

Chapter 4

Assessments

1. This section outlines the research that was undertaken to determine key audiences for countryside access, their needs and preferences. In addition, members of the public were asked to send in ideas for improvements to the network, the results of this are also presented below, together with a system for prioritising each suggestion.

Research

2. Faber Maunsell were commissioned in 2005 to carry out a study that would:
 - Identify key audiences for rights of way improvement planning and
 - Capture their needs and preferences for countryside access and recreation in Cumbria. The full findings are available at <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/roads-transport/cycleandwalk/default.asp>.

Key audiences

3. Key audiences were identified using existing research as a starting point, which categorises users in various ways. While there was considerable research in relation to access to the National Parks, there was less information available for Cumbria outside of the National Parks.
4. Common user groups were classified as key audiences, while 'other users' covers all other recreational interests, including water and land-based adventure activities. Local community interests were accounted for by including 'rural residents' as a key audience. Land managers were included in view of their role in countryside and access management. Potential or under-represented user groups were also each given a key audience category, in line with ROWIP guidance.
5. As a result, fourteen key audiences were identified (see table 4 below).

Table 4 : The fourteen key audiences together with how each group is characterised and defined

Key Audiences		Definitions
KA1	Land or property owners and Countryside Managers	Any person who owns or manages land
KA2	Urban residents	For the purposes of this study – anyone describing their place of residence as urban rather than rural
KA3	Rural residents	For the purposes of this study – anyone describing their place of residence as rural rather than urban
KA4	Passive Visitors or tourists	In Cumbria on holiday/visiting but are not intending to do any countryside activity. May be there, for example, to visit museum, country home or have afternoon teas.
KA5	Latent users	Individual who in the past participated in an activity but has lapsed for any reason, or an individual who has not yet participated in the activity but has an interest in doing so, if conditions were met. (for example, single parents who no longer walk or cycle, or people who own a bike but no longer feel confident cycling in traffic)
KA6	Serious Walkers	Individual for whom walking is a main leisure activity and interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular participation; • Long distance walks; • Long duration of walks; • Well-equipped (for example, boots, rucksacks); and • Greater incidence of membership of walking organisations.
KA7	Casual Walkers	Individual for whom walking is an interest. Relative to serious walkers, casual walkers participate in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter distance walks; • Walks of shorter duration; • Less strenuous walks (for example, flatter). • And have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More minimal equipment; • Lower incidence of membership of walking organisations.
KA8	Serious Cyclists	Individual for whom cycling is a main leisure activity and interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular participation; • Long distance cycling; • Long duration of cycling; • Ownership of more specialist equipment; and • Greater incidence of membership of cycling organisations.

Key Audiences		Definitions
KA9	Casual Cyclists	Individual for whom cycling is an interest. Relative to serious cyclists, casual cyclists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate in shorter distance cycle rides; • participate in cycle rides of shorter duration; • participate in less strenuous cycle rides (for example, flatter); and • Have less specialist equipment.
KA10	Equestrians	Individual for whom horse riding is an interest or leisure activity
KA11	Other Users	Includes wide range of other activities, including water and land-based adventure activities
KA12	People with Limited Mobility	This includes people in wheelchairs, electric scooters, using frames or sticks, parents or carers with pushchairs, people with visual impairments and people who simply have difficulty in negotiating rough ground or stiles
KA13	People from Black & Minority Ethnic groups	Any UK resident who would not describe themselves as White British
KA14	Young People	Aged 13-19

Needs and preferences

6. Knowledge gaps relating these audiences and their needs and preferences were identified and investigated¹. In addition, the views of the Local Access Forum on needs and preferences were gathered.

7. 'Needs' and 'preferences' were defined as:

Need: A need is a measure that is critical to a decision to undertake an activity or make use of a right of way or other access resource. For land owners and countryside managers, a need is a measure that is critical to the efficient management of land.

Preference: A preference is a measure that is not critical, but one that;

- Would enhance the experience of use;
- Would increase the frequency of use;
- Would give greater choice of use; and
- May encourage a more lengthy period of participation.

For land owners and countryside managers, a preference is a measure that makes the management of land easier.

¹ Focus groups took place with:

- Young people,
- People with limited mobility,
- Passive visitors and
- Latent users (both urban and rural)

While written consultations took place with parish councils, depth interviews took place with other audiences not previously consulted and a workshop took place with members and representatives of the Local Access Forums.

8. A comprehensive list of needs and preferences for the fourteen key audiences were identified. The following findings summarise this part of the research:
- The majority² of identified needs and preferences met the key aims identified in the Countryside Access Strategy.
 - Some were directly linked, for example encouraging sustainable travel.
 - Some key audience's needs were assessed as currently being met.
 - Some³ needs and preferences were common to several key audiences, for example improvements to public transport.
 - A number of conflicting needs and preferences were identified, for example:
 - the provision of facilities and infrastructure requested by passive visitors, versus a desire to keep the countryside natural expressed by rural residents, serious walkers and land managers or –
 - the adequacy of waymarking: urban residents and passive visitors requested more (both in number and the information on finger-posts) vs. rural residents and serious walkers who consider the present provision adequate.
9. Although many needs and preferences identified were both common to the LDNP and the remainder of Cumbria outside the National Park boundary, there were a number of differences in issues between the two geographical areas, as follows:
- Opinions on maintenance of the rights of way network were overall more positive within the LDNP, where few concerns were raised concerning the waymarking and surface conditions of routes.
 - However, outside the National Park boundary, improved maintenance and waymarking were identified as key needs and preferences; and
 - Improved connectivity of the rights of way network, particularly bridleways, was identified as a key need and preference in the area of Cumbria outside the National Park boundary, whereas within the LDNP, identification of this need or preference was less prevalent.
10. In summary, the needs and the two main preferences of the fourteen key audiences are: (see table 5 on next page)

² An example of a need and preference which conflicts with the aims of the CAS is to provide car-parking at the start of walks.

³ Examples of needs and preferences common to several key audiences were: public transport improvements; publicity and promotional material detailing 'what to do and where to do it'; short circular walks that are easier to use and accompanied by a guide leaflet which covers points of interest; safer routes and fostering confidence in the network (to combat route uncertainty, fear of getting lost and competence level).

Table 5 : The needs and top two preferences of the fourteen key audiences

Key Audience	Prioritised Needs and Preferences	
KA1 Land or property owners or Countryside Managers	Need	Funding for proper access management
	Preferences	Control of unauthorised access, responsible behaviour by users
		Assistance with instigating rights of way diversions, for example, around farmyards
KA2 Urban Residents	Need	Public transport improvements
	Preferences	Information on where to go and what to do
		Improved public transport integration, bus-train and bus-bus
KA3 Rural Residents	Need	Public transport improvements
	Preferences	Information on where to go and what to do
		Concentrate on network of paths that lead to specific points of interest
KA4 Passive Visitors or Tourists	Needs	Public transport improvements
		Cheaper and more short term car parking, especially at popular access points
		On-site information on routes – distances, terrain, gradients etc
		Indoor activities, including for use as poor weather alternative
		Information on where to go and what to do, and the facilities available
		Circular routes for walking, short and flat with guide leaflets
		Improved waymarking
		Traffic-free cycling routes, flat and short
		Pubs open at lunchtimes for refreshments
	Preferences	Assessed as currently being met
KA5 Latent Users	Needs	Public transport improvements
		Information on where to go and what to do and what facilities are available
		Information on where to find short, flat, stile free trails that are suitable for pushchairs and young children
		Confidence in using the access network or participating in recreation, particularly cycling, for example, cycling competence, map reading abilities and adequate waymarking
KA6 Serious Walkers	Needs	Assessed as currently being met
	Preferences	Longer distance and all day walks
		Public transport improvements
KA7 Casual Walkers	Needs	Assessed as currently being met
	Preferences	Circular walking routes, 2-3 hours duration, walking routes with a purpose
		Public transport improvements

KA8 Serious Cyclists – Mountain Biking	Needs	Wider opportunities for mountain bikers
		Range of challenging routes, with grading system for mountain bikes to inform users of where to find routes of their desired standard
		Education / signage on which routes can be used legally
	Preferences	Mountain bike routes close to home
		Greater opportunity or flexibility to transport cycles, especially in groups, on public transport
KA8 Serious Cyclists – Other Cycling	Needs	Long distance continuous routes away from main roads
		Variety of cycle routes
		Cycle ways to reach the countryside
	Preferences	Continuity of routes, removal of physical severance
		Consistency of standard on cycle routes
KA9 Casual Cyclists	Needs	Traffic-free routes
		Circular cycling routes
		Nature / grading / route information for traffic-free routes, including distances, destinations
	Preferences	One way cycle routes integrated with public transport
		Variety of cycle routes
KA10 Equestrians	Needs	Extend and 'join up' bridleway network where limited
	Preferences	Wider variety of riding routes
		Traffic-free riding routes
KA11 Other Users – Recreational Vehicle Users, Climbers and Water-based activities	Needs	Assessed as currently being met
	Preferences	Sites or centres for authorised use by recreational vehicles
		More routes that can be legally used by recreational vehicles
		Barrier to new climbers is cost of equipment
		Proximity of car parking to climbing areas due to need to carry equipment
		Better access onto lakes for sailing craft and boats
		Better access for canoeing, especially on white water
KA12 People with Limited Mobility	Needs	Barrier-free routes
		Short circular paths (distance limited by battery life, children's needs)
		Sound, level surfaces, limited incline on routes
		Sufficiently wide route for chairs, companions, assistants to allow side-by-side walking
		Comprehensive information about what to expect (conditions, facilities etc) before setting out

		Information about what facilities are already available
		Someone to do activities with
		Accessible public transport
		Accessible toilets
		Easy to negotiate stiles (with wide, stable steps)
		Control of overhanging, hazardous vegetation
		Easy to open gates
		Organised walks from easily accessible locations or served by public transport with knowledgeable guides
		Well-maintained steps with firm edges and high visibility markings at edges
		Preferences
	Stiles to be capable of being used by young children and elderly people	
KA13 Black & Minority Ethnic Groups	Needs	Confidence to view the countryside as 'familiar territory'
		'Welcoming attitude' by non-BME resident communities and visitors
		Personal safety
		Adequate provision of facilities e.g. suitable places of worship, restaurants that meet dietary requirements
		Information provision on what facilities are available
	Preferences	Short circular walks with a purpose
	Organised group visits	
KA14 Young People (13-19 years)	Needs	More affordable and reliable public transport
		Information about where to go and activities available
		Challenging, exciting activities
		Low cost activities
	Preferences	Centres offering a range of activities in a single location to minimise need to travel
		Need someone to organise them

Development of the prioritisation methodology

11. From the needs and preferences research, and stakeholder workshops, a scoring system was developed, to help decide which specific rights of way improvements should go in the statements of action.

12. The necessary characteristics of the prioritisation mechanism are:

- Simple to use and understand – due to the large number of action ideas to be processed the mechanism needs to be capable of use with the minimum need for specialist knowledge,
- Fair and objective – no one user group or type of action should be discriminated against,
- Transparent,
- Focused on meeting the aims of the Countryside Access Strategy and takes account of the needs and preferences of key audiences,
- Capable of application to a wide variety of types of actions.

13. The scoring mechanism judges not only which information has been provided on the action suggestion form, but also takes into account of:

- Who would benefit (does the suggestion meet a need or a preference of one or more key audience),
- How many people might benefit and to what degree (for example, marginal benefit, through to significant difference),
- Is the suggestion in a strategic location⁴,
- The impact of the proposal on the rights of way network (for example, how it would contribute to a more effective network of routes) – a high scoring project might join missing links, provide a circular route, or provide access to previously inaccessible places such as open access island sites,
- Accessibility (for example, what access improvements would be made, such as surfacing, waymarking, promotional material, less restrictive furniture),
- Safety (for example, personal safety such as managing road crossings or provision of alternative route to avoid traffic, street lighting in urban areas or segregation),
- Whether and how any of the six themes⁵ promoted by the Countryside Access Strategy are met (for example, action results in environmental improvement, matches with public transport service, or specifically aims to address social inclusion).

14. The prioritisation mechanism includes three distinct stages:

- Stage one – Initial Screening;
- Stage two – Initial scoring of projects;
- Stage three – Moderation, Review and Programming.

⁴ Strategic locations were:

- Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres (see figure 11 in appendix for information on the Joint Structure Plan for a more detailed explanation of Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres / hubs).
- National / regional / proposed strategic cycle routes (including Sustrans routes),
- Promoted routes : Pennine Way, Pennine Bridleway, Hadrian's Wall, Wainwright's Coast to Coast route, Cumbria Way, Cumbria Coastal Way, The Eskdale Trail and The Dales Way.
- Other information from Management Plans / Parish Plans

⁵ Education, Health, Local Economy, Social Inclusion and Sustainable Transport and the environment

Consultation for action suggestions

15. Members of the public, parish councils, recreation groups and organisations were invited to submit action suggestions during a three-month consultation period from December 2005 – March 2006. The term 'Action' has been adopted to denote all project ideas that might include suggestions for rights of way improvements, schemes etc. Actions can include physical measures such as new links in the network, improved maintenance, or 'softer' measures, such as promotional material, or services such as outreach projects, and health walks etc. Over 1200 responses were received, scored and mapped.
16. This consultation provides our assessment of the adequacy of the countryside access network.

Stage one – initial screening

17. Stage one of the prioritisation mechanism is an initial evaluation to ensure that each proposal broadly meets the aims and objectives of the Countryside Access Strategy and one or more of the identified needs or preferences for the fourteen key audiences.

Stage two – action prioritisation or scoring

18. Stage two is the scoring process. The maximum score a project can receive is 150. The scores and weighting factors of the various criteria were developed through consultation with the three Local Access Forums and other user group representatives.

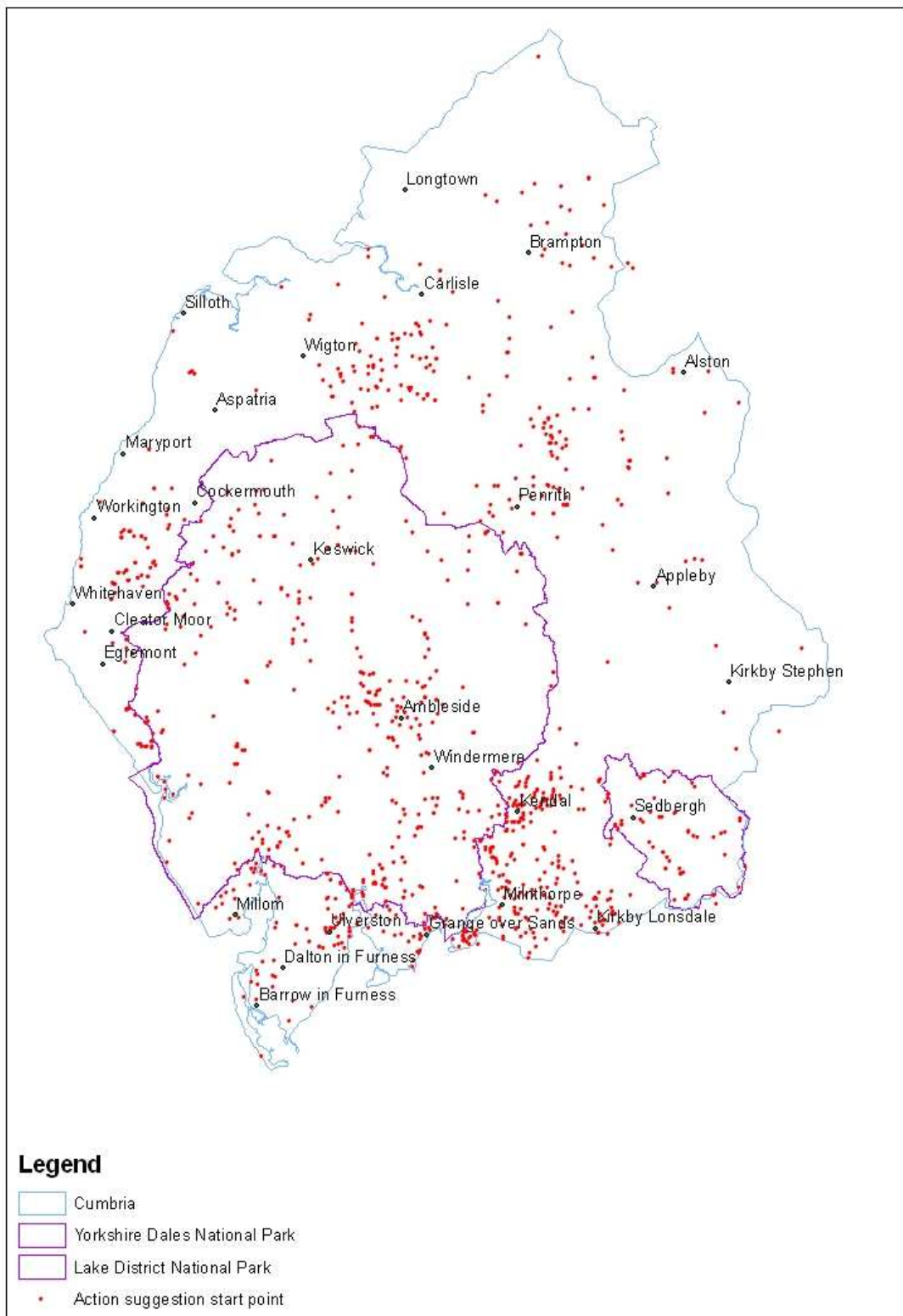
Stage three – moderation, review and programming

19. Stage three is a review process. The score needs to be assessed for rationality and not just taken at face value as the scoring system is not entirely objective. Aspects to consider during this moderation stage include:
- Impact on landscape, ecology and archaeology of the area,
 - Interaction with other types of proposals,
 - Need for variety of types of action or aimed at different beneficiaries or geographical spread,
 - Possibility of achieving a 'package' of measures where action suggestions adjoin,
 - Cost of the action and value for money,
 - Funding need and availability,
 - Partnership working to deliver the action,
 - Any adverse impacts and
 - Achievability (legal and ownership obstacles and length of time to overcome these).
20. None of the above should impact on an action's inherent priority, but are issues for programming rather than prioritisation. Following stage three, the project ideas can be planned for within the Statement of Action (see chapter 5).

Analysis

21. It is possible to view the spatial distribution of the suggestions through a Geographical Information System (GIS - see figure 10). Further maps are included in the appendix that shows the top third-scoring projects by type of improvement requested.
22. Taking just the top-third scoring projects (over four hundred suggestions) the following results can be summarised:
 - There were many requests for new bridleway links, closely followed by cycle way links,
 - These types of projects also generally scored highly,
 - There is a representative spread of top-third scoring projects in each authority area.
23. Only three suggestions were received which were *explicitly described as* improvements for people with limited mobility, although making general improvements to surfacing or bridleway gates, for example, has benefits for many user-groups. It is possible during 'stage three' of the scoring process, which ensures a variety of types of action, to ensure that such projects are programmed for implementation. In addition, within the LDNP there is already a 'Miles Without Stiles routes' action plan taking this work forward.

Figure 10 : Map of Cumbria showing spatial distribution of action suggestions and National Park boundaries



Conclusions of the Assessments

24. We have assessed the existing opportunities available for different user-groups in Cumbria. The opportunities for people with limited mobility have been included – there is best practice to draw on in terms of barrier reduction, promoted barrier-free routes and access to information. However, there remain areas where improvements are called-for.
25. We have assessed the quality of existing countryside access (use and condition). There is a noticeable demand for improvements such as upgrades to routes and the condition of access furniture. Annual targets to improve the percentage of paths ‘easy to use’ are already nested in Cumbria County Council policies.
26. We have undertaken in-depth research to identify the needs and preferences of fourteen key audiences, now and for the future. A number of needs and preferences were common to several key audiences, for example, improvements to signing, to information, and integration with sustainable transport. The conclusions of this research have formed the basis of the statements of action.
27. We have assessed the adequacy of the network by inviting ‘action suggestions’ from a wide variety of consultees and the public. The amount of responses (1200) suggests that there is considerable demand for improvements, such as new links in the network.
28. We have prioritised the responses received with the help of a scoring system developed in consultation with the three Local Access Forums and user-group representatives. The scored project ideas enable a systematic approach to programming the statements of action. Some prioritised projects will appear in the final statements of action.
29. The draft Statements of Action are presented in Chapter 5.

Monitoring and Reviewing

30. This ROWIP is intended to be a dynamic, five-year action plan. Annual reviews will be published to monitor and review progress, with input from the Local Access Forums. As part of the annual review process, there will be scope for ‘action suggestions’ received during the preceding twelve months to be scored and mapped. This will enable new projects and initiatives to be considered for inclusion.