

Wiltshire Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2015 - 2025

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



Foreword

I am pleased to present Wiltshire Council's Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP). The CAIP sets out Wiltshire Council's proposals for managing and improving access to the countryside for the next 10 years. Progress will be reviewed annually with a view to carrying out a light touch review of the plan itself after 5 years, should it be necessary.

Wiltshire's extensive Countryside Access Network (CAN) is an invaluable resource for both residents and visitors to the county and it is free to all users. It offers people a variety of attractive routes to explore and appreciate Wiltshire's countryside and heritage and to exercise. The CAN also provides people with routes to access their local services, whether this is a footpath to a bus stop in a rural area or tarmac paths linking where people live with schools, shops or employment. It also provides habitats for wildlife.

The Government and National Health Service are increasingly emphasising the need for more preventative medical care. Evidence shows that the CAN has a key role to play in promoting good physical and mental health, whether it is for relaxation or physical activity, or to encourage active travel to local services. Relatively small investments in maintenance and enhancement coupled with initiatives to encourage its use have been shown to bring far greater savings to the NHS and wider society. The CAN also supports Wiltshire Council's Business Plan 2013 – 2017, not only in terms of its public health benefits but also supporting Wiltshire's economy and providing local people with opportunities to help maintain and shape the network to meet their needs. Wiltshire Council recognises how vital the CAN is and will continue to provide a level of funding to reflect this.

The innovative ideas within the CAIP to improve maintenance and to enhance and encourage use of the CAN have the potential to make a major contribution to the wellbeing of Wiltshire's communities. Wiltshire Council will continue to work in partnership with countryside access users, volunteers and local communities to ensure that the network evolves to meet the changing needs of both Wiltshire's residents and visitors.

Cllr Philip Whitehead, Portfolio Holder for Highways

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Glossary

Access Land: the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) (often called the CROW Act) permits the public to walk freely on mapped areas of mountain, moor, heath or downland without having to stick to paths. The Act also gives provision for landowners and tenants to restrict or exclude public access to Access Land in certain circumstances. This is to avoid potential conflicts between public access and land management, for example when shooting takes place

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): a designation where an area receives special protection to conserve and enhance its natural beauty

Area Board: Wiltshire Council manages 18 area boards, which cover the whole of Wiltshire. They bring together a range of organisations and local groups to try to ensure that issues which are a high priority for local communities are considered and dealt with

biodiversity: the number and variety of plants and animals found within a specific area

Countryside Access Forum (CAF): see Wiltshire & Swindon Countryside Access Forum

Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP): Wiltshire Council's second Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

Countryside Access Network (CAN): all the routes and areas that members of the public can use to access the countryside. Also includes paths in urban areas which are public rights of way

Core Strategy: the most important part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). This sets out Wiltshire Council's plans for where development should take place in the county

Definitive Map and Statement: the legal record of public rights of way (see Appendix 2)

Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO): a legal order to modify the definitive map and statement, for example if evidence has been found that a footpath should have been recorded as a bridleway

Green Infrastructure Strategy: Wiltshire Council's strategy to deliver a network of routes and areas for wildlife to thrive and people to enjoy

landowner: this may include the person who is responsible for managing the land on behalf of the owner

Local Nature Reserve (LNR): district, county and unitary councils have powers to acquire, declare and manage LNRs. To qualify for LNR status, a site must be of importance for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. Some are also nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Management of the site can be undertaken by the local authority or "friends of" groups or organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts

Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3): Wiltshire Council's strategy for delivering national transport goals at a local level

mobility impairment: a physical disability that may make using the CAN more difficult. Examples include people who use wheelchairs, have sight loss, physical co-ordination problems, manual dexterity or learning difficulties

National Nature Reserve (NNR): some of the finest sites in England for wildlife and/or geology. NNRs were initially established to protect sensitive features and to provide 'outdoor laboratories' for research. Now many reserves also allow public access. Natural England can declare NNRs. Natural England manage

about two thirds of England's NNRs, the remaining third are managed by organisations approved by Natural England; for example, National Trust, the Forestry Commission, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts and Local Authorities

National Park: an area which is protected because of its beautiful countryside, wildlife and cultural heritage

Natural England (NE): the Government's advisor on the natural environment. NE provides advice on how best to safeguard England's natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and people

New Forest Access Forum (NFAF): the equivalent of the Wiltshire & Swindon CAF within the New Forest National Park

permissive path: a route where the landowner allows public access but is not a formal public right of way

Public Path Order (PPO): a legal order to divert or extinguish an existing right of way or to create a new right of way

Paths Improvement Grant Scheme (PIGS): an annual bidding process where Wiltshire Council provides funding to enable parish councils to undertake improvements to their local CAN

public rights of way (sometimes just called rights of way): paths and tracks which anyone can use to cross private land. Rights of way exist in towns, villages and the countryside and the public have a legal right to use them at any time of the day or night, all year round. See Appendix 3 for more information

Ramsar: sites protected under the 'Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat', signed at Ramsar in Iran. This is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, to recognise their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value

rights of way: see public rights of way

Rights of way Improvement Plan (ROWIP): Wiltshire Council's first ROWIP covered 2008 – 2012, the Countryside Access Improvement Plan is the revision of this document

Special Area of Conservation (SAC): an area defined in the European Union's Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), considered to be of European interest

Scheduled Monument: an archaeological site or historic building deemed to be nationally important. The status gives legal protection against unauthorised changes to the structure under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Special Protection Area (SPA): a protected area under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): a UK conservation designation for an area of land considered to be of special interest due to its wildlife or geological nature. They have a strong legal protection

Sustrans: a sustainable transport charity which aims to enable people to travel by foot, cycle or public transport for more of their journeys

Wiltshire & Swindon Countryside Access Forum (CAF): this body was set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). It is made up of user groups and owners and occupiers of land. It provides independent guidance to Wiltshire Council and other organisations such as Natural England on ways to improve public access, open air recreation and use of the CAN

1 Introduction

In 2008, Wiltshire County Council produced its first rights of way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). ROWIPs are a requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. The ROWIP was an aspirational plan covering 2008 – 2012 which set out how the council would manage and improve the network to meet modern day needs. The plan continued to be taken forward by Wiltshire Council when Wiltshire became a unitary authority in 2009.

The official guidance on ROWIPs¹ says that they should consider;

- the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public;
- the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and the enjoyment of the authority's area;
- the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems

Although the guidance focuses on rights of way, it also states that improvements to other routes and areas which allow people to access the countryside need to be considered. To reflect this requirement more clearly, the title of the second ROWIP has been changed to the Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP).



Rights of way give access to the countryside. Mere Down, photo courtesy of Visit Wiltshire/Chris Lock

1.1 What the CAIP covers

The CAIP sets out the actions Wiltshire Council will take to manage, improve and promote Wiltshire's countryside access network (CAN). The CAN includes:

- public rights of way in both rural and urban areas (footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic)
- permissive paths
- cycleways which are not adjacent to roads
- canal towpaths
- country parks
- town parks
- forests with public access (generally managed by the Forestry Commission)
- Access Land
- stretches of road and pavements or joint footway/cycleways which link the above together

Wiltshire Council does not manage some parts of the CAN itself, but it will work in partnership to improve public access to the countryside where possible at these locations.

Although the plan is largely about countryside access, the CAIP also covers rights of way within settlements. Many of these provide key links to local services and have a tarmac surface.



Some rights of way are urban paths, as here in Amesbury

¹ DEFRA (2002)

1.2 The importance of the CAN

The CAN is important because it:

- provides attractive routes away from roads both in the countryside and within towns. They can be used for leisure journeys, to access local facilities or to travel between settlements
- is an extensive, free at the point of use recreational resource. It helps Wiltshire's residents keep physically and mentally healthy
- is a tourism resource (e.g. for walking holidays or days out), contributing millions of pounds annually to Wiltshire's economy
- forms a significant part of our heritage
- enables people to enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of large parts of the countryside that cannot be reached by road
- can be a wildlife habitat or provide 'green corridors' between areas of habitat

England's CAN is very well used. It was estimated by Natural England that between March 2010 and February 2011, the 41.7 million adults resident in England took a total of 2.49 billion visits² to the natural environment³ between them.

Figure 1 shows how many visits Wiltshire residents take each year to the natural environment and where they are going. This figure and figure 2 come from surveys undertaken with adults during Natural England's study "Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment".

Every year, Wiltshire's 371,000 adults make more than 40 million trips to the natural environment. The majority of these are to the countryside, though the surveys also show the importance of town parks for providing opportunities for people to access nature.

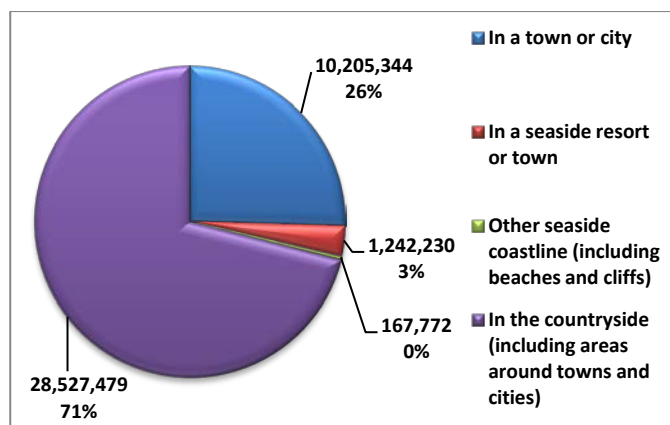


Figure 1: How many visits Wiltshire's residents take to the natural environment annually and where they go⁴

As can be seen from Figure 2, 43% of Wiltshire's adults visit the natural environment daily or several times a week and 66% visit at least once a week.

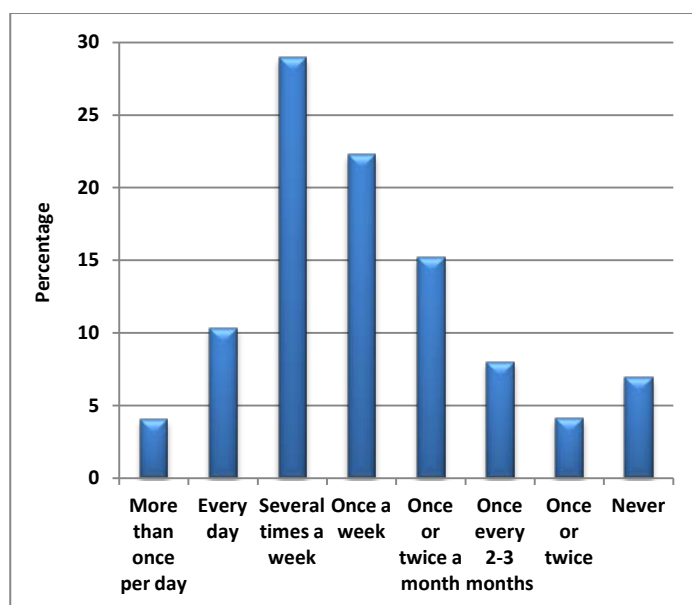


Figure 2: Frequency of visits to the natural environment by Wiltshire residents⁵

One of the key reasons people have cited for accessing the natural environment in Wiltshire is to meet their health and exercise needs. This is discussed in detail section 4.3.

² Natural England (2012). Figure 2.2

³ Natural environment is defined as all green open spaces in and around towns and cities, the wider countryside and coastline. Private gardens are excluded

⁴ Figure is annual average of Wiltshire adult results between March 2009 and February 2012

⁵ From all results between March 2009 and February 2012. Sample size 882 interviews.

1.3 The objectives of the CAIP

The CAIP is a daughter document of Wiltshire's Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) and will help to deliver many of the objectives of LTP3. With this in mind, the most relevant strategic objectives in LTP3 have been taken as the objectives for the CAIP. These are shown in Figure 3.

The CAIP also helps to meet the key objective in both Wiltshire Council's Business Plan 2013 – 2017 and The Wiltshire Community Plan 2011 – 2026, which is "to build stronger and more resilient communities". More details of this can be found in section 4.7.

1.4 Producing the CAIP

The research undertaken in producing the action plan is explained in section 8. Consultation with a range of organisations and individuals was undertaken on the draft document. A list of consultees is included in Appendix 1.

Two key consultees were the Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum (CAF) and the New Forest National Park Access Forum (NFAF). Access Forums are statutory bodies made up of user groups and owners and occupiers of land. They provide independent guidance to Wiltshire Council and other organisations such as Natural England on ways to improve public access, open air recreation and use of the CAN.

Figure 3: The objectives of the CAIP

	The key LTP3 strategic objectives that the CAIP helps deliver
SO1	To support and help improve the vitality, viability and resilience of Wiltshire's economy and market towns
SO2	To provide, support and/or promote a choice of sustainable travel alternatives including walking, cycling, bus and rail
SO5	To improve sustainable access to a full range of opportunities particularly for those people without access to a car
SO6	To make the best use of the existing infrastructure through effective design, management and maintenance
SO8	To improve safety for all road users and to reduce the number of casualties on Wiltshire's roads
SO12	To support planned growth in Wiltshire and ensure that new developments adequately provide for their sustainable transport requirements and mitigate their traffic impacts
SO13	To reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car
SO14	To promote travel modes that are beneficial to health
SO15	To reduce barriers to transport and access for people with disabilities and mobility impairment
SO17	To improve sustainable access to Wiltshire's countryside and provide a more useable public rights of way network
SO18	To enhance the journey experience of transport users

2 The county of Wiltshire

Wiltshire is a largely rural county with a population of 471,000. The largest settlements are Salisbury, Chippenham and the county town Trowbridge. Swindon Borough Council is a separate authority.

2.1 Landscape and biodiversity

There is a great diversity of landscape in Wiltshire. In the north-east and south of the county there are chalk downlands, Salisbury Plain covers much of the middle of the county and there is wooded farmland in the west and north.

As can be seen on Figure 4 overleaf, some parts of Wiltshire have a special landscape status:

- The 3 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), covering 44% of the county:
 - The Cotswolds
 - The North Wessex Downs
 - Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs
- The New Forest National Park (NFNP), which includes a small part of south-east Wiltshire
- The Cotswold Waterpark, near Cricklade

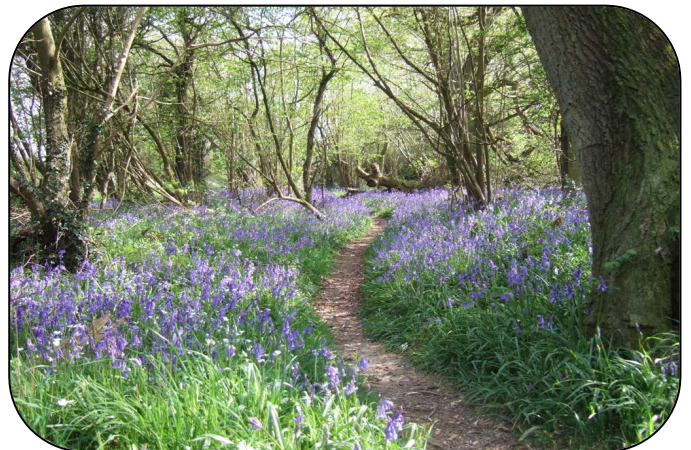


Motorised vehicle users exploring one of Wiltshire's many Byways. Photo courtesy of Tread Lightly

The county is also very rich in biodiversity. There are:

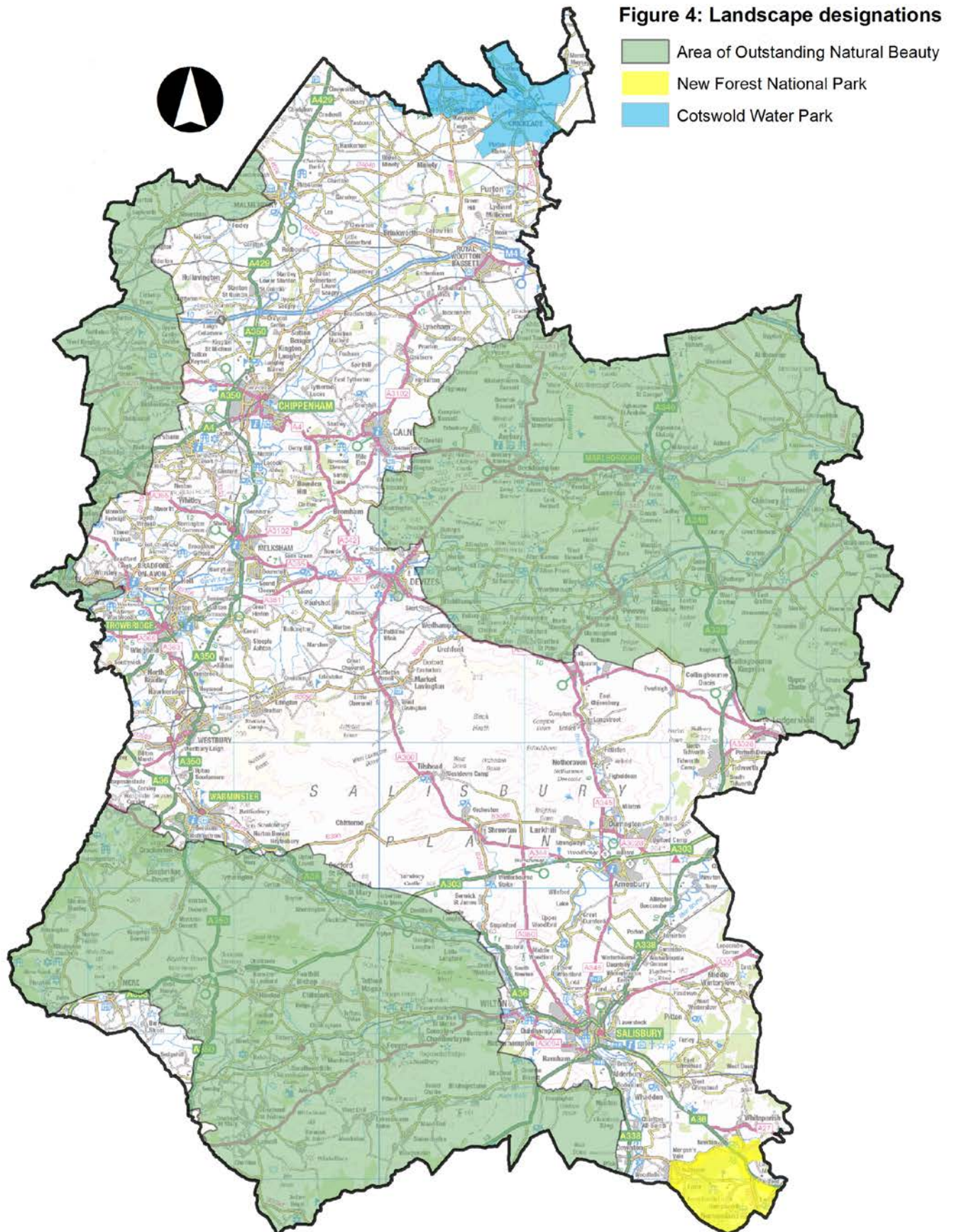
- 135 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These cover a range of habitats for particularly important populations of British Wildlife, including calcareous grassland, lowland meadows, broadleaved woodland, streams, rivers and standing waters
- 10 Special Areas of Conservation, 3 Special Protection Areas and 1 Ramsar
- Many other areas with special designations such as National and Local Nature Reserves and County Wildlife Sites. Even outside these designated sites, legally protected flora and fauna species are found around the county

The CAN provides many opportunities for reaching and appreciating these areas but management of the CAN also needs to consider potential impacts upon them.



Bluebell wood. Photo courtesy of Peter Blyth

Figure 4: Landscape designations



2.2 Archaeology

Wiltshire has a long and interesting human history, reflected in the fact that there are more than 2,000 scheduled monuments. The most famous of these are in the World Heritage Site which covers Stonehenge and Avebury and their surrounding landscapes. There are many earthworks within the county such as burial mounds, the impressive Wansdyke and hill forts.



Avebury stone circle can be freely explored



Carriage drivers on one of Wiltshire's historic rights of way, The Ridgeway

There are also many more recent archaeological remains, for example:

- Old Wardour Castle
- industrial structures such as Dundas Aqueduct and Caen Hill Locks on the Kennet and Avon Canal
- mills in Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge

In many cases the CAN provides access to and around these historic sites. For instance, stretches of the Wansdyke and some hill forts have rights of way running along their banks and much of the Fosse Way, a Roman road, is also a public right of way.

3 Results from Wiltshire's first ROWIP

3.1 Improvements made under the ROWIP

- 1) Reflecting the desires of local communities and investing in community led projects:
 - the Paths Improvement Grant Scheme (PIGS) gives funding to parish councils towards CAN upgrades they feel are important
 - stiles are being replaced with gaps or gates on key routes identified by local communities and where landowners give their approval. This helps make routes easier to use by people with mobility impairments



A stile being replaced by a kissing gate

- priorities for maintenance and improvements are influenced by feedback from local residents
- 2) New ways of maintaining the network:
 - machinery has been made available to the rights of way and countryside service, for example Land Rovers, a tractor and wood chipper. This means maintenance such as

overgrowth clearance and replacing bridges can be undertaken more quickly

- increasingly, external sources of funding are being sought to improve the CAN. Examples include the Lottery, Landfill Communities Fund, New Forest small grants scheme, developer contributions and sponsorship from private companies
- 3) Increasing the involvement of volunteers:
 - the service supports many individuals, user groups and parish councils who help to manage their local rights of way and countryside sites to meet local needs and desires
 - the estimated value of the volunteer working parties is around £200,000 per year across the county
 - nine of our countryside sites have established volunteer groups who help manage and enhance them in the interests of public access and nature conservation
 - in 2012 the Southern Area Board, which covers 16 parishes, decided that rights of way were a key issue. The board, in partnership with the rights of way and countryside service, has been encouraging parishes to take more responsibility for their networks. This led to nearly 60 stiles being replaced with gates on a number of well used routes in the area
 - work experience placements have also been undertaken within the service
 - 4) Improving information and promotion:
 - The rights of way and countryside pages on the council's website have been improved:
 - on-line mapping has been introduced which shows the most up to date information on rights of way
 - rights of way faults can now be reported on-line as well as by telephone
 - there are useful web-links, e.g. to user groups and a "where can I go?" section
 - country park locations are shown on the website
 - press releases are being increasingly used to promote the work of the service and family leisure events are organised and widely publicised
 - social media such as Facebook and Twitter is increasingly being used

5) Improving partnerships:

- “waste” from Wiltshire Council’s highways service is reused, for example planings taken off roads during maintenance are used to improve surface conditions on rights of way
- new links are being created with organisations responsible for health, sport and tourism
- existing external partnerships have been strengthened, for example with user groups, Wiltshire Council’s Area Boards, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the New Forest National Park Authority and neighbouring authorities
- strong relationships have been maintained with most landowners, which helps co-operation when it comes to maintaining and upgrading access
- the relationship with the Countryside Access Forums is being increasingly used to support the work of the service

6) Improving links with public health:

- in 2014 the Public Health team at Wiltshire Council provided funding for a volunteer co-ordinator post
- the post will improve the support the council can offer to existing volunteers and seek to increase the numbers of volunteers
- the post is funded for an initial 18 months but if it proves to be a success further funding will be sought

3.2 Areas where progress has been limited

These areas will continue to be progressed in the CAIP:

- 1) the rights of way database. This will help ground and office staff manage the network better
- 2) the backlog of Definitive Map Modification Orders. This has increased as the rate of applications coming in has exceeded the rate it has been possible to deal with them
- 3) “The Wayfarer”, a publication to promote the work of the service, was produced for several years and was well received. However, individual publications such as this have been discontinued largely due to costs. More use is now being made of press releases, the website and social media instead

3.3 Examples of schemes delivered under the ROWIP

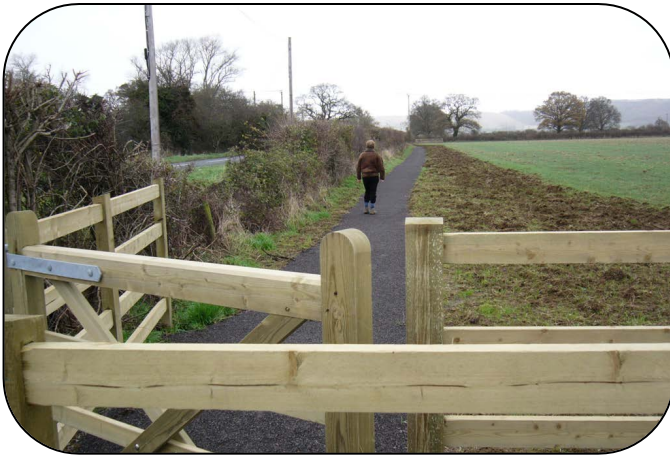
- 1) A large volunteer scheme has been undertaken on Salisbury Plain to greatly improve the signage. Tread Lightly, a motorised vehicle user group, have been working in partnership with Wiltshire Council and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). 40 volunteers have installed over 300 signs. The MoD has also worked with Wiltshire Council to rationalise rights of way on Salisbury Plain. New routes have been created and other routes have been diverted to make the rights of way network much easier to manage and follow on the ground



Tread lightly volunteers working with the council and MoD to improve signing on Salisbury Plain

- 2) The Landfill Communities Fund charity contributed £13,000 towards a £19,500 scheme at Potterne. This improved the surfacing and drainage of several bridleways and byways at a key location on the network, making the routes useable all year round
- 3) The Friends of Biss Meadows (in Trowbridge) worked on a scheme to restore a pond for the benefit of local residents and schools. This involved replacing the dipping platform and improving paths to allow disabled access, new seating large enough to take school parties, community art and an interpretation board. Advice and a contribution of £868 from the rights of way and countryside service brought in a contribution of £7,000 for detailed design and surveys and then £50,000 from Community Spaces/The Big Lottery

- 4) The Paths Improvement Grant Scheme (PIGS) began in 2008 and is run in partnership with the Wiltshire & Swindon Countryside Access Forum. 30 schemes have been undertaken in its first 5 years. PIGS provides up to half the total cost of a scheme to parish councils so they can undertake changes they feel are important to their local network. Many schemes involve replacing stiles with gaps or gates to make routes around villages more accessible.



The Rowde Paths Improvement Grant Scheme provided a traffic free link between the village, canal and bus stops

A number of larger schemes have also been undertaken, for example:

- surfacing a footpath between Upper Castle Combe and Lower Castle Combe to make a good quality link for residents that can be used all year round
 - constructing a new link which takes walkers away from the busy road between Rowde and the Kennet and Avon Canal, which included destination signing. This provides safer access
- to bus stops, new circular walk opportunities for villagers and also good access for canal users to the community run shop in Rowde
- 5) The service has been supporting the work of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust volunteers to restore the canal and towpath. This will provide new walking, cycling and possibly horse riding opportunities. Several sections of the canal are already in place, for example Pewsham Locks near Chippenham and on the outskirts of Wootton Bassett. In 2012 the trust received the Queens Award for Volunteering Service
- 6) A volunteer group Friends of the Railway Path has been set up to improve and promote the route between Swindon and Marlborough. The group have produced promotional material, organised events and numerous workdays with a particular emphasis on improving biodiversity. The group is supported by a range of partners including Wiltshire Council, North Wessex Downs AONB, Sustrans, Wiltshire Bridleways Association and The Ramblers
- 7) The council's countryside sites are used for a number of events and groups. Examples include bat walks, badger walks, dawn chorus walks, children's activity days and tree planting to celebrate National Tree Week
- 8) Rights of Way and Countryside service staff helped to organise and support a challenging 3 day tour around the Imber Range Perimeter Path on Salisbury Plain by the Disabled Ramblers, using their motorised off-road buggies
- 9) the New Forest and South Downs National Park Authorities and local councils (including Wiltshire Council), have made a successful bid for funding through the DfT's Local Sustainable Transport Fund. The national parks have £3.8m to spend between them, which is enabling extensive surface improvements to be made to some byways and bridleways around Redlynch

Badger Walk & Talk



National Badger Day

Celebrate National Badger Day with a guided walk through Hamham Slope woodland to learn about the elusive badger, hosted by the Rights of Way & Countryside Team and local badger experts.

✓Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear

When: **Saturday 6th October**

Where: Hamham Slope, Salisbury, meet at the steps near Grasmere Close, off Old Blandford Road

Time: **10am - 12 noon**

Cost: **Adults £2 Children/concessions £1**

Booking essential

For further information please contact:

Rights of Way and Countryside Team, Environment Services, County Hall, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JD

Tel: 01225 718647 Email: countryside@wiltshire.gov.uk

Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult

Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters

The Rights of Way and Countryside service holds many events at Wiltshire Council's countryside sites

3.4 Taking ROWIP successes forward

The achievements of the first ROWIP have been reviewed in detail during the production of the CAIP. Many of the successful actions will continue to be progressed in the new action plan.

4 Context

The CAN makes a large contribution to many high priority areas of central and local government policy.

The figure below shows how the CAIP relates to other strategy areas. The following sections explain the links outlined below.

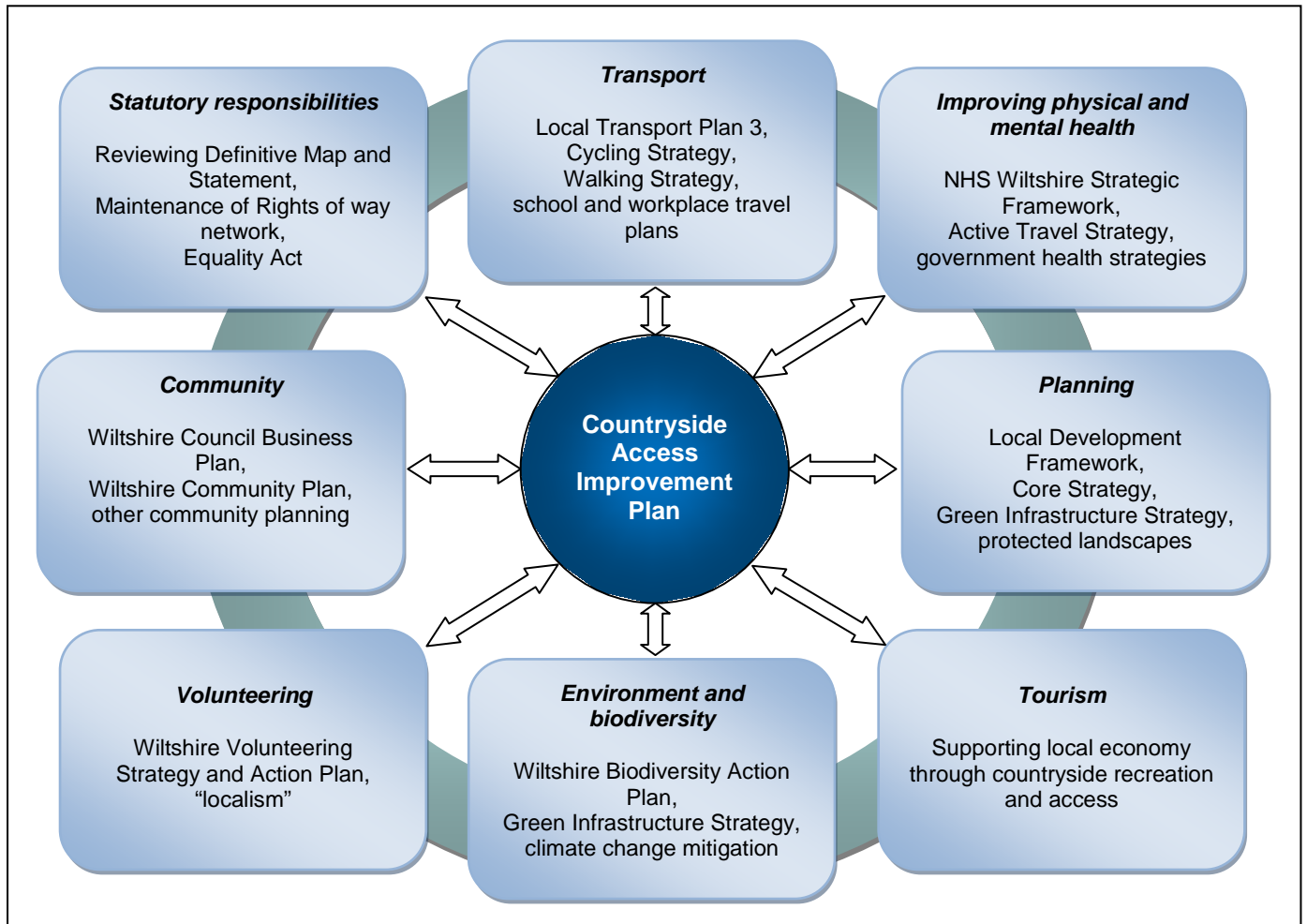
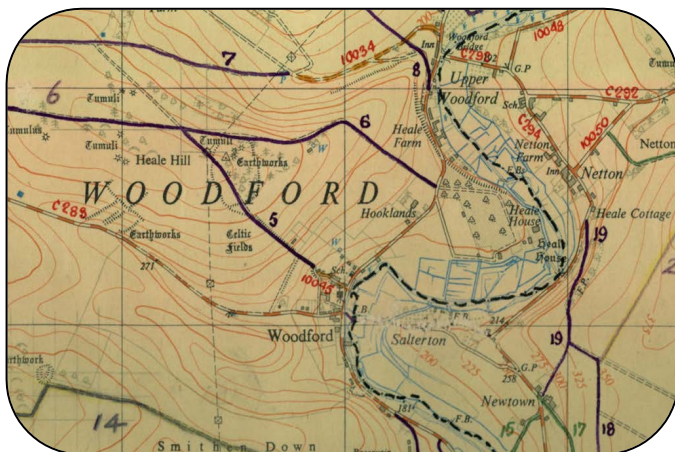


Figure 5: The relationship of the CAIP to other strategy areas

4.1 Statutory responsibilities

The five main statutory duties of the council relating to rights of way are to:

- protect the rights of the public by ensuring that the network is adequately signposted, maintained and free from obstruction (Highways Act 1980)
- ensure that the legal record of rights of way, the Definitive Map and Statement (see Appendix 2), is kept up to date and under constant review (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)



An excerpt from the definitive map showing the numbered rights of way in the parish of Woodford

- consider the needs of those with mobility impairments when maintaining the network and authorising structures (e.g. stiles and gates) on the rights of way network and seek improvements to existing structures where it would be beneficial (Equality Act 2010)
- establish a local access forum
- have due regard to protecting sensitive habitats and biodiversity in managing and improving access (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006)

Another important function undertaken is diverting and extinguishing rights of way where required to enable development to proceed (Town and Country Planning Act 1990). This is a power rather than a statutory duty.

4.2 Local Transport Plan 3

LTP3 is Wiltshire Council's strategy for delivering national transport goals at a local level for the period 2011 to 2026.

There are 18 strategic objectives in LTP3. The CAN has a strong role to play in contributing to 11 of the objectives and also contributes to most of the other objectives to a small extent (see section 1.3). As the CAIP is a daughter document of LTP3, these 11 objectives have been used as the CAIP objectives.

Figure 6 shows how the CAN contributes towards these objectives. It also makes a contribution towards achieving the aims of most of the other daughter documents. The relevant documents are:

- Accessibility strategy
- Cycling strategy
- Smarter choices strategy
- Walking strategy (in development)
- Network Management Plan (in development)
- Wiltshire Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy (WiSMoTSS) (in development)

	LTP3 strategic objective	How does the CAN help?
SO1	To support and help improve the vitality, viability and resilience of Wiltshire's economy and market towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAN provides access to Wiltshire's countryside, heritage and archaeology for leisure, e.g. days out and walking holidays • Visitors to the countryside contribute millions of pounds each year to the economy, e.g. the National Trails attract many domestic and international visitors • Some rights of way are key links within and between settlements, so they provide access to local services
SO2	To provide, support and/or promote a choice of sustainable travel alternatives including walking, cycling, bus and rail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAN provides attractive walking and cycling routes within and between settlements and away from roads • Some CAN routes provide links to bus stops and railway stations
SO5	To improve sustainable access to a full range of opportunities particularly for those people without access to a car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In many places the CAN offers opportunities for countryside access, access to local services and links between settlements without the need for a car. For instance, many country parks, towpaths, rights of way and cycleways are very close to urban centres and can be accessed on foot or bicycle
SO6	To make the best use of the existing infrastructure through effective design, management and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAN is part of Wiltshire's existing infrastructure
SO8	To improve safety for all road users and to reduce the number of casualties on Wiltshire's roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAN provides routes for people to travel without having to use the road network. This can take people away from stretches of road where safety would be a concern
SO12	To support planned growth in Wiltshire and ensure that new developments adequately provide for their sustainable transport requirements and mitigate their traffic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing developments in particular bring a demand for access to local facilities and the countryside from the new residents. The CAN provides these links for walkers and often cyclists too • The availability of a good CAN on the doorstep is essential to encourage people to exercise more, avoid car journeys just to take dogs for a walk etc.
SO13	To reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As SO5
SO14	To promote travel modes that are beneficial to health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking, cycling and horse riding have been shown to be beneficial to both physical and mental health • The CAN provides routes and areas people can use to undertake these healthy travel modes, so its use can be promoted

SO15	To reduce barriers to transport and access for people with disabilities and mobility impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAN provides some opportunities for those with mobility impairments to access local services and the countryside. Examples of these opportunities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ wheelchair accessible paths ○ Riding for the Disabled groups ○ disabled people driving along Byways Open to All Traffic to access remote locations • Reducing barriers may include replacing stiles with gaps or gates, surfacing improvements or improving maintenance on key links
SO17	To improve sustainable access to Wiltshire's countryside and provide a more useable rights of way network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more useable network could be developed through a number of methods including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ upgrades ○ creating new links or areas for public access ○ improving information ○ involving volunteers to help shape the management of the network
SO18	To enhance the journey experience of transport users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People using the CAN are transport users • The experience can be enhanced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ through maintenance (e.g. better waymarking or cutting back vegetation to make a route easier to use and reveal views) ○ by undertaking upgrades (e.g. surface improvements or replacing stiles with gaps or gates)

Figure 6: How the CAN contributes to LTP3 strategic objectives

4.3 Improving physical and mental health

4.3.1 The importance of regular exercise

- *69% of women and 57% of men in the south-west take insufficient physical activity to reduce their risk of disease and ill-health⁶*
- *One in four adults experience mental illness at some point during their lifetime and one in six experience symptoms at any one time – making mental illness the largest single cause of disability in our society⁷*

The importance of regular exercise is well documented (see Appendix 4A). Walking and cycling are very accessible ways for people to increase their activity levels so it is central and local government policy to promote these forms of transport (see Appendix 4B). A recent study⁸ has also suggested that horse riding and its associated

activities can help people get the exercise they need to keep healthy.



Mountain bikers following The Wansdyke. Courtesy of MBSwindon

⁶ Davis, Dr A (2010)

⁷ DoH (2011)a

⁸ University of Brighton & Plumpton College (2011)

4.3.2 The CAN and physical and mental health

There have been a number of studies which have demonstrated that contact with the natural environment greatly benefits both physical and mental health (see Appendix 4C).



The National Trust says that we, and especially our children, are showing the symptoms of 'Nature Deficit Disorder' (see Appendix 4C). Photo courtesy of Forestry Commission

In 2011 central government formally recognised this link in two white papers – “Healthy Lives, Healthy People” and “The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature” (see Appendix 4D). The CAN is the key resource to enable the aims of these white papers to be achieved as:

- it provides many of the routes and areas within Wiltshire where people take exercise through walking, cycling or horse riding. This exercise could be for leisure or as part of journeys to access services in both urban and rural areas
- it is an extensive and free at the point of use resource
- guided walks such as Walking for Health and Salisbury Bus Walks are helping to encourage people to be more active. In some cases people are being referred to these initiatives by their GPs
- the council's countryside sites are used by several charities to help people who have experienced mental health issues

Figure 7 shows that there is a very strong link between frequency of visits to the natural environment and levels of physical exercise generally. Over half (58%) of the people who

visited the natural environment frequently⁹ took part in at least 30 minutes of physical activity 3 or more times a week. Just 4% of the people who never visit the natural environment achieved the same level of any form of exercise.

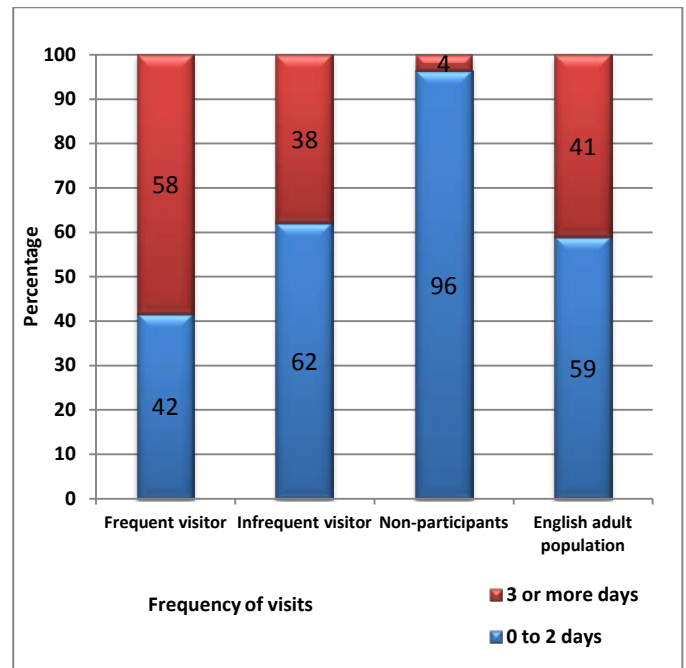


Figure 7: Number of days in the last week Wiltshire residents undertook 30 minutes of more of physical activity vs how frequently they visited the natural environment¹⁰

Following the publication of the white paper “Healthy Lives, Healthy People”, the Department of Health set up a number of indicators in order to monitor the health of the nation. Indicator 1.16 is “Percentage of people using outdoor places for exercise/health reasons”. This information is gathered through the “Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment” study by Natural England. Figure 8 shows that Wiltshire residents were among the top 10% nationally who cited exercise/health as a reason for accessing the countryside.

⁹ “Natural environment” is defined as all green open spaces in and around towns and cities, the wider countryside and coastline. Private gardens are excluded. Frequent is defined as at least 3 times a week, infrequent is once or twice a week or less

¹⁰ Annual average figure for Wiltshire adult results between March 2009 and February 2012

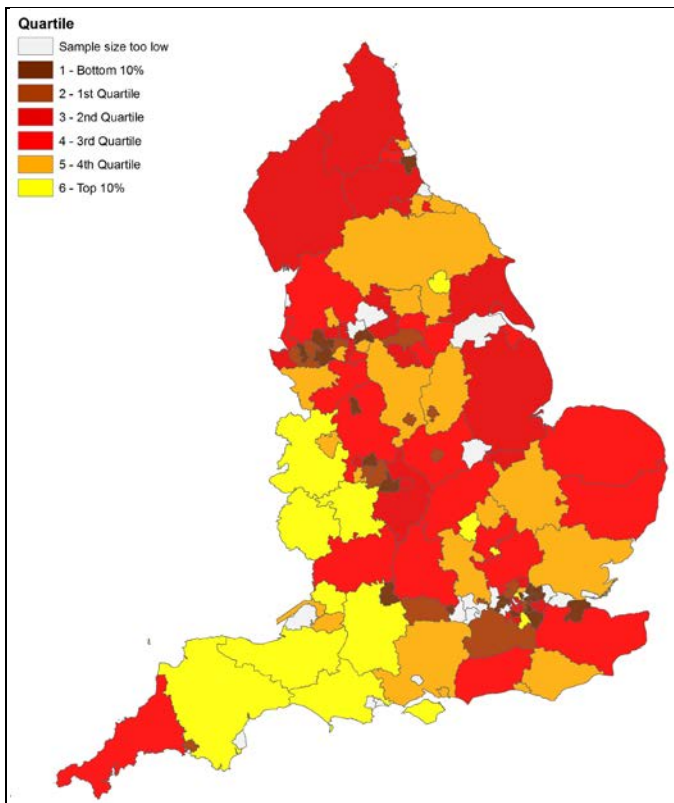


Figure 8: Levels of people citing exercise/health as a reason why they were accessing the countryside

It is clear from Figures 7 and 8 how vital countryside access, and therefore a well maintained CAN, is to meeting the health needs of the residents of Wiltshire.

4.3.3 The CAN and the efficient use of limited funding

- *“It has been estimated by the Chief Medical Officer that the cost of inactivity to the NHS and the economy is £8.2 billion annually. This figure excludes individuals who are obese due to inactivity, which contributes an extra £2.5 billion annual cost to the economy”¹¹*
- *“Mental ill health is the single largest cause of disability in the UK, contributing up to 22.8% of the total burden, compared to 15.9% for cancer and 16.2% for cardiovascular disease. The wider economic costs of mental illness in England have been estimated at £105.2 billion each year. This includes direct costs of services, lost productivity at work and reduced quality of life”¹²*

¹¹ See Appendix 4E for more detail
¹² DoH (2011b)

- *“In most health care systems, the predominant focus for both treatment and expenditure has come to be on people who have become ill... Yet the best approach, and the cheapest, is to focus efforts upstream, and try to create healthy environments in which people can flourish rather than flounder... recent years, however, have seen declines in connections between people and nature, and people and people, with resulting falls in emotional and physical well-being and increases in public health costs”¹³*



The CAN provides opportunities to access nature, which brings physical and mental health benefits. Photo courtesy of Forestry Commission

Some recent studies have considered the cost savings which accompany walking and cycling projects, many of which use the CAN. These projects could be physical upgrades or guided walks such as Walking for Health. These studies have shown that **every £1 invested in walking and cycling projects can save the NHS and the country up to £19¹⁴.**

The role of health promotion transferred from the NHS to Wiltshire Council in 2013. The key aim of this will be to reduce people's need for medical treatment through prevention of illness. The CAN has a key role to play in both preventative care and treatment for both physical and mental health issues, so the rights of way and countryside service will be working closely with the public health team.

¹³ Pretty, J; Griffin, M et al (2005)
¹⁴ See Appendix 4F for details

4.4 Planning

Wiltshire has one of the fastest growing populations in the country. This growth and the trend towards smaller household sizes is fuelling demand for new homes and other development.

Wiltshire's Core Strategy is making provision for at least 37,000 new homes in the county between 2006 and 2026. Much of this growth will be focused on Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury but there will also be some growth in smaller settlements, for example due to the MoD rebasing project. The CAN will play a key role in providing routes from the new developments to local services and the countryside. The integrity of the CAN must also be maintained where possible when considering other developments such as business parks or solar farm proposals.

Wiltshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy is currently in progress. It will provide a long-term vision for the natural environment in terms of both conservation and providing public access to the countryside. The linear links and green spaces that make up the CAN itself form much of the county's green infrastructure.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy also requires that when sites are being restored after extraction is complete, they should provide enhancements to the rights of way network and support the reinstatement of canals where appropriate.

In terms of special landscape designations, Wiltshire Council also supports the work of the 3 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Cotswold Waterpark and New Forest National Park. The council is a funding partner for the AONBs.

4.5 Tourism

- *"An estimated £20 billion was spent in England on visits to the natural environment during 2011 – 12"¹⁵*

- *"The Kennet and Avon Canal was estimated to bring nearly £19m and 444 jobs into the economy of Wiltshire in 2009"¹⁶*

By providing both access to the natural environment for recreation and links to services in settlements, the CAN supports the county's economy by:

- helping to sustain the viability of local shops and services such as public transport and pubs
- creating jobs
- supporting the re-use of previously redundant buildings, eg as cafes



The restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal brings new opportunities for walkers and cyclists

¹⁵ Natural England (2012)

¹⁶ British Waterways (2010)

4.6 Environment and biodiversity

The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) aims to conserve the county's wildlife and its habitats.

The CAN helps deliver the BAP objectives as follows:

- it improves access to and understanding of the natural environment. Family-friendly events held at Wiltshire Council's country parks help raise awareness and interest in nature conservation
- much of the CAN itself consists of green corridors, providing habitats and 'stepping stones' between habitats for many species. For instance, the towpath alongside the Kennet & Avon Canal hosts glow worms and bats use the hedgerows and tree-lines as commuting routes between roosts and feeding areas

Raising awareness of the CAN through nature conservation work will help meet two specific BAP targets:

- to increase the number of people actively volunteering in biodiversity conservation across the county
- local authorities [should] enhance biodiversity on their land holdings¹⁷



The CAN provides habitats for wildlife like this Kingfisher. Courtesy of David White

Wiltshire also has a Climate Change Adaptation Plan. Green space such as the CAN has a small role to reduce potential impacts and it may be affected by climate change. The plan is discussed further in Appendix 5.

¹⁷ there is now only one local authority as Wiltshire became a unitary authority after the plan was written

4.7 Community and volunteering

The two overarching plans for Wiltshire Council are The Wiltshire Community Plan 2011 – 2026 and Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2013 - 2017. Although both have slightly different key goals, they share the same vision: to build stronger and more resilient communities. For more details of these plans see Appendix 6.



Volunteers helping the Senior Rights of Way Warden replace a bridge in the New Forest National Park

The CAN contributes towards this vision in a number of ways:

- it supports the rural economy through use of local services when people visit the countryside and historic sites
- it provides an extensive network of routes and areas people can use for exercise, particularly near settlements. Local access to green space from home can help to reduce health inequalities¹⁸
- it provides access within and between settlements and to public transport services, providing alternatives to driving
- the Paths Improvement Grant Scheme (PIGS) helps to encourage individuals and groups to take an interest in their CAN by providing funding which enables them to undertake works themselves
- the rights of way and countryside service has hundreds of individuals, user groups and parish councils who help manage the network (see section 5.3)
- volunteering can provide a focus for local people, which helps to bring communities together

¹⁸ Mitchell & Popham (2008).

- mitigating climate change through the provision of green space

4.8 Other plans of relevance

The following also need to be taken into account by Wiltshire Council in the management of the CAN.

- Cycling strategy
- Accessibility strategy
- Motorcycle strategy
- Smarter choices strategy
- Walking strategy
- Network Management Plan (in development)
- Wiltshire Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy (WiSMoTSS) (in development)
- Economic regeneration strategy (in development)
- Energy Change and Opportunity Strategy 2011 – 2020
- Green Infrastructure Strategy (in development)
- Wilts and Swindon Historic Land Characterisation (in development)
- Open Space Study (in development)
- Climate Change Adaption Plan
- Parish plans, town plans and community visions
- Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan 2015 - 2021
- Cranborne Chase & West Wilts Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019
- North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019
- Cotswold AONB Management Plan 2013 - 2018
- Cotswold Waterpark Master Plan
- New Forest National Park Management Plan
- New Forest National Park Recreation Management Plan
- New Forest National Park Core Strategy and Development Management Policies
- Wiltshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Canal and Rivers Trust, towpath guidance

5 The Rights of Way and Countryside service

5.1 Overview of the service

Broadly, the Rights of Way and Countryside service is responsible for the following activities:

- Maintaining the legal records of:
 - rights of way
 - highways maintainable at public expense
 - common land
 - town and village greens
- maintaining the rights of way network (see 5.2)
- managing and maintaining Wiltshire Council's countryside sites for the conservation of nature and public enjoyment



Wiltshire Council is responsible for maintaining the county's extensive rights of way network

- Promoting the use of the whole of the CAN, including:
 - seeking improvements and new links, for example through the Paths Improvement Grant Scheme (PIGS)
 - seeking additional funding for specific schemes
 - organising and running public events
- managing and maintaining trees on land owned by Wiltshire Council
- supporting the reconstruction of the Wilts & Berks and Cotswolds canals and the management and care of the Kennet and Avon Canal in Wiltshire

- advising on biodiversity matters

The service is part of Environment Services, which also includes Enforcement, Fleet and Technical Services. Environment Services comes under the Associate Director for Waste and Environment.

5.2 Maintenance of the rights of way network

Responsibility for maintenance of the network lies with both Wiltshire Council and landowners, as set out below.

Wiltshire Council key responsibilities:

- making sure rights of way are free from obstructions
- clearing vegetation that grows from the surface of paths
- maintaining path surfaces and most bridges
- signposting and waymarking
- where requested, providing a minimum of 25% contribution towards costs incurred by a landowner in maintaining stiles and gates on rights of way

Landowner key responsibilities:

- maintaining stiles, gates and other boundary crossings
- obtaining consent from the council before erecting new stiles or gates
- cutting back hedges or overhanging vegetation
- keeping paths clear of obstructions
- making sure no misleading signs are used that might deter people from using paths
- reinstating cross field footpaths and bridleways within 2 weeks of initial ploughing and 24 hours for subsequent disturbances

Members of the public also have responsibilities, these are set out in the Countryside Code.¹⁹

5.3 Volunteers

The service works with many individuals, user groups and parish councils who help to manage the network to meet their needs (see Appendix 7).

¹⁹ Available at www.naturalengland.org.uk

Examples of the support they offer include:

- volunteer groups who help with maintenance, upgrades such as installing gates, contacting landowners and seeking additional funding to enhance the network
- Parish Tree Wardens, who gather information about their local trees and encourage local practical projects to benefit trees and woods



Parish Tree Wardens at a training day

- volunteer groups in the country parks, e.g. Friends of Biss Meadows, Friends of Oakfrith Woods, Friends of Southwick Country Park, Friends of Harnham Slope
- parish councils with rights of way representatives who liaise with Wiltshire Council staff, landowners etc.
- canal restoration volunteers
- National Trail volunteers
- two Access Forums provide advice to help steer the work of the rights of way and countryside service

It should be noted that while volunteers give their time for free there are many costs associated with volunteers, including:

- organising works
- training
- providing tools and equipment
- insurance etc.

Generally these costs have previously been found from within the service budget, though the Cotswolds Conservation Board and The Ramblers have borne some of the costs in parts of the county. Reductions in budgets mean that it will be increasingly important to seek additional funding to support volunteer work. The council will encourage volunteers

who wish to work across communities to help those who find it difficult to help themselves. The service also provides work experience opportunities. A number of student placements have been undertaken and a work placement scheme to enable a wounded serviceman to gain new skills was undertaken in partnership with the MoD.



Work placement schemes with the Rights of Way and Countryside service enable people to gain new skills

5.4 Partnerships

As well as volunteer groups the service works in partnership with many other organisations, including:

- other teams at Wiltshire Council, including schools, planning and highways
- other local authorities, including parish councils
- user groups
- residents and village associations
- the New Forest National Park Authority, Cotswolds Conservation Board and partnerships at the other two AONBs
- the Cotswold Waterpark
- English Heritage
- interest groups such as an ornithological society, bat groups, tree wardens and badger group
- Canal Trusts
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- NHS
- Sustrans
- Ministry of Defence
- Forestry Commission

A full list of partners is shown in Appendix 7.

6 Current provision

Wiltshire has an extensive Countryside Access Network. The CAN includes:

- Public rights of way in both rural and urban areas (footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic)
- permissive paths
- cycleways which are not adjacent to roads
- canal towpaths
- country parks
- town parks
- forests with public access (generally managed by the Forestry Commission)
- Access Land
- stretches of road and pavements or joint footway/cycleways which link the above together

6.1 Public rights of way

Public rights of way, often known just as rights of way, are routes which anyone can use to cross private land. They generally reflect historic use by members of the public. Many date back hundreds of years but some have been created recently. People have a legal right to use them at any time of the day or night, all year round. There are over 6,000 kilometres (nearly 3,800 miles) of rights of way in Wiltshire, which is the 3rd largest network of England's counties. Appendix 3 explains the difference between the four types of Right of Way.

In Wiltshire the percentage of byways open to all traffic, restricted byways and bridleways is considerably higher than the national average. This means the county has a higher proportion of routes that can be used by cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and motorised vehicles than most other counties. This can be seen in Figure 9.

Rights of way can be links:

- within and between settlements, for example for people to access local services
- from settlements to the countryside
- out in the countryside

Classification	Length (km)	% of network	national average ²⁰ %
Footpaths	3,578	59	78
Bridleways	1,569	26	17
Restricted Byways	205	3	3
Byways Open to All Traffic	695	11	2
Total	6,047	100	100

Figure 9 – proportions of different types of rights of way in Wiltshire compared with the national average

6.2 National Trails

Two long distance National Trails pass through Wiltshire - The Ridgeway and the Thames Path. The responsibility for the management and maintenance of these routes lies with partnerships which include Wiltshire Council.



Horse riders on The Ridgeway. Photo courtesy of Jos Joslin

6.3 Long distance walking routes

There are over 20 long distance walking routes in Wiltshire. Some, such as the Mid Wilts Way, White Horse Trail, Pewsey Avon Trail and Imber Range Perimeter Path are wholly within Wiltshire. Others are much longer distance and pass through the county, examples of these are The Monarch's Way, Wessex Ridgeway and the Kennet & Avon Canal towpath.

²⁰ <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/rightsofway/prow/default.aspx>

6.4 Access Land

There are a number of areas of Access Land in Wiltshire, much of which is chalk grassland. Not all of this is easy to use due to steep slopes or a lack of roads or rights of way to access it.

6.5 Salisbury Plain Training Area

A considerable number of rights of way lie within the Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA). It is sometimes necessary to restrict public access to the area, but the Ministry of Defence (MoD) maintains a presumption in favour of public access unless there are operational or training requirements, or safety and security concerns. The SPTA bylaws also enable some additional public access other than via rights of way. The training area covers 11% of Wiltshire.

6.6 Permissive paths and permissive access

There are many permissive paths around the county where some public access is allowed by the landowner but they are not formal rights of way. Some of these were negotiated through schemes run by Natural England or sustainable transport charity Sustrans. In other cases a local landowner has been happy to allow public access (for example to help the local community avoid a busy road) but has not wanted to create a formal right of way. Some National Trust and English Heritage properties allow permissive access through parts of their sites. An example of this is the access allowed to the wider Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site beyond the stones themselves.

6.7 Cycle networks

The National Cycle Network (NCN) has several long distance routes in Wiltshire. NCN routes are a mixture of rights of way, quieter roads, canals and cycle paths. All are also available for use by walkers and some parts can also be used by horse riders. The main stretches of off-road NCN routes in the county are:

- Marlborough to Chiseldon (and onwards into Swindon) railway path
- Chippenham to Calne railway path
- Calne to Avebury

- Chippenham to Pewsham (it is hoped to take this route through to Lacock)



The CAN provides attractive routes for family leisure.
Photo courtesy of Forestry Commission

The Wiltshire Cycleway also provides an on-road, signed route around the county.

6.8 Canals

The Kennet & Avon Canal links west to east through the county. It starts in Bath and passes through Bradford-on-Avon, Devizes, Pewsey and on to Newbury and Reading. The route was fully restored in 1990. The 64 km of towpath through Wiltshire is very well used by walkers and cyclists and the route is a big tourist attraction. It has famous structures such as:

- the 29 locks at Caen Hill near Devizes
- water pumping stations at Crofton and Claverton
- aqueducts in the Limpley Stoke valley

Work is currently underway to restore other stretches of canal and towpath in the county, the largest of which is the Wilts & Berks Canal. This canal will run from the Kennet and Avon at Semington through Melksham, past Chippenham, Calne, Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon and will finish at Abingdon in Oxfordshire. Stretches of the canal have already been restored, for example near Royal Wootton Bassett and Chippenham. The restored route will bring a further 50 km of towpath to the county.

The Thames & Severn canal is also being restored. This will bring another 6 km of towpath to Wiltshire.

6.9 Countryside sites and town parks

The council directly owns, leases and manages a number of countryside sites across Wiltshire that are open to the public for quiet recreation and enjoyment. Some sites are countryside destinations in their own right, whilst others such as Barton Farm Country Park in Bradford-on-Avon, Biss Meadows in Trowbridge and Drews Pond Wood in Devizes also provide gateways to the wider countryside. Biss Meadows provides a key open space in an area of high population that is also close to a deprived neighbourhood.

Many of the sites have high nature conservation, landscape, archaeological, historical or recreational value. The main sites are shown on Figure 10 overleaf.

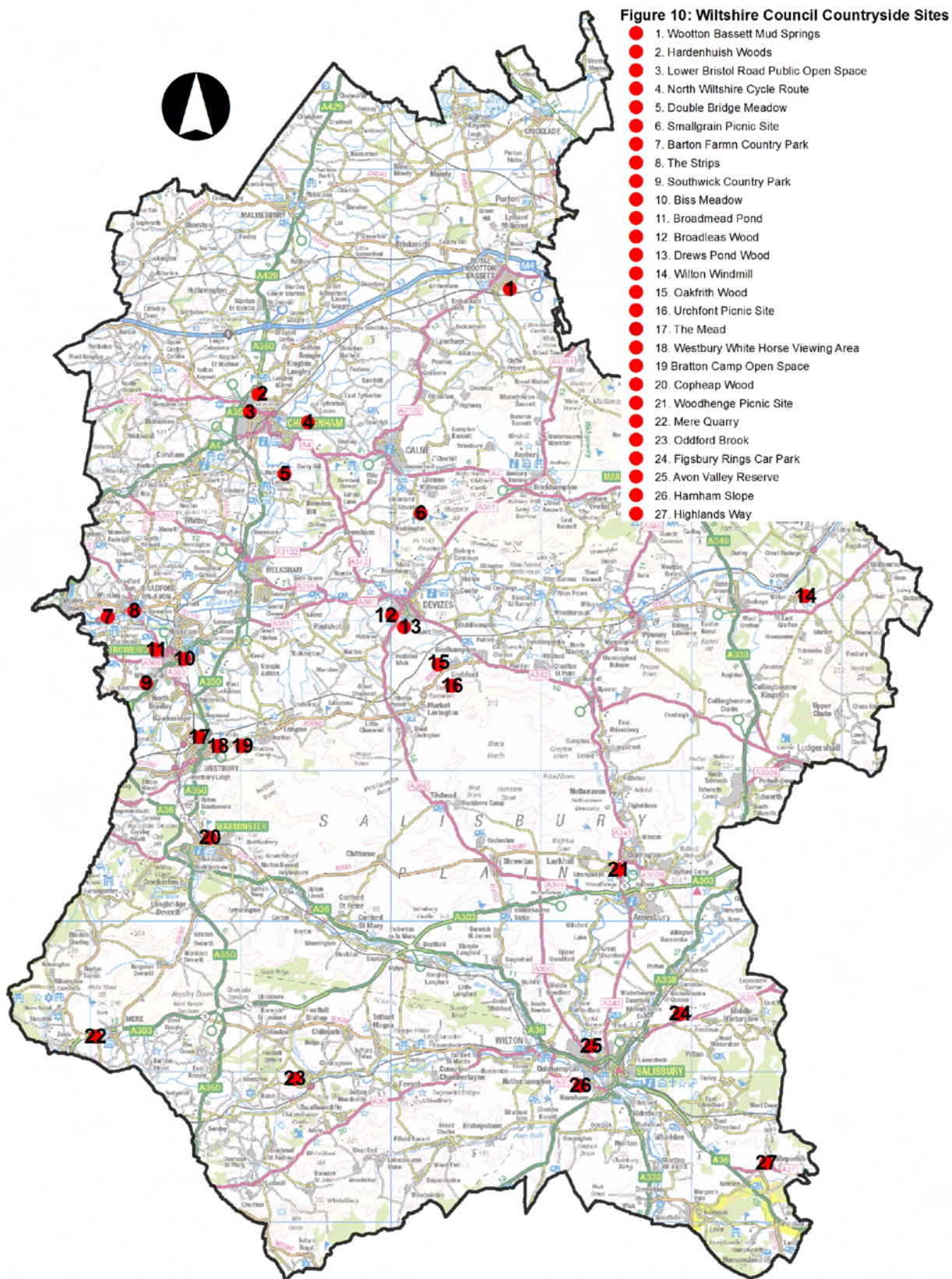
Southwick Country Park, Barton Farm Country Park and Oakfrith Wood are used by groups with particular needs in the community. These groups include The Richmond Fellowship and The Wellbeing Project who help people with stress and mental health issues; they undertake practical conservation work and also utilise nature's resources to undertake creative projects.

Other groups such as the probation service, children with learning difficulties, schools, Wiltshire Council's Youth Offending Team, Wiltshire Young Carers, scouts, guides and cubs also make use of the countryside sites.

Most towns in Wiltshire also have town parks to provide important green space on people's doorsteps. Some are managed by Wiltshire Council while others are managed by town councils.



Southwick Country Park provides good access for people with mobility problems



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Not to Scale

6.10 Nature reserves

There are a number of National and Local Nature Reserves around the county, some of which allow public access. Their management is undertaken by a range of organisations including Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Salisbury City Council, Natural England, community groups and individual landowners²¹.

6.11 Woodland

Many rights of way pass through woodland and there are a number of woods where permissive public access is allowed²², for example those owned by The Woodland Trust or National Trust or managed by the Forestry Commission.

6.12 The road network

Many rights of way are linked up by the road network. Often minor roads can be used with no real safety concerns. However, there are locations around the county where major roads have to be crossed or used to make connections, so some routes get little or no use. This issue can sometimes be resolved by either creating a new right of way/permissive link or using road verges where they exist.

6.13 Guided walks and cycle rides

Walking for Health is a national initiative managed by The Ramblers which aims to encourage mainly sedentary people to become more active. The short walks are free, led by trained leaders and take place weekly. Some of the walkers have been referred by their GPs. There are currently walks in 13 locations around the county and they have proved very popular. Amesbury, Calne and Chippenham walks regularly have 20 – 30 participants and every walk has at least 10 – 15 people on a regular basis.



A Walking for Health guided walk

For longer distance walkers there are local groups of The Ramblers. For mountain bikers, Salisbury Road and Mountain Bike Cycling Club and MBSwindon offer guided rides.

The service organises a number of educational events for adults and children at its country parks throughout the year. Examples are dawn chorus walks, seed collecting days and evening bat walks. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust also organises similar events at its sites.

6.14 “Walkers are Welcome” Towns

Walkers are Welcome is a nationwide initiative launched in 2007 to encourage towns and villages to be more welcoming to walkers. This has a number of aims including providing very good information on suggested local walks, ensuring footpaths and facilities for walkers are well maintained and promoting the health benefits of walking. Bradford-on-Avon and Corsham are both Walkers are Welcome towns.

²¹ For further information search for “nature reserve” on:
<http://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/>
<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>
<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/>

²² For suggestions of woods that can be visited see
<http://visitwoods.org.uk/>

7 Use of the countryside access network

7.1 Valuing the CAN

In 2011 Wiltshire Council undertook 2 “What matters to you” surveys, one which was open to the general public and one that was specifically targeted at 11 – 18 year olds²³.

The aim of the surveys was to understand what matters to residents in order to deliver services which reflect their priorities. The top 8 priorities from both surveys are shown in Figure 11.

Priority	Adult survey	%	Youth survey	%
1	Health services	56	Education provision	56
2	Access to nature	45	Job prospects	49
3	Parks, green space, countryside	42	Health services	48
4	Clean streets	40	The level of crime	48
5	Education provision	40	Access to nature	42
6	Job prospects	38	Public transport	41
7	Public transport	38	Clean streets	40
8	The level of crime	37	Decent housing that is not expensive	39
	23 categories available		18 categories available	

Figure 11: “What matters to you” surveys for adults and young people. Responses to question “Which of the things below, if any, are the most important in making somewhere a good place to live?”

NB: There was no “Parks, green space, countryside” option for youth survey

It is clear from the results of both surveys that Wiltshire residents of all ages value access to the countryside and the CAN very highly.

7.2 How the CAN is being used

“Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment” by Natural England gives a feel for how people use, enjoy and are motivated to protect the natural environment²⁴. Some relevant key findings and conclusions are as follows²⁵:

Finding 1:

75% of all visits were for walking and 47% were for exercising a dog while walking

Conclusion 1:

Actions should be particularly focused on improving conditions for walkers (including with dogs). As much of the CAN is accessible to a variety of users including walkers, improvements for walkers would often improve conditions for others



A high proportion of visits to the CAN involve exercising dogs. Photo courtesy of Forestry Commission

Finding 2:

- 31% of “destinations” for Wiltshire residents were within 1 mile of the starting point and 66% were within 2 miles. The starting point was almost exclusively the person’s home
- Use of the natural environment is higher in the higher socio-economic groups. Those living in more deprived neighbourhoods (in the DE socio-economic groups) tend to visit closer to home and urban destinations such as town parks rather than the wider countryside

²⁴ For the purposes of the study, the “natural environment” means all green open spaces in and around settlements as well as the wider countryside and coastline, excluding private gardens. This is a similar definition to the CAN

²⁵ Natural England (2012). Figures are from surveys undertaken in Wiltshire, not the national figures quoted in the main report

²³ Wiltshire Council (2011) & Wiltshire Council (2012)

Conclusion 2:

It should be a priority to provide high quality access to the CAN right from where people live. This access appears to be especially important in more deprived neighbourhoods. People in these areas would use routes on their doorstep more than in better off areas and their health is likely to be poorer

Finding 3:

Children were present in the group for 23% of visits in the Wiltshire surveys

Conclusion 3:

It would be beneficial to encourage more families to increase their use of the CAN. Examples of how this could be done include continuing to host family friendly events at Wiltshire Council's countryside sites and increasing accessibility for buggies by removing stiles or replacing them with gates

7.3 Demographic changes

Finding 4:

Population growth in Wiltshire:

- the population grew by 5.3% from 2002 to 2010
- this trend is expected to continue, with a 7.5% increase in the county's population from 2010 to 2021²⁶

Conclusion 4:

An increasing population will lead to greater use of the network. As much of the demand for the CAN is from where people live, upgrades to the network around new housing sites must be sought

Finding 5:

Ageing population in Wiltshire:

- the population is ageing considerably more rapidly than average increases across England or the south-west. There was a growth of 20% in the number of people aged 65 or over between 2002 and 2010
- this trend is expected to continue, with a further 35% increase in the number of people over 65 in Wiltshire from 2010 to 2021²⁷

²⁶ Wiltshire Council, NHS Wiltshire, Wiltshire Assembly (2013). p10

²⁷ Ibid. p11

Conclusion 5:

If older people are to keep active and therefore healthy, they will need a more accessible network as they are more likely to find stiles (and sometimes surfacing and latches) difficult than other people. This highlights the need to replace stiles with gaps or gates on key routes, which can also benefit wheelchair users and parents with buggies and children

7.4 Disability

Finding 6:

- 32% of Wiltshire's residents say that they have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity. Of these, 56% say it limits their activities in some way (i.e. 18% of the total population asked)²⁸
- Many of those who say disability limits their activities will have a mobility impairment. This could be, for example:
 - being blind
 - a wheelchair user
 - not being able to walk very far
 - finding uneven surfaces painful to walk on
 - finding gradients, climbing over stiles or opening stiff latches or other informal gate closures difficult

Conclusion 6:

The requirements for improving accessibility for people with these sorts of disability are generally the same as discussed in conclusion 5



The Disabled Ramblers using their rugged mobility scooters on their expedition around Salisbury Plain

²⁸ Ibid. p29

8 Action plan

8.1 How the action plan has been produced

The action plan in the CAIP has been produced by considering the following:

- 1) statutory responsibilities (section 4.1)
- 2) local and national strategies, particularly the strategic objectives in LTP3 (section 4.2)
- 3) research to consider how people are using the CAN (section 7)
- 4) a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis of the CAN. This was compiled through:
 - a workshop undertaken with user groups
 - a review of the issues raised in the first ROWIP
 - a review of the actions in the first ROWIP

The full SWOT analysis is shown in Appendix 8.

The action plan has been formed by asking the following questions:

- 1) What are the **key issues** the action plan must address?
- 2) What **opportunities** are there to address these issues?
- 3) What **actions** need to be undertaken to fulfil these opportunities?

The CAIP is an aspirational document. The ability to achieve the actions will depend on what staff and financial resources are available in the future. However, it provides a framework broadly agreed upon by stakeholders as to the direction the management of the CAN should be taking and what opportunities should be taken when they arise.

8.2 Key issues

6 key issues were identified through the research. Each of the opportunities to address these issues forms a section of the action plan.

Key Issue 1 – public awareness

People might not use the access network fully due to lack of knowledge of their options or their legal rights.

Opportunity 1 – promote greater use of the network for a variety of purposes. This will bring knock-on benefits for health, the rural economy and a better appreciation of the countryside.

Key issue 2 - ease of use

In places the network could be easier to use. Sometimes busy roads have to be used to link up paths, some routes do not go where people want to go and parts of the CAN are difficult for people with mobility impairments to use.

Opportunity 2 – create a more coherent network. Provide new access where people want to go, better access for all in key locations and reduce severance by busy roads.

Key issue 3 – improving effectiveness

Wiltshire has a very large CAN, so the allocation of limited funding has to bring the most benefit to the most number of people and also reflect the council's legal obligations.

Opportunity 3 – increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the network for the benefit of users and landowners.

Key issue 4 – definitive mapping

The rights of way network is constantly changing, with routes being added, extinguished or diverted. There are many inconsistencies in the recorded network.

Opportunity 4 – prioritise changes to the definitive map which work towards a more coherent network.

Key Issue 5 – development

Construction of new buildings and other infrastructure often has impacts on the CAN.

Opportunity 5 - new developments should retain or create good links in the CAN. Provide excellent opportunities for new residents to access local services and the countryside.

Key issue 6 – partnerships

It is increasingly important to work in partnership with other organisations and volunteers to maintain and enhance the network.

Opportunity 6 – increase involvement of external organisations and volunteers to allow more local desires to be met, lever in additional funding and enable a better understanding between users of each other's needs.

8.3 Likely funding sources for CAIP actions

- Much of the funding for implementing the plan will come from the service budget. However, in the foreseeable future it is expected that there will be continuing reductions in local authority funding. This will increase the need for creative solutions to be found if the aspirations of the CAIP are to be realised
- LTP3 should continue to provide a small, specific budget for CAIP improvements. This is often used to provide match funding to help lever in external funding
- Developer contributions, ie when new housing, industrial sites etc. are constructed
- Wiltshire Council Area Board funding
- Other organisations and charities whose aims overlap with those in in the CAIP, eg Landfill Community Fund, public health funding sources etc.

8.4 Action plan key

Policy – our approach to delivering the opportunities

Action – the specific tasks to be delivered

Strategic objectives – the LTP3 objectives each policy will deliver (see section 4.2)

Performance indicator – the measure that will be used to monitor progress

Opportunity 1 – promote greater use of the Countryside Access Network (CAN) for a variety of purposes. This will bring knock-on benefits for health, the rural economy and give people a better appreciation of the countryside

Objective		Actions to achieve objective	Performance measures	Key LTP strategic objectives
1-1	Improve signposting and waymarking	<p>Good signposting and waymarking is essential as it gives people confidence of their rights, reduces straying from routes and advertises the existence of the network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a well signposted and waymarked CAN • Ensure waymarking follows the legal lines of right of way • Consider providing destinations and distances on signs if external funding is available • Consider using volunteers to help maintain signs and waymarking • Ensure interpretation boards and signage at countryside sites are well maintained 	<p>1. What proportion of broken or missing signposts have been repaired or replaced?</p> <p>2. Which schemes have been undertaken that enhance signing?</p>	SO2, SO5, SO6, SO13, SO14, SO17, SO18
1-2	Promote the physical and mental health benefits of using the CAN for walking, cycling and horse riding	<p>A key government objective is to improve the health of the nation. The CAN provides an asset to help achieve this and unlike most forms of exercise, it is free at the point of use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and support (e.g. through surfacing, good maintenance and publicity) walking, cycling and horse riding initiatives which promote active lifestyles and wellbeing, e.g. Walking for Health, Riding for the Disabled 	Which health related initiatives have been supported?	SO2, SO5, SO6, SO13, SO14, SO15, SO17, SO18
1-3	Promote and improve the CAN for utility journeys	<p>The CAN provides links away from traffic both within and between settlements, so it can be used for accessing shops, schools, work etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local communities and other partners to promote utility routes and undertake improvements (e.g. new links, improved surfacing, road safety measures or changing the status of a route from footpath to footway/cycleway) 	Which utility links have been improved, created and promoted?	SO2, SO5, SO6, SO8, SO12, SO13, SO17, SO18

1-4	Promote and improve the CAN for leisure and tourism purposes	<p>The network allows enjoyment of the beauty of the countryside and nature and also provides access to heritage sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form effective partnerships with tourism and heritage organisations, Town Councils, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty authorities/boards etc. • Support schemes which promote tourism for both visitors and residents to help boost the local economy (e.g. "Walkers are Welcome" scheme) • Work in partnership to undertake improvements where necessary • Promote tourist information such as maps and guides, e.g. through web pages and direct contact with members of the public 	Which tourism related initiatives have been supported?	SO1, SO6, SO16, SO18
1-5	Promote the CAN for those with mobility impairments and parents with pushchairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve information on the options available to those with mobility impairments and parents with pushchairs 	What promotion of accessible routes has been undertaken?	SO2, SO5, SO6, SO15, SO17, SO18
1-6	Promote the work undertaken by the Rights of Way and Countryside Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep people informed of the work of the service through press releases, social media, user groups, events and talks where requested • Continually review web content, add new useful links • Consider improvements to the on-line rights of way mapping 	<p>1. Press releases are produced and events undertaken</p> <p>2. Improvements are made to the website</p>	SO6, SO17, SO18
1-7	Promote use of the country parks	<p>Wiltshire Council's country parks provide venues for events organised by the council and other organisations. They are also used by organisations such as mental health charities to help with rehabilitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote these uses and events and seek additional uses, e.g. to use the parks as a potential "stepping stone" to the wider CAN 	<p>1. What groups have been using the country parks?</p> <p>2. What events have been undertaken at the country parks?</p>	SO6, SO17

1-8	Promote responsible use of the CAN	<p>Members of the public need to be clear about their rights and responsibilities when using the CAN</p> <p>This can be done through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day to day contact • Promoting the Countryside Code • Signing the network well to inform users what they can and cannot do and where they can legally go • Reducing irresponsible or illegal use of the network (e.g. motorbikes using bridleways), including liaising with police 	What initiatives have been undertaken to reduce irresponsible or illegal use of the network?	SO6, SO17, SO18
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Opportunity 2 – create a more coherent network. Provide new access where people want to go, better access for all in key locations and reduce severance by busy roads

Objective		Actions to achieve objective	Performance measures	Key LTP strategic objectives
2-1	Create and promote new access where there is a strong demand or likely to be a future need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with local communities, user groups, landowners and other organisations, identify missing links and fill them where possible, particularly near settlements and "honey pot" sites • This could involve new links (e.g. to link housing with the countryside or to reach Access Land parcels which currently don't have a route to them), or making existing links available to wider range of users • Consider creating formal rights of way, permissive paths, installing bridges, initiatives on private land such as toll access etc. • Seek to retain useful existing permissive paths when agreements expire. These will mainly be routes created through the DEFRA "Higher Level Stewardship" scheme 	What new access opportunities have been created and promoted?	SO2, SO5, SO6, SO13, SO14, SO17, SO18
2-2	Create and promote circular route opportunities	<p>Generally people prefer circular routes rather than going out and back along the same route</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with local communities, user groups, landowners and other organisations, identify, create and promote circular route opportunities, particularly near settlements and "honey pot" sites • This could involve creating new links or making existing links available to wider range of users 	What new circular routes have been created and promoted?	SO6, SO14, SO17, SO18

2-3	Reduce the extent to which the continuity of the network is interrupted by busy roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with local communities and user groups, identify locations on the CAN where road crossings and stretches of road linking up rights of way are a major safety concern • Consider options such as improving visibility, creating new crossing facilities, traffic management, using existing bridges/underpasses, undertaking diversions, creating new routes set back from the road or using highway verges (taking into account that some are protected for wildlife) • Severance can also be due to watercourses, railways etc. 	<p>1. Problem locations are identified and given a priority score</p> <p>2. Schemes are undertaken based on the prioritised list and achievability</p>	SO2, SO5, SO6, SO8, SO13, SO14, SO17, SO18
2-4	Improve key entrance points to the CAN	<p>People need to feel confident and safe at entrance points to the CAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with local communities and user groups identify key locations where the entrance points are poor • Consider options to overcome the issues people experience at these points <p>Some attractive parts of the CAN are little used because they are difficult to get to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where feasible, provide or encourage improved access opportunities where there is felt to be "suppressed demand", eg through working with bus companies or providing new parking facilities 	<p>1. Problem locations are identified and given a priority score</p> <p>2. Schemes are undertaken based on the prioritised list and achievability</p>	SO6, SO8, SO17, SO18
2-5	Improve conditions on the network for those with mobility impairments	<p>Some people find routes difficult to use due to uneven surfaces. Stiles can be a barrier for many with mobility impairments and pushchairs, they can also be a problem for people walking dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is demand to make certain routes more accessible, improve maintenance (e.g. cut back vegetation further) and undertake surface improvements • Working within the framework of Wiltshire Council's gaps, gates and stiles policy, seek to replace stiles with gaps or gates where demand is greatest and landowners are willing • Encourage landowners to follow best practice for furniture design, as set out in the gaps, gates and stiles policy, including provision of dog access where possible • In partnership with user groups, promote existing and create new accessible trails where they would be well used • Improve surfacing on byways open to all traffic where there is demand for those with mobility impairments to be able to drive to remote locations (e.g. to enjoy views) 	What accessibility improvements have been undertaken on key routes?	SO6, SO15, SO17, SO18

2-6	Improve surfacing in problem locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with local communities, user groups, landowners and other organisations, identify well used locations where surfacing is an issue • Seek to improve the situation through cutting back vegetation, improving drainage and/or using appropriate materials to surface 	What surface improvements have been undertaken?	SO6, SO17, SO18
2-7	Support the restoration of canals in the county	<p>The Wilts & Berks Canal and Thames & Severn Canal are currently being restored by volunteers. The Wilts & Berks Towpath Challenge seeks to have a publicly accessible route along the line of the future canal by 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input into these projects to seek the best possible access for walkers, cyclists, people with mobility impairments and horse riders 	What new access opportunities have been created along restored canals?	SO1, SO15, SO17, SO18

Opportunity 3 – increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the network for the benefit of users and landowners

Objective		Actions to achieve objective	Performance measures	Key LTP strategic objectives
3-1	Use technology to improve the effectiveness of the service	<p>A database is being developed to help manage the CAN better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record all the structures (i.e. gates, signs, bridges etc.) on site using hand-held computers • Record faults reported by members of the public or found through surveys undertaken by staff or volunteers. Use systems such as MyWiltshire to manage the faults, recording how and when these issues were resolved. This will help to improve feedback to members of the public • Explore the merits of using automatic counters or carrying out manual surveys in order to increase knowledge of use of the network and the impact of schemes 	<p>1. Structures have been recorded on the database</p> <p>2. The MyWiltshire reporting tool is being used to record and monitor the fixing of faults on the network</p> <p>3. What before and after monitoring has been undertaken to assess scheme benefits?</p>	SO6, SO17, SO18

3-2	Review policies and procedures to make sure they are "fit for purpose"	<p>Systems thinking will be used to look in detail at work processes in order to take out stages which do not "add value"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review processes within the service and undertake changes to make them more efficient and effective, bearing in mind that legislation sets out how some processes must be undertaken • Produce management plans for countryside sites • Review policies when required 	What policies and procedures have been reviewed?	SO6, SO17, SO18
3-3	Protect the rights of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance to landowners to ensure they are aware of their legal responsibilities • Enter discussions with landowners or other parties to resolve issues and undertake enforcement where discussions are not effective • Liaise with police to undertake enforcement where necessary • Work with enforcement team to seek to reduce fly tipping on the CAN • Add records of public rights of way to the Definitive Map and Statement to ensure they are legally recognised 	<p>1. What guidance has been issued to landowners?</p> <p>2. What issues have been resolved through discussions and/or enforcement?</p>	SO6, SO17, SO18
3-4	Recognise local materials, structures and character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to retain local styles and materials in the network. In some cases this may require external funding • Investigate the viability of using alternative types of wood for access furniture (ie stiles, gates etc.) to increase lifespan 	What schemes have been undertaken which recognise local character?	SO6, SO17, SO18
3-5	Use partnerships and legal powers to minimise irresponsible use of rights of way and the need for Traffic Regulation Orders	<p>Irresponsible or illegal use of the CAN sometimes causes serious and very costly damage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with user groups, police and other partners to promote responsible use of cars and motorbikes • Where serious damage occurs, voluntary restraint or temporary / permanent Traffic Regulation Orders will be used to stop further damage or to enable repairs to be undertaken 	What voluntary restraint/traffic regulation orders have been undertaken?	SO6, SO17, SO18

3-6	Maintain the network on a reactive basis, except where volunteers are able to undertake proactive surveys	<p>Reactive inspections of faults will be carried out following notification of a defect. This could be ad-hoc or by proactive, structured surveys by volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the feasibility of parish councils and volunteers surveying their local network and use this system where appropriate Manage the issues raised in the surveys through the My Wiltshire App 	<p>1. How many parishes have been surveyed?</p> <p>2. What proportion of issues have been resolved within 1 month of the parish surveys?</p>	SO6, SO17, SO18
3-7	Secure an appropriate annual budget for maintenance, legal work and CAIP schemes	<p>Studies have shown that the cost:benefits ratio of countryside access, particularly in terms of promoting tourism and healthy lifestyles, greatly outweighs the relatively small costs of maintaining the network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wiltshire Council will recognise these benefits and seek to secure the funding required to maximise these opportunities through effective maintenance 	Has an appropriate annual budget been secured?	SO1, SO2, SO5, SO6, SO14, SO15, SO17, SO18
3-8	Protect and enhance the natural environment when managing the CAN	<p>Much of the CAN is greenspace, which provides habitats for wildlife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the network in a way which supports the needs of wildlife Follow legislation on protected species <p>Old materials from road schemes are frequently re-used on the CAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road planings and the associated budget to lay them, as well as other materials, will continue to be made available for use on the CAN 	<p>1. Legislation is considered when managing the network</p> <p>2. What schemes have reused materials from road schemes?</p>	SO6, SO17, SO18

Opportunity 4 – prioritise changes to the definitive map which work towards a more coherent network

Objective		Actions to achieve objective	Performance measures	Key LTP strategic objectives
4-1	Maintain and update the Definitive Map and Statement	<p>The Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) is the legal record of public rights of way. It is constantly being revised based on new claims and historic evidence. However, it is likely that there will be a legislation change which means in 2026 it will be closed to new claims based on pre-1949 evidence. As a result, a prioritisation scheme has been developed to deal with applications to modify the DMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications are determined relative to the prioritisation scheme <p>Many problems with existing rights of way have been recorded (e.g. gaps in the network, dead-ends, changes in the status of paths at parish boundaries such as a bridleway becoming a footpath, uncertainty about the width of rights of way etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake changes to reduce fragmentation of the network where it will be of most benefit to users 	<p>1. How many applications have been determined relative to the number of applications received annually?</p> <p>2. How many orders have been undertaken which resolve fragmentation issues?</p>	SO6, SO12, SO17, SO18

Opportunity 5 - new developments should retain or create good links in the CAN, providing excellent opportunities for new residents to access local services and the countryside

Objective		Actions to achieve objective	Performance measures	Key LTP strategic objectives
5-1	Secure funds for improvements to the CAN from planning applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with planners and developers to ensure the impact of development on the CAN is acceptable • Require developments to fund improvements to the existing CAN (both on-site and off-site) and provide new links to meet the needs of the new users / residents of the development 	What improvements and contributions have been negotiated from developers?	SO6, SO12, SO17, SO18

5-2	Consider new access possibilities on Wiltshire Council land and disused transport infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek useful new links on council owned land where appropriate, particularly when tenancies change or land is sold off • Seek to retain a footpath, bridleway or byway as appropriate if transport infrastructure such as roads, railways or canals are closed 	<p>1. What new links have been created on council land?</p> <p>2. What rights of way links have been retained when transport infrastructure closes?</p>	SO6, SO12, SO17, SO18
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Opportunity 6 – increase involvement of external organisations and volunteers to allow more local desires to be met, to attract additional funding and to enable a better understanding between users of each other’s needs

Objective		Actions to achieve objective	Performance measures	Key LTP strategic objectives
6-1	Maintain existing and develop new partnerships to help deliver projects	<p>Partnerships help to create local ownership of projects, ensure they meet local aspirations, keep people informed, gain political support and help bids for external funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain existing effective partnerships with local residents, user groups, parish councils, other local authorities and government bodies 	What projects have been delivered due to effective partnerships?	SO6, SO17, SO18
6-2	Encourage community and volunteer input into the management and enhancement of the CAN	<p>Local communities and volunteers undertake improvements such as installing gates and cutting back vegetation or may undertake surveys, consult with landowners and offer advice. Parish councils also have some legal powers to manage the rights of way network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek more involvement of local communities and volunteers in the network • Seek funding in addition to the normal operations budgets for supporting the work of communities and volunteers • Support parish councils if they wish to use their legal powers 	What schemes have been undertaken with communities and volunteers?	SO6, SO17, SO18

6-3	Assist local communities to undertake improvements they feel are important through the Paths Improvement Grant Scheme (PIGS) and other methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Transport Plan funding will continue to be made available for PIGS and other locally driven projects • Advertise PIGS and support parish councils and community groups in undertaking their own schemes (e.g. upgrading stiles to kissing gates, surfacing or creating new links) 	How many PIGS schemes have been undertaken annually?	SO6, SO17, SO18
6-4	Create strong links with other policy areas	<p>The CAN helps to meet the aims of a number of other organisations and policy areas such as transport, planning, biodiversity, health and tourism. Good policy links will help to show why the network is important, promote usage and attract external funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on and influence relevant emerging policy documents • Consider other policy documents when managing the CAN 	What link have been made with other policy areas?	SO6, 12, 17 and 18

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