



Research Report

Rights of Way Improvement Plan Consultation – Equestrian Users

Findings from a survey of horse riders, drivers and owners within
Warwickshire about the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

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Introduction

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ("CROW") placed a duty on the County Council to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP), a 10-year plan for improving the provision of access to the countryside.

The plan will include the County Council's assessment of such things as;

- the extent to which Warwickshire's rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public,
- the opportunities provided by rights of way for exercise and open air recreation,
- the accessibility of the rights of way network to blind or partially sighted persons and those with mobility problems, and
- targets for the future of the rights of way network.

In order to assess what should be included in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, consultation with interested parties was undertaken. Seven different questionnaires were designed and distributed to walkers / general countryside users, cyclists, horse riders, land managers, motorised users, Parish / Town Councils and Tourist Information Centres. The results in this report relate to the findings from the questionnaires returned by **horse riders and drivers**. The consultation was carried out in August and September 2004.

Key findings

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) ride or hack out at least twice a week, only 6% ride or hack out less than once per week.
- Nearly all respondents (93%) ride on tarmac roads, 87% ride on unsurfaced roads or public bridleways and 54% ride on their own land.
- 73% of respondents feel that bridleways and unsurfaced roads are 'essential' to them as horse riders, and a further 22% think that they are 'very important'.
- Almost four in five respondents stated that they would be willing to pay for toll rides or permits.
- 60% of respondents rated the **condition** of the bridleway network as adequate or better.
- Over 65% of respondents rated the **network** of bridleways in their area as 'poor' or 'very poor'
- The two most significant factors which would encourage horse riders to make more use of bridleways are 'less road riding between bridleways' and 'better connection between bridleways'.
- The three things that put horse riders off using particular paths are 'fast or busy roads to ride across', 'difficult gates' and 'paths that are in poor condition or overgrown'.

Response rates

- Overall, 208 completed responses were received to the equestrian consultation. A total of 61 questionnaires were received through the Warwickshire County Council website, and 147 paper copies were returned.
- The vast majority of respondents to the questionnaire were female (91%).
- The age profile of respondents is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: "How old are you?"

Age group	% of respondents
Under 18	8%
18 – 29	16%
30 – 44	32%
45 – 59	37%
60 or over	7%

- All but one of the respondents classified themselves as 'White'.

Results – Horse and horse riding details

- More than one-half of respondents (53%) specified that they own their own horse at their own stables or grass livery, whilst a further 37% said that they own their own horse and it is kept at a livery yard. The remaining 10% do not have their own horses, with 7% using horses provided at riding schools and 3% using someone else's horse.
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) ride or hack out at least twice a week. Only 6% of respondents ride or hack out less than once a week. Respondents that own their own horse appear to hack or ride out more frequently than respondents who do not own a horse.
- Figure 2 shows the average time of the usual hack or ride out of respondents during different times of the year. Respondents spend nearly two hours on their average hack or ride on weekends in the summer, but it falls to less than one hour during weekdays in the winter.

Figure 2: Average hack or ride out times throughout the year

Time of year	Average time (mins)
In summer during the week	78
In summer at the weekend	109
In winter during the week	54
In winter at the weekend	85

- Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents spending time on hack and rides at different times throughout the year.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents spending time on hacks and ride outs throughout the year

	Half an hour or less	Half an hour to an hour	1 to 2 hours	Over 2 hours
In summer during the week	2.6%	38.5%	51.0%	7.8%
In summer at the weekend	2.2%	9.7%	60.8%	27.4%
In winter during the week	25.7%	43.3%	27.5%	3.5%
In winter at the weekend	3.8%	24.9%	61.1%	10.3%

- Nearly all of respondents (93%) ride on tarmac roads, 87% ride on unsurfaced roads or public bridleways and 54% ride on their own land or land belonging to the owner of the horse. Less than one-quarter of respondents (24%) use toll rides / permit schemes.
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) feel that bridleways and unsurfaced roads are 'essential' to them as horse riders. A further 22% think they are 'very important' and the remaining 5% think they are 'fairly important'..
- Figure 4 shows that the amount of time that riders spend on bridleways and unsurfaced roads varies depending on the individual. Approximately one in three (35%) respondents spends less than a quarter of their time on these routes, whilst two in five (40%) spend more than three-quarters of their time on them.

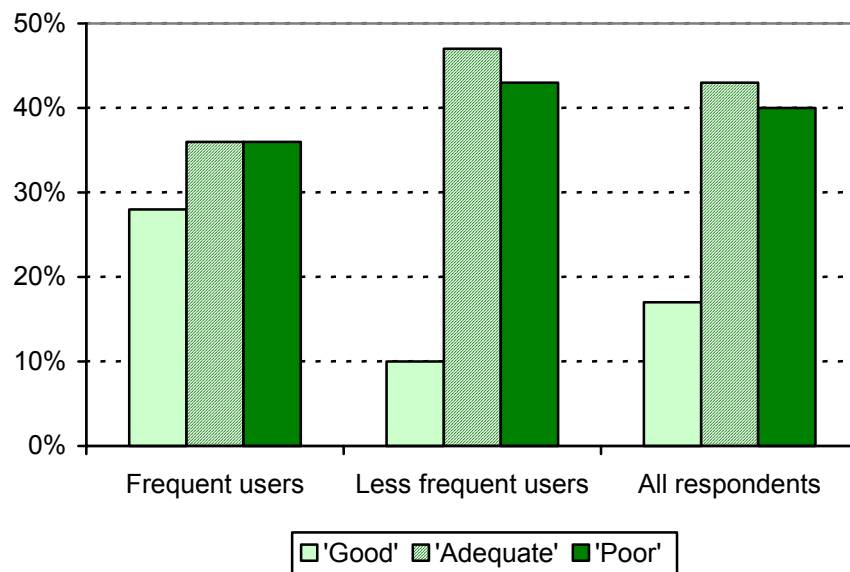
Figure 4: Percentage of hacking / riding time spent on bridleways and unsurfaced roads

Percentage of hack or ride spent on bridleways or unsurfaced roads	% of respondents
More than 75% of the time	14%
50% - 75% of the time	26%
25% – 49% of the time	25%
Less than 25% of the time	28%
None of the time	7%

Results – Satisfaction with bridleways

- Overall, 17% of respondents think that the condition of bridleways in their area is either 'good' or 'very good'. A further 43% think that bridleways in their area are 'adequate', whilst the remaining 40% think they are either 'poor' or 'very poor'.
- Respondents who spend more than half of their time on bridleways appear to be slightly more satisfied with the quality of the condition of them, compared to those who spend less time on them. Figure 5 shows the levels of satisfaction between the two sets of respondents.

Figure 5: Satisfaction with the condition of bridleways



- Overall, 15% of respondents think that the condition of bridleways in their area is either 'very good' or 'good', whilst 65% think that the condition is 'poor' or 'very poor'. The remaining 20% think that it is adequate.

- Respondents were asked what they thought of the network of bridleways in their area, the results are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: “How would you rate the network of bridleways in your area?”

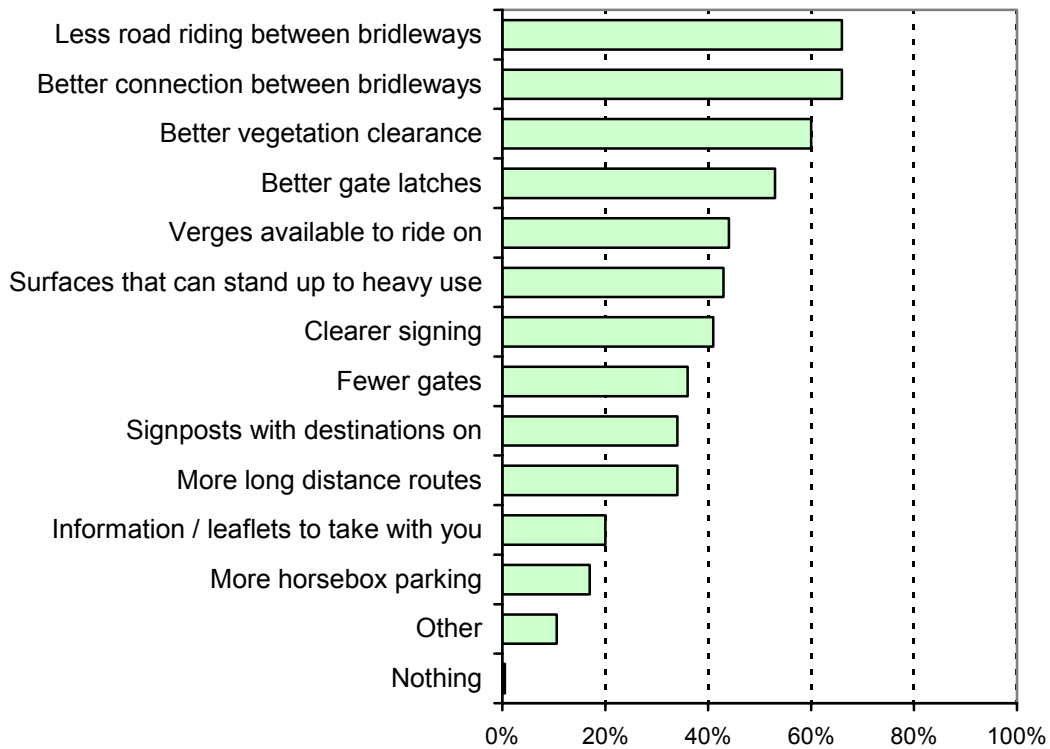


- Again, when the results are broken down to respondents who use the bridleway network the most and least, those who use them the most have a greater level of satisfaction. One-quarter of respondents (25%) who use the bridleways the most think that the network is either 'good' or 'very good', compared to two-fifths (40%) who think it is either 'poor' or 'very poor'. The comparative figures for respondents who use the bridleway network less often are 7% and 83% respectively.
- Respondents were asked what three things they would improve about the bridleways they use. The most popular comments are detailed below:
 - Horse friendly gates 39%
 - Better clearance of vegetation 34%
 - A more even riding surface 33%
 - Better signposting and way marking 19%
 - More bridleways 19%
 - Better linking of bridleways 15%
 - Less road riding between bridleways 13%
 - Wider paths 12%
 - Bridleways that don't allow vehicles 12%
 - More consideration from land owners 7%

Results – Likes and dislikes

- Respondents were asked to indicate what would encourage them to make more use of the bridleways or to use different bridleways. They were asked to tick up to five factors from a list of 14. Less than 1% of respondents thought that there was 'nothing' that would encourage them, the views of the other respondents are shown below in Figure 7.

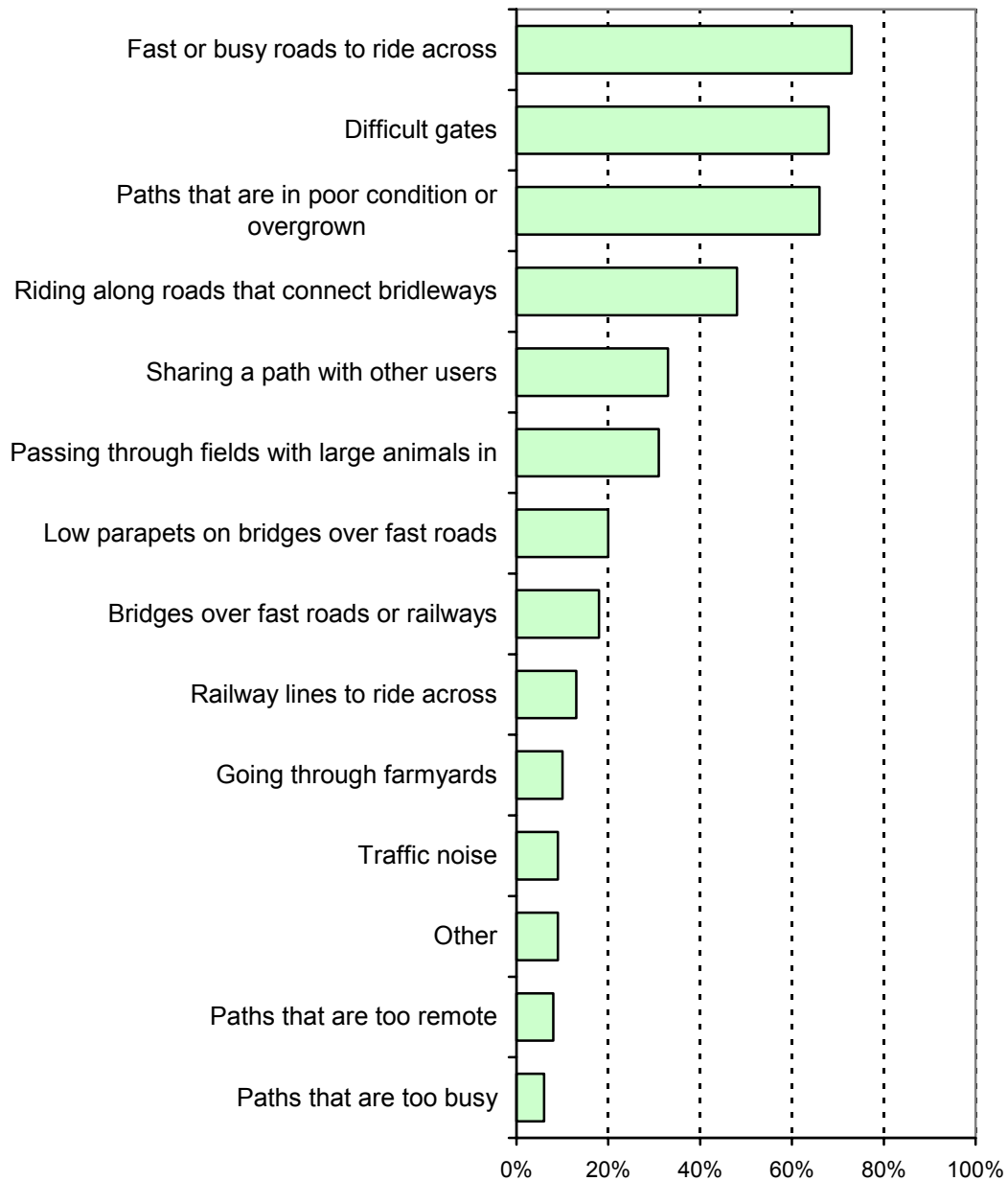
Figure 7: “What would encourage you to make more use of the bridleways or to use different bridleways?”



- Of the respondents who chose 'other' as a factor their suggestions are summarised below:
 - More bridleways in the area 6 respondents
 - Co-operation from landowners / farmers 5 respondents
 - Banning motor vehicles 4 respondents
 - Areas to gallop / jump 3 respondents

- Respondents were asked to indicate what puts them off using particular paths. They were asked to tick up to five options from a list of 14; Figure 8 shows the results.
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) stated that crossing busy or fast roads put them off using a particular path. Approximately two-thirds of respondents reported that difficult gates (68%) and paths that are in poor condition or overgrown (66%) were also things that would put them off using a particular path.

Figure 8: “What puts you off using particular paths?”



- Of the respondents who chose ‘other’ as a factor that puts them off using particular paths, there were no comments that were made by more than one respondent, although abusive landowners, unsafe routes and lack of signage were all mentioned.

- Nearly four in five respondents (79%) stated that they would be willing to pay for toll rides or permits.

Results – Miscellany

- Nearly one half of respondents (46%) travel to other parts of the County or further afield to ride out.
- There were few respondents who reported that they use their horse for driving. Overall, 5% of respondents reported that they drive their horse on tarmac roads, 3% drive their horse on their own land and 3% on unsurfaced routes.
- Nearly one-half of respondents (46%) said they were a member of the British Horse Society, whilst 3% said that they were a member of the British Driving Society.
- Approximately two-fifths of respondents (41%) said that they were a member of a local equestrian group.
- More than one-third (34%) said that they were not a member of any equestrian groups.