

## **Natural England Commissioned Report NECR113**

### **Higher Level Stewardship permissive access evaluation**

#### **Appendix 3      Evaluation of the access provision**

<b>Criteria: Accessibility</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Type of measure:</b> Land manager, user representatives and other stakeholder perceptions, supported by personal observation in nodal areas during face-to-face interview process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ease of access</li> </ul>	<p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>most sites had multiple access points from publicly accessible areas; most commonly there were two access points (42%); only 6 sites with one access point and 8 sites with 5 or more access points.</li> <li>Map boards present at entrances in 28 sites out of 38; no maps at 8 sites; additional signage at 5 sites.</li> <li>Waymarkers in place on 14 sites and partially available on 3 sites. Over half sites (55%) sufficiently well marked to allow access to be followed.</li> <li>9 sites had high or moderate proximity to an urban area and 29 sites had low proximity (i.e. none nearby)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links to public transport</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately one third of access agreements in the sample had links to public transport (36.6% of Permissive footpaths and 34% of open access). Mostly buses - vary from summer only to year round.</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>few sites accessible by train; almost half (16) are within 0.5km of a bus route and a further 6 re within 0.5-1km.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of parking</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slightly more than one third of agreement holders in the sample indicated access to parking (38% open access 41% permissive footpaths and 30% permissive bridleways).</li> <li>Car parks vary from informal pull-offs to formal car parks.</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>often ample parking but not directly adjacent to site; at site entrance parking can be limited by space or poor quality surface. In approximately 50% of sites parking there is some parking or it is good, in the other 50% parking is either limited or non-existent.</li> </ul> <p>National stakeholder survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority did not know</li> </ul>

<b>Criteria: Integration</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Type of measure:</b> Land manager, user and other stakeholder perceptions. Mapping data. On-site survey (face-to-face location visits only). Comparison with RoWIP priorities identified in each area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which access links to other rights of way/long-distance paths/open access</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A large proportion of agreements in the sample had links to existing rights of way (83% of open access; 84% of footpaths; 87% of bridleways).</li> <li>Respondents not aware of regional themes or RoWIPs</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of respondents unaware of any regional themes that influenced permissive access.</li> <li>Some areas have aims for access network but no evidence this influenced permissive access selection.</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23 out of 32 sites had moderate to high links with the surrounding PRow network; 5 sites had high proximity to other access areas.</li> </ul> <p>National stakeholder survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two thirds of respondents suggested it was good, the others did not know</li> <li>All respondents indicated unsatisfied demand for further access.</li> <li>None of the respondents indicated any awareness that regional themes/aims had influenced nature of permissive access.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of links to areas of interest (e.g. ancient monuments, landscape features, wildlife sites)</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A large proportion of agreements in the sample made a range of features accessible (83% of open access; 71% of footpaths; 64% of bridleways). Features include viewpoints, rivers, woods, historical assets).</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in 79% of visits some features of topographic interest noted, most common was 'good views', also woods and river; 12 sites noted as being close by or adjacent to some form of water body and 3 had views of rivers; 15 sites had some historical feature of interest; few sites (29%) had features of architectural interest.</li> </ul>

<b>Criteria: Promotion</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Type of measure:</b> Provider, user and other stakeholder activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion via formal website</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only 8.2% mention Country Walks website as a form of promotion</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of promotion via website is low.</li> <li>Stakeholders indicate it is inadequate; the 'secret website'</li> <li>Lack of awareness of website among users.</li> </ul> <p>National Stakeholder interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion "too passive" – website not widely known.</li> <li>Lack of promotion has restricted use levels</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider promotion</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17.3% indicate their access is not promoted at all; 17% suggest promotion by others.</li> <li>Some suggest only word-of-mouth is used</li> <li>19% indicate NE signs as a form of promotion</li> <li>16% indicate some other form of promotion (e.g. local parish magazine)</li> <li>22.3% promote access themselves</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Half sample indicate level of promotion adequate; 20% indicate less promotion required; 26% indicate more promotion needed.</li> <li>Some do not want to see sites promoted - concerns of over-use and feeling that access is for locals, not visitors. Word-of mouth felt to be adequate by some.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>User group promotion</li> </ul>	<p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over half sample indicate a lack of information; only 6 out of 32 respondents suggest it is adequate.</li> <li>Half the sample indicate a lack of publicity.</li> <li>Some user groups provide information - ramblers through membership and guided walks of local associations; some evidence of health groups using permissive access for guided walks. BHS access officers provide information to local riders but general awareness is low.</li> <li>Local Access Forums write to Parish Councils.</li> <li>Information does not travel outside of local user groups.</li> </ul> <p>National Stakeholder interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion limited, use of means other than website poor.</li> </ul>

<b>Criteria: Utilisation</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Type of measure:</b> Land manager, user and other stakeholder estimates. Positive and negative aspects of use levels (e.g. use in relation to sensitivity of site, traffic issues, disturbance of neighbours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of users</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>limited information - evidence based on perceptions of agreement holders</li> <li>walkers - varies from 5 per week to 20 - 30 per day; horse riders varies from 1 - 30 per day.</li> <li>64% agreement holders indicate daily or weekly use.</li> <li>70% experience level of access they were expecting, 22% indicate level of use is different from expected.</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly variable</li> <li>Stakeholders had little idea about use levels</li> <li>two thirds of the sites discussed with agreement holders had had some form of access before the agreement came into force</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Users seen on 14 out of 38 routes (37%)</li> </ul> <p>National Stakeholder interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsatisfied demand for access, but mainly for cyclists and horse riders.</li> <li>Access has 'slightly improved'.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of user</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>walkers and dog walkers on 90% of agreements; horse riders on 47%; organised groups 40%; school groups (20%)</li> <li>majority are local walkers/riders</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>walker/dog walker is most common type of user</li> <li>other users include riders, runners, cyclists, organised groups.</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority seen were dog walkers/walkers, horse riders also seen at two sites, evidence of riding at other sites was noted.</li> </ul> <p>National Stakeholder interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Horse riders and walkers thought to have benefitted the most.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature of use</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>large amount of local use</li> <li>some sites have high use levels form nearby urban area, or because provide a link in a long-distance footpath, or tourism</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>local users, dog walkers</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20 dogs seen with users, half were on leads.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timing/Seasonality of use</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>summer, weekends, are more popular</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>summer, weekends, evenings most common</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January/February, during the day, mid-week.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associated impacts (e.g. traffic)</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dog fouling and destruction of ground nesting birds</li> <li>gates left open, rubbish, damage to crops</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small number of reports of anti-social behaviour and abuse of provider.</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fly tipping at 4 sites; cycle tracks and hoof prints on 4 footpaths; remnants of fires; dogs running in ploughed field; vehicle tracks (2 sites) and joy riding (1 site)</li> <li>Some sites on very busy roads - makes access and pull-off difficult.</li> </ul>

<b>Criteria: Provider experience</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Type of measure:</b> Farmer/landowner perceptions and experiences. Costs – monetary and non-monetary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on land/farm management</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>limited impact</li> <li>some changes to grazing regimes</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small number of changes - 7 respondents indicate minor changes, mostly in terms of grazing regimes.</li> <li>Provides some means of controlling where users go - can direct them away from</li> </ul>

	<p>conservation areas.</p> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One site had logs and concrete blocks across all field access points (adjacent to large urban area)</li> <li>• evidence of people taking short cuts (e.g. cutting corners, holes in hedges)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on business (e.g. ongoing maintenance costs; benefits from increased product sales)</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 respondents indicated direct benefits (brought people to shop or farm stand); 6 suggested there could be a small financial gain.</li> <li>• 27% indicated some form of cost - most common was management time, keeping paths clear, maintenance of the infrastructure, checking people out.</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small level of maintenance required - mostly topping off vegetation.</li> <li>• Little evidence of direct monetary benefit - only 2 respondents indicated benefit. Suggestions in 10 cases that local economy might benefit but no evidence.</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No evidence of monetary gain.</li> <li>• Fly tipping, rubbish, evidence of misuse (cycle tracks on footpaths, joyriding), people walking off-route, and missing signs suggest there can be a cost to management.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction with users</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited - don't often meet users</li> <li>• Friendly - people ask questions - tell you about problems.</li> <li>• Allows people to enjoy countryside</li> <li>• Some evidence of abuse; 'we've got rights' attitude.</li> <li>• some general vandalism; signs taken, rubbish.</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low level of interaction</li> <li>• few changes in attitudes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to give something back to the community</li> <li>• opportunity to show people what farmers are doing</li> <li>• minor monetary benefits</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some changes in attitude - realisation that most problems caused by small minority.</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide place for local walkers/dog walkers</li> <li>• Good to see people enjoy countryside</li> <li>• improves local relations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance and management time</li> <li>• dealing with open gates and dogs.</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dealing with problems (mostly in areas adjacent to urban areas)</li> <li>• Some evidence that costs exceed HLs payments</li> </ul>

<b>Criteria: User experience</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Type of measure:</b> User group representative perceptions and experiences; other stakeholder perceptions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of infrastructure (e.g. signage)</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority indicated infrastructure all in place</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers aware of when signs missing or damaged</li> <li>• In most cases indicated active maintenance and daily or weekly checking of the access.</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally good, some missing signs in places - farmer usually aware.</li> <li>• Small number of sites have additional interpretation boards</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of provision (e.g. attractiveness, access to features of interest, aesthetic landscape qualities)</li> </ul>	<p>Telephone Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more than 75% indicated features made accessible;</li> </ul> <p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most respondents indicated high quality of access to features of interest (woods, rivers, historical assets, wildlife)</li> </ul> <p>Site visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wet boggy ground in some cases, access sited</li> </ul>

	<p>across drainage areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parking difficulties</li> <li>• lack of waymarkers to find way around</li> <li>• fast traffic on roads</li> <li>• 79% had access to features of interest - most common was good views.</li> <li>• 28 out of 38 sites had signs in place, only 14 had waymarkers</li> </ul> <p>National Stakeholder interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access not created where needed, half respondents felt access was not good value for money.</li> <li>• Not targeted – depends which farmers offer it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction with provider</li> </ul>	<p>Face-to-face interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders suggested very limited interaction, farmer seldom seen on the ground</li> </ul>

<b>Criteria: Social impact</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Type of measure:</b> Land manager, user group representative, and other stakeholder experience and perceptions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits to local community (e.g. dog walkers)</li> </ul>	<p>Land managers note a range of benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of safer routes that avoid roads (e.g. for riders)</li> <li>- Provision of access for local community (e.g. walkers/dog walkers, local school and other groups)</li> <li>- Enables greater control of those accessing the land</li> <li>- Helps people see what farmers are doing</li> <li>- Improved local relationships</li> <li>- Users identify problems – extra pair of eyes</li> <li>- Meeting a demand for access</li> </ul> <p>Stakeholders indicate range of benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing access in areas where it was very limited</li> <li>- Plugging gaps in the rights of way network</li> <li>- Provision of local benefits, limited use to visitors</li> <li>- Not always where they are wanted/needed</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walkers/dog walkers identified as beneficiaries on 90% agreements; horse riders on 47%; organised groups on 40%.</li> <li>• 64% agreement holders indicate daily/weekly use</li> <li>• Large numbers use some of the access sites.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship between land managers/owners and local communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved relationships with locals</li> <li>- Giving something back to the community – the ‘feelgood factor’</li> <li>- Limited contact between walkers and farmers – mostly positive where it occurs.</li> <li>- Some concern over vandalism, littering, damage by dogs.</li> <li>- Perception that damage caused by a small minority.</li> <li>- Local people appreciate having the access to land.</li> <li>- Some improved understanding of farming by general public (but limited)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits to wider community</li> </ul>	<p>Land managers:</p> <p>Other Stakeholders:</p> <p>National Stakeholder interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in RoW network links</li> <li>• Landowners receive payments</li> <li>• Opportunity costs of money wasted on poor schemes</li> <li>• Too little provision</li> <li>• Public not involved in deciding where access should be provided therefore does not represent value for money.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of promotion reduces use and value for money.</li> </ul>
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<b>Criteria: Perpetuation</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Type of measure: Provider experiences and attitudes.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probability that the access will continue beyond lifetime of the agreement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likely in some cases – where not presented any problems and/or access is difficult to stop. Where there have been damage/costs the access will be curtailed.</li> <li>Telephone survey indicated only 3.2% would never enter into an access agreement again suggesting positive experiences.</li> <li>Telephone survey indicates 27% of sample would have provided access without HLS agreement; 42% indicated people were using the access before an agreement was signed.</li> <li>Telephone survey indicates 28% of respondents provided their access for altruistic reasons; only 16.2% provided access for financial reasons.</li> <li>National stakeholder interviews indicated not secure in long term – but may be hard for farmer to stop it; and when scheme ends there will be a poorer distribution of access.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider attitudes to voluntary access provision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Face-to-face interviews suggest just under half will continue to provide full or partial access; one third do not know, one third will stop providing.</li> <li>Telephone survey indicated 58.4% agreement holders will continue to provide access voluntarily once agreement expired; 20.4% indicated they would definitely stop provision; 21.3% are undecided.</li> <li>Access will be difficult to stop in some places – costs of prevention will outweigh benefits.</li> <li>Arable farms will be influenced by prices of crops, especially cereals.</li> <li>More provision likely on grazing land than on arable.</li> <li>Half of national stakeholders interviewed indicated access unlikely to continue beyond end of scheme.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of interaction between provider and user.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likely to continue in some form on almost half agreements – due to difficulties of stopping access, and suggestions that some use will be allowed (e.g. local people, invited persons/groups).</li> <li>Telephone survey indicated large proportions felt their access provision provided benefits to others; 82.2% indicated the access had not created any management problems; only 16% took up access for financial reasons.</li> <li>National stakeholder survey indicated little interaction between providers and users and no improvement in relations.</li> </ul>

