

MID COTSWOLD TRACKS AND TRAILS GROUP

INFORMATION ON THE VALUE OF MULTI-USER TRACKS

The following is intended as a source document to be drawn on for evidence or illustration. Information has been culled from a range of sources which are acknowledged where possible; quotations are attributed.

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WHY ARE MULTI USER TRACKS NEEDED?

As *The British Horse Society* records: 'Many rights of way are now disconnected from each other because the roads that should connect them are no longer safe for equestrians to use due to the speed and volume of motorised traffic on them, leaving many equestrians without a safe local route to use. Horse riders in England currently only have access to 22 percent of public rights of way and horse-drawn vehicle drivers only five percent and those in Wales only have access to 21 percent of public rights of way and horse-drawn vehicle drivers only six percent.'

What is true for equestrians is also true for other vulnerable road-user groups.

Figures show that **Gloucestershire** has

- * 3,500 miles of rights of way network.
- * 2,800 miles of these tracks are footpaths (available to walkers only).
- * 81% of the county's tracks are available to walkers only.
- * A high percentage of this 81% have stiles or kissing gates somewhere along their route. These can preclude the less agile, those with all-terrain pushchairs or mobility scooters, and mixed groups of walkers/riders/cyclists, thus reducing their usefulness to the community as a whole even further.
- * Multi-user tracks offer greater accessibility to a wide spectrum of vulnerable users because they do not have stiles or kissing gates.

The British Horse Society (BHS), together with the membership of its Affiliated Riding Clubs and Bridleway Groups, is the largest and most influential equestrian charity in the UK. The BHS represents the interests of the 4.3 million people in the UK who ride or who drive horse-drawn vehicles working for safer on- and off-road riding and carriage driving through an improved public rights of way network, and

seeks to create new opportunities of lawful off-road riding and carriage driving, and safer use of our roads by all road users. It works in partnership with other user groups including Sustrans, local and central government, to make rights of way and other access areas useful and open to all, and our roads safer for all users.

The BHS considers horse related traffic accidents to be significantly under reported.

There have been 2035 road incidents reported on the BHS website www.horseaccidents.org.uk since the website first launched in November 2010, 54 of which occurred in Gloucestershire.

Out of the 54 road incidents reported in Gloucestershire, four of these resulted in a horse fatality, with four horses sustaining severe injuries. Three riders also sustained severe injuries.

Out of the 2035 road incidents in total, 203 resulted in a horse fatality, with 85 horses sustaining severe injuries. There were also 38 rider fatalities, and 150 riders sustained severe injuries.

There were 183 Road Traffic Incidents reported on www.horseaccidents.org.uk in 2012. These included 2 rider fatalities; 12 severe rider injuries; 14 horse fatalities; and 3 severe horse injuries.

This view is supported by the **Hospital Episode Statistics Online**.

The recently published Health and Social Care Information Centre's "Admitted Patient Care, England – 2014/15: External causes" table shows "Animal-rider or occupant of animal-drawn vehicle injured in transport accident"

The data shows: Finished consultant episodes 4,081: Admissions 4,054: Male 602: Female 3,477: Emergency 3,667: FCE bed days 8578.

There were 104 horse rider casualties recorded by the police in Great Britain in 2014. This includes one adult horse rider who was killed and 23 who were seriously injured. One child horse rider was also seriously injured.

The BETA Survey in 2010 noted that 46% of riders who rode once a week or less, cited access to safe off-road riding as a factor that would increase their riding opportunities.

HOW DO MULTI-USER TRACKS CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL OR NATIONAL POLICY?

They will increase the opportunities for healthy exercise, especially by women and girls, and help meet Gloucestershire's commitments to a healthy population engaged in sport and to equality of opportunity and access. They can increase safety and accessibility, bolster community adhesion and increase rural tourism.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ?

2011 The letter from Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries: *Letter dated 14th June 2011* in support of multi-user tracks says

"Unless there are good and specific reasons not to expressly allow horse riders to use such routes, local authorities should take steps to accommodate them. Local authorities should be making the most of their off-road networks through integration of use. Multi-user routes have been shown to be readily adopted and well appreciated by local people. Where they are done well they bolster community cohesion and create a better understanding between users."

2014 In April 2014, Dan Rogerson MP, Minister for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, wrote to all Local Access Forum Chairs advising that *"I am particularly keen that you ensure that revised Rights of Way Improvement Plans cover access to woodland, as well as other land types, and consider how to provide improved provision for horse-riders."*

In June 2014, Dan Rogerson MP, Minister for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, wrote to all Local Highway Authority Chief Executives *"I am particularly keen that as you review your ROWIP you specifically consider access to woodland, as well as other land types, and consider how to improve provision for cyclists, equestrian and disabled users. I am aware that the existing public rights of way network does not always serve cyclists and horse riders particularly well, particularly as rural traffic is increasing."*

"Additionally, there is a duty to consider the needs of disabled users and improve disabled access on Rights of Way."

2016 - Highways England's Accessibility Strategy

In July 2016, The British Horse Society announced that equestrians had been included in Highway England's Accessibility Strategy.

"Highway England is aiming to create an inclusive and integrated network that is safer and more secure for all road users, including cyclists, walkers and equestrians.

The BHS Access and Rights of Way Department, its Access and Bridleway Officers, and equestrian access groups around England worked collaboratively with Highways England in the consultation process, to ensure equestrians were included alongside other road users in this document. The BHS has worked hard to represent riders across England, and become a key user group. This means that equestrian rights will be considered alongside that of cyclists and walkers."

Extract from HEAS: *"We are supporting the users of our network including drivers and their passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and other vulnerable users"*

Under the section Improving the Accessibility of Our Network, Highways England cite *.... increase the provision of dedicated multi-user routes, and accommodate multiple-users on existing routes."*

You can view the whole strategy at:

https://app.clickdimensions.com/blob/bhsorguk-a1imh/documents/arow/s150749_accessibility_strategy_4pp_v3.pdf

What is the Policy in Gloucestershire?

June 2016 - Extracts from Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan

13.1.2 In some parts of the county increased safety and accessibility for walkers, horse riders and cyclists may enable better community connectivity, support economic prosperity and provide wide social benefits. The county is a visitor

destination for walkers and cyclists and recreational horse riding is recognised as a significant element of the rural tourism economy.

13.1.6 The GCC Rights of Way and Countryside Access Improvement Plan^[1] acts in tandem with the LTP to provide better connected rural access networks. Both public rights of way and unsurfaced roads available for motorised vehicular users are important to walkers, horse riders, carriage drivers and cyclists. They can provide links in the network of other paths to complete coherent routes.

13.1.7 The Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (6.2.2/3) states that 'It is desirable that the pedestrian, cycle and horse riding routes are integrated with the road network. This means ideally ensuring that the path network is cohesive and that where a route has to cross a busy road, a safe crossing point is provided where practicable'. It adds that '... this also means 'provision of well-maintained verges for horse riders and walkers especially where this provides links between sections of the public rights of way network. The danger to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders from traffic is very real and it is important to reduce the risks. Access needs to be considered in the context of the Local Transport Plan and with local planning processes. Encouraging people away from busy routes, agreeing measures to safeguard quieter routes and improving accessibility to and within green space'.

13.1.8 Whilst the large number of tracks and bridleways in Gloucestershire are hugely valued by local people and the wider tourism industry, they are quite fragmented. Bridleway routes may involve cyclists and horse riders having to ride along busy roads in order to get between one stretch of track and another. There is felt to be a strong case for linking up some of these existing tracks and bridleways with new stretches of off-road track to create a more connected network of multi-user tracks.

What is the Cotswold Conservation Board's View ?

The Cotswold Conservation Board's Public Rights Of Way Position Statement says "An adequate network is needed for walkers, cyclists, (on- and off-road), horseriders and carriage drivers. With the ever increasing motorised speed and volume, the importance of addressing PRow access needs of the "vulnerable non-motorised user" cannot be underestimated."

"The Board offers to work with the highways authorities, landowners and user groups to identify and tackle high priority gaps in the often fragmented and disjointed network of bridleways and restricted byways that hinders horse riders, carriage drivers, cyclists and those with mobility impairment from accessing and maximising the enjoyment of the PRow network."

Somerset County Council and **Bath & North East Somerset Council** have a written policy commitment to ensuring all multi-user paths (including cycle tracks) cater for all non-motorised users, including horse riders and the disabled. A significant minority of horse riders are partially disabled and the provision of safe routes away from increasingly dangerous urban and rural roads is essential for all such users.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (adopted November 2006) "Policy Statement 4.1: When improving PRow or creating new PRow, an inclusive approach will be taken

from the outset, that wherever possible, the routes will be accessible to equestrians, cyclists, walkers and those with visual and mobility impairments”.

Hereford County Council’s Local Transport Plan states that they will

“Seek to ensure that where possible other sustainable active modes such as walking and cycling can share facilities with equestrians and that where infrastructure improvements are carried out for one mode it is suitable for all.”
(<http://www.hertsdirect.org/docs/pdf/1/lt3v2.pdf> Item 3.10 page 30)

Devon County Council also introduced an Inclusive Access policy on all cycle tracks.

WHO ARE THE RIDERS?

Natural England (2016) Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) report says "Horse riding accounted for just over 27 million visits to the natural environment in England in 2015". The survey estimated that 86% of these were taken by women. Their 2014-15 survey shows that 9% of horse riders have a declared disability.

According to the General Household Survey:

Horse riding is a minority sport with an adult participation rate of 1% for regular riders and 3% for occasional riders

Other surveys employing alternative methodologies provide estimates of 5% of households having at least one person who has taken part in horse riding in the last year and 4.5% of the population aged 5 and over having taken part in horse riding in the last year.

The demand statistics for horse riding are much lower than those for walking (45% and 68%) and cycling (11% and 21%) and confirm that in relative terms horse riding is a minority sport.

The minority of regular riders account for the vast majority of riding occasions.

Furthermore, the 21% of horse riders who own a horse account for a disproportionately high level of riding days.

Participation in horse riding is dominated by women whose 4 weekly participation rate is nearly 4 times that of men. This finding is replicated when comparing girls with boys.

Horse riding is relatively ageless and classless.

Horse owners are a minority of the horse riding population but account for a disproportionately high number of riding occasions.

There is a significant core of disabled people whose participation rate and frequency of participation is equal to that of the population as a whole.

The General Household Survey (GHS) is a continuous survey which has been running since 1971 and is based each year on a sample of the general population resident in private, that is, non-institutional, households in Great Britain. Since 1971, the GHS has included questions on population and fertility, family and household information, housing, health employment and education. In so doing, it provides a unique opportunity to examine the inter-relationship between these important areas of social policy and to monitor changes in their associations over time. The survey is widely used by central government as a source of background information for decisions

on resource allocation, in developing household projection techniques and national population projections. It is also widely used by a wide range of health professionals, and by researchers and secondary analysis with an interest in social policy and demographic issues.

The British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) National Equestrian Survey (2010-11) recorded 3.5 million adults who took part in horse riding with 1.6 million riding at least once a month. Of those riding at least once per year 73% were women and 27% men. There had, however, been an increase in the number of male riders over the past 10 years. In 2010 8% of riders considered themselves disabled in some way. 48% of all riders were aged 24 years and under, but there was significant growth in the numbers of over 45's riding. New figures from their survey 2015 highlight an increase of 35,000 horse riders aged 16-24 since the 2011 survey, taking the overall total to 403,000.

Statistics from the **British Horse Society** show that the society has over 82,000 members through Great Britain and approximately 90% of these are women.

According to **Sport England**: "There continues to be an upwards trend in once a week participation among people with a long term limiting disability, illness or infirmity, this group now representing 12% of all "once a week" horseriders." (*Sport England funding announcement press release 17th December 2012*)

Again, Sport England states "We want to see more people riding in the countryside, on bridlepaths, in urban areas, riding schools, clubs, colleges and livery yards. In doing so we will pay particular attention to young people between the ages of 14-25 as well as those with disabilities and those with a prodigious talent."

The Pony Club is an international voluntary youth organisation for those interested in ponies and riding founded in England in 1929 and now represented in 15 countries with a membership of over 102,000 world-wide and 40,000 in the UK. It has been the starting point for most national equestrian team members and Olympic medal winners. The UK Pony Club had 30,674 British members belonging to either one of their 357 branches or 330 centres in 2012. There are 7 branches of the Pony Club in Gloucestershire and 11 Pony Club centres in the county.

The Riding for the Disabled Association provides therapy, achievement and enjoyment to people of all ages with disabilities with a UK network of 500 volunteer groups organising activities such as riding, carriage driving, vaulting and showjumping to up to 28,000 people each year. It is not an individual membership organisation but has 576 membership groups organised on a local basis throughout the UK giving 28,000 people access to equestrian activities. In Gloucestershire there are 15 RDA groups.

Devon County Council recognise the benefits to women and children:

"Devon County Council should acknowledge that there is a very important equity dimension to horse riding which is often overlooked. Unlike walking and cycling which are both dominated by male adults, horse riding is unique in that the majority of its participants are women and children."

(Devon County Council commissioned research in September 2003 to complement the authority's response to the need for all Local Highway Authorities to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan by 2007. The aim of this research was to produce an objective review of multi-use routes to inform the county policy. A report by Simon Shibli, Keith Harrison, Maxine Barlow and Craig Mulder was accordingly published in May 2004. In July 2005 Devon then published "*Improving Devon's Environment - Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2005*".)

The West Pennine Bridleway Strategy recognised the diversity in the horseriding community:

"Riding as a leisure pastime is increasing annually. In 1967 it was estimated that 100,000 people in Britain rode each week. In 1974 this had risen to 500,000 and in 1995 to 3.5 million (Peat Marwick). There is a demand for increased facilities not only from local riders on short rides but for longer routes linked to accommodation provision. Contrary to the image often associated with equestrian activities, riders come from the widest range of age, and occupation, as well as background."

ARE MULTI-USE TRACKS SAFE?

YES - say Bath & North East Somerset Council

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting of 5th November 2008:

"On Tuesday 20th November 2007 the Enterprise & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Panel reviewed the outcome of the previous year's trial of shared use on existing cycle tracks. Having announced the trial 'a resounding success', it was recommended that in future multi-use continued on the Chew Valley Lake cycle path and the Colliers Way cycle path. It was also recommended that a further 12 month multi-use trial period should be assigned to the routes of the Norton Radstock Greenway and the Bristol and Bath Railway Path. **The further year's trial has now ended and all users have shared these paths without incident.**"

"The Council's existing policy is of shared access for all non-motorised users on all new cycle paths. This was recommended by the O&S Panel in 2005 and endorsed by the whole Council. The Council's Local Transport Plan Policy encourages shared use of new cycle paths and this is supported by our Rights of Way Improvement Plan." *Councillor Charles Gerrish*

Cornwall's picturesque Camel Trail has transformed the disused railway line from Padstow to Camelford into a popular multi use track. It is similar in width and terrain to the Stroud to Nailsworth path, but probably more heavily used owing to its popular tourist location.

Simon Talbot-Ponsonby, then **Sustrans** Director of Projects, wrote of it: "People anticipate problems that are not there and make a fuss about it from ignorance and however much you show evidence, they say "but it is different here". My response when people say that 'BB' path is busier than anywhere else, we cite the example of the Camel Trail at Padstow, which at times must be one of the busiest paths in the country, although the users are all tourists."

The Countryside Agency used a research team comprising Professor David Uzzell, Rachel Leach, and Laura Hunt of Surrey University's Department of Psychology,

along with Dr Neil Ravenscroft and Gill Rogers of Brighton University's Chelsea School to investigate the issue. Full details of the methodology and outcomes can be found in its research notes *'How people interact on off-road routes: Phase II'* (CRN 69). Overall 3,175 observations of route users were made, recording 4,973 people, drawing on 168 hours of video recordings. Very few respondents had any personal experience of accidents or other incidents. *The summary concludes:*

'For cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders and others, shared use routes are an increasingly important resource, providing sustainable transport links and car-free travel to and from the wider countryside.

That they are safe, and are perceived to be safe, is a key factor in their promotion, though there is a view that when different users (e.g. cyclists and walkers) share routes, it leads to conflict. However, this research found that conflict is a rare occurrence. When it occurs, structural issues (e.g. width and maintenance of the route) are important factors. Route owners/managers should be developing within user groups a 'culture of thoughtful and tolerant use'. A Code of Conduct should focus on the rights and responsibilities of all user groups in order to reduce ambiguities concerning issues such as right of way, passing etiquette, the meaning of bells, control of dogs, and the speeds that should be adopted for safety and courtesy. The policing of shared routes would ensure that users know they are actively managed. Shared use routes should have information panels at their access points detailing the Code of Conduct as well as the contact person in the responsible agency for maintaining the route and to whom comments, complaints and reports of conflict should be directed.'

Government-sponsored reports from The University of Surrey (2000 & 2002)

'How People React on Off Road Routes Phase I and Phase II' confirm that conflict of any sort is very rare on shared use tracks. Horse riders, joggers and the disabled, all minority users (classed as "others" in the report) are the least likely to be involved in any conflict on non-motorised shared routes.

Suggestions have been made that cycle tracks that are used as commuter routes are unsuitable for horse riders. However, the majority of horse-riders and walkers use busy cycle tracks outside commuting hours and all research shows that common sense prevails and use is self-regulating, i.e. those wishing to use a route for leisure purposes do not use such a route during commuting hours. Research also shows that walkers are at the most, although minimal, risk from speeding cyclists.

What does Sustrans think?

Phil Jones Associates Ltd for Sustrans (*The Merits of Segregated and Non-Segregated Traffic-Free Paths - A Literature-Based Review December 2008, Project Code 553*) noted that: "Our review of the research available has confirmed that the risk of actual conflict on traffic-free paths is generally low"

"Horses automatically have access to all of the Network which is on the public highway, generally quiet roads, restricted byways and bridleways. Of the 965 kilometres of the National Cycle Network (NCN) Sustrans actually owns, there is fewer than 80 kilometres which horses aren't able to use, and that's mostly because the strip of land in our ownership is either too narrow, or because we haven't developed a route on that land yet. Where the NCN runs over land that is not in Sustrans ownership then the landowner determines whether horses can use the

path. Where a route follows the course of a bridleway or restricted byway there is a statutory obligation to provide a route that is available for walkers, horses and cyclists to use and in developing the NCN we take this into account."

The Trails Trust's views on Risk

"Multi-user paths present no unacceptable risk to users. This is confirmed by all research in the public domain, including the Government sponsored research 'User Interaction on Multi-user Paths 2000 & 2002 (University of Surrey) and Devon C.Council research. Research shows speeding cyclists to be the main cause of accident on shared paths but even this is minimal."

What is the Government's view?

"Horse riders are particularly vulnerable road users, and cycle routes can provide appropriate and important opportunities to avoid busy roads. There is potential for conflict in any situation where people share a public space, but the possibility of conflict is not reason enough to disregard ridden access; actual conflict could be resolved and any misplaced concerns reduced over time."

Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries:

(Letter dated 14th June 2011, in response to Anne Main MP, circulated to all Local Access Forums and County Councils.)

The British Horse Society

"The BHS maintains that horse riders, walkers and cyclists can comfortably pass on a route that has a width of 3m and all can happily coexist on narrower routes with one party giving way to the other as appropriate. Many public bridleways and permissive routes are significantly narrower than 3m, yet reports of it being a problem are very rare; rather it can create a greater feeling of co-operation and tolerance between users.

Multi-user paths represent best value for everyone – users and taxpayers. Research demonstrates that multi-user paths present no unacceptable risk to users.

Bridleways of all widths, gradients, sightlines and surfaces have been shared by walkers, horse riders and cyclists since 1968."

"In particular, the BHS argues for the inclusion of equestrians on cycle routes as: Equestrians are vulnerable road users and every available opportunity should be taken to provide safer off-road access for them just as it is for walkers and cyclists Providing routes that cater for all non-motorised vulnerable road users represents best value.

Equestrians, walkers and cyclists coexist very well on bridleways, restricted byways and byways in England and Wales, and on routes in Scotland. There is therefore no cogent reason why this should not happen on cycle tracks.

The lack of a 3m width should not automatically mean that equestrians should not be provided, for on a cycle route. There are many bridleways that are less than 3m and they are shared by riders, cyclists and walkers without problems.

Surfacing should not normally be a reason for not providing for use by all non-motorised users.

All local authorities should implement a general presumption to permit equestrians to use cycle routes along with walkers and cyclists.

Equestrians tend to avoid times when a cycle route is busy.

British Horse Society: especially Note on Cycle Routes issued 12th October 2011

GOOD PRACTICE

We have already mentioned **The Camel Trial in Cornwall** (page 6)

In Scotland, the **Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003** gives everyone statutory access rights to most land and inland water. This means that horses are allowed on all paths, irrespective of width or surface. The Parliament then published its **Scottish Outdoor Access Code** (Approved by the Scottish Parliament on 1 July 2004) which sets out expectations of all parties. Regarding horse riding, it says:

“Access rights extend to horse riding. Riding on firm or hard surfaces, such as wide paths and tracks and well-drained ground, causes few problems. On narrow routes, horse riding may cause problems for other people, such as walkers and cyclists. If this occurs, take extra care by giving way to walkers where possible or by looking for an alternative route. If you are riding off-path, particularly in winter, take care to avoid going onto wet, boggy or soft ground; and churning up the surface.”

Durham County Council has developed their disused railway lines into multi user tracks which they advertise: “Come and experience Durham's railway legacies. The railway paths, former railway lines, are attractive countryside routes that can be used by walkers, wheelchair users, horse-riders and cyclists. “

They also publish a Code of Practice for their use in the form of a visitor charter:

Country DURHAM Railway Paths Visitor Charter

Walkers, wheelchair users, cyclists and horse riders are all allowed to use the Railway Paths. Please take care when other users are around, and be aware of their needs. Be polite and courteous to other users, a nice wave and a 'thank you' goes a long way to keep people happy.

Walkers Walkers Walkers

Do

- ✓ Listen for cyclists and horse riders who may be approaching you from behind
- ✓ Be prepared to let cyclists or horse riders pass you, step out of the way if you can
- ✓ Take extra care in areas with poor visibility

Do not

- ✗ Obstruct the passageway for other users by taking up the full width of the path

Cyclists Cyclists Cyclists

Do

- ✓ Give an audible warning and slow down when overtaking other users
- ✓ Take extra care when approaching children, horses and dogs
- ✓ Take care in areas with poor visibility
- ✓ Limit party size to ten cycles

Do not

- ✗ Ride too quickly, the paths are not race tracks and should not be used as if they were
- ✗ Brake hard, deliberately skid or do anything else that is likely to damage the surface of the path
- ✗ Ride on the embankments or other rough areas off the surfaced path

Horse Riders Horse Riders Horse Riders

Do

- ✓ Come to a walk when passing other users
- ✓ Ride on the surfaced track except where it is unsuitable for horses
- ✓ Dismount before crossing roads and bridges
- ✓ Limit party size to five horses
- ✓ Take extra care in areas with poor visibility

Do not

- ✗ Aim to end your journey well before dusk
- ✗ Gallop at any time on the Railway Paths
- ✗ Jump fences, gates or furniture
- ✗ Allow your horse to foul the path, more off to the side of the route where possible

All users should take their rubbish home with them, and should leave all gates as they are found.

If you have a dog with you please clean up after it and take the waste to the nearest bin. Please comply with any instructions from the Countryside Rangers.

Countryside Service
tel: 0191 383 4144
email: countryside@durham.gov.uk
www.durham.gov.uk/countryside

Caring for your countryside
countryside@durham.gov.uk
www.durham.gov.uk/countryside

Durham County Council

The Durham Visitor Charter above deals with the subject of fouling under "Horse Riders" - "Please Do Not" and says "Allow your horse to foul the path. Move to the side of the route where possible."

It should be noted that all existing bridleways and Restricted Byways have been used by multi-user groups for millennia without health concerns. Horse dung presents no threat to human health and it is easily biodegradable, being soon dispersed by beetles and weather.

An article written by **Jane Greatorex, of the Department of Medicine, University of Cambridge**, discusses the risk of zoonoses following exposure to horse manure on public rights of way.

Conclusion of the study: "Horse manure is a solid waste excluded from federal EPA solid waste regulation because it neither contains significant amounts of hazardous chemicals, nor does it exhibit hazardous characteristics. The chemical constituents of horse manure are not toxic to humans.

Horse guts do not contain significant levels of the two waterborne pathogens of greatest concern to human health risk, neither do they contain significant amounts of the bacteria E. coli O157, H7 or Salmonella. There is no evidence in the medical literature that horse manure would pose any significant risk to human health when deposited on public rights of way."

British Horse Society Facts About Horse Dung leaflet says:

- Horse dung is mainly digested grass
- Unlike dog faeces, horse dung from a healthy horse presents no threat to human health
- Horse dung is good for biodiversity and is useful in a compost bin in small amounts
- Horse dung is biodegradable

Horses depositing dung on a popular path is often given as a reason not to permit horses. However, it should be noted that horses are not ridden out for the purpose of defecating, as may be the case with walking dogs. Horses defecate approximately eight times a day, that is, once every three hours. Thus, most will not pass droppings when out for an hour's hack.

However, horses' droppings can be unpleasant if they cannot be avoided by passing feet or wheels, particularly for a wheelchair or on a path frequently used by small children. A code of practice has been adopted by BHS Scotland and can be used as a basis for local codes of practice to encourage riders to reduce the impact of horse droppings on other users. *"When riding these routes, we would ask you to consider: If your horse dungs on what is obviously a multi-use path please dismount and kick it off the track. These paths are used by a variety of other users including those who may be partially sighted, cyclists, walkers with children etc. Although we think horse dung is innocuous, some others do not! Please do not leave dung in car parks. Whilst out and about, please remember the three principles of the Access legislation: take responsibility for your own actions, respect the interests of other people and care for the environment". **

If there is still local concern about horses' droppings, and conditions permit, it may be feasible to retain or create a soft surface over part of the path width, suitable for horses, to encourage horse riders to use one side of a route. Thus, the other side will be dungfree. This can be done without a physical barrier or change in surface but, for example, by signs on posts or on the surface that encourage horse riders to 'Keep Left' (for example) and explaining the reason. Alternatively, a central 'green' strip with two outer hard surface strips will encourage horses to use the central strip, leaving cyclists and pedestrians to use the firmer outer lanes. A central strip provides optimum head room for the tallest users (horse riders) on tracks with overhanging vegetation from the sides.

* Some riders with certain disabilities may not be able to mount or dismount without mounting blocks, and some might need assistance to dismount for safety reasons. If mounting blocks are considered useful in general, they can be incorporated along a track as sponsored items or decorated/constructed as "artistic" installations.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS?

According to the **Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation** in March 2011: "Equestrianism is 6th most popular activity for women and the top outdoor pursuits activity."

"As well as being a popular activity, horse riding is one of the best outdoor activities for burning calories. The top five activities for burning calories include:

- Mountain biking – 480 calories;
- Horse riding – 400 calories;
- Extreme walking – 360 calories;
- Kayaking/canoeing – 300 calories;
- Windsurfing/surfing – 300 calories"

British Horse Society: The health benefits of horse riding in the UK were investigated by the *University of Brighton and Plumpton College* for the *British Horse Society* in *The Health Benefits of Horse Riding in the UK (2011)*.

Sport England UK have adopted a threshold value for the contribution of sport to meeting Government guidelines on the recommended intensity and frequency of exercise that is likely to achieve physical health benefits. The threshold value measures the degree to which an individual participates in sport of moderate intensity activity for at least 30 minutes or more, three times a week. The research, therefore, assessed whether horse riding can be classified as a moderate intensity exercise and examined the frequency with which individuals take part

The research also examined the psychological and social benefits of horse riding. Reliable existing evidence indicates that physical exercise produces well-being benefits linked to social interactions and changes in mood, anxiety, self esteem and other personal emotions.

Two scientific exercise testing trials were undertaken to analyse the physical exercise intensity of recreational horse riding using validated scientific measurements of energy expended and current definitions of what constitutes moderate intensity exercise in terms of energy expenditure measured in metabolic equivalents (METs).

The first trial involved 17 participants cycling in a laboratory to assess their aerobic fitness levels. Measurements were also taken of their descriptive anthropometric characteristics.

In the second trial the same 17 participants rode a horse for 45 minutes at the Plumpton College equestrian centre following a protocol that replicated the pattern of a typical riding lesson.

A questionnaire survey was undertaken of 1,248 horse riders. The quantitative and qualitative data gathered by the questionnaire allowed an analysis of the respondents' self reported measures of exercise intensity and frequency, and their perceptions of the social and psychological benefits of horse riding.

Briefly, the findings were that:

- i) Horse riding and activities associated with horse riding, such as mucking out, expend sufficient energy to be classed as moderate intensity exercise.
- ii) Regular periods of trotting in a riding session may enhance the energy expended and associated health benefits.
- iii) More than two thirds (68 percent) of questionnaire respondents participate in horse riding and associated activities for 30 minutes or more at least three times a week.
- iv) Sport England estimate that such a level of sporting activity will help an individual achieve or exceed the government's recommended minimum level of physical activity.
- v) A range of evidence indicates the vast majority (90 percent plus) of horse riders are female and more than a third (37 percent) of the female riders who took part in the survey were above 45 years of age. Horse riding is especially well placed to play a valuable role in initiatives to encourage increased physical activity amongst women of all ages.
- vi) Amongst the horse riders who took part in the survey, 39 percent had taken no other form of physical activity in the last four weeks. This highlights the importance of riding to these people, who might otherwise be sedentary.
- vii) Horse riders with a long-standing illness or disability who took part in the survey are able to undertake horse riding and associated activities at the same self-reported level of frequency and physical intensity as those without such an illness or disability.

In more detail, it explained: "The scientific trials indicated general horse riding energy expenditure was equivalent to 3.7 METs and trotting equated to approximately 5.0 METs. These levels are clearly within the moderate intensity exercise band recommended by the UK's ABC of Physical Activity for Health guidelines that considers moderate intensity to be typically characterized as between three-six METs. The national compendium of physical activities categorises energy expenditures for different recreational physical activities and reports levels of four METs for general horse riding and 6.5 METs for trotting, which are similar to those obtained in the scientific trials.

The compendium also reports that the energy expenditure for saddling and grooming was 3.5 METs which is in the moderate intensity band

More than two thirds (68 percent) of questionnaire respondents achieved the government guidelines for exercise intensity and frequency (30 minutes for three times a week or more at moderate intensity) from horse riding and associated activities alone. Of these respondents 69 percent achieved this level of intensity and frequency through horse riding and the other 21 percent did so through associated activities such as mucking out and grooming.

Women have been identified in government studies as a social group with relatively low levels of participation in physical activity. Some 93 percent of questionnaire respondents were women and 49 percent of female respondents were aged 45 or above. These are comparable figures to a major Sport England survey which found that 90 percent of those participating in equestrianism are women and 37 percent of

the female participants in equestrianism are aged 45 or above. The gender and age profile of equestrianism is not matched by any other sport in the UK.

Thirty nine percent of questionnaire respondents indicated that horse riding was the only form of physical activity in which they had participated during the last four weeks. These respondents, if they did not ride, would be sedentary people unless they changed their exercise habits, thus stressing the importance of horse riding for these individuals.

Qualitative data obtained in the questionnaire suggests that for some respondents with long-standing illnesses or disability, horse riding had actually improved their physical or mental condition.”

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, previously National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) issued Public Health Guidance 8 in January 2008 to “offer the first national evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the physical environment to encourage physical activity.”

Two of its recommendations are relevant to the consideration of multi-user tracks and bridleways:

“Who should take action? *Recommendation 3:*

- Planning and transport agencies, including regional and local authorities.

What action should they take?

- Plan and provide a comprehensive network of routes for walking, cycling and using other modes of transport involving physical activity. These routes should offer everyone (including people whose mobility is impaired) convenient, safe and attractive access to workplaces, homes, schools and other public facilities. (The latter includes shops, play and green areas and social destinations.) They should be built and maintained to a high standard.

Public open spaces

Who should take action? *Recommendation 4*

- Designers and managers of public open spaces, paths and rights of way (including coastal, forest and riverside paths and canal towpaths).
- Planning and transport agencies including regional and local authorities.

What action should they take?

- Ensure public open spaces and public paths can be reached on foot, by bicycle and using other modes of transport involving physical activity. They should also be accessible by public transport.
- Ensure public open spaces and public paths are maintained to a high standard. They should be safe, attractive and welcoming to everyone.”

WHAT ARE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS?

“There is nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse”. ~ John Lubbock, Recreation, The Use of Life, 1894

“Men are better when riding, more just and more understanding, and more alert and more at ease and more under-taking, and better knowing of all countries and all passages; in short and long all good customs and manners cometh thereof, and the health of man and of his soul.” ~ Attributed to Edward Plantagenet

The BHS leaflet summarising the health benefits of riding in the UK concluded:

- Horse riding stimulates mainly positive psychological feelings.
- Horse riders are strongly motivated to take part in riding by the sense of well-being they gain from interacting with horses. This important positive psychological interaction with an animal occurs in a very few sports.
- Being outdoors and in contact with nature is an important motivation for the vast majority of horse riders.

In more detail, it explained: “More than 80 percent of questionnaire respondents reported that horse riding made them feel ‘quite a lot’ or ‘extremely’ cheerful, relaxed, happy or active. Qualitative data suggests that horse riding can play a role in managing negative feelings relating to anxiety and depression. The experience of these psychological benefits amongst questionnaire respondents was not influenced by the frequency of participation in horse riding and most psychological benefits were experienced by riders who did not participate regularly.

Asked to rate different motivations for going horse riding, 82 percent of questionnaire respondents rated the motivation of ‘interaction with horses’ as either ‘very important’ or ‘extremely important’. No other motivation received such a high importance rating. Existing evidence suggests that companion animals can provide owners with certain psychological benefits. These findings suggest that the interaction with horses may be very positive psychologically for horse riders.

More than 80 percent of questionnaire respondents rated the motivations ‘contact with nature’ and ‘scenery and views’ ‘important’, ‘very important’ or ‘extremely important’. Some personal development motivations identified as important by respondents included ‘escape’, ‘develop skills’, ‘challenge myself’, ‘experience excitement’, ‘to be physically active’ and ‘to relax’. Participation in horse riding provides a range of psychological and social benefits, some of which are particular to the interaction with animals and nature and therefore would not be gained from other forms of sporting activity.”

Diane Crone of the **University of Gloucestershire** in her address to the Cotswold Conservation Board on 21st November 2014 stressed the positive effects on mental health and well being of time spent outdoors in contact with the natural environment in green space. She cited various research sources as evidence including her own *Walking Back to Health: A Qualitative Investigation into Service Users Experiences of a Walking Project* and *“I feel totally alive, totally happy and totally at one”*: A psycho-social explanation of the physical activity and mental health relationship from the experiences of participants on exercise referral schemes.

At the University of Essex, researchers J. Pretty, J. Peacock, R. Hine, M. Sellens, N. South & M. Griffin of the Departments of Biological Sciences and Sociology produced a report: *Green Exercise in the UK Countryside: Effects on Health and Psychological Well-Being, and Implications for Policy and Planning*.

The abstract summarises their findings:

“There is evidence that contact with the natural environment and green space

promotes good health. It is also well known that participation in regular physical activity generates physical and psychological health benefits. The authors have hypothesised that 'green exercise' will improve health and psychological well-being, yet few studies have quantified these effects. This study measured the effects of 10 green exercise case studies (including walking, cycling, horse-riding, fishing, canal-boating and conservation activities) in four regions of the UK on 263 participants. Even though these participants were generally an active and healthy group, it was found that green exercise led to a significant improvement in self-esteem and total mood disturbance (with anger-hostility, confusion-bewilderment, depression-dejection and tension-anxiety all improving post-activity). Self-esteem and mood were found not to be affected by the type, intensity or duration of the green exercise, as the results were similar for all 10 case studies. Thus all these activities generated mental health benefits, indicating the potential for a wider health and well-being dividend from green exercise. Green exercise thus has important implications for public and environmental health, and for a wide range of policy sectors."

Its concluding comments note that:

"From the range of case studies examined for this research, the study concludes that green exercise generates mental health benefits regardless of the level of intensity, duration or type of green activity undertaken. Green exercise has important implications for public and environmental health. A fitter and emotionally more content population would clearly cost the economy less as well as reducing individual human suffering. In today's world where sufferers of stress and mental illhealth are more commonplace, nature can act as a vital health resource.

Mental ill-health is already problematic in the UK with at least one in six individuals suffering at any one time. Depression and mixed anxiety are more commonplace, with incidence rising from 7.8% in 1993 to 9.2% in 2000. The associated public health costs are thus growing, with £3.8 billion of the NHS annual expenditure used in the treatment of mental illness and a further £0.68 billion used for personal social services expenditure. With the resulting costs incurred due to lost outputs, and the increased expenditure on the provision of care, the importance of regular access to nature is paramount. This research shows that improvements to mood and self-esteem can occur, and as depression and depression-related illness is estimated to become the most pronounced source of ill-health by 2020 (WHO, 2001), the need to encourage regular participation in green exercise activities becomes ever more important for addressing mental ill-health.

Kenkel D S and Manning W. 1999. Obesity and related conditions already cost more in public health terms than smoking, and will overtake smoking as industrialised countries' largest source of mortality in a decade if current trends persist. Thus increasing support for and access to a wide range of green exercise activities for all sectors of society should produce substantial economic and public health benefits. There is an important challenge in identifying barriers and developing innovative solutions for all social groups, particularly those who feel excluded from green space." (*Economic evaluation of nutrition policy. Or, there's no such thing as a free lunch.* Food Policy 24, 145-162)

In another research paper published by the **University of Essex** as an occasional paper in March 2003, it is pointed out that:

“Two of the primary determinants of physical and mental health, leading to increases in life expectancy, are now acknowledged to be diet and physical activity. Ironically, just as food shortages have been largely conquered in industrialised countries, so diets have become a major public health cost. On average, people now consume more food calories than they burn, and consume types of food constituents that are making them ill. The costs of diet-related illness (coronary heart disease, strokes, obesity, maturity onset diabetes mellitus, gall-stones, osteoporosis and several cancers) now exceed those of tobacco use.

Physical activity is now known to be a cofactorial determinant of health. In Europe, there has been a dramatic fall in physical activity over the past 50 years with on average 2 MJ (500 kcal) less energy output per day in adults aged 20-60 years. This is equivalent to the running of a marathon each week. Although similar trends have occurred across Europe and North America, the UK compares badly with many countries. Jobs have become less physical, people are more likely to take the lift than walk the stairs, and adults and children are more likely to travel to work or school by car than to walk or bicycle. Only 32% of adults take 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week, and only 47% participate in sport more than 12 times a year.

Physical activity greatly reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease, and also reduces the risk of developing diabetes, hypertension and colon cancer. It enhances mental health, fosters healthy muscles and bones, and helps maintain health and independence in older adults.”

The writers identify the benefits of access to the natural environment and go on to say : “We believe, therefore, there is a synergistic benefit in adopting physical activities whilst at the same time being directly exposed to nature. We call this ‘**green exercise**’.

Green exercise is likely to have important public and environmental health consequences. A fitter and emotionally more content population costs the economy less. Increasing the support for and access to a wide range of green exercise activities for all sectors of society will produce substantial public health benefits.”
(Green Exercise: Complementary Roles of Nature, Exercise and Diet in Physical and Emotional Well-Being and Implications for Public Health Policy, Jules Pretty, Murray Griffin, Martin Sellens, Chris Pretty of the University of Essex and Suffolk College, Ipswich.)

They also record the benefits of companion animals for emotional, physical and psychological health. They cite, for example, **Beck and Meyers’ (1996)** study of pets and companion animals which concluded that “preserving the bond between people and their animals, like enhancing good nutrition and exercise, appears to be in the best interest of those concerned with public health”
(Beck A M and Meyers N M. 1996 Health enhancement and companion animal ownership. American Journal of Public Health 17, 247-57.)

“All I pay my psychiatrist is the cost of feed and hay, and he'll listen to me any day.”
Anonymous

The Trails Trust recognises the *social benefits* of use of multi user tracks in its aims "Access should be free and open to all whether young or old, disabled or fit, well off or socially disadvantaged. Access should be non discriminatory and multi user. Families and groups of friends often wish to walk, cycle and ride together" In its October 2007 report *Creating Multi-user Public Rights of Way - A Guide for Local Groups 'The Case for an Inclusive Policy on Multi-user Paths throughout England and Wales'* it also says:

"We believe that Councils and Government should use public money to benefit the maximum number of user groups in line with Best Value, and not restrict use to individual user groups. Since 2003 we have succeeded in opening the majority of cycle paths in both Somerset and B&NES Council areas to equestrians. Previously these were only for cyclists and pedestrians."

WHAT ARE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS?

LOCALLY:

Figures show 23,272 horses registered in Gloucestershire (2009) with an estimated £69,491,000 – nearly 70 million - going into the local economy annually, supporting feed suppliers, farriers, vets, farm diversification via livery yards, saddlers, horse transport, equine tourism and more. There are, for example, 184 registered farriers currently working within 30 miles of Cheltenham, while a quick online survey of livery yards and riding stables in Gloucestershire revealed over 90 establishments, not counting the small DIY liveries, specialist training centres, cross country courses and studs.

There are no figures specifically for Gloucestershire's district council areas providing statistics for walking, cycling or horse riding. However, the Cotswolds in particular are a popular destination for walking holidays and day visits involving the use of public rights of way. Tourism within the Cotswolds AONB is the major economic driver of the area to the value of over £1 billion. As a subset, walking, cycling and riding on public rights of way make an important contribution and are frequently observed right across the county.

In October 2014's edition of *Cotswold Life*, George Barks of **Stacks Property Search** described the "lifestyle premium", the positive effect of riding facilities on property prices: "Location in relation to competitions and activities has a significant effect on value ... a most important factor is to be able to ride out safely from your yard especially with young children on ponies and to find a suitable network of bridlepaths."

The local level of horse interest can be seen by the popularity of such internet sites as Gloucestershire Horseriders' Facebook page with over 17,000 people linked to this page in Sept 2016. Equine events at Badminton and Gatcombe are famous and are great tourist attractions. Numerous smaller shows, competitions, organised pleasure rides and other equine events take place throughout the year. There are 14 BHS-approved livery yards in the county, and many more smaller and DIY establishments and 8 BHS approved riding centres. Hartpury Equestrian Centre is one of the country's leading equine educational establishments with an international

reputation for excellence and an Ofsted 'outstanding' rating for its courses. Hartpury has a Riding Centre, Livery Yard, Training Centre and Facility Centre, all BHS approved.

The Forest of Dean Greenways Project:

The new routes are already being used and appreciated by local people and can be used to bring more visitors to the Forest of Dean and help promote the district as one of the UK's most attractive and accessible outdoor leisure destinations. The Greenway routes have been designed to connect with nearby towns, villages, hotels, B & B providers, tourist attractions, equestrian centres and related businesses to maximise the project's benefit to the local economy.

The *Business Opportunities Information Pack* draws attention to the possibilities the Greenways bring:

"If you run a pub or restaurant, guesthouse or visitor attraction, there are a number of ways your business can benefit from the new Greenways. For instance:

- Can you offer bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation for Greenway users?
- Do you have land that can be used for parking and storing horse boxes?
- Can you offer overnight stabling or a secure field that could be used for horse accommodation?
- Can you offer secure storage for cycles and other equipment used by leisure cyclists and walkers?
- Can you offer packed lunches and/or an evening meal to users of the Greenways?
- Do you have a drying room for clothes and equipment?
- Can you offer baggage transfers or pickup / set down facilities for overnight-stay users of the routes? "

The Project encourages tourism businesses to use the promotional opportunities afforded by the Greenways, by:

- Emphasising the proximity of the business to the Greenways
- within the business's leaflets and publicity material;
- Liaising with local equestrian and cycling centres who have clients looking for overnight accommodation;
- Mentioning the Forest of Dean Greenways in website text to attract good search engine rankings for people looking for horse riding, cycling and walking opportunities;
- Advertising services on the British Horse Society website.

NATIONALLY:

Equestrian interests already make a major contribution to the economy and social fabric of many communities with 3.5 million people (6.5% of the GB population) having ridden a horse at least once in the last 12 months. (British Equestrian Trade Association National Survey, 2010/11). Leisure riding was the most common equestrian pursuit, though riding lessons and non-affiliated competing had also increased in 2010-11. The frequency with which riding is undertaken had also

undergone significant change with the number of regular riders (those that ride at least once a month) growing by nearly 50% from 1.4 to 2.1 million riders.

This is backed up by other results such as those showing that riding appears to be unaffected by seasons. The majority of riders, that is over 90%, now appear to ride all year round, compared to 77% in 1999 and only 60% in 1995. This consistency of activity serves to ensure that the related employment becomes permanent rather than seasonal, with the need to employ and train more people to a higher level of professionalism and capability.

The survey suggested that the average local spend on the private upkeep of one horse was £3,105 a year or £2.8 billion nationally. The estimated GB horse population, including both private and professional ownership, was 1.3 million horses. Indirect consumer expenditure associated with equestrian activity was estimated at £557 million. Up to 50,000 people are directly employed in the horse industry, and its gross output nationally has been estimated at £3.4 billion (DEFRA, 2004) and by BETA in 2010/11 as having a gross output of £3.8 billion a year, “lower than previously but reflecting the shrinking consumer market caused by the economic downturn. It is still, however, an extremely large figure in its own right, boosted significantly when other equine-related activities such as racing (an estimated £3.7 billion) and major equestrian events (an estimated £6 million) are factored in.”

The BHS reported that:

“The equine industry, excluding horse racing, is estimated to be worth £3.8 billion and to employ 150,000 people. Horse riding generates significant economic benefit to the community by supporting small businesses and by providing jobs both directly and indirectly. The British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) estimates that, on average, each of the one million horses kept in the UK generates an economic contribution to the local economy of over £3,300 per annum, a total of £3.3 billion going to local communities across the UK.”

The BETA survey asked horse owners to estimate what they spent on keeping and maintaining their horse. Direct expenditure included the amount of money spent on the general upkeep and care of horses, including accommodation, feed, healthcare, equipment and insurance and totalled £2.6 billion. The biggest growth in expenditure fell into healthcare, farriery, grooming products, insurance, competition fees and training. Indirect expenditure for the more rider-related expenditure such as clothing, footwear and accessories amounted to £408m and the estimated expenditure on riding lessons was £732million.

BETA’s survey notes that: “Employment within the horse industry can be a very difficult area to put figures to, due not only to the number of voluntary, unpaid help, but also due to the different definitions of “employment”... trade comprises those businesses supplying the core with goods and equipment ie manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers of horse and rider equipment and feed and healthcare products. Currently we estimate that there are over the 4300 companies active, including 2000 Saddlers and feed merchants and 1800 suppliers offering nearly 20,000 full time jobs.

The advantage of the specialist nature of equestrianism is that it attracts specialist types of businesses requiring skilled individuals who often require specific knowledge.

There are more than 19000 businesses now servicing this requirement for specialist information, services and products. There are nearly 100 specialist equestrian magazines servicing the market, covering specific disciplines (British Dressage), services, (Trainer Magazine) and general activities (Horse & Rider). We have over 1200 livery yards, 1100 riding schools, 2000 studs, 2500 farriers as well as a wide range of specialist equipment and service providers from Mechanical horse riding simulators, to journalists, photographers and dealers.

These 19,000 businesses provide employment for at least 28,500 people on a full time basis.”

The importance of the horse industry and the riding community grew within Government with the appointment of a ‘Minister for the Horse’, supported by an ‘Official for the Horse’ and a small Horse Industry Team in the previous government.

It is not clear whether these posts still exist. They were intended to promote the industry’s sustainable contribution to economies and communities, especially in rural areas. Their specific remit was:

- to promote close working relations and effective communication with
- the equine industry in England;
- to co-ordinate the Government's equine policy; and to work in partnership with the industry to devise a long-term equine industry strategy and commission supporting research.

The first major output of this team was a report produced by the Henley Centre examining the horse industry in Great Britain and developing a ten year strategy for the industry. (*A Report of Research on the Horse Industry in Great Britain* March 2004)

The **DEFRA** research identified five main strategic issues that the industry believed the 10 year strategy should address. These were:

1. The wider promotion of the British Horse Industry;
2. The promotion of British thoroughbreds and the development of a British Sports Horse;
3. The development of ‘joined-up’ thinking and best practice in the promotion of leisure riding and sporting excellence;
4. The promotion of horse tourism within the UK; and
5. The continued improvement of ‘off-road’ riding facilities

The research suggested that there was potential for horse tourism to contribute to multiple social, economic, health and environment agendas within Britain. It identified opportunities not just for ‘riding’ tourism but for the wider ‘horse tourism’ agenda including a day at the races, exhibitions etc. The research recommended that the horse industry strategy promote a national framework for horse tourism, identify best practice nationally and identify a governing body to promote it. The report suggested

that stage two of the preparation of the strategy include research to provide insight into the current and future potential of the market.

The research said that the improvement of off-road riding opportunity would have multiple benefits, to safety and thus the growth of the sector, to wellbeing and to the sustainable use of the countryside and land management, and critically, to equestrian tourism. However, it also recognised that challenges varied locally and that there was a need for national planning. The report recommended that the horse industry consolidate its efforts behind a lead organisation to promote its needs, and articulate these nationally and locally.

(Taken in part from Devon's *Feasibility Study – Developing the Devon Bridleway Network*, a report by EKOS Consulting for Devon County Council 15th July 2004)

Furthermore, there are, of course, savings to be made by expanding and encouraging opportunities for exercise in the countryside:

“The UK government has recently estimated the costs of physical inactivity in England, and these are of the same order as the costs of obesity (*Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives*. Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Cabinet Office.2002). Assuming a full range of effects of physical inactivity, including depression, the total cost is £8.2 billion per year (comprising £1.7 bn direct health care costs for the NHS, £5.4 bn of earnings lost due to sickness absence, and £1 bn in earnings lost to premature mortality). This comprises some 5% of the NHS budget, 72,000 days lost and 86,000 lives lost prematurely. Each day, 235 people die prematurely due to the effects of physical inactivity.”

Green exercise has important consequences for public health costs. Put simply, a fitter and emotionally more content population costs the country less. Obesity now costs the public purse more than smoking. On current trends, it will soon overtake smoking as Britain's biggest killer, while diseases related to diet and physical inactivity will also increase. Better support for and access to a wide range of green exercise activities for all sectors of society will produce substantial public health benefits and cost savings.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM OTHER MULTI-USE TRACK USERS:

Each year, some 551 million day visits are made to the UK countryside (433 m) and seaside (118 m), and these visitors spend more (£14 billion) than the gross income earned by farms for the food produced in the landscape.

A substantial proportion of these day visits involves significant physical exercise, including 110 m days on outdoor sport and leisure, 104 m days on hiking and walking, 77 m on pony trekking, mountaineering and shooting, and 32 m on cycling.

The State of the Countryside 2001 Countryside Agency.

www.countryside.gov.uk/information/report/default.htm

Well-maintained bridleways are, of course, a boon to others than horse riders: walkers, cyclists and mobility scooter users. There are no figures for mountain biking in England, but in Scotland, seen as a premier mountain biking destination and with several high quality mountain biking centres, the economic impact of mountain biking tourism is estimated at an expenditure of £119million, employment

of 3,470 and a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £68million (*Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland* a 2009 report for Scottish Enterprise). Focusing on those where mountain biking is the main reason for the trip provides an estimate of £46.5 million expenditure, 1,350 FTE and £26.6 million GVA. According to the **urnley** (MENE), 1.6% of off-road/mountain biking trips result in spending money, mostly on the purchase of equipment.

A study in 2003 by M Christie & J Matthews *The Economic and Social Value of Walking in England*, commissioned by **the Ramblers Association**, estimated that there are over 527 million walking trips annually to the English countryside. Expenditure associated with these trips is around £6.14 billion (£11.65 per trip), supporting between 180,559 – 245,560 full time equivalent jobs. These figures, collated from 3 different survey types include visits to the coast and longer trips which included a walk.

However, according to **MENE**, the average spend per person on a visit to the English natural environment is £7.40 including visits to the coast, attractions, playing fields, allotments etc. The mean spend per person for a visit using a path, cycleway or bridleway for horse riding, off-road cycling and walking is just £1.45, but dog-walking distorts these statistics as it is regular and frequent but rarely involves a financial outlay. Using the MENE figures for number of visits specifically to a path/cycle path/bridleway for horse riding, off-road cycling and walking (359,674,250 annually), the annual spend in England is £58,257,121. These figures, however, do not include any accommodation cost, cycle or horse hire or purchase of them, or of equipment.

A 2003 study by **ADAS Consulting Ltd** *Economic Benefits Analysis*, in connection with the Bedfordshire Access Improvement Plan, derived no figures for the economic value of access, but did conclude that spending by walkers might be smaller than other categories, yet be important in particular types of outlet such as the pub. Just over one fifth of accommodation providers along the Cotswold Way corridor believed that the National Trail was very important to their business with a further 43% reporting that the Cotswold Way provided welcome additional income. In conclusion, while there is no study specifically identifying the economic value of public rights of way, the scale of the benefits is beyond doubt.

OFF-ROAD CYCLING

The West Pennine Bridleway Strategy notes that: “Participation in off-road cycling appears to be increasing over recent years. Whilst existing demand is difficult to quantify, British Cycling states it has approximately 16,000 members. In addition, the Cyclists’ Touring Club (CTC) has 55,000 members (including associate members) and Sustrans has 38,000 ‘supporters’. Statistics specifically relating to the numbers of participants for off-road cycling and mountain-biking are not readily available, however, anecdotal evidence gathered from land managers and countryside service staff seem to indicate that numbers are increasing.

An additional benefit to the development of safe horse-riding routes will be the opportunities to develop “multi-use” facilities for off-road cyclists, pedestrians and access for the mobility impaired. The majority of off-road cycling is enjoyed by those who simply wish to cycle away from traffic, and are sufficiently challenged by accessing the same routes available to horse and rider.”

The UK cycle industry employs around 20,000 people, mostly involved in distribution and retail (www.bikebiz.co.uk). There are about 400 bicycle and bicycle accessory suppliers, and the Association of Cycle Traders has around 730 shop members. Locally, a major mountain biking event, Hell of the North Cotswolds, takes place annually in April attracting over 1100 riders to Winchcombe. The Stroud area alone has 4 cycle shops, one of national renown, and several bicycle hire outlets.

The Forestry Commission 7Stanes Project, which has developed mountain-biking centres across Southern Scotland, has demonstrated the contribution mountain-biking activities can make to the local economy. During summer 2004, independent research was undertaken at Glentress, Mabie and Dalbeattie centres. This study established that approximately £2.99 million was being brought into the South of Scotland economy annually (www.7stanes.gov.uk) through these three centres.

WALKING

Walking is the most popular outdoor activity with an estimated 68.2% of the population undertaking at least one leisure walk of 2 miles or more per annum. The impact of walking upon the rural economy, in particular, is significant. For example the 630 mile South West Footpath attracts £300 million a year to the economy of the region, supporting over 7,500 jobs. 27.6% of people visit solely to walk the path, spending £136 million a year. In addition, local residents 23 million take walks along the route annually, spending £116 million. These benefits can be compared to the annual maintenance cost of the footpath of only £500,000.

THE ECONOMIC EXPERIENCE OF PARTICULAR LOCALITIES OR PROJECTS:

Of those farms responding to the **Farm Diversification in England** survey, 21% of 492 diversified farms in the South West that responded had gone into 'equine enterprises'. Equine enterprises were defined as 'including any activity either the production and provision of horses, or the provision of facilities for horses'. The England wide survey reported that 23% of diversified activities were equine activities. Of these, more than half of the holdings provided livery facilities, 15% had horse racing or stud facilities and 11% were involved in providing horse riding or trekking. Centre for Rural Research (2003) *Farm Diversification in England 2002*

The development of the National Pennine Bridleway and the Mary Towneley Loop to the east of the West Pennines provides an example of off-road bridleway routes and offers valuable lessons in terms of their development and management. Research has highlighted the benefits in terms of supporting the rural economy (Countryside Agency, 2004). As a result of the loop the following businesses have been established:

- Seven new bed and breakfast establishments with stabling and other facilities,
- Five other new stabling facilities mainly linked to existing accommodation,
- One new self catering establishment,
- One new cycle hire business
- Two new booking/package companies.

West Pennines Moors Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, 2004, WPM Area Management Committee

The strategy considers ways to support the rural economy that can enhance and support the environmental quality of the area through sustainable forms of tourism. The strategy identifies outdoor activities and in particular horse riding and mountain biking as key opportunities. The strategy identifies the need to improve the existing bridleway network and develop links to liveries and potential accommodation providers.

In terms of economic impact it is estimated that people on day visits to the Pennine Bridleway will spend on average £6-7, whereas long distance users will spend between £15-35.

The table below shows the estimated average spend by visitors to the Pennine Bridleway:

Estimated spend by visitors to the Pennine Bridleway

Average spend per person per day £		
User Group	Short distance users (day visits)	Long distance users
Walkers	6	15-35
Cyclists	6	20-35
Horse riders	7	30-35

In total, expenditure by visitors to the bridleway to amount to £11.3 million per year. With an estimated local output multiplier of 1.34, this generates a further £3.84 million of output in the local economy. Total annual gross output in the Trail corridor is therefore estimated to be £15 million. It is estimated that £30,000 of direct visitor expenditure accounts for the support of one full time job. On this basis, 377 full time equivalent jobs will be supported locally as a result of the Pennine Bridleway extension.

The Mary Towneley Loop:

Twelve of the 21 accommodation providers along the route were asked whether the creation of the loop had had an impact upon their visitor patterns. They reported 826 overnight stays by users of the National Trail from May to September, which is well in excess for accommodation providers in the previous year and demonstrates that total overnight stays on the Mary Towneley Loop will have more than doubled between 2002 and 2003.

Electronic monitoring has found that the number of horse riders has increased as a percentage of users considerably. Many riders are now using the route for three day breaks due to the success of businesses running specialist riding packages and publicity in the form of a number of press features for riding holidays. It was found that most of the riders using the route were local or from within the region.

The National Trails in Wales:

The National Trails in Wales project has brought tangible economic benefits to accommodation and service enterprises. A 2006 study concluded that:

- Over one third of accommodation enterprises located on or near a National Trail describe the Trail as ‘very important to the profitability’ of their business.
- Walking has been identified by accommodation providers as being of ‘some importance’ to over 60% of their visitors.

- On average, accommodation providers attributed 36% of their turnover to the National Trails and each business employs on average 3 FTE people.
- Almost one fifth of service providers described the National Trail as 'very important to the profitability' of their business; just over one half said the Trail provided them with 'welcome additional income'.

Devon: Feasibility Study - Developing the Devon Bridleway Network:

"Farming performs an essential role in conserving the landscape and community life. However, with employment and incomes dwindling in the agricultural sector it is essential that diversification opportunities are explored.

Equestrian tourism is one such form of diversification that can be explored.

The English Tourism Council (ETC) identify activity and special interest breaks as being a growth market. They emphasise the opportunities for building stronger linkages between activity suppliers and other tourism enterprises. This project may be of benefit not only to activity suppliers, like riding centres, but may also benefit other tourism enterprises on route or in the surrounding area, like B&Bs, pubs and shops;

The ETC emphasise the benefits that rural enterprises can gain through working together. A wide range of businesses may be able to benefit from the creation of horse riding routes. Horse riders generally spend more per day than walkers and cyclists and are therefore more likely to buy pub meals. This may help to have a positive knock-on effect for producers.

It recommends partnership where possible and appropriate with other user groups, such as cyclists. It recommends that best practice at the local level is established and promoted and that the next stage of the research considers local need across Britain with regard to access issues and rights of way.

The Icknield Way Trail project:

It is anticipated that the creation of the route will result in an additional £350,000 per annum being added to local pubs, accommodation providers, livery stables, village shops and other attractions in the area.

The South of Scotland Countryside Trails (SOSCT project) is expected to attract more than 13,273 new visitors a year to southern Scotland, generating gross spending of £1.58 million on food, drink, accommodation and support services, and generating or safeguarding jobs in the above industries as well as specialist ones such as fuel, baggage transfer, cycle hire, and saddlery, veterinary and farrier services.

This report was compiled by **Mid Cotswold Tracks and Trails Group** which was set up by a group of local horse riders with the following aims:

- To improve and expand the tracks and trails network to enable horses to be ridden off road in safety;
- To develop new links and create additional multi-use routes to benefit horse riding;
- To promote use of local riding routes and facilities to promote sustainable tourism, which may include publication of maps and guides;
- To establish good relations with local authorities, landowners and other user groups, such as walkers, cyclists, disabled, trail riders and carriage drivers, in order to achieve the above.

<http://www.midcotswoldtrails.org.uk>

ORGANISATIONS AND REFERENCES IN THE REPORT:

ADAS Consulting Ltd (2003) *Economic Benefits Analysis* in connection with Bedfordshire Access Improvement Plan

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries:
Letter dated 14th June 2011, in response to Anne Main MP, circulated to all Local Access Forums and County Councils.

Beck A M and Meyers N M. 1996 *Health enhancement and companion animal ownership*. American Journal of Public Health 17, 247-57.

The British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) National Survey, 2010/11

British Horse Society: especially *Note on Cycle Routes* issued 12th October 2011 and *The Health Benefits of Horse Riding in the UK* 2011 University of Brighton and Plumpton College

Centre for Rural Research (2003) *Farm Diversification in England 2002*

Christie, M & Matthews, J (2003) *The Economic and Social Value of Walking in England*

Cotswolds Conservation Board: *Exploring the Economic Impacts of the Cotswold Way National Trail*, The Tourism Company for the Cotswolds Conservation Board. 2010

The Countryside Agency:

*How people interact on off-road routes: Phase II(CRN 69).
The State of the Countryside 2001*
www.countryside.gov.uk/information/report/default.htm

Crone, Diane, University of Gloucestershire *Walking Back to Health: A Qualitative Investigation into Service Users Experiences of a Walking Project*

Cycle industry www.bikebiz.co.uk

DEFRA *A Report of Research on the Horse Industry in Great Britain* Henley Centre
March 2004

Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Cabinet Office *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives* 2002

Devon County Council commissioned research in September 2003 to complement the authority's response to the need for all Local Highway Authorities to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan by 2007. The aim of this research was to produce an objective review of multi-use routes to inform the county policy. A report by Simon Shibli, Keith Harrison, Maxine Barlow and Craig Mulder was accordingly published in May 2004. In July 2005 Devon then published "*Improving Devon's Environment - Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2005*".

Feasibility Study – Developing the Devon Bridleway Network, a report by EKOS Consulting for Devon County Council 15th July 2004)

Durham County Council

The *Railway Paths* and the *Railway Paths Visitor Charter* www.durham.gov.uk

The English Tourism Council (ETC) so called between 1999 and 2003, when it merged with the British Tourist Authority to form VisitBritain before re-launching as a separate corporate body in 2009. *Working for the Countryside a strategy for rural tourism in England 2001-2005* is the English Tourism Council and the Countryside Agency's joint strategy following on from the *Rural White Paper* in 2000.
www.tourisminsights.info

The Forest of Dean Greenways Project The Forest of Dean Greenway Project is a local community initiative led by a group of unpaid volunteers from the Forest of Dean and District Horse Riders and Carriage Drivers Association and grant-aided by the Forest of Dean Local Action Group and the Gloucestershire Environmental Trust. Horse riders, leisure cyclists and walkers can now enjoy some 30 miles of high-quality and inter-connected woodland tracks contained within four individual Greenway routes linked by quiet country lanes to local towns, villages, tourist attractions, hotels, pubs, equestrian centres and rural businesses.

The Forestry Commission 7Stanes Project The 7stanes are seven mountain biking trail centres spanning the south of Scotland from the heart of the Scottish Borders to Dumfries and Galloway. 'Stane' is the Scots word for stone, and at each of the 7stanes locations is a stone sculpture reflecting a local myth or legend. The stanes are found out on the trails in the forests, in prominent locations near cycling

and walking paths, accessible on foot or by horse as well as by bike, and ranging in size from one to three metres high and from two to six tons in weight. The 7stanes Mountain Biking Community Interest Company (CIC) is a not for profit organisation. The CIC includes representation from nine organisations, including three business groups representing over 150 local tourism businesses. The Company was registered in October 2010. Reg No. 386358. The 7stanes CIC was set up in the wake of public sector reduced funding and is pioneering in its approach to sustain the future of mountain biking in the south of Scotland. www.7stanes.gov.uk

The General Household Survey (GHS) is a continuous survey which has been running since 1971 and is based each year on a sample of the general population resident in private, that is, non-institutional, households in Great Britain. Since 1971, the GHS has included questions on population and fertility, family and household information, housing, health employment and education. In so doing, it provides a unique opportunity to examine the inter-relationship between these important areas of social policy and to monitor changes in their associations over time. The survey is widely used by central government as a source of background information for decisions on resource allocation, in developing household projection techniques and national population projections. It is also widely used by a wide range of health professionals, and by researchers and secondary analysis with an interest in social policy and demographic issues.

The Icknield Way Trail project: Crossing six counties, the Icknield Way Trail is a 170 mile (274 km) route linking the Ridgeway National Trail in Buckinghamshire with The Peddars Way National Trail on the Suffolk/Norfolk border. A regional route for walkers since 1992, since 2004 it has also been available for horse riders and cyclists, providing a walking and riding link between the two National Trails.

Kenkel D S and Manning W. 1999. *Economic evaluation of nutrition policy. Or, there's no such thing as a free lunch.* Food Policy 24, 145-162

The Mary Towneley Loop: Opened in 2002, as part of the purpose-built long distance National Trail bridleway for horse riders, mountain bikers and walkers, this high level route encircles Todmorden, Bacup, The Rossendale Valley, Whitworth and passes close to Hebden Bridge. It crosses Heptonstall Moor, Black Moor, Worsthorn Moor and visits many of the valley bottoms. 120 miles of the main route are open in Derbyshire and the South Pennines. In the Yorkshire Dales the 10 mile Settle Loop is also available. Lady Mary Towneley MBE was the instigator of the Pennine Bridleway National Trail.

Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) The MENE survey provides trend data for how people use the natural environment in England. An annual report is published at the end of each year of the MENE survey. In addition, a quarterly report is published every 3 months to provide the latest results from the current year of the survey.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/evidence/mene.aspx>

The National Trails in Wales *The Benefits to Business of the National Trails of Wales.* Report to Countryside Council for Wales March 2006

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care. *Public Health Guidance 8* January 2008 offers “the first national evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the physical environment to encourage physical activity.” www.nice.org.uk

Pony Club- an international voluntary youth organisation, dedicated to encouraging young people to ride and to care for horses and ponies, whilst promoting the highest ideals of sportsmanship www.pcuk.org

Ramblers Association - Christie, M & Matthews, J (2003) *The Economic and Social Value of Walking in England*

Riding for the Disabled provides therapy, achievement and enjoyment to people with disabilities all over the UK. Its network of 500 volunteer groups organises activities such as riding, carriage driving, vaulting and showjumping for up to 28,000 people each year. www.rda.org.uk

Scottish BHS:

Riding Routes www.bhsscotland.org.uk/riding-routes.html

Scottish Enterprise: *Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland*. 2009

Scottish Parliament: *The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003*

Scottish Outdoor Access Code (approved by the Scottish Parliament on 1 July 2004)

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act clearly sets down in statute a presumption in favour of access, if taken responsibly, over most areas of land and water. It establishes statutory rights of non-motorised access (e.g. for walking, cycling, horse riding, canoeing) to land and inland water for passage, recreation, education and commercial activities. The access rights must be exercised in a responsible manner and there are reciprocal obligations on land managers to act in a responsible manner towards access takers, both in their behaviour and in the way they manage the land. Guidance is given in a Scottish Outdoor Access Code, a comprehensive explanation of responsible conduct drawn up by SNH, in consultation with other interests. The Code was approved in July 2004 and published in February 2005 when Part 1 of the Act came into effect.

The South of Scotland Countryside Trails (SOSCT project), a 350km network of routes developed specifically for horse-riders and walkers, linked to quality assured horse and rider accommodation. It is an innovative partnership project involving British Horse Society Scotland, local community path groups, Scottish Borders Council and Solway Heritage under the umbrella of Southern Uplands Partnership. To secure European Regional Development funding, it had to demonstrate unique economic benefits. This was achieved by combining the Tweed Trails proposals with the recommendations of an earlier feasibility study commissioned by BHSS for a linear route linking west to Ae in Dumfries and Galloway into one single project, and on a further study to demonstrate the potential for equestrian tourism development based on the resultant route network.

www.southofscotlandcountrysidetrails.co.uk/about-sosct

Somerset County Council

Rights of Way Improvement Plan(adopted November 2006)

Sport England especially *Funding Announcement press release 17th December 2012*

Sustrans is a national UK charity which aims to help people to travel by foot, bicycle, or public transport for more of their everyday journeys.

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk>

The Merits of Segregated and Non-Segregated Traffic- Free Paths - A Literature-Based Review by Phil Jones Associates Ltd for Sustrans (December 2008) Project Code 553

The **Trails Trust** is a national charity based in Somerset which is dedicated to setting up and improving multi-user public rights of way

<http://www.thetrailstrust.org.uk>

Aims: " Access should be free and open to all whether young or old, disabled or fit, well off or socially disadvantaged.

Access should be non discriminatory and multi user. Families and groups of friends often wish to walk, cycle and ride together"

"We believe that Councils and Government should use public money to benefit the maximum number of user groups in line with Best Value, and not restrict use to individual user groups. Since 2003 we have succeeded in opening the majority of cycle paths in both Somerset and B&NES Council areas to equestrians. Previously these were only for cyclists and pedestrians."

Creating Multi-user Public Rights of Way - A Guide for Local Groups

October 2007 report 'The Case for an Inclusive Policy on Multi-user Paths throughout England and Wales'

The University of Brighton and Plumpton College:

The Health Benefits of Horse Riding in the UK (2011)

University of Essex, researchers J. Pretty, J. Peacock, R. Hine, M. Sellens, N. South & M. Griffin of the Departments of Biological Sciences and Sociology
Green Exercise in the UK Countryside: Effects on Health and Psychological Well-Being, and Implications for Policy and Planning
and

Green Exercise: Complementary Roles of Nature, Exercise and Diet in Physical and Emotional Well-Being and Implications for Public Health Policy, Jules Pretty, Murray Griffin, Martin Sellens, Chris Pretty of the University of Essex and Suffolk College, Ipswich March 2003,

University of Surrey:

How People React on Off Road Routes Phase I (2000) and Phase 11(2002)

West Pennines Moors Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, 2004,WPM Area Management Committee

The West Pennine Moors Bridleway Strategy agreed by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, Bury Metropolitan Borough

Council, Chorley Borough Council, Hyndburn Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and Rossendale Borough Council
www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/countryside/bridleways/index.asp

Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, now renamed **Women In Sport**, the leading sport charity dedicated to improving and promoting opportunities for women and girls in sport at every level. www.wsff.org.uk *Active People Survey 4* (2009-10) leading to the *Equestrian Factsheet* March 2011.

National Planning Policy Framework Core Principles

The National Planning Policy Framework Core Principles paragraph 75 includes:

Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails

The National Planning Policy Framework Core Principles paragraph 17 includes:

- *conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;*
- *actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and*
- *take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.*

Multi-user tracks meet these criteria in various ways - they are part of our cultural heritage to be passed to future generations, they are rural access corridors which are safer than roads, they are health and well-being assets, and they can be of great economic benefit to the rural communities.

Tracks and trails are often overlooked as a heritage asset, but many of the tracks have been used since Roman times, and some are probably Celtic. Others may have come into being in Medieval times or Victorian times but are no less part of our history. This rich heritage is now in need of protection and some safer additional links as many routes are broken up by fast and dangerous roads, and many lanes are increasingly suffering as "rat-runs" for traffic.

The National Planning Policy Framework Core Principles paragraph 28 includes:

Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- *promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*
- *support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres;*
- *promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*

Although multi-user tracks are not specified above, they strongly assist the objectives of the principles with regard to property prices, sustainable tourism, diversification of agricultural businesses, respecting the character of the countryside, and promoting the retention of community facilities as a long-term, fully integrated "sports venue".

The National Planning Policy Framework Core Principles paragraph 114 includes

Local planning authorities should:

- *set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure;*

Improved multi-user rural access corridors are vital constituents of the green infrastructure.

The National Planning Policy Framework Core Principles paragraph 123 includes

Planning policies and decisions should aim to:

- *identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.*

Existing Public Rights of Way should be protected from the influence of developments, either directly on or nearby, which would reduce its recreational and amenity value.

The National Planning Policy Framework Core Principles paragraph 126 includes

Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;*
- *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*

As mentioned in regard to para 17 above, multi-user tracks are a large part of our existing heritage assets and their conservation, enjoyment and viable usage should

be strongly taken into account. As shown in the various items of this report, conservation and improvement of our historic multi-user access network would preserve and enhance the wide social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits. The desirability of new developments to the rural access network would be a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness in itself, and allow greater connectivity to the heritage of our woods, commons, tracks and trails, villages and other heritage sites by a wide range of people.

The National Planning Policy Framework Core Principles paragraph 129 includes

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

**MCTTG EQUESTRIAN ACCESS STRATEGY: PART THREE:
GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

We believe that Gloucestershire County Council should ensure:

- Routes cater for all non-motorised vulnerable road users thereby representing best value for Gloucestershire people.
- All possible routes are promoted as shared use, not just as 'a cycling or walking route', but inclusive of all non-motorised users, thereby creating acceptance of other users and consideration of all needs.

This is consistent with Gloucestershire's **Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011 – 2026**. Sections of particular relevance here are reproduced below. This could easily be adapted to form part of an overarching Gloucestershire Equine Access Policy and Strategy.

NB Parts which are of especial relevance to horseriders and MCTTG have been printed in bold italic for ease of reference.

“3.4.6.1 The Equality Act 2010 – formerly the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) – requires that in carrying out their functions, public authorities must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that it is not impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with disabilities to benefit from those functions as others would do, or to show that there are good reasons for not doing so.

There is no specific reference in the Equality Act to any aspect of rights of way management and, as yet, no body of case law that can be referred to in the application of either the Equality Act or the DDA to rights of way. Nonetheless, it is clear that authorities are required to have regard to their obligations under the Equality Act wherever changes or additions to the rights of way network are proposed.

4.2.3 Surfaces

4.2.3.1 The county council will make every reasonable effort to keep the surface of public rights of way in reasonable repair, taking into account the varying and sometimes conflicting

demands of users and the impracticality of inspecting the whole network regularly (see Inspections).

4.2.3.2 However, it should be noted that the legal requirement is for Footpaths to be maintained to a standard suitable for walkers, and in some cases for pushchairs and wheelchairs, while for all other routes the legal requirement is for them to be maintained to a standard suitable for horseriders and walkers, again sometimes also for pushchairs and wheelchairs. This standard therefore applies to Byways Open to All Traffic as well as Restricted Byways and Bridleways.

4.2.4 Waymarking

4.2.4.1 There is no legal requirement to waymark paths, however the yellow footpath and blue bridleway ‘waymark’ arrows are now a common sight on public footpaths and bridleways and are of benefit to both users and landowners.

4.2.4.2 The county council provides waymark discs with words as well as colours showing the status of the route. We will continue to provide basic instruction, at request, to volunteers and land managers as appropriate to help with this activity but this is a low priority.

4.2.7 Core Activities

1. Concentrate available resources on maintaining the overall condition of the public rights of way network to an adequate standard as set out in Annex F achieving a 70% ease of use score whereby the paths are available to the majority of users for most of the time.

4.2.9 Potential Improvement Actions 1. Where opportunities arise take advantage of funding to improve the condition of the county’s footbridges and bridle bridges to a standard fit for use by people with disabilities, where appropriate. Replacement or repairs to bridle bridges should take into account usage by horseriders and mobility vehicles especially those where gates and steps impede their use.

4.6.4 Promoted horse riding routes

4.6.4.1 Recreational horseriding is now recognised as a significant element of the rural tourism economy. Equestrian tourism is encompassed as part of DEFRA’s —Horse Industry Strategyll.

4.6.4.2 The only ‘named’ equestrian route passing through the county is the Sabrina Way, established by the British Horse Society in 2002. There is also a network of hard surfaced off-road routes provided within the Forest of Dean by the Forestry Commission, and a booklet detailing circular rides in the Cotswolds, —Cotswolds on Horsebackll published by BHS.

4.6.4.3 The British Horse Society and its affiliated groups aim to address the discontinuity of routes for horseriders and other higher rights users and to this end have established a group both in the Forest of Dean and in the Cotswolds.

4.6.4.4 Where appropriate, the county council will support the provision of promoted bridle routes by offering to proof read publications and where resources permit assisting with such routes during their development.

4.6.7 Potential Improvement Actions

- 1. Continue to ensure promoted routes that are recognised by the highway authority are clearly named on roadside sign-arms.**
- 2. Take advantage of funding opportunities to record all currently available approved national trails and regional routes and disabled access routes on GCC’s website mapping.**
- 3. Take advantage of opportunities to improve the linking of safe routes for horseriders and higher rights users (i.e. cyclists and carriage drivers).**

4.7.2 Integrating agricultural management and public access

4.7.2.1 Some users have experienced difficulties in traversing fields with cattle in them. ***For equestrians, horses grazing in fields crossed by bridleways and byways can also pose a particular hazard.***

4.7.2.2 These matters provide council officers with considerable challenges which will not always be achievable without compromise on both sides. However sometimes assistance with simple guidance for users can address the concerns raised.

Gloucestershire County Council works closely with volunteers, both from organised bodies, and as individuals. Volunteers form a key part of the delivery of the public rights of way service.

4.9.3 Value of local partnerships

We continue to see great value in entering into local partnerships, which can be an effective vehicle to achieve the enhancement of the local environment. They offer:

A means to establish better communications with local people and engender goodwill;

Access to funding sources;

Long term sustainability of the resource;

Galvanised voluntary effort;

Increased public awareness, commitment and action;

Make use of local skills, knowledge, expertise and contacts;

Gives people greater control over decisions about their environment and creates solutions, which reflect community need.

4.9.4 Core activities

1. Encourage, support and celebrate the work of volunteers through provision of tools and training, activities, and grants.

4.9.5 Recommended Practices

1. Provide support to community groups and volunteers in assisting with identifying funding opportunities and developing projects, which meet shared priorities.

2. Provide grants where funding is available to continue the development of the volunteer network and to develop volunteer networks.

4.10.2 The section on Key Partner Organisations recognises the importance of user bodies including the British Horse Society, affiliated bridleway groups and Carriage Drivers.

4.10.6 Recommended Practices

1. Explore opportunities for joint working with other organisations and departments where the network may be improved in a cost effective way, whilst ensuring that overall management control is retained in line with the authority's overall legal responsibility for the highway network.

2. Continue to work in partnership with neighbouring and other local authorities, agencies and organisations to ensure a co-ordinated approach and aid the delivery of shared priorities whether at a local or regional level.

3. Work with partners and other council directorates to ensure that the ROWIP is, where possible and appropriate, synchronised and incorporated with other appropriate strategies.

4. Focus attention on working with key partners, such as the Cotswolds Canals Trust, the Forestry Commission and the National Trust to establish good quality recreational paths as appropriate.

5.1. USERS WITH LIMITED MOBILITY AND DISABILITIES

5.1.1 Section 69 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act places a duty on the authority to have regard to the needs of people with mobility problems when authorising the erection of barriers on footpaths or bridleways. It empowers the council to make agreements with owners, lessees and occupiers of land for works to replace or improve structures and to make them safer or more convenient for people with mobility problems.

5.1.2 The Disability Discrimination Act placed duties on all service providers and requires that we operate equitably and without discrimination against people with disabilities. While this has been superseded by the Equality Act the spirit of this approach remains in place.

5.1.3 The Countryside Agency document —By All Reasonable Means was published late in 2005, now available from the Natural England website. It is a guide that aims to assist countryside and land managers in provision of access for the less able.

5.1.4 Guidance to local authorities on stiles and gates on rights of way and their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 has been issued by Defra.

5.1.5 The county council public rights of way team has established links with Stroud and District Access Group in developing routes which are available to those that are less able.

5.1.6 There have been a number of path improvement projects over recent years across the county which have sought to enable use of the footpath network by more less able-bodied walkers by the replacement of stiles with kissing gates, most notably in a project led by Arlingham Parish Council and with funding through Business Link and Access for All.

5.2.4 Walking and riding are also popular healthy outdoor activities which can contribute to the health and well-being of individuals.

5.3 HORSE RIDERS AND CARRIAGE DRIVERS

5.3.1 While the equestrian industry generates millions of pounds for the county's economy, the bridleway network in the county is highly fragmented including examples where bridleways sometimes change status at the parish or the county boundary resulting in —cul de sac routes.

5.3.2 A British Horse Industry Confederation document identifies that a well-maintained public rights of way network along with open access provision is essential in meeting the aspirations of the industry.

5.3.3 Road safety is a major concern for local horse riders, carriage drivers, riding for the disabled centres, riding schools and stables would all benefit from improved safer links to the local public rights of way and off road network.

5.3.4 While carriage driving is a popular pastime in some other counties, it is still not a sizeable area of activity in Gloucestershire, though a carriage driving representative now sits on the Gloucestershire Local Access Forum, and The Forest of Dean Riders and Carriage Drivers Association was formed in 2006.

5.3.5 The British Horse Society is keen to improve existing lawful routes for all riders and additional provision of routes where possible, including multi-use paths. It urges the provision of horse-friendly surfaces and better road crossings where practicable.

5.3.6 In support of these aims the BHS has established two affiliate groups, the Forest of Dean and District Horse Riders and Carriage Drivers Association, and the Mid-Cotswold Tracks and Trails Group. The Forest group gained funding to develop a multi-use trail network between Dymock and Bream – around 100km.

5.5 RECREATIONAL MOTOR VEHICLE USERS

5.5.1 The public rights of way that are legally available to recreational motor vehicles are those routes classified as Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs). There are currently only a small number of BOATs in Gloucestershire. The NERC Act has effectively curtailed attempts by vehicle users to have these routes reclassified to vehicular status. Therefore recreational

vehicle use may well in future become focussed on the unclassified unsurfaced road network.

5.5.2 Public rights of way and unsurfaced roads available for motorised vehicular users are also important to walkers, horse riders, carriage drivers and cyclists. They can provide links in the network of other paths to complete networks and routes. Vehicular public rights of way can also be important to users with mobility problems.”

Note, however, that the ROWIP warns us too:

“5.5.3 In making improvements for non-motorised users, authorities shouldn't disadvantage legitimate motorised use. Proactive management to deal with the issues of proper recording of rights, maintenance and shared use can bring benefits to all users.

5.5.4 Where applications are made for the holding of motor vehicle trials and rallies that affect public rights of way, a range of conditions will be applied when requests for consent are sought by organisers, and where necessary temporary closures will be required to safeguard lawful users.

5.7 UNDERSTANDING PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF USERS

5.7.1 *It is important that proposals for improving public rights of way should not unduly benefit one class of user at the expense of another. In particular, improvements that are intended to benefit cyclists, carriage drivers, horse riders or walkers should not restrict lawful motorised use of public vehicular public rights of way.*

5.7.2 In the present financial climate it is highly unlikely that significant funding will be provided to adapt and improve the network to better meet the needs of local users. “

5.7.3 It is therefore essential that existing funding and practices take advantage of funding opportunities as they arise – particularly those connected with development.

5.7.4 Steps that can be taken to improve matters for local users include enhancing existing relationships with local parish and town councils and with local groups and volunteers.

5.8 RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

1. Ensure that all future works on public rights of way, access land and county council owned sites undertaken by the county council consider using the least restrictive structure, i.e. gap, gate, stile, and encourage landowners and land managers to do likewise, in line with BS5709 (2006) and the spirit of section 69 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the new provisions in the Equality Act.

2. Continue to focus resources on ensuring that the basic existing network is brought up to a standard whereby it will pass the former 'ease of use' test. In other words, ensure that the existing path network reaches the bronze standard, is accessible to most lawful users and is maintained to a reasonable standard.

3. Work with planners and developers on development proposals and highways engineers on road schemes and other decision makers to better inform them and develop solutions to reduce network severance and to provide new and improved infrastructure for local users.

4. Ensure sufficient widths for all users, particularly those with disabilities and horse riders, are proposed in any public path order where this is practicable and where the route is suitable.

5. Where opportunities arise and resources are made available, make appropriate improvements to the network based on identifiable user needs.

6. As opportunities allow, work with representatives of local disability groups and access professionals to evaluate proposals and to carry out local access audits.
7. Work with partners to promote the accessibility of routes and sites using guidance provided in the publication 'By All Reasonable Means'.
8. Enhance links with parish and town councils, local groups, volunteers, land owners and managers to improve community engagement with issues affecting the path network and where possible deliver the maintenance of paths locally.

6.2 PERSONAL SAFETY

6.2.1 Providing opportunities for children to walk or cycle to school safely provides an opportunity for exercise and can help to establish good habits which will be continued into later life. Children walking or cycling to school can also reduce the traffic pressures on the roads near to their school, with both safety and environmental benefits. There have already been successful 'Safe Routes to School' initiatives in parts of Gloucestershire. Public rights of way may well form important parts of these routes and we will work closely with project partners in the delivery of such schemes, funding permitting.

6.2.2 It is desirable that the pedestrian, cycle and horse riding routes are integrated with the road network. This means ideally ensuring that the path network is cohesive and that where a route has to cross a busy road, a safe crossing point is provided where practicable.

6.2.3 It also means provision of well-maintained verges for horse riders and walkers especially where this provides links between sections of the public rights of way network. The danger to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders from traffic is very real and it is important to reduce the risks. Access needs to be considered in the context of the Local Transport Plan and with local planning processes. Where new developments are planned with increased traffic implications, their impact on any existing paths or road crossing points should be considered.

6.2.3 Potential Improvement Actions

6.2.3.1. Where resources are made available, work with project partners to develop —Safe Routes to Schools¹¹ projects and other functional route projects that benefit the wider community.

6.2.3.2. Where there is a demonstrable need, road verges should be maintained by Gloucestershire Highways to a standard whereby they are safe and available to horseriders and walkers, resources permitting.

6.6 HEALTH PROMOTION

6.6.1 Public rights of way and open spaces have an important part to play as a resource for people wanting to exercise through sport, play and recreation. The short definition of a healthy walk is: "a purposeful, brisk walk undertaken on a regular basis", and it can include any walk which is specifically designed and carried out for the purpose of improving an individual's health. ***Horse riding and cycling also provide distinct opportunities for good exercise.***

6.6.5 The provision of a basic infrastructure of paths that can be used for healthy walking and riding is at the core of the work of the county council's public rights of way team. Concentrating resources on providing a good basic network of public rights of way that users can access easily enables users to enjoy the opportunities that the network can provide.

6.6.6 While guided walks and rides as well as sponsored walks (e.g. the Meningitis Trust's annual Five Valleys Walk) and rides clearly encourage use of public rights of way and give people the confidence to explore their locality further and to benefit from the exercise so provided, these are provided mainly through existing voluntary organisations, for example

the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, local Rotary Clubs and parish councils. The Ramblers Association together with local walking groups and clubs also provide opportunities for guided and self-guided walks.

6.6.7 We will continue to tackle those network problems highlighted to us by organisers of such activities.

6.10.2.2 The three national trails that pass through Gloucestershire, and in particular the Cotswold Way, can have a positive effect on the rural economy and bring economic benefits to local communities along the route. ***Economic benefits can be generated through more investment in walking, riding and cycling networks.***

6.10.2.3 ***We should continue to work with appropriate organisations to promote Gloucestershire’s varied countryside and rights of way network to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism throughout the County.***

3. Ensure 95% of county’s foot and bridle bridges are maintained to an acceptable standard	Current achievement of 91% of the total number of bridges was classified as good or average in the 2008 survey.	Approx £40,000 pa (part of ‘works budget’ mentioned above)	Additional estimated £100,000 pa to improve bridges to an acceptable structural standard and in line with DDA
4. Ensure that new gates on bridleways and restricted byways are suitable for all users, including horseriders	Current practice is somewhat ad hoc and needs formalising.	As required funding is drawn from the works revenue budget (at 1. above)	Additional funding of £35,000 pa would enable pro-active work on this area of activity

Sabrina Way, 200 miles – part of the growing National Bridle Route Network, developed by the British Horse Society and partner local authorities, and available to walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders. Its east end is at Great Barrington on the county boundary with Oxfordshire, where it links with the eastward bound Claude Duval Bridle Route and the projected West Oxfordshire Way bridle route (as well as the D’Arcy Dalton Way walking route); it runs for 44 miles west then north-west across Gloucestershire to the county boundary with Worcestershire at Forthampton, and continues north west and north to Hartington in Derbyshire where it links with the Pennine Bridleway. The Gloucestershire section of the Sabrina Way was officially opened by the Princess Royal in 2002. For more information: <http://www.ride-uk.org.uk/extent/natreg/sabrina.htm>

Part E- Meeting Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) Outcomes

The following factors shall be taken into consideration:

The way promotes access opportunities to a range of users;

Supports the walking and cycling strategies as set out by the Local Transport Plan (LTP);

Changing the status of existing routes to create new capacity to meet need and demand;

Routes which would reduce fragmentation of the bridleway network, or provide safer links from riding centres or stables to local bridleways;

Meet any other agreed access or transport plan policy, strategy or initiative promoted or supported by the County Council.

It is intended that where opportunities arise to respond to positive access initiatives, (e.g. an offer by a land manager to establish a public right of way or a permissive route to an access site, or a request to install a pedestrian gate in the boundary of an access parcel to facilitate public access), the access authority will look to do so if resources permit.
