RIGHTS OF WAY
Improvement Plan 2007-2011

Northamptonshire County Council
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Welcome to the Northamptonshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

We have a tremendous asset in the network of public rights of way here in Northamptonshire, and I am delighted to introduce our plan for the coming years that sets out how we will prioritise our actions to bring about improvements for all members of the community.

I know how important this network is to everyone who uses our rights of way – remember how people were affected during the Foot and Mouth Disease crisis in 2001. To back up this view, the research commissioned by the Rights of Way team has shown that local accessible paths are what residents really wish to be maintained. We can deliver this in the next few years with the support of our farmers and landowners in ways that match both the needs of the community and the changing face of agriculture and access to the countryside.

I hope that the plan can help us to improve the profile of Northamptonshire County Council by means of improved promotion, publicity and branding to ensure that our services are recognised and appreciated by members of the public. If we provide attractive and well maintained access, our standing in the community will be raised.

We have a particularly important challenge in Northamptonshire by being a major part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area in which there are proposals to deliver significant urban expansion around the major towns which will include a great deal of associated infrastructure such as new roads, education facilities and leisure opportunities. Our Rights of Way team is fully committed to achieve as much as possible in partnership with the growth area delivery bodies and as you will read, great importance has been placed on this subject within this plan’s Statement of Action.

I would like to personally thank everyone who contributed to the production of this plan, especially all those who took part in the initial surveys in 2004 and everyone who completed feedback on the Draft Plan launched at the 2005 Northampton Balloon Festival. I would also like to thank all the volunteers that have helped make the county’s rights of way network such a valuable asset. Without their input our job would have been made much more difficult and we could have lost touch with our communities which are our life blood.

My hope is that this plan, allied to the provisions of the Local Transport Plan will result in significant improvement in accessibility throughout the county as well as having environmental benefits and contributing to the promotion of good health for the people of Northamptonshire.

In the meantime I would very much like to express my personal appreciation of all those involved in pursuing these objectives which I have no doubt will provide a good positive contribution to the wellbeing of the County.

Bob Seery
Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways and Transport
Welcome to the Northamptonshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

This strategic document explains how Northamptonshire County Council as highway authority will identify, manage and deliver improvements to its local rights of way and access to the countryside over the next 4 years.

Since the draft version of this plan was circulated in August 2005, many of the comments, suggestions and priorities have been incorporated in this document. These have allowed us to:

1. Check that the findings of the research were right
2. Consider people’s views on our proposed actions
3. Prioritise proposed actions in the approved Plan
4. Identify and deliver a series of ‘quick wins’ to achieve important improvements

We have put an electronic version on our website www.northamptonshire.gov.uk

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Natural England and Defra have the following information on their websites:

England has about 190,000 km (118,000 miles) of footpaths, bridleways, byways and other rights of way. They are the most important way for visitors to enjoy the countryside, and are also useful for local people to get to the shops, school and work.

Definitions:

**Footpath**
open to walkers only, waymarked with a yellow arrow

**Bridleway**
open to cyclists, horseriders and walkers, waymarked with a blue arrow

**Restricted Byway**
open to cyclists, horseriders, carriage drivers and walkers, waymarked with a plum coloured arrow

**Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)**
open to all walkers, cyclists, riders and motor vehicles, waymarked with a red/orange arrow

A ROWIP is a strategic document which is a means for the local highway authorities to identify and propose the management of improving public rights of way and access to the countryside. Plans should be reviewed at least every 10 years.

The CRoW Act 2000 requires every local highway authority to assess:

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

The plan should also contain statement of actions, these are action local highway authorities proposes to take for the management of local rights of way and for securing improvements to the network, with particular regard to the matters dealt with in the assessment.

Also the CRoW Act requires every local highway authority to consult with:

- Each local highway authority whose area adjoins theirs
- Each district and parish councils whose area is within theirs
- Any Local Access Forum established for their area
- The Countryside Agency (now Natural England)

In November 2002 further guidance was issued from DEFRA which provided local highway authorities with greater detail on what was expected to be contained within the ROWIP process. The guidance given by DEFRA includes the following:

- Access to and within attractive areas which might have few existing rights of way i.e. watersides, woodland or particular views or attractions
- Attractive routes to support tourism and economic regeneration or community lead initiatives.
- Opportunities for cycling, horse riding, horse driving and walking, allowing people to avoid roads mainly used by motor vehicles.
- Routes from centres of population in conjunction with public transport to allow easy access to the countryside from where people live.
- Links to create circular routes and better facilities for walkers (including dog walkers), runners, cyclist, horse riders and drivers for leisure and health.
- Convenient and safe crossings over roads, railway, rivers and canals.
- The current rights of way network such as ways ending in a cul-de-sac or routes carrying different rights along their lengths.
- Routes for local journeys such as walking to work, shops, doctors and other local amenities.
- Routes through and around heavily developed areas, to ensure such development does not prevent or disrupt the continuity of the network.
The guidance gives greater depth to the process that the assessment should go through. Local highways authorities should:

- Study of the definitive map and statements.
- Collate and consider data on:
  - applications for modifications to the map and statement
  - request for improvement to the network and
  - the current condition of the network
- Identify any other relevant information, including plans and strategies.

The study of the definitive map should allow a preliminary assessment of:

- The extent to which routes are available to different groups of users
- Areas which are deficient in rights of way for all or particular groups
- Obvious inconsistencies or anomalies in relation to individual rights of way
- Other opportunities to improve the network

The study of the map should be in conjunction with the wider highway network, cycle tracks and permissive routes including towpaths and routes through woodland and forest.
Since the 1960s, the population of Northamptonshire has increased by 50% to 646,000 residents. It remains a predominantly rural county but is interspersed with several large and small towns.

Northamptonshire is officially in the East Midlands region but it borders three other economic regions (Eastern England, the South-East and West Midlands) with whom it shares many common features.

The Northamptonshire economy consistently grows well above the national average. The traditional industries of boot and shoe manufacturing, steel production and agriculture have now been largely replaced by the service, technology, engineering and distribution sectors.

In terms of settlement patterns, the county can be divided into two areas. Northampton itself, (population, 200,000) dominates the western end of the county. The other towns servicing this area are Daventry, Towcester and Brackley.

The eastern area of the county is closely associated with the A6 corridor and the Midland Main Line railway. The smaller A6 towns include Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Finedon, Burton Latimer, Rothwell and Desborough. Wellingborough and Kettering and Corby are the principal population centres in this area.

Northamptonshire has a significant natural heritage with important areas in the western uplands and the Nene Valley. Its man-made heritage can be seen in the limestone villages at either end and the sandstone villages in the Northampton area. Important contributions are also made by the small industrial towns and the Grand Union Canal.

Northamptonshire provides some tourist attractions, in particular Silverstone and the Rockingham Motor Speedway motor racing circuits, a number of stately homes, Towcester Racecourse and Stoke Bruerne which is the most popular location on the wider attraction of the Grand Union and Oxford canals.

There are 3 mainline railways through the county – Northampton and Long Buckby sit on a loop of the West Coast Main Line, Wellingborough and Kettering are on the Midland Main Line and Kings Sutton is on the Chiltern Railways route from London Marylebone to Birmingham. Whilst the actual number of stations (7 when Corby regains its station in 2008) within Northamptonshire is fairly low there are a number of other stations serving its residents – including Bedford, Market Harborough, Stamford, Peterborough, Milton Keynes, Rugby, Bicester and Banbury.

Road transport has developed greatly in the county over the decades, particularly strategic routes such as the M1, A5, A14, A43 and A45.
The Rights of Way Improvement Plan does not exist within a vacuum. Numerous other plans, policies and strategies have an impact on how access is managed, measured and planned.

Rights of way and the corridors in which they sit make a significant contribution to, and provide new opportunities for supporting the current agendas for improving the quality of people’s lives. These rights can also enhance access to local places of heritage, recreational, and cultural interest; and provide a framework for improved outdoor recreation in general. The use of rights of way provides a basis for more sustainable transport modes, improved health from more active lifestyles and access to areas for environmental education. Through tourism and employment they also provide support to the local economy.

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area

Northamptonshire is the largest part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands (MKSM) growth area, one of the four growth areas in the greater south east identified by the government in the Sustainable Communities Plan in February 2003.

Within these growth areas there should be a step change to deliver successful, thriving and inclusive communities. The MKSM area includes the whole of Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, Luton and Bedfordshire and part of Buckinghamshire.

The Sub-Regional Strategy (SRS) has sets out the key elements of growth in the MKSM area. It will be used to inform growth at the local level and to guide the investment decisions of the public and private sectors. The SRS identifies two main locations for growth in the county. These are:

- North Northamptonshire with a particular focus on the principal urban areas of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough; and
- West Northamptonshire, with a particular focus on Northampton, Towcester and Daventry

Local delivery vehicles have been set up for each location to facilitate growth – these are the North Northamptonshire Development Company www.nndev.co.uk and the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation www.wndc.co.uk

Community Strategy for Northamptonshire 2004–2013

The development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan accords well with the Community Strategy developed by the seven local strategic partnerships and other members of the Northamptonshire Forum.

The overriding ambition of the Community Strategy is “about helping to shape and develop a place:

- where people enjoy a high quality of life
- where everyone can contribute to and benefit from sustained economic performance and success; and
- where the strong physical, social and green infrastructures we need are well planned, secure, sustainable and well maintained.”

In addressing the regional growth agenda as set out in the MKSM Sub-Regional Study rights of way also have a part to play as part of the foundation of local environmental assets that need to be enhanced, and managed to accommodate the increase in local population and activity. The Community Plan also aspires to ensure that:

“Growth is managed sensitively, consistently and conscientiously in planning and designing good, appropriate and sustainable local communities, housing, employment, transport and other infrastructure needs.”

and it aims to ensure that:

“In all we do, we cherish the urban and rural fabric of the county and re-using all our surroundings and natural habitats … encouraging and supporting the interest and engagement of communities in their local environment.”
The strategy specifically notes the need to protect and improve rights of way, and the ROWIP is an essential tool to deliver this objective.

Key to achieving this ambition, the plan notes that:

"New development must also contribute to the establishment and expansion of our green infrastructure that will not only ensure a high quality environment for new communities, but protect and enhance the quality of life in our existing settlements."

and that:

"the means of travel are reliable, convenient, flexible and affordable, including to and between rural and less accessible areas, with appropriate routes and connections to achieve the integration of transport services and to meet people’s work, welfare and leisure needs."

The plan further notes that there will be a need to:

"Develop existing and new public places and green spaces for the benefit of the county’s people and economy by identifying flagship projects and the resources to deliver them to improve the understanding and use by communities of their local environment."

The River Nene Regional Park

The River Nene Regional Park initiative is not a ‘park’ in the traditional sense. It is a unique, forward thinking developmental network of environmental, sport and cultural projects. Rather than focusing on a physical boundary, the initiative will operate in a virtual arena. The projects are designed to bring about social, environmental and economic benefits of local and national significance.

The ground breaking network of projects will act as a catalyst, stimulating the economy by encouraging investments from organisations and businesses throughout the UK and possibly beyond. The River Nene Regional Park will therefore benefit the quality of life for people living and working in the growth area and embrace the multifunctional nature of the river Nene region.

The RNRP will be the central mode by which green space provision (vital to the government’s vision of the ‘liveability’ of the area) will be accomplished within the MKSM growth area.

The RNRP, whilst working alongside key partners aims to bring key initiatives together in a network that will support the vision for the Regional Park and define a unified brand for the growth area. This will in turn support the promotion and the raising of the profile of Northamptonshire as a key tourist destination supporting the need for sustainable economic schemes within the East Midlands region.

Sustainable/integrated transport and road safety

The increased use of rights of way can make a major contribution to the sustainable integrated transport agenda through helping to reducing congestion and air and noise pollution. Walking and cycling are promoted in national transport strategies such as Transport 2010 (DfT, 2000), the Regional Spatial Strategy, and Northamptonshire’s 2nd Local Transport Plan (LTP).

The ROWIP is included as a component of the 2006-2011 LTP and presents an excellent opportunity to ensure that the role of rights of way is a valuable contributor to the transport agenda for the future.
Within the LTP there are eight action areas which have been identified as necessary to deliver the County Council’s Cycling Strategy:

a. Define key cycle corridors within the four main towns of Northampton, Kettering, Wellingborough and Corby. Including safe on-and-off road cycle routes, catering for the different levels of ability and competence amongst cyclists and linked to desired routes and destinations.

b. Ensure that all new highway schemes undergo cycle audits (or cycle-friendliness reviews if valued at under £10,000).

c. Encourage journey to work by cycle through travel plans. These may include engineering measures to benefit cycling, such as crossings, off-road paths or cycle parking facilities at the site.

d. Develop cycle facilities to and at transport interchanges and key bus stops on major radials. These will include cycle parking facilities to enable cyclists to leave their bikes securely for potentially long-term parking.

e. Target secondary school and college students with training and educational activities, as well as the traditional focus on primary schools.

f. Explore all possible capital and revenue funding sources, especially those available from sources external to the Council.

g. Undertake a complete analysis of all cycle accidents throughout the county on an annual basis. This analysis will be used to identify the major causes and locations of accidents, and to prioritise areas for education and engineering intervention.

h. Promote the health and leisure benefits of cycling through the County Physical Activity Forum. This partnership will include all relevant organisations and individuals with an interest in promoting non-motorised transport.

The safety of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders is an important link between ROWIP and transport plans. Northamptonshire’s LTP includes a road safety strategy and the county has a number of performance indicators that relate to reducing the number of people killed or injured in road accidents.
The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is an integral part of Northamptonshire’s second Local Transport Plan (LTP2), packaged under the ‘Healthier Travel objective’. The ROWIP has key linkages with all the LTP objectives:

**Healthier Travel**

Rights of Way have a key role to play in encouraging people to take up healthier travel choices such as walking and cycling. Many of the schemes will deliver an increasing number of commuter routes between communities, workplaces and other destinations.

**Maintenance**

The county’s rights of way network forms an integral part of our transport network, and this is recognised through the allocation of maintenance funding from our overall capital and revenue allocations.

**Growth**

Rights of Way have a key part to play in accommodating additional growth in the county, both in terms of the promotion of alternatives to the car and the provision of green infrastructure.

**MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy**

**Development Issues**

- Work together to ensure that developers face similar development proposals throughout the growth area.
- Liaise closely on cross-border developments to ensure communities are considered in new developments.

**Congestion**

The Rights of Way network can assist in the provision of high quality alternatives to the car as part of the development of cycling and walking networks for each of the larger urban and surrounding areas.

**Accessibility**

An improved Rights of Way network can play a key part in accessing work, leisure facilities, shops, services, schools and other transport services in both rural and urban areas for those who do not currently have good access to transport services or who are looking to reduce their reliance on the car.

**Safety**

The improvement of Rights of Way crossings on main roads has been recognised as an issue for some years. The elimination of accidents, particularly for cyclists and equestrians through promotion of safe, off-road alternatives, can contribute towards the road safety objective.

**Environment**

Urban Rights of Way networks can play their part, alongside other measures, in the promotion of alternatives to the car close to Air Quality Management Areas, as well as the contribution that both urban and rural networks can make to environmental and quality of life issues more generally.
Northamptonshire County Structure Plan 1996–2016: Policies regarding rights of way

Policy GS3
The location, layout and form of development will be planned so as to reduce the need to travel, improve opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport and therefore reduce dependency on the private car.

Policy T8
Measures will be introduced to encourage walking and cycling, these will include:

- Concentrating development where a wide range of facilities are, or will be, easily accessible by walking and cycling;
- Providing safe and easy access for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Making provision for pedestrians and cyclists when planning developments; and
- Identifying networks of pedestrians and cycle routes and supporting improvements to these networks.


Policy L14
Planning permission for development proposals will be conditional upon the protection of existing public rights of way. Additionally, in appropriate cases, negotiations will be instigated with a view to introducing new public rights of way.

6.29. The Borough Council will seek to retain public rights of way. Where the diversion of an existing route is considered appropriate in order to enable development to proceed, the Borough Council must be satisfied that a new line for the route, generally acceptable to the public, can be provided. The use of estate roads for the purpose should, wherever possible, be avoided with preference given to paths through landscaped or open space areas away from vehicular traffic.

6.30. In an endeavour to increase general accessibility in the Plan area, the Borough Council wishes to encourage the protection and greater use of the existing public rights of way system and to promote the introduction of new rights of way, particularly in the countryside, and to accommodate the reasonable needs of all potential users. To this end, the possibility of introducing circular walks will be considered, to include routes associated with the Nene Way County Path and the network of footpaths in the town linear park system.

6.31. Particular regard will be paid to the protection and enhancement of the stretch of the Nene Way in the Plan area which runs along the Nene Valley from Weedon to the Northamptonshire/Cambridgeshire border and constitutes an important leisure resource. In addition, the proposed Nene Valley cycleway, comprising a cycle route through the Nene Valley which avoids main roads is supported; this is to be supplemented by a series of separate circular routes in the Valley area.

Northamptonshire – Adopted Minerals Local Plan

Paragraph 18
Mineral working, particularly sand and gravel working can have a drastic impact on public rights of way. Operators will be required to provide satisfactory alternative routes if their proposed method of working affects existing rights of way…Restoration schemes should provide access which is at least as good as that pertaining before workings began. Where appropriate, applicants will be encouraged to dedicate additional rights of way over the restored area.

Policy NMLP 30
Planning permission for mineral operations that affect the use of public rights of way will not be permitted unless the proposals allow for:

a. The continued use of the public right way on the definitive route or on a temporary diversion of the route of the route during extraction and restoration, and

b. The reinstatement of the public right of way after mineral extraction and restoration on the definitive route or on a permanent diversion.
A SAFER CLEANER AND GREENER COUNTY

In 2006 the County Council agreed a series of new strategic goals to steer the way the authority works in future years. The part of the framework that has significant scope for impact upon the services delivered by the Rights of Way service is that part associated with the aim of providing a cleaner and greener county. There is the added ability to contribute to another strategic goal – a safer, freer and more prosperous county through the work of the casualty reduction unit and generally providing safer highways through better design and the funding of improvements.

By combining these two goals into an initiative known as Safer Cleaner Greener, the rights of way service will lay the foundation to work closer with other authorities in making the county a safer place to live and work and provide greatly enhanced greenspace management.

From April 2006 funding has been provided to set up the basis of how Safer Cleaner Greener can make these improvements happen. To date the following activities have been included:

- A pilot area based on the Kettering Borough boundaries has been chosen to introduce the enhanced ways of working.
- An audit has been carried out of all the street trees in the Borough area with a view to introducing best practice in this field for the benefit of all councils in Northamptonshire.
- An audit of rights of way to provide the council with an accurate record of its assets, a measure of the usage levels and a gauge as to how suitable the network is for all types of user.
- A re-survey of the protected wildflower verges that NCC manages via the Wildlife Trust. These areas have suffered in recent years through a failure to monitor their condition. This work ensures that the verges are sensitively managed and will give a clear specification for any future highways contractor to adhere to.

Bringing together the work of various agencies involved in annual grass cutting and vegetation management. Currently it is possible that four or more agencies could all be carrying out work in one parish under totally separate arrangements. The view is that a higher quality and more cost-effective service can be achieved if much of the work is bound together into local contracts over a number of parishes so that one provider can be selected and complete the work under the supervision of a more empowered local community, closer to the needs of the residents. Work will be completed on this facet of Safer Cleaner Greener to deliver benefits over the coming years.
Classifications of Public Rights of Way in Northamptonshire

The public rights of way network in Northamptonshire is divided into three categories - footpaths (FPs), bridleways (BRs) and byways open to all traffic (BOATs) – which can be used by different classes of users. The proportions of public rights of way by type are shown on the following chart, which includes 2 of our neighbouring counties and the figures for the East Midlands.

It can be seen that, in terms of proportions of rights of way types, Northamptonshire has a similar distribution to that in Bedfordshire but a significantly higher percentage of bridleways than Leicestershire. Overall in the East Midlands the proportion of routes available to at least cyclists and horseriders (i.e. those having a status above footpath) is roughly comparable.
**Measurement of Ease of Use: Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI)**

Each highway authority is expected to provide an annual measurement of its own rights of way network's ease of use, based on a survey of a random 5% of the total length of rights of way in its area. This measure is shown as BVPI 178.

Whilst the measurement takes account of problems caused by obstructions, missing signage, ploughing and cropping, it does not differentiate between routes that contain state-of-the-art access structures and those that have [assessed as safe and easy to use] stiles. If we are to seek real improvements, especially on behalf of those respondents who told us what they wanted, the measurement against BVPI 178 would need to be updated or bolstered to reflect the effect of a network containing improved infrastructure. This also applies to improvements we may be seeking through providing more information to the public via roadside signage and upgrades to surfaces.

The following chart shows the ease of use figures for the last 5 years.
Definitive Map and Statement Issues

One of the characteristics of Northamptonshire’s network is the significant number of dead end paths and paths which change status (for example, a route changing from bridleway to footpath) for no obvious reason. The importance attached to resolving these problems has been strengthened by the responses of parishes in asking for individual sections of PRoW to be linked to create a more continuous network. Parishes see changes to the network through creation orders or agreements and change of route status as a priority.

Users also find the patchwork of status and the fragmentation of the network a deterrent to their use of many routes. These can be a real danger by forcing riders and cyclists onto busy roads instead of continuing along rights of way. Land managers see the advantages, for both land management and public access, of removing dead-end paths in return for improving circular routes, upgrading the status of existing routes or creating new links.

We have recorded the incidences of problems such as cul-de-sacs, major obstructions and changes in status to provide the basis for a work programme designed to systematically tackle the issues to both make a superior legal record and address the issues that are important to people.

Cul-de-sacs

The instances of cul-de-sac paths that don’t link with a highway (including other rights of way) are known to be of particular importance to people as they affect their confidence in using the network. There are over 100 of these problems in the county.
Major Obstructions

Throughout Northamptonshire developments have impacted on public rights of way. Situations caused by obstructions are reasonably numerous (33 known instances) and can, in the case of lakes and quarry workings across paths, cause major problems for all concerned. It is important that these obstructions are dealt with in a timely way to get the access network properly joined up. That said, it is often the case that there is a local custom for people to find their way round these problems.

Status Changes at County Boundaries

There are a few situations where, for example a public footpath is shown on one surveying authority’s definitive map and the other shows a public bridleway joining it. These situations require research on both sides of the boundaries to ensure that the routes carry the correct rights.

Under-Recording

Whatever the issues currently facing surveying authorities (those councils responsible for keeping the definitive map and statement up to date), there is likely to be a significant impact caused by the effects of a national project known as Discovering Lost Ways (DLW). It has been instigated by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) in response to the ‘closing’ of the definitive map on 1 January 2026, some 25 years after the enactment of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

By setting a date after which it will no longer be possible to make amendments to the map and statement based on historical evidence, it was recognised that this could result in a surge of applications in the years leading up to 2026. To meet this challenge DLW aims carry out research in a programmed way by looking at historical data sources in local records offices and at a national level to accelerate the process of ensuring that maps are as up to date as possible in terms of showing all possible routes by adding those that have been missed off councils current records. At the time of writing there is no specific timescale as to when Northamptonshire’s archives will be researched by the DLW team (known as the Archives Research Unit).

For more detail about the Discovering Lost Ways project refer to their website at http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Access/DLW - please note that this address may change following the full transition to Natural England.
Determining the adequacy of the path network

An integral part of the preparation of a rights of way improvement plan is the assessment of ‘the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public’ and the opportunities they provide ‘for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the authority’s area’.

An important initial step in tackling this undertaking is to develop a good understanding of the public’s use of, and demands on, its local path network. It is also useful to look at the national patterns of use and also the way that leisure and utility journey patterns are evolving. In Northamptonshire, the consultation results and surveys that informed the body of the ROWIP provide the foundation for this aspect. To complement this, a review of national preferences is also outlined below.

After this collation of information the next stage is to relate the findings to the opportunities that the rights of way network affords for the different categories of user, including levels of connectivity and the conditions, or standards that will be encountered on the ground.

It is this analysis that will, in turn, point to the areas of deficiency in the provision that the authority can then strive to address via the delivery of its rights of way improvement plan.

Walking

Rights of way provide for a variety of users from the frequent dog walker to the user of long distance routes. Walking is by far the most common activity. The Great Britain Day Visits Survey (GBDVS) 2002/03 records 1,126 million day visits to the English countryside (TNS Travel and Tourism, 2004). 31% of countryside visitors quote walking as their preferred past time.

But, the term ‘walking’ can cover a wide range of different sorts of activities. The Day visit survey identified three main sub-categories:

- Short Walk/Stroll, including dog-walking (up to 2 miles)
- Long walk/hike/ramble (over 2 miles)
- Hill-walking (but excluding mountaineering /climbing)

In 2001 a study commissioned by the Countryside Agency asked people what type of access resource was used during their activities. The results are shown as percentages below (respondents were allowed to specify more than one option).
Other studies provide a similar picture noting that:

- around 50% of the population visit the countryside at least once a year, from all sectors of society but with wealthier groups visiting more frequently, and the chief age group favouring countryside visits being between 45-59 years.
- key factors influencing the frequency of visits are time to do it, the availability of private transport, and good sources of information and the costs of such trips.
- lack of concise and user friendly information is often a real disincentive to countryside use. This could include a range of mechanisms including leaflets, newspaper articles, web sites, posters etc - and signage, way marking and interpretable facilities.
- personal safety is also identified as a problem, especially for those with young children, or individuals with limited mobility, women wanting to walk alone, and for most people where connections have to include ‘on-road’ links.
- poorly maintained routes, including muddy or dog-fouled areas, are also identified as constraints.
- in terms of latent demand, infrequent users often request improvements like toilets, allocated car parking, better conditions under foot, clear waymarking and more accessible information. This group represents a substantial proportion of those 70+% of visitors expressing a desire to increase their frequency of visits to the local countryside.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Route Used</th>
<th>Walking or Rambling</th>
<th>Running or Jogging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country parks/public gardens/National Trust properties etc.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other open areas of land</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other paths or tracks</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridleways</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavements alongside main roads</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canal towpaths</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive paths or areas</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle tracks</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green lanes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main roads</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOATs (Byways open to all traffic)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUPP (Roads used as public paths)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of households where 1 or more undertake activity</strong></td>
<td><strong>724</strong></td>
<td><strong>151</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Entec (2001)
Horse riding

Information from the British Horse Society suggests that:

- 2.4 million people ride nearly 1 million horses each year (a round 4.5% of the population)
- horse owners and riders spend around £2.5 billion each year on horses and riding
- around 500,000 ha of land is used to keep horses (estimated in 1988 and likely to have risen substantially since then)
- horse related businesses employ around 50,000 people directly, and 200,000 people indirectly.

Further research undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University in 2004 looked at the nature and requirements of horse riders, it noted that:

- it was an activity not dominated by a particular age group or income class
- it was undertaken predominantly by females
- it had a fairly uniform participation rates across the country
- most of the participants did not own a horse

They also found that equestrians prefer safe, off-road routes and for new initiatives to be directed in such a way as to ‘enhance the existing network by creating links, safe road crossings, parking and access to more existing rights of way’.

In 2004 support was found for Sheffield Hallam’s findings with respect to requirements for improvement, but with additional comments about desire to have gates of a type that can be opened without dismounting and suitable surfacing for horses.

Carriage Drivers

Carriage driving is less popular and is not as well researched as horse riding. However, it is an important user group, as they will have a right to use Restricted Byways as well as byways and other routes with vehicular rights. Carriage drivers tend to come from older age groups than horse riders and are much more likely to own a horse.

About half of the carriage drivers said they preferred circular routes, while the other half where happy to use both linear and circular routes.

Research undertaken in Hampshire provided evidence of latent demand:

- 66% of respondents said they would do more driving if they could;
- 43% of the local British Driving Society members admitted to exceeding their rights on public rights of way;
- 70% use permissive routes and 52% have negotiated private arrangements with landowners;
- 30% pay for access (usually entry to Country Parks or to use toll rides);

Route variety is desirable but difficult to achieve because of limited routes with adequate rights, meaning that there is a high tendency for drivers to use the same routes over and over again. The key requirements also include suitable parking for horse boxes and routes with gates wide enough for the passage of the carriage.
Cyclists

The rights of way network and other routes segregated from the main carriageway can provide for a range of users, both the comparatively new enthusiasm for mountain biking and also for other cyclist users who for prefer not to contend with motorised traffic.

Local networks of off-road routes are often very important for families with children who are too young to cycle on roads. There is great demand for off-road recreational cycling in the County as demonstrated by the popularity of cycling on the Brampton Valley Way and enjoying the circuit around Pitsford Water (Brixworth Country Park). The Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan has set a target of an overall increase in cycling of 5% by 2010.

Several trends are influencing the volume and nature of the demand for cycling facilities including, the increasing interest in health and fitness, the environment and sustainable transport. The county however share the negative issues common to many areas of an inadequate existing supply of routes and cycle hire, small budgets for route development and publicity, incomplete linkages between routes and often substandard maintenance of traffic-free cycleways or shared routes.

Motorised Users

The use of byways by motorised vehicles is a pursuit favoured by a relatively small number of people. Nationally it is estimated that there are about 15,000 such users. Two-thirds of these are thought to be motorcyclists.

It is an often contentious subject and criticism is sometimes founded on hearsay rather than direct evidence.

Work is underway within the County to assess the needs of trail bike riders and drivers of four wheel drive vehicles, and how best to address the issues of byway maintenance, the provision of clear information, concerns about possible conflict between users and the potential impact of such use sensitive areas of the local landscape and heritage.

Matching the user requirements to the actual network

A simple way of assessing of the adequacy might be simply to examine a map of the path network and to draw-up a list of the obvious weaknesses, gaps, and deficiencies based on what is known about use and demand from local and national sources of data. But while this may be sufficient for a small authority with a very limited network of rights of way, there are significant advantages from adopting a more methodical, structured approach.

Modelling adequacy: Numeric approach

This method uses demographic data for the area being studied, together with information about the patterns of recreational behaviour derived from national studies. Using this information, the likely demand for the different types of route can be calculated in a series of concentric zones, radiating out from each centre of population in the study area. This assessment can then be compared with the provision which exists in each zone and a judgement made about the degree to which the existing network is adequate and the degree of any shortfall.
Modelling adequacy: Geographic approach

This builds on the numeric approach but aims to provide a stronger assessment of the range of access resources available to people in the areas where they live.

A series of ten basic requirements and matching assessment parameters can be for the different types of path use (e.g. for short and longer local provision on foot, for off-road horse riding and cycling, etc). An assessment can then made of the extent to which the network in an area meets each of those standards, taking into account also factors such as the length of routes available and their proximity to users.

It is our intention to combine the 2 methods and this will involve a staged approach, outlined below in Table A. The resources available in an area for the different types of activity are first identified and mapped.

The adequacy of the network in relation to the likely demand for each activity is then assessed using a series of ‘operating rules and criteria’, as shown in Table B.

The assessment is generally limited to the area that is within 5 km of the boundary of the main centres of population in the study area, reflecting the fact the great majority of walks and cycle rides take place close to where people live. However this can be adapted for other conditions, provision for horse riding can be assessed on the number of off-road routes that can be accessed from each riding stable, livery yard or place where a horse box can be parked.

The provision for MPV and carriage driving use is also assessed differently, on a county or district wide basis reflecting the somewhat different characteristics of that activity.
### Rule Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population Size</strong></td>
<td>A lower limit on the size of population area for which this provision applies is proposed as not less than 0.5 km dimension in any one orientation (0.25 km² in total).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Areas of open space</strong></td>
<td>Such areas to be at least 15 ha in extent (rectangular area around which a path of 1.5km could be provided) through the total can be made of separate areas if the only separation is a road or other feature that has numerous locations for crossing between paths of the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desirable features that are linear</strong></td>
<td>Each 5 km section of desirable feature (measured from the edge of the district or to the end of the feature) is considered adequate if 20% of the length of each section has provision for on foot activity alongside it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stables and livery yards</strong></td>
<td>At least 5 horses have to be at the stable or livery yard for it to be quality for the assessment. The horses should be owned by the one owner unless available for third parties as part of a commercial riding school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of activity</td>
<td>Operating rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a On-foot, both walking and running - Short on foot provision.</td>
<td>Routes of between 1.5 and 3 km in length. Starting from edge of population areas they must be available within 0.5km* of the home to provide adequate provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b On-foot, both walking and running longer local on-foot provision.</td>
<td>Routes of between 4 and 10km in length. Starting from edge of population areas, interconnecting with public transport or with suitable off road parking provision. Maximum 20% on public roads lower than ‘C’ classification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Desirable feature on-foot provision.</td>
<td>Minimum 1km route provision to desirable features including view point areas of special landscape value, historic monuments and river corridors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d On bicycle (off-road - Short local on hard surfaced roads.</td>
<td>Routes of between 4 and 10 km in length. Starting from the edge of population areas they must be available within 1km of the home to provide an adequate provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e Desirable feature off-road cycle provision.</td>
<td>Routes of between 6 and 15km in length. Starting from edge of population areas, interconnecting with public transport on which bicycles can be carried or suitable off road parking provision. Maximum of 20% on public roads lower than ‘B’ classification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f Off-road horse riding</td>
<td>At least 5 horses stabled in the riding school of livery yard. Routes of between 3km and 10km in length, starting from the stable of livery yard. Available routes with a maximum of 20% on public roads lower than ‘C’ classification. Any area provision including field associated with the stable of livery yard are assumed to count towards the total length on the basis of four times the longest dimension of open space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g Off-road driving</td>
<td>County level demand is assessed as 0.5% of the county population. Routes of at least 10km in total with a total travel distance on public roads between the start and finish of the route no greater than the length of the off-road element.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of activity</td>
<td>Operating rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>h Local restricted mobility provision</strong></td>
<td>Hard surfaced routes (level or with restricted gradient) with no barriers to access for wheelchairs, pushchairs etc, of between 1.5km and 5km length. Starting from the edge of urban areas they must be available within 0.5km of the home to provide an adequate provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>i Desirable feature mobility provision</strong></td>
<td>As for item h but with restricted mobility provision where hard surfaced routes are provided. Off road parking or suitable public transport provision also required with access to the hard surfaced path.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derived from work undertaken by ENTEC and commissioned by the Countryside Agency.
Implementation

As part of the Safer Cleaner Greener project based within the borough of Kettering this approach will be further enhanced by a detailed survey of the physical rights of way network. The survey will record in detail the nature of path surfaces and the condition and location of signage and access furniture. This will inform the simple mapping of the routes by adding a further layer about the user friendliness of such provision.

Interpretation

The outcome of the assessment provides a numeric value (proportion of population with a particular standard of provision), mapped data and qualitative assessment of the condition/convenience of the routes.

The combination of the three datasets shows whether or not there is an inadequacy, as well as providing an indication of where this exists on the ground and in what condition.

The conclusions will point to the opportunities and to the main deficiencies in provision which the authority should try to address via the delivery of its rights of way improvement plan.

The basic standards are:

- On-foot short local provision: starting within 500 metres of residence, routes of 1.5 to 3km;
- On-foot longer local provision: starting within 5km of population area edge, routes of 4 to 10km with public transport or car park provision and maximum 20% on public roads all lower than class ‘C’;
- On-foot desirable feature provision: within 5km of population area edge, routes to features or through desirable areas at least 1km in length, representing at least 20% of length if linear features;
- On-bicycle short local off road provision: within 1km of residence, hard surfaced routes of 2 to 5 km;
- On-bicycle longer local off road provision: within 5km of population edge, routes of 6 to 15km with public transport (capable of bicycle carriage) or car park provision and maximum 20% on public roads all lower than ‘B’ classification
- On-bicycle desirable feature provision: within 5km of population area edge, routes to features or through desirable areas at least 1km in length, representing at least 20% of length if linear features;
- Off-road horseriding: routes of 3 to 10km starting at stables / livery yards with 5 or more horses and maximum 20% on public roads all lower than ‘C’, area access contributes to route total;
- Off-road motorsports: A comparison of need relative to route availability undertaken at a county level, routes to comprise at least 10km off-road which can be made up from several shorter sections provided that no more than 10 km total travel required on public road.
- Restricted mobility short local provision: within 0.5 km of residence, hard surfaced routes of 1.5 to 3 km;
- Restricted mobility desirable feature provision: within 5km of population area edge, car parking provision with access to route, hard surfaced routes to features or through desirable areas at least 1km in length, representing at least 20% of length if linear features.
Other Opportunities for Access

There are a number of other routes and opportunities that complement the rights of way network and also provide for public access.

**Permissive routes** are routes accessible by permission of the owner and which do not establish permanent rights (this permission has no legal status and may be revoked by the landowner, subject to conditions, at any time). Public access is usually for a limited period of time and it is the responsibility of the landowner to maintain the route.

**Paths provided through agri-environment schemes**
The Stewardship Schemes (administered by DEFRA) has provided for routes by agreement. The agreements have normally been for a ten-year period. There are a number of such agreements operating within Northamptonshire.

**Open Access Land under part 1 of the CROW Act 2000**
The Forestry Commission have dedicated much of their freehold land to provide “Open Access” which will provide permanent public access. Many areas of Forestry Commission land have excellent woodland routes that provide opportunities for riders, cyclists and walkers of all abilities.

**Unregistered Public Rights**
There are known to be routes in Northamptonshire with public access that have not yet been recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement. Some are historic paths; some have become public more recently through use.

**Country Parks**
There are several country parks and other recreation sites managed for the enjoyment of the public. Some events during the year ranging from fungal forays to local celebrations and some have facilities for a range of activities including fishing, orienteering, cycling etc.

**Nature reserves with access for the public.**
Northamptonshire is fortunate in having a substantial number of wildlife sites managed by a range of bodies including the County Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust, English Nature and local authorities. Many of these sites are permanently or regularly open and public access is encouraged.

**Accessibility: Access to and from settlements and services**
Each settlement has been analysed to assess whether the residents have direct off road access to the surrounding countryside from the development area as shown on the local plans.

- settlements do not have direct links to the countryside by footpaths, bridleways or byways. These are predominantly in the west of the county.
- parishes do not have access by bridleways, which makes it difficult to promote cycling and equestrian routes in particular.

**Town and Country Links**
Local Authorities and parishes raised the importance of linking population centres with surrounding parishes by foot and cycle. The rural urban fringe is the most immediate and potentially accessible part of the countryside to many people.
The Urban Fringe represents one of the most valuable, yet frequently overlooked resources. It can contribute to the health, wealth and well being of urban and rural communities alike and underpin more sustainable living.

There are many public rights of way within urban areas and on the urban fringe that should be used to provide safe and traffic free links to increase accessibility. This is especially true in areas that have the highest density of households without a car.

Inter Community links
With only 11.8% of journeys to work by Northamptonshire’s residents being on foot or bicycle (2001 Census), it is clear that there is both need to support these users and tap the demand that exists but that is suppressed by blockages to safe, convenient non-motorised travel.
Northamptonshire County Council’s Rights of Way Team has, along with parish and town councils, identified existing inter community links for improvement. Many of these connect small communities with towns that function as rural service centres with shops, employment areas, leisure facilities and transport links.

Access from / to recreation and leisure sites
A lack of access to and from the wider countryside onto Forestry Commission land, country parks, picnic spots, managed open space and leisure facilities has been highlighted by local authorities, the Broads Authority, parishes, users and disability groups alike.

Development of circular routes
Walkers, equestrians, cyclists, land managers and parishes have expressed a desire for the development of a network of short circular routes starting and finishing at or near pubs, settlements etc, as well as longer routes in more remote areas.
Considerations for the Statement of Action

- Feed into a Rural Transport Strategy with a user focus to provide a strategic network of rights of way and associated sustainable routes that enhance rural service centres.
- Take positive measures to encourage the creation of circular routes that link points of interest.
- Identify strategic missing links in the network and work with partners to prioritise action to reduce gaps in the network.
- Highlight opportunities through an exemplar project developing the use of rights of way and minor roads to provide better walking and cycling access to local services.
- Identify and investigate opportunities for inter-community cycle links between and within larger centres of population.
- Manage and encourage (where appropriate) access to recreation, wildlife and open access sites through partnership working.
- Support partners who are developing their own Recreation Strategies.
- Involve land managers and user groups in identifying those dead ends, gaps and changes in status where changes in the paths would be to the public benefit. Divert, create, upgrade status or extinguish identified routes as appropriate.
- The provision of joined up routes across non-operational airfields is seen as locally important.
- Create new paths to improve the network through creation agreements or where necessary creation orders.
- Prioritise Definitive Map anomalies that will provide a more joined up network. Assess resources and procedures for public path order making.
Access for less mobile / blind / partially blind

Disability access groups see the removal of obstacles on routes (stiles etc) as the greatest benefit for the less able. A number of parishes rated improving surfacing on selected routes as the best measure to aid the less able.

Expectations of access groups for improved access are generally low. Local disability groups saw the urban fringe, between town and countryside, as the most important area for improving public rights of way to “access for all” standards. Concentration on a small number of high quality routes surfaced near towns would be seen as a real benefit.

A lack of knowledge about the location of accessible routes is also seen as a problem. When routes are free from barriers, these are not promoted or maintained as “routes for all” with the needs of mothers with pushchairs and mobility groups in mind. 85% of parishes saw the promotion of existing “easy access” paths as important for helping those less able to access the countryside.

Local Authorities and health Primary Care Trusts are working closely to develop a countywide Healthy Walks Scheme following the success of a pilot project. Current issues limiting this work are the lack of response or support from general practitioners and a shortage of volunteer walk leaders.
In line with the requirements set out by Defra, NCC has conducted a series of surveys to investigate the needs of users of the rights of way and wider access network. We conducted the following surveys:

**Parish and Town Councils**
A paper based survey was sent out to all parishes and towns councils via the parish clerk. 128 parishes returned the survey.

**Residents**
We decided that the best way to gain the view of residents of Northamptonshire was by telephone survey. 1000 interviews were conducted. The data sample was structured to represent the demographic profile of the adult population of Northamptonshire according to age and district as found in the 2001 Census.

**Walkers**
We distributed a paper based survey via walking groups including the Northamptonshire Ramblers and various smaller local groups. 497 questionnaires were returned.

**Equestrians**
We distributed a paper based survey via groups including the British Horse Society and British Driving Society and questionnaires were sent to local stables and livery yards where they were available upon request. 331 questionnaires were returned.

**Cyclists**
We distributed a paper based survey via groups including Cyclists Touring Club (CTC) and various smaller local groups. 205 questionnaires were returned.

**Motorised Vehicle users**
We distributed a paper based survey via MPV (mechanically propelled vehicle) groups including GLASS, LARA and the TRF. A total of 58 questionnaires were returned.

**Impaired mobility and visual impairments**
The questionnaire was constructed and distributed via Mobility Northants. 256 questionnaires were returned.

**Landowners and occupiers**
We distributed a paper based survey via the County Land & Business Association (CLA) and the same survey was distributed electronically by the National Farmers union (NFU). 218 questionnaires were returned.

**Young people**
We carried out four focus groups with sixth formers in local schools - two urban and two rural.
A number of key issues or themes have come out of the assessments. These were used to formulate and justify the proposed actions contained in the next part of the plan – the Action Plan – in a form that relates back to the findings of the assessments.

The issues have been put into themes, grouping together similar ideas and needs.

There are outcomes from the survey work carried out for the assessment of needs, the input from the Local Access Forum and from the network analysis carried out by NCC.

The highlights of the survey findings are shown on pages 33 & 34.
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SURVEYS, QUESTIONNAIRES AND WORKSHOPS

ACCESS PATTERNS – How people use the network

- 75% of path users (walkers, equestrians, cyclists and MPV users) enjoy planning and trying new routes. This requires that the network is in good order throughout the county.
- 90% of equestrians tend to use the same routes – suggesting either a comparative lack of bridleways, or a disjointed network.

INFORMATION – Signage

- 83% of parish and town councils who responded wish to see destination and distances on more finger posts. The Northamptonshire Local Access Forum also stressed the importance of this improvement during a consultation workshop.
- 56% of path users (walkers, equestrians, cyclists and MPV users) think that paths are badly signposted.
- 85% of residents wish to see improvements in signposting and waymarking.

INFORMATION – Publicity

- 85% of residents wish to see more promotion of access and more publicity for public rights of way along with a greater availability of information.
- 70% of path users (walkers, equestrians, cyclists and MPV users) think that there isn’t enough information available about public rights of way.

A MORE ACCESSIBLE NETWORK

- 42% of town and parish councils asked for more gates that would suit people with mobility problems and those with pushchairs.
- 72% of residents want stiles to be replaced by kissing gates or other more access-friendly structures. An even greater percentage (79%) of people with mobility problems requested this improvement.
- 81% of those who have some form of mobility problem suggested that surfaces should be improved on public rights of way. 76% of residents surveyed suggested the same improvement.
A JOINED-UP NETWORK

88% of residents asked for better crossings of major severances of the network, particularly roads, rivers and streams.

90% of equestrians asked us to look at changing the status of some public footpaths to bridle ways, where it is safe to do so, to allow more widespread access compared with the current disjointed structure. 67% of cyclists echoed this sentiment.

91% of MPV users and 79% of horseriders think there aren’t enough rights of way for their own particular type of use. It is understandable for these users to feel this way but, when compared to the national and regional averages, Northamptonshire has a higher proportion of byways and bridleways. Interestingly only a third of walkers felt they were inadequately provided for.

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACE

83% of residents responded by saying they wanted more and better inter-village links.

85% of residents would like to have more links that provide access to amenities such as woodland, water and sites of historic or ecological interest.

77% of residents suggested we improve and create routes to local facilities including local shops, parks and pubs

CIRCULAR ROUTES

80% of residents wish to see more circular routes being provided.

90% of walkers, cyclists and horse riders say they prefer to use circular routes as opposed to other patterns of access and recreation.

MAINTENANCE

75% of cyclists stated that public rights of way are not being maintained to the appropriate standard. 70% of equestrians questioned agreed with this as did 53% of MPV users and 46% of walkers.

76% of MPV users said that finding an obstruction was common
PROPOSED ACTIONS

Based on the findings of the needs assessment and our own analysis of the access network, the draft ROWIP contained a number of proposed action headings forming the basis of how we saw it being implemented.

The 3 month consultation period between August and November 2005 allowed respondents to provide feedback to our proposals and to rank the actions as low, medium or high priority.

Those actions that scored the highest are the ones that will provide the Rights of Way service with clear direction for the next 4 years, with the justification that the activities are based on clear public desires and expectations as well as justifiable best practice.

Summary of Proposed Actions

1. Create a safe joined-up network
2. Create and develop routes open to those with mobility problems and visual impairment
3. Create a series of circular routes to improve people’s health and enjoyment
4. Improve the surface and accessibility of routes linking communities and amenities
5. Improve the information available on signposts
6. Increase onsite interpretation, promotion and publicity
7. Increase the standards of maintenance
8. Improve travel choices
9. Use opportunities resulting from growth in the county to help fund improvements

The next part of the ROWIP provides specific details as to what types of improvements will be carried out over the coming years, and will report on some of the examples where these improvements are beginning to take place.

KEY

Walkers
Horse Riders
Mechanically Propelled Vehicle Users
People with mobility problems and/or visual impairment
Cyclists
Residents
Northamptonshire has seen a road-building programme over recent years which has added new roads at a rate significantly higher than the national average. This has led to many new roads being built across existing public rights of way and in many cases these rights of way have been made difficult or even dangerous to use.

Road Crossings

Although we know all too well where improvements could be made, the Ramblers’ Association ran a campaign “Safe to Cross” to raise awareness of the issue and to press for action to reduce the risks associated with crossing busy roads carrying fast-moving traffic. In April 2003 the Association published “You’re Either Quick or Dead” identifying crossings across the country on the road network managed by the Highways Agency and Local Authorities.

In a survey the Ramblers’ Association identified 24 such crossings on roads in Northamptonshire – on the A14, A43, A45, A508 and A605. Little has been done to tackle the issues surrounding these crossings as is the case with numerous other road crossings of “lesser” roads which the Local Access Forum has stressed are as important for local users wishing to explore the county’s access network or to use it as an alternative to being on the roads.

Work has been done to identify locations where barriers to access are being caused by roads. Maps are included in the Network Assessment section of this document showing these locations, gathered from sources such as the Highways Agency, Ramblers’ Association and via contact from Parish Councils and individuals during the ROWIP consultation period last year.

The Highways Agency has responded to demands by constructing bridges over the A14 dual carriageway at Twywell and more recently, Burton Latimer.
Recent Successes via Road Schemes

Things appear to be improving in the design and construction of bypasses and new roads where non-motorised users are being catered for by the inclusion in the schemes of grade-separated crossings (bridges and underpasses) or signal controlled crossings (Toucan or Pegasus crossings). Examples of good practice include the A6 Rushden Bypass where 2 pedestrian bridges have been constructed near Higham Ferrers and the Northamptonshire County Council scheme for the A428 West Haddon Bypass where the Jurassic Way (a promoted County Path) has been accommodated through an underpass. The proposed Cross Valley Link Road to the west of Northampton will have 2 signalised crossings for non-motorised users.

Roadside Verges

The disjointed nature of parts of the network is often caused by a long distance along a road between 2 paths. An obvious solution to this would be to increase the number of roadside verges that could be made available to connect up the routes meeting the road along its length. Clearly where footways and cycleways have been provided, these simply need opening up but in situations where the verge is crossed by grips and festooned with signs some levelling work will be needed as well as possibly relocating signs and barriers for better access.

Additional Routes

In addition it may be necessary to include some new routes on private land, perhaps behind roadside hedges to link up disjointed networks. This will require the cooperation of landowners to provide the space for such links and it is inevitable that compensation will be required in some cases. The resource implications of this type of improvement will be significant.

If routes connect with lanes and roads that are not heavily trafficked then these roads could be used as part of the wider access network without significantly adding to the risks associated with non-motorised users sharing the road network. To this end it seems sensible to investigate the use of Quiet Lanes\(^*\) or similar to help join up fragmented parts of the network including routes that appear to be dead ends.

Disused Railways

The pressures of impending urban expansion across the region bring with them tremendous opportunities for improved access not only connected directly with the growth areas but also more generally across the county. For example there are a great number of former railways providing safer off-road routes often between larger villages and urban areas.

One successful project that has achieved significant non-motorised use of a disused railway is the Brampton Valley Way between Northampton and Market Harborough in Leicestershire. This facility has now been added to the National Cycle Network as part of Route 6 which stretches ultimately from London to the Lake District and is used regularly by people for both recreation and commuting into Northampton.

\(^*\) Not adopted in Northamptonshire
Stanwick Lakes run by the Rockingham Forest Trust is easily accessible on foot or cycle along the line of the former Wellingborough to Peterborough railway. It is hoped that improvements can be funded for the section near Thrapston and for the dedication of the section past Higham Ferrers providing significantly more off road access in the area.

There are proposals from the Borough Council of Wellingborough to provide a cycle route on the disused railway between Little Irchester and Summer Leys Nature Reserve near Great Doddington. Because of the immense capital costs associated with laying new tracks and replacing bridges it is unlikely that any serious reopening of disused railways will occur in Northamptonshire in next few years.

Aside from the restoration of passenger services to and from Corby, little else should prevent the desire for, and, it is hoped, the realisation of, new proposals to use disused railways for walking and riding over the life of this plan.
ACTION No. 1 – Create a Safe Joined-Up Network

1.1 Road Crossings
Create better and safer crossings over roads 2007-2011

1.2 Roadside Verges
Improve roadside verges to provide safer connections between paths 2007-2011

1.3 Creative Thinking
Add new routes to address the fragmented network 2007-2011

1.4 Quiet Lanes
Investigate quiet roads as part of the solution to a fragmented network 2007-2011

1.5 Disused Railways
Work with landowners to open former railway track beds for access 2007-2011
Two recent Acts of Parliament – The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 specifically require the availability of the access network to be considered for people with mobility problems and those who are blind or partially sighted. As Highway Authority, Northamptonshire County Council cannot any longer rely on access its services to be the sole preserve of an ambulant population.

As part of ongoing improvements already being made to the rights of way network, to country parks, open spaces and other areas, many of the old dilapidated stiles and gates are being replaced with gates or are being removed altogether providing increased accessibility for everyone whether they have any mobility problems or not.

In parallel to the legislative changes, people’s expectations have changed over the years and the standards of access furniture (gates, barriers, bridges and the like) need to reflect the type of user likely to want to go onto the network. If walking for health is to be encouraged then the presence of stiles could prevent access onto the path network for older people, for people recuperating after illness or operations and those who want to take buggies with them. The objective will be for the least restrictive option wherever possible, taking into account the needs of livestock farmers and keepers of horses.

When planning to upgrade a route to a higher standard, the largest cost elements are likely to be the improved bridges and surfaces.

**Condition Survey**

Gathering information on the current situation is crucial to plan for future works and to gauge what standard exist. We propose to carry out an access audit as part of a wider condition survey of the public rights of way network. The furniture and structures on paths along with their ease of use will be scored and used to inform the process of planning investments including where negotiation with landowners will be necessary. From early 2007 we will be surveying the Kettering Borough area to use a pilot for improving the way in which Green Management is delivered by the various organisations – see Action No. 7 for details of this project.

Once the improvements are made it will be essential to inform people of the new facilities and that they are not going to find any problems caused by restrictions. The information could be conveyed on site with signposting, via published leaflets and on the web. Even if restrictions still exist, these can be shown and people can make their own decisions as to whether they feel like tackling a route.

Making access suitable for blind and partially sighted people specifically is difficult but when a guide accompanies their partner, the paths and open spaces become accessible once more. It is therefore important to recognise the importance of good standards of maintenance and information.

To develop routes suitable for all people it seems sensible to phase them over a period of years rather than trying to achieve an instant impact. A number of high-standard, accessible-to-all routes will be developed over the life of this plan. These routes will also meet some of the proposed actions elsewhere in this document – such as Action Nos. 3 (Health and Enjoyment) and Action No. 4 (Links between Communities) – meaning that even more of the user’s needs and demands are being met.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1</strong></td>
<td>Access Audit</td>
<td>Carry out an access audit of the rights of way network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2</strong></td>
<td>Provide information</td>
<td>Make the information about routes available to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.3</strong></td>
<td>Change from stiles</td>
<td>Replace stiles – gaps being best, gates &amp; barriers next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.4</strong></td>
<td>Accessibility Projects</td>
<td>Improve 1 or 2 routes per year to fully accessible standards</td>
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</table>
Walking and cycling are recognised as important ways of improving people’s health. The Walking the way to Health Initiative – an initiative of the British Heart Foundation and the Countryside Agency – has raised the profile of health benefits from walking on the network, whether that is on footways beside the roads, in country parks or on the wider access network in the countryside.

The network of well-promoted opportunities is not greatly developed in Northamptonshire, apart from some excellent work being done in South Northamptonshire so there is potential to move the health benefits of walking and cycling up the agenda. Working alongside the Local Transport Plan, Northamptonshire County Council has a pivotal role to play in making this happen. With the appropriate support from Primary Care Trusts, GPs, Borough and District Councils the facilities under the control of NCC (public rights of way, country parks etc) provide the infrastructure for a significant amount of progress to be made on increasing the amount of appropriate access for improving people’s health and for the general benefit of the whole community.

The sustainable transport charity Sustrans has recently taken the Government’s methods of assessing the economic benefits of transport schemes and applied them to a number of walking and cycling routes. Their results indicate a benefit to cost ratio of 20:1. For every £1 spent on walking and cycling schemes, a value of £20 accrues in terms of money not needed to be spent on things such as healthcare – because the population is more active, fitter and healthier and requires less intervention from the health sector. With the added environmental benefits of reduced carbon emissions, less congestion and improved air quality in towns and cities, it can be seen that these benefits soon create compelling reasons to promote and encouraged greater levels of walking and cycling.

* Economic Appraisal of local walking and cycling routes (Sustrans) 2006.

Circular Walks

The survey data indicated that the group who were most vociferous about the creation and improvement of circular walks were our residents.

The benefits of providing these would be at the very least threefold.

1. It gives people the chance to explore and enjoy more of their neighbourhood and increase their sense of belonging
2. People will be more able to walk and ride near to their homes for health reasons
3. The local access network will be better promoted and maintained

In an ideal world the promotion of circular routes should not increase car use because the walks could be targeted at local residents only. We recognise that this is unrealistic but there is scope for local communities to identify, promote and maintain their own circular routes with support from their local authorities. This would achieve the benefits of a healthier lifestyle without promoting car use in order to access one of these routes.

By their very nature circular routes, if widely available, could provide totally car-free access to the network. Residents suggested that they mostly (51% of respondents) prefer short circular walks lasting 1 to 2 hours. These are the most likely to be popular and we will prioritise the development and production of a series of such walks. Horse riders (78% of respondents) are the same in terms of preferred ride duration so work to introduce safe 1 to 2 hour rides will also be carried out.

A major part of our network assessment has focused on identifying potential circular walks and rides.
Included here are a few examples of the type of routes that have been chosen. A complete list of parishes where an assessment has been made is included in the Appendix.

This map shows the potential for two short circular routes from the centre of Ringstead near Thrapston. One route is 2.5 miles (4.3km) and the other is 3 miles (5km). In the village, the routes pass by local shops and a pub and outside the village the routes use a recently upgraded bridleway, a disused railway track bed and either a quiet lane or a lakeside walk. This type of safe route is just the type that would appeal to local residents, either for regular dog walking or as an introduction to walks and rides further away.

Sutton Bassett is a very small settlement near Market Harborough but even here there is the potential for people to enjoy circular routes to the east of the village via a 2.5 mile bridleway and road circuit for riders and walkers or a shorter 1 1/4 mile footpath and road route for walkers only. It is unlikely that this network would receive wide publicity but it is intended that such identifiable routes are shared with the local parish councils and other interested community groups.
Parish notice boards or bespoke interpretive panels will be used to show either the local rights of way network (because in the surveys some people preferred to make up their own routes) or specific circular routes. For more detail on this specific action see Action No. 6 “Increase Publicity and Onsite Interpretation”. The Focus Northamptonshire Project delivered several examples of this type of improvement and our intention is to build on its work. For more information on what has already been done on this visit our own website, specifically designed to promote our leafleted walks:
www.rightsofwaynorthamptonshire.org.uk
**Health Benefits**  Provide infrastructure for using access network for healthy walking / riding  2007-2011

**3.1 Partnerships**  Work with NHS to jointly promote walking and cycling for healthy lifestyles  2007-2011

**3.2 Partnerships**  Work with Borough & District Councils on providing access to health routes  2007-2011

**Circular Walks**  Provide more circular walks and rides of no more than 1 to 2 hours  2007-2011

**3.4**
Much of the emphasis in any plan associated with rights of way and access inevitably centres on the leisure aspect of using the network. It is however also used for getting from one place to another for amenity purposes e.g. for going to the shops or to work and to connect with public transport links.

**Surfaces**

Specific feedback from the surveys points to the need for improved surfaces on popular routes. The residents emphasised this need as did those with mobility & visual impairments. We intend therefore to ensure that surfaces are kept in good order on leafleted routes and county paths and those linking to other communities or facilities. Where the surfaces become unsuitable for these uses and therefore at odds with the need for a higher standard of maintenance, we will improve the surface, making them suitable for year-round use by all parts of the community.

Input from the Local Access Forum pointed to the need for better surfaces on byways and bridleways, many of which provide direct links between communities. The issue here is the damage to the surface that can be caused in particularly the winter months by horses and motorised traffic.

Where byways and bridleways are being damaged by legal use the reasons need to be investigated. If maintenance of the surface and management of encroaching vegetation will alleviate the problems then these are the things to try in the first instance. Therefore a programme of works should be put in place to ensure these routes are fully open giving them the maximum chance to dry out and be free from encroaching vegetation. Protecting this investment is important so it is crucial that where damage is likely to continue byways should be closed to motorised traffic on a seasonal basis, allowing access for all classes of user in the summer months.

Taking the issue of surfaces further, if a route exists between 2 places that people want or need to use then this use will be made more likely if the surface provides for safe, incident free use. A hardened (not necessarily asphalt) surface between 2 villages or between a town and a place of interest will be used more than if it were an impenetrable mass of nettles and brambles.

**Destinations**

Between housing developments and nearby employment areas, cycle tracks are often put in place to get employees to work without using cars. The same principles apply to all areas because of the desire to reduce dependence on car travel. Communities severed by roads would also benefit from having a high quality off road link.

Other places of interest mentioned in the research findings to which people require access are:

- Woodlands
- Waterways
- Historic sites
- Parks
- Pubs

Many of these came from residents so the improvements need to be targeted around places where people live. Clearly, the current network may not fulfil the needs of the population so we will need to look at creating extra routes or making the existing network more functional.
ACTION No. 4 - Improve Links between Communities

4.1 Inter-village links
Work with local communities and councils to identify and plan better links

4.2 Inter-village links
Create and/or improve routes linking communities – 1 or 2 routes per year

4.3 Byways/bridleways
Improve surfaces on byways & bridleways for all users

4.4 Destination interest
Create and/or improve routes to places of interest – 1 or 2 routes per year
Over the last few years Northamptonshire County Council has carried out a programme of signing rights of way where they leave the metalled road leaving the vast majority of such paths adequately signed. At the most recent 5% survey of the network, carried out in 2006 to provide the figure for Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 178 showed that 80% of signposts were found to show the correct status and point in the correct direction. This figure is down slightly from recent years and highlights an area where improvements are still necessary.

It is also clear from the user surveys that signage is a major issue with our customers and the view is that more could be done not only to increase the physical numbers of signs but also to make them better at conveying information to users.

People wish to see destination and distance on signposts and the Local Access Forum suggested that a contact number be shown also. We feel the county’s web address would be more appropriate and less likely to change in the long term.

A further area of interest is providing information at the start of a route that indicates what the user might find along the path in terms of furniture (stiles, gates, bridges etc), slope, surface or width. This poses more of a challenge to the signpost designer but some form of symbols could be chosen to inform the user what to expect. We plan to attach small plates to some signposts advising users what to expect.

Waymarking

A long-standing issue is that of people’s confidence when using the public rights of way network. There needs to be clear, informative signs at each end of paths and just as importantly there should be enough waymarking along the route to remove any doubt in the mind of the users as to where the paths run. Examples of situations that can cause doubt are:

- Private gardens
- Crossfield arable paths
- Junctions
- Woodlands
- Residential areas
- Hostility from owners & occupiers

The duty placed on highway authorities to provide signs along the route gives the opportunity to increase the standard of many routes, giving people the confidence to use the network in the knowledge that they are on the correct route and have the back up of the local authority if things need addressing.

Where paths are promoted as part of a route, more often than not, they receive extra signs and waymarks to guide users. This will continue as part of the ongoing improvements the service provides.
| **5.1** | Finger posts | Include information about what to expect on a route on finger posts. | 2007-2011 |
| **5.2** | Improving standards | Replace wooden & plastic signposts with new standard | 2007-2009 |
| **5.3** | Improving standards | Look at ways of increasing the number of signed paths in villages | 2007-2011 |
| **5.4** | Waymarking | Significantly increase the amount of waymarking across the county | 2007-2011 |
Northamptonshire County Council provides a great deal of information about public rights of way in the form of leaflets, newsletters, interpretive boards, via the web and through our Parish Path Wardens. Yet still, people felt that more information should be available and that rights of way should be promoted and publicised better. The group mainly concerned with the perceived lack of publicity, promotion and availability of information are the residents. They are not necessarily the hardened walkers and riders that are traditionally associated with use of the access network but people who reside in the areas where paths exist and in towns where the network has been lost to development or become amalgamated with adopted highways.

From the ROWIP survey question “where would you like to find information” the most popular sources are libraries, tourist information centres, local newspapers and the Internet.

The leaflets already produced by Rights of Way Northamptonshire County Council have proved extremely popular but there is a need to use other methods of distribution in addition to the usual sources of main libraries, Tourist Information Centres, Country Parks and pubs.

We have already developed a better distribution system to get the leaflets into more outlets across the region via an arrangement with Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd.

Part of our successful Growth Area Fund (GAF2) work is to ensure that we include leaflets and guides to accompany the work done to improve links between villages. By doing this the profile of the county council is raised and hopefully the routes become more popular with the public, using them not only for leisure purposes but to supplement our drive to reduce people’s dependency on car travel.
ACTION No. 6 – Increase Publicity and Interpretation

6.1 Onsite interpretation
Install clearly designed map panels at central points in communities
2007-2011

6.2 Publicity
Include a series of local walks & rides in local newspapers and magazines
2007-2011

6.3 Publicity
Improve distribution of leaflets to libraries and other outlets
2007-2011

6.4 Leaflets
Increase the number of leaflets to support map panel provision
2007-2011
When asked, as part of the ROWIP Consultations in 2004, what could be done to improve public access in their community, Parish Councils said that the following actions were required:

- Prevent puddling and mud around stiles & gates
- More regular cutting of vegetation
- Better enforcement on misuse
- Remind landowners of their responsibilities

The user groups (walkers, riders and drivers) in terms of maintenance and enforcement mentioned several issues that did not meet their needs:

- Paths not reinstated across arable fields
- Unsafe/unsuitable/poor furniture
- Obstructions
- Overgrown paths, especially bridleways /byways
- Poor surfaces & surface conditions

Their top 3 relating to maintenance are (The top one was actually poor signposting and waymarking but that is being dealt with by Action No. 5):

1. Poor surface condition
2. Poor furniture (stiles, gates, barriers)
3. Overgrown routes

Vegetation Clearance

Currently NCC, using its partnership with Atkins and landowners, cuts seasonal vegetation from 70km of footpaths and 93km of bridleways. The proportion of the network in need of vegetation clearance each summer is not known but it is estimated that slightly over 30% is being seasonally maintained. This means that the current expenditure needs to grow at least three-fold to achieve levels reflecting our statutory obligation to clear vegetation twice during the summer on 500km of paths. Most years 2 cuts are not sufficient to keep paths open so the increase in costs would be even higher if a third cut was to be carried out. An increase was provisionally already agreed for 2006-7 but due to budget pressures, this investment has not been implemented.

A Safer, Cleaner & Greener County

This is one of the Council’s priorities in its Medium Term Plan 2006-2009 and it forms part of a Local Area Agreement with Central Government.

For 2006-2007 the Rights of Way Service has been allocated an extra £50,000 to look at ways delivering better value for money in how its services are carried out. The Rights of Way Service believes that one of the major inefficiencies is the problem of multiple delivery of Green Management activities across the county. Currently, for example, grass cutting is carried out by way of three separate contracts – highway verges cut by the County, roadside areas such as landscaping cut by the Parish Council and the public rights of way cut by the Rights of Way Service. The idea being promoted via the Green Management concept is to reap the benefits of amalgamating the work and pooling budgets into a single contract, hopefully delivered by local contractors.

The work carried out from 2006 is to find out feasibility of the scheme in the Kettering Borough area. We are capturing detailed information about the rights of way network, the verges and other green zones to give an accurate measurement of the extent of vegetation clearance required. We are working closely with Kettering Borough Council who currently deliver the highway verge cutting in their area as how much of that work is carried out that could be joined with the other maintenance in future years. Once the results of this are known we will set up the framework for delivery in 2007 and move onto the rest of the county.

To achieve even more value for money on seasonal vegetation clearance we plan to give much more work to farmers to cut their own field edges and grass tracks. They not only have the equipment to do the work they also carry out the work to a very high standard.
**Stiles, gates, barriers and gaps**

Landowners are responsible for the good state or repair of gates and stiles across rights of way on their land. We will carry on providing assistance to landowners to maintain these structures in a safe condition but we will always seek the least restrictive option when negotiating improvements in line with Action No. 2.

Where there is no longer a need for a structure because the land is not used for keeping livestock, the structure will be removed. Where livestock is still present, a new structure will be authorised with the least restrictive option being the starting point.

We accept that a greater standard of maintenance should be carried out on County Paths and Leafleted Walks and paths we propose to promote in other ways.

**Surfaces**

Many surfaces on bridleways and byways suffer damage due to use. Sometimes this damage is exacerbated by a lack of vegetation clearance – hedges and overgrowth – and not helped by use of narrow widths. Bearing in mind nature conservation, a great deal more clearance work would help to maintain light and air on these routes and encourage use of the full legal width.

Where vegetation removal alone does not produce a more usable route, we will need to consider the importation of aggregate to add to the surface.

**Landowners’ Responsibilities**

Linked to all the previous subjects is the fact that landowners are responsible for keeping paths clear across arable fields. Highways authorities find it easier to achieve this in their areas if they are able to show that the parts of the network that they maintain are done to a high standard. Working together is always preferred but there will be situations where enforcement may be necessary. Even in these situations, if there is joint working going on, good results should be easier to achieve.
ACTION No. 7 – Improving Maintenance

Seasonal vegetation  
Increase mowing programme to 3 cuts per year  
2008-2011

7.1 Stiles and Gates  
Improve stiles and gates and aim for least restrictive replacement (see note)  
2007-2011

7.2 Byways & bridleways  
Improve surfaces on byways & bridleways for all users  
2007-2011

7.3 Enforcement  
Work together with landowners/occupiers but use our powers when required  
2007-2011

7.4 Bridges  
Ensure new bridges meet requirements for NCC access to maintain network  
2007-2011

7.5 Safer cleaner greener  
Coordinate delivery of Green Management throughout Northamptonshire  
2007-2011

(note) Stiles and gates also included in Action No. 2 (2.3) but this action is for normal maintenance contributions and general improvements – not a specific programme of stile removal.
Priority outcomes from ROWIP consultation

7.4 Byways and bridleways:
Improve surfaces on byways and bridle ways for all users

Overall priority out of our 35 proposed actions: 1

We already improve several byways every year to bring their standard up to a good standard for all users. This often requires the use of imported material to allow better access for vehicles, horseriders, cyclists and pedestrians. The cost of these improvements is significant and they have to be prioritised against other improvements. It is proposed that surfacing improvements will form a significant part of our work over the next few years especially to provide a safer network away from roads and to help people reach their destinations as quickly as possible where the routes are used for commuting.

7.1 Seasonal vegetation:
Increase clearance to include all network 3 times per year

Overall priority out of our 35 proposed actions: 6

Carried out in tandem with the coordination of green management activities across the county (alongside boroughs, districts and parishes), there could be a significant increase in the amount of seasonal vegetation that is managed every summer.

Within action heading 7 (Improving Maintenance) we have included a further proposal as 7.6, Safer, Cleaner Greener.

7.2 Stiles and gates:
Improve stiles and gates and aim for least restrictive replacement

Overall priority out of our 35 proposed actions: 7

7.3 Bridges:
Ensure new bridges meet requirements for NCC access to maintain network
Overall priority out of our 35 proposed actions: 8
Public rights of way are part of the wider transport network and have the potential to significantly contribute to relieving congestion and pollution whilst improving road safety and quality of life. Some of the proposed actions will help to encourage people out of their cars for example improving access between communities and the facilities they wish to use but there are more general principles that can be adopted to deliver the benefits of sustainable transport.

The Rights of Way service, as a key player in the delivery of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) will provide both expert advice and actual delivery on schemes that meet the following objectives of the current LTP 2006/07-2010/11:

- Congestion – to reduce the congestion experienced by road users
- Accessibility – to improve access to workplaces, education, health, shopping & other facilities
- Safety – to reduce the number and severity of casualties in road accidents
- Environment – to minimise and wherever possible reduce the effect of traffic and transport on the built and natural environment
- Health – to encourage healthier travel choices by the people of Northamptonshire
- Growth – to provide the transport system necessary to support growth in the county

These objectives confirm that rights of way are more than simply a leisure asset for accessing the countryside. More of the focus in the future will be on how the network could go some way to achieving the objectives set out in the LTP.

If some of the rights of way network is used by commuters instead of them having to use their cars then this should be encouraged by making the routes suitable for this type of use. Inevitably some “hardening” of surfaces may be necessary to suit walking and cycling to work and the benefits of the LTP objectives make this worthwhile. A great deal of impetus is being given to the formulation of workplace travel plans to help to achieve the modal shift targets.

If employees can be encouraged to take up car sharing, home working, or be given incentives to use public transport, then many of the targets in the Local Transport Plan become attainable.

The access network can be an integral part of the Safe Routes to Schools initiative, potentially adding to the use of footways and urban paths to get children safely to school without relying on cars and avoiding less safe walking and cycling routes.

Several access routes exist already across Northamptonshire providing a range of options for non-motorised users. There is the Sustrans National Cycle Network (National Route 6 passes through the county and uses the Brampton Valley Way), numerous former railways which are now available for walking and riding and parts of the road network have dedicated cycle tracks beside them. It will ultimately be feasible to create an integrated network including these and new routes that allow real choices to be made.
ACTION No. 8 – Travel Choices

Local Transport Plan  
Use LTP framework to deliver improvements via rights of way service  
2007-2011

8.1  
Commuter routes  
Improve commuter routes away from the road network – 1 per year  
2007-2011

8.2  
Integrate networks  
Provide routes that join adopted highways and path networks to workplaces  
2008-2011

8.3
The growth areas identified in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (March 2005) will have an impact on the provision of access in Northamptonshire. Clearly, many developments are going to directly affect land over which existing public rights of way pass but the opportunities provided by development will, with a strong commitment, provide for a more integrated, better specified and well promoted access network.

Each time an area is identified for development, the rights of way service, working closely with colleagues in Sustainable Transport and the planning authorities, will ensure that all opportunities are grasped for providing new links, better links and important upgrades to existing infrastructure. Significant improvements will be expected to be funded by the developer on both the site itself and on adjacent parts of the access network including enhancement of the existing provision.

Northamptonshire County Council will work with local planning authorities to ensure that the issues and actions contained in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan are considered when planning policy is revised and when applications are being considered. Our responses to consultations carried out by North Northamptonshire Together (now known as the North Northamptonshire Development Company) and the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation on their respective Core Spatial Strategies have included many of the issues raised in the ROWIP.

**Proposed Schemes**

The South West District of Northampton is an extensive area (670 hectares) allocated for growth associated with the MKSM urban extensions having become regionally significant following the publication of the Sustainable Communities Plan (2003), Regional Spatial Strategy (2003) and the MKSM SRS (2005). The preferred strategy for development of the South West District focuses on the creation of six sustainable communities, totalling around 6,000 dwellings and 120 ha of employment development, together with a local community centre, schools, and a large Country Park along the River Nene.
Several coordinated schemes have been submitted for planning consent in the last few years and if approved will deliver a range of developments including those mentioned above, a major flood attenuation scheme for the River Nene and a string of distributor / relief roads. The partners in these schemes include Northamptonshire County Council, Northampton Borough Council, English Partnerships, the Environment Agency, British Waterways and private developers.

Developments on the scale of those in the South West District of Northampton provide opportunities for enhancements to the access networks both within their limits and beyond to the wider community.

Northamptonshire County Council has secured improvements to several rights of way as part of this scheme. These include:

- Upgrade of the towpath alongside the Grand Union Canal to cycleway status with a new surface. This will provide a fast convenient route into Northampton from the surrounding settlements, funded by developer contributions.
- New walking facilities alongside the River Nene as part of the Upton Flood Attenuation Scheme.
- Better surface to existing bridleways to provide year-round usability.
- New access into the proposed country parks.
- A new cycleway / foot bridge spanning both the canal and the river funded from developer contributions.

Where the new road intersects existing rights of way, signalised crossings have been included in the scheme to minimise the risks to users, and to maintain safe access along important routes like the Nene Way County Path.

Corby is undergoing a significant amount of change due to the requirements of the growth agenda and before that, the comprehensive regeneration plans for the town. The population of the town is expected to double in the next 30 years, to around 100,000, through large new residential developments such as Priors Hall, Little Stanion and Oakley Vale.

At Priors Hall there will be approximately 5000 new houses built and around 3000 jobs created along with 200 hectares of new parkland. The developers are promising a comprehensive network of cycling and walking facilities within the new community as well as new bus services linking to Corby town centre and surrounding areas.

In some ways, even with many parts of the county are being considered for urban expansion, there has never been a better opportunity to promote the benefit of outdoor access that at present.

More significantly the likelihood that these opportunities can actually be delivered is greater than at any other time in the past.

Standing in the way of growth is not a realistic option for the rights of way profession, despite the remit to protect those wishing to exercise their rights. Where developments are planned, our remit is to secure the best deal for future residents and for existing users, by working with developers to maximise their investment in enhanced access corridors and securing better connections to work and leisure areas.
ACTION No. 9 - Harnessing Growth

Planning policy
Ensure access improvements are plugged into the emerging planning policies 2007-2011

Developer contributions
Seek contributions from developers to enhance local access network 2007-2011

New access
Work with planning authorities and developers to create new access 2007-2011

9.1

9.2

9.3
Priority outcomes from ROWIP consultation

7.4 Developer contributions:
Seek contributions from developers to enhance local access network

Overall priority out of our 35 proposed actions: 3

Northamptonshire County Council is already working closely with some of the major developers in the area to ensure that enhancements are included in their plans for housing or business areas and on major transport infrastructure projects. For example, a development near Kettering General Hospital has contributed a significant sum to facilitate a proposed upgrade to a local footpath to more accessible standards. A distribution company has delivered a 3 miles plus network of multi-user paths to north of Kettering as part of the landscaped grounds of the development. This model of provision is often preferred because the developer can deliver the infrastructure as part of the construction phase whilst still on site.

Future major developments in and around Northampton, Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby will be expected to contribute significant sums towards the aims of the LTP, including the delivery of major new non-motorised travel options along new strategic corridors, encouraging people to switch away from car use onto safe, attractive, well maintained routes.

All these aims should be contained in the imminent Transport Strategy for Growth, to be published in 2007 by Northamptonshire County Council.
POTENTIAL FOR SHORT CIRCULAR ROUTES

Kettering Borough Example Study Area

On-Foot Short Local Provision – a route with a length between 1.5km and 3km, starting from 500m of residence. Area greater than 0.25sq km

Ashley – population number: 217, area: 0.3153sq km

- A footpath, CSS permissive path and bridleway route of 2.42km. Consisting of PROW GA4 and GA10 and a permissive route. Within 500m of most of the houses in Ashley and bus stop (see map, right)

Brampton Ash – population number: 59, area: 0.1274sq km

- The main road through the village is the A427 which has only partial footway provision.

Braybrooke – population number: 338, area: 0.2656sq km

- There is not circular provision that does not involve C class and unclassified road with intermittent footway.

Broughton – population number: 2047, area 0.7376sq km

- Provision available of footway and local surfaced paths, involving several bus stops.
- Footpath, bridleway and footway route of 1.7km in length. Consisting of PROW GD4 and GD6 with bus stops on route
- Bridleway, footpath and footway route of 2.48km in length. Consisting of PROW GD5, GD4, GD9 and GD10 with bus stops on route (see map, right)
- Footpath, bridleway and footway route of 1.93km in length. Consisting on PROW GD4, GD5 and GD6

Provision is mainly for the north of the settlement; Footways provide the routes for those in the south-west of the village.
Burton Latimer – population number: 6740, area 2.321sq km

- Provision available on footway, involving several bus stops.
- Bridleway, Footpath and footway route of 2.82km in length. Consisting of PROW UA19, UA20, UA4 and UA12. In part forms a riverside walk. Includes bus stops.
- Footpath and Footway route of 1.78km in length. Consisting of PROW UA4 and UA20. In part along riverside
- Footpath and footway route of 2km in length. Consisting of PROW UA10. on route several bus stops
- Footpath and footway route of 2km in length, Consisting of PROW UA8 and UA7.
- Potential of footway and footpath route 2.692km in length, consisting of PROW TM6, TM17, UA21 and UA 19 with 0.029km on road with no footway.

Cranford St John area: 0.2219sq km &
Cranford St Andrew area: 0.1986sq km
Joint population of 414 joint area of 0.4205

- There is not circular route provision

Desborough – population number: 8073, area 2.471 sq km

- Provision available on footway, involving several bus stops

There is no provision for a circular walk on public rights of way that leave the envelope of the town

Dingley – population number: 209, area 0.3264 sq km

No circular footway or PROW provision.

Geddington - population number: 1504, area 0.6664sq km

No circular footway or PROW provision.

Grafton Underwood - population number: 134, area 0.2105sq km

No circular footway or PROW provision.
**Harrington** - population number: 154, area 0.2105sq km
No circular footway or PROW provision.

**Loddington** - population number: 477, area 0.3044sq km
No circular footway or PROW provision. Potential 2.1km routes consisting of footway, PROW GR2, GR4, GV2, GR1 and GR5 and u class and C class road with no footway.

**Newton and Little Oakley** – joint population number: 147, area 0.20889sq km
No circular provision in Newton only 800m from provision in Geddington which also has no circular provision.

**Orton** - population number: 74, area 0.1002sq km
No circular footway or PROW provision.

**Pytchley** - population number: 496, area 0.4532sq km
- 1.7km PROW route, consisting of GW11 and GW16 (see map, right)

**Rothwell** – population number: 7108, area 1.493sq km
- Provision available on footway, involving several bus stops
- 2.3km route on PROW and footway, including several bus stops. PROW consist of UH13, UH8 and UH20
- 2km route on PROW consisting of UH20, UH9, UH26, UH13 and UH8
- 1.7km route on PROW and footway, PROW consist of UH2 and UH22. Includes bus tops.
**APPENDIX A** – NETWORK ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Footway Provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rushton</strong></td>
<td>451</td>
<td>0.358sq km</td>
<td>No PROW provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stoke Albany</strong></td>
<td>330</td>
<td>0.280sq km</td>
<td>No PROW provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sutton Bassett</strong></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0.137sq km</td>
<td>1.9km PROW and footway including bus stop, PROW consists of HB8, HB10 and HG5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thorpe Malsor</strong></td>
<td>144</td>
<td>0.125sq km</td>
<td>No PROW provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warkton</strong></td>
<td>144</td>
<td>0.218sq km</td>
<td>2km PROW, footways and permissive paths. PROW consists of HE5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weekley</strong></td>
<td>242</td>
<td>0.228sq km</td>
<td>2km PROW, footways and permissive paths. PROW consists of HE5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weston by Welland</strong></td>
<td>141</td>
<td>0.024sq km</td>
<td>No PROW provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wilbarston</strong></td>
<td>767</td>
<td>0.288sq km</td>
<td>No PROW provision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Potential routes 2.9km consisting of PROW HA15, HH22, HH4, HA17 and HH26 and ‘U’ class road with no footway.

Potential routes 2.2km involving PROW, and footway including some riverside walk. PROW consists of HD3, VD38, VD4, VD8 and HD4. Intermittent footway on ‘U’ and ‘C’ Class road.

Potential routes 2.2km involving PROW, footway and permissive paths. PROW consists of HE5.

Potential routes 2.9km consisting of PROW HA15, HH22, HH4, HA17 and HH26 and ‘U’ class road with no footway.
POTENTIAL FOR LONGER CIRCULAR ROUTES

Kettering Borough Example Study Area

On-Foot Longer local Provision: Starting within 5Km of population area edge, routes of 4 to 10 km with public transport or car park provision and maximum 20% on public roads.

1 5.7km FP, BW and U rd.
   HA15, HH22, HA16, GA10, GA4, HH5, U71042.
   Within 5km – Stoke Albany, Wilbarston, Ashley, Sutton Bassett, Weston By Welland, Cottingham, east Charlton, Pipewell, Desborough (partial), Dingley, Brampton Ash
   Closest bus stops at Stoke Albany, Wilbarston

2 9.9km FP, BW, BWAY, FW and U rd.
   U62253, FW C31, D2, DM3, U62303, FW C31, D3, D5, D7, D9, D3, DA11, DA7, DF3
   Within 5km – Mawsley, Great Cransley, Broughton (half), Lodington, Orton, Harrington, Maidwell, Draughton, Lamport, Hanging Houghton, Brixworth, Scaldwell, Old, Walgrave, Pitsford, Holcot, Hannington.
   Closest bus stop at Old

3 7.3km FP, U Rd and C Rd with FW
   PA4, PA1, GF15, U71261, U71262, GF14, PA5, FW C39
   Within 5km – Barton Seagrave, Burton Latimer, Little Addington, Great Addington, Ringstead (half), Denford, Woodford, Tywell, Islip, Thrapston (half), Lowick, Slipon, Sudborough, Grafton Underwood, Warkton, Cranford St Andrew, Cranford St John,
   Closest bus stops at Cranford St John and Tywell.

4 4.7km FP, BW and FW
   GT1, UB33, U51082 with partial FW, Ub32, UB30, GT14, GT15, GT2
   Within 5km – Newton, Geddington, Weekley, Warkton, Kettering (part), Rushton, Pipewell, Great Oakley, Corby, Stanion, Little Oakley, Grafton Underwood (half).
   Closest bus stops at Geddington and Little Oakley.

5 9.9km BWAY, FP, U rd
   MK33, GL20, U7121, U71214 (partial FW), GL2, MK17, MK18, MK20, U30012
   Within 5km – Geddington, Newton, Weekley, Kettering, Warkton, Grafton Underwood, Sudborough, Brigstock, Weldon, Stanion, Little Oakley, Great Oakley
   Closest bus stop at Geddington and Brigstock.

6 4.2 km FP, BW and FW
   VD11, GF8, GF5, GF6, GF7, GF5, VD36,
   Within 5km – Barton Seagrave, Warkton, Kettering, Weekley, Grafton Underwood, Slipon, Tywell, Cranford St Andrew, Cranford St John
   Closest bus stop

7 5.8km U rd and FP
   U30012, MK20, MK18, Mk17, Mk19, MK18
   Within 5km – Brigstock, Stanion, Weldon, Little Oakley, Newton, Geddington, Weekley, Warkton, Grafton Underwood, Sudborough
   Closest bus stop at Brigstock.
APPENDIX A - NETWORK ASSESSMENT

8 5.5km BWAY, FP, BW
MC17, MC9, Hn13, NU8, NU9, NH14, NH20, NH18, MC3
Within 5km – Sudborough, Lowick, Brigstock, Stoke Doyle, Pilton, Wadenhoe, Achurch, Aldwickle, Thorpe Waterville, Titchmarsh, Thrapston, Islip, Tywell, Silpton
Closest bus stop at Sudborough

9 6.6km FP, FW
UC1, B576 (with FW), UH9, UH20, B576 (with FW), C123 (with FW), U703072 (with FW), C123 (with FW), UH13, UH27. UC12, U72023 (with FW), U72006 (with FW), U72028 (with FW), U72016 (With FW), U72025 (with FW)

10 9.7km FP, BW, FW
GD3, GW14, GW18, TR10, TR8, TR9, GW17, GW10, GW11, GW16, GD6, GD5, GD4, C6 (with FW), U71129 (with FW)
Within 5km – Broughton, Little Cransley, Mawsley, Great Cransley, Loddington, Orton, Thorpe Malsor, Kettering (half), Barton Seagrave (3/4), Burton Latimer, Isham, Pytchley, Little Harrowden, Orlingbury, Great Harrowden, Hardwick, Harthington, Walgrave, Holcot (half), Old
Closest bus stop at Broughton and Pytchley.
### POTENTIAL FOR INTER-VILLAGE ROUTES

#### Kettering Borough Example Study Area

Inter Village Links (under 4km)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Distance (km)</th>
<th>Type of route – route ref number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilbarston</td>
<td>Wilbarston</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>BW – GA4, HH5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilbarston</td>
<td>Wilbarston</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>FP &amp; BW – GA4, GA10, HA16, HH4, HA17, HH26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilbarston</td>
<td>Stoke Albany</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>FP &amp; BW – GA4, GA10, HA16, HH22, HA15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilbarston</td>
<td>Sutton Bassett</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>BW &amp; B Rd – GA2, HB6, HB2, B664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilbarston</td>
<td>Sutton Bassett</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>BW Rd(FW) – GA2, HB6, HB7, HG6, HB10, HG5, B664 (with FW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilbarston</td>
<td>Sutton Bassett</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>FP &amp; BW – GA4, GA12, GA3, HB11, HB6, HB7, HG6, HB8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilbarston</td>
<td>Weston by Welland</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>FP &amp; BW – GA4, GA12, GA3, HB11, HB6, HB7, HG4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilbarston</td>
<td>Weston by Welland</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>BW &amp; B Rd(FW) – GA2, HB6, HB7, HG6, HB10, HG5, B664 (with FW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brampton Ash</td>
<td>Dingley</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>A Rd – A427 (with 0.6km of FW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brampton Ash</td>
<td>Dingley</td>
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<td>FP &amp; A Rd (FW) – A427 (with FW), GB6, GH2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Stoke Albany</td>
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<td>A Rd &amp; B Rd – A427, B669</td>
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<tr>
<td>Braybrooke</td>
<td>Great Oxenden</td>
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<td>U Rd &amp; FP – U71065, GC9, U71065, GC11, DH5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Braybrooke</td>
<td>Dingley</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>BW, C Rd &amp; A Rd – GC3, C111, A6, C111</td>
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<td>Broughton</td>
<td>Great Cransley</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>FP C Rd – GD15, GG1, C6 (with FW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broughton</td>
<td>Great Cransley</td>
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<td>C Rd – C6 (with FW)</td>
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<td>Broughton</td>
<td>Pytchley</td>
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<td>BW – GD6, GW16</td>
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<td>Pytchley</td>
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<td>FP &amp; BW – GD5, GD6, GW16, GW11</td>
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<td>Burton Latimer</td>
<td>Isham</td>
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<td>FP – UA4, TM11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burton Latimer</td>
<td>Isham</td>
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<td>FP – TM6, TM17, UA21, UA19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Access Type</td>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burton Latimer</td>
<td>Kettering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>C Rd – C136(with FW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cranford St John</td>
<td>Cranford St Andrew</td>
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<td>FP – GF1</td>
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<td>Cranford St Andrew</td>
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<td>C Rd – C9 (with FW)</td>
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<td>FP – GF15, PA1, PA4</td>
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<td>Cranford St John</td>
<td>Slipton</td>
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<td>FP, BW &amp; C Rd – GF15, PA1, PA14, C39, C8</td>
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<td>Cranford St John</td>
<td>Barton Seagrange</td>
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<td>BW – GF5, GF6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cranford St John</td>
<td>Barton Seagrange</td>
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<td>BW – GF5, BD36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Cransley</td>
<td>Mawsley</td>
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<td>BW – GG9, HK1</td>
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<td>Great Cransley</td>
<td>Loddington</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>FP – GG7, GR5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Cransley</td>
<td>Thorpe Malsor</td>
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<td>FP &amp; U Rd – GG3, U71113, GG6, HC3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desborough</td>
<td>Thorpe Underwood</td>
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<td>FP – UC10, GP18</td>
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<td>Desborough</td>
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<td>FP – UH13, UH27, UC12</td>
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<td>FP &amp; B Rd – UC1, B576 (with FW), UH9, UH20</td>
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<td>Dingley</td>
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<td>Sutton Basset</td>
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<td>C Rd &amp; B Rd – C111, B664</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geddington</td>
<td>Newton</td>
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<td>BW – GL13, GT3</td>
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<td>Little Oakley</td>
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<td>BW &amp; C Rd – C97, GT2, C7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geddington</td>
<td>Stanion</td>
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<td>FP &amp; U Rd – U71214, GL6, GZ1, U501161</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grafton Underwood</td>
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<td>FP – GM9, GM10, HD1,</td>
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<td>Grafton Underwood</td>
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<td>Arthlingworth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Location 2</td>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>Newton Little Oakley</td>
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<td>BW – GT13, UB7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>FP – GW2, GW4, TM3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Rushton Pipewell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoke Albany Wilbarston</td>
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<tr>
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<td>FP &amp; Rd – HB9, over county boundary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sutton Bassett Weston by Welland</td>
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<td>FP – HB8, HG4</td>
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<td>Sutton Bassett Weston by Welland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thorpe Malsor Kettering</td>
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<td>Weston by Welland Welham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilbarston East Carlton</td>
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<td>FP – HH6, GK1</td>
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