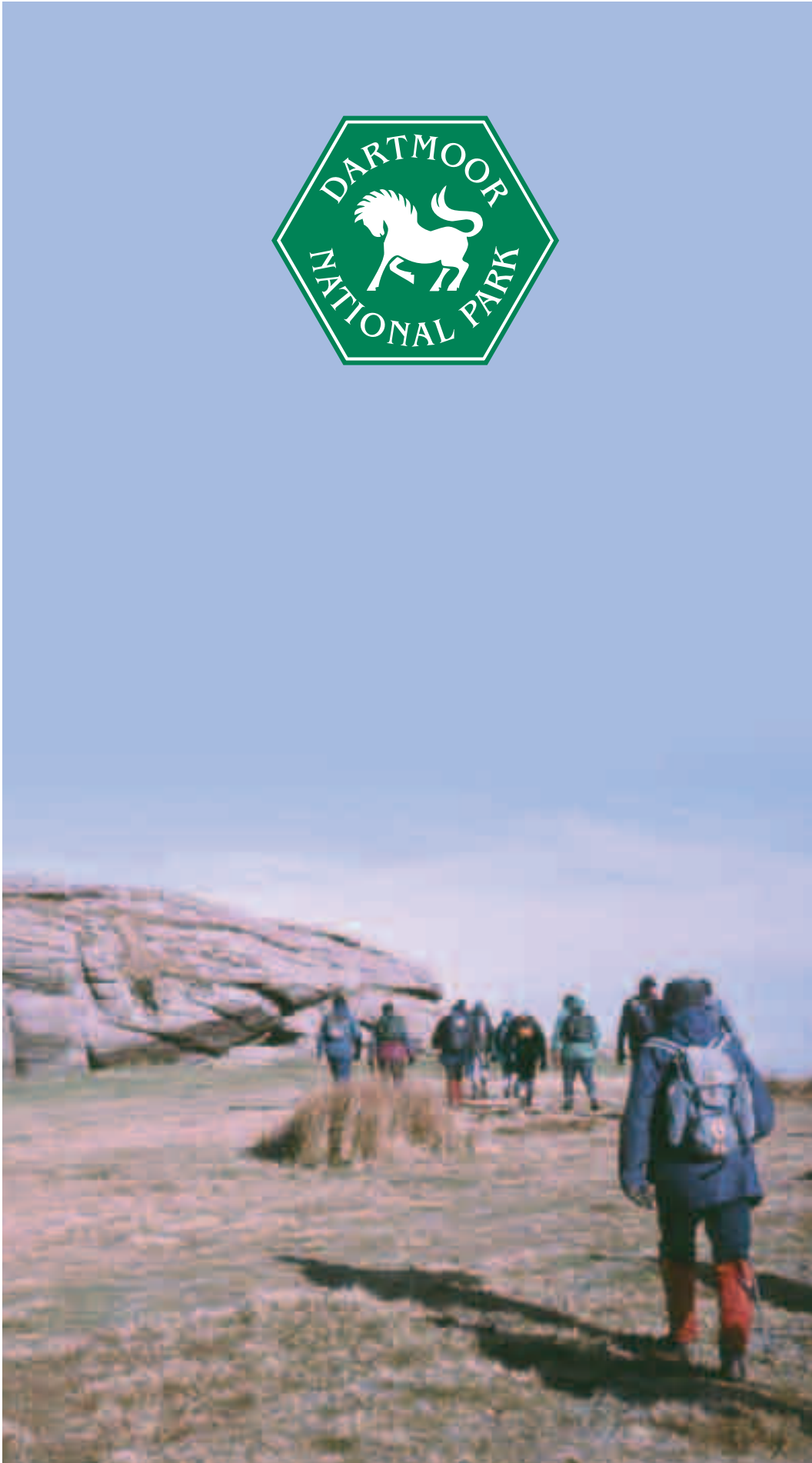


Dartmoor National Park

Improving Devon's Environment: Rights of Way Improvement Plan



Dartmoor National Park

1. Introduction

This chapter of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan can provide only an initial strategic statement, being prepared within the timeframe for inclusion within the 2005 submission of the Devon Local Transport Plan 2006-2011. Additional ongoing work will refine, review and further develop this strategy and its implementation plan.

1.1 Dartmoor National Park Authority

Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) is a free-standing local authority charged with the conservation and enhancement of Dartmoor National Park and the promotion of its understanding and enjoyment by the public (see statutory purposes, below). Devon County Council remains the local highway authority for the whole of the National Park, but DNPA has certain concurrent powers, e.g. for the creation, stopping up and diversion of rights of way. DNPA is both the 'access authority' and the 'relevant authority' in relation to access to open country under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CRoW Act), and is also the appointing authority of the Dartmoor Local Access Forum, under the same legislation.

Under an agency agreement, DNPA carries out the maintenance of most of the rights of way within the National Park, on behalf of the local highway authority, and also takes the lead role in areas of concurrent powers. Under this agreement the local highway authority remains the surveying authority for keeping the Definitive Map and Statement under continuous review, for handling applications for modification of this Map, and for maintaining minor county roads and specified surfaced paths. DNPA regularly undertakes improvements to the rights of way network and may also carry out minor works to unclassified county roads (UCRs) to complement the rights of way network.

Though all the 'proposed actions' in this chapter are attributed to DNPA, they will generally be pursued in association with the local highway authority, Devon County Council.

1.2 Existing Access Provision

Dartmoor National Park covers an area of 953 sq km. There are approximately 730 km of public rights of way:

Status	Number	Length (km)	Percentage of DNP network	National Average
Footpath	465	353.3	48.3%	78%
Bridleway	270	358	49%	17%
Byway open to all traffic	28	18.9	2.6%	2%

Dartmoor
Moorland Scene
copyright Blair
Scobie



Horseriders and cyclists are well provided for in terms of the relative percentage of the network that is available to them, compared with the national average percentage of bridleways. There are 127 km of permissive footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths which have generally been established by agreement between the Authority and landowners.

The Dartmoor Commons Act (1985) gives a right of access on foot and horseback to 35,531 ha of registered common land within the National Park. There is access to further land through agreements negotiated by DNPA, through the open access policies of other landowners and through customary use (or de facto access). The extent of access land in August 2004 was approximately 43,834 ha. When the CRow Act access rights come into effect (late August 2005), there will be access to an estimated additional 2,500 ha of 'open country' to which there has

not formerly been any access. The existing rights for horseriders to use the Commons will remain unaffected, but the right to use new access areas created under the CRow Act will be for access on foot only.

The Dartmoor Commons Act (1985) does not grant a right to cycle but common land may be legally accessed by cyclists following bridleways. DNPA has sought to supplement cycling opportunities through the use of byways, minor county roads and new permissive routes, the use of which is facilitated by the publication of the Dartmoor For Off-Road Cyclists map produced by DNPA in 2001.

1.3 Use of Existing Access Provision

It is extremely difficult to quantify usage of the existing access resource. An estimate may be gauged from the total number of visitors and the percentages enjoying an activity likely to take place on a right of way (or access land). The National Parks Visitor Survey (1994) recorded 3.8 million annual day visits to Dartmoor National Park. 54% of these were holiday based and 46% were day trips from home. A large number of the recorded visits involved an activity using rights of way or other access areas: 37% went for a short stroll, 15% went for a long walk (over 2 hours). The proportions of visitors engaging in outdoor pursuits included: 6% cycling or mountain biking, 3% pony trekking/riding, 2% running and 4% on a guided walk.

More recent data confirm the popularity of rights of way-based activities, with Tourism Trends in Devon 1999, 2000, and 2002 suggesting that 60.9% of Dartmoor visitors engaged in walking.

The rights of way network is used by local people as well as visitors. Such usage is very hard to quantify but some inference may be drawn from the County Council's initial consultations in respect of this Plan. The respondents who used Dartmoor either exclusively, or with one or more other area of Devon, were mostly local people (81.1% were local to Devon). Of this group of predominantly local residents, 32.7% used rights of way daily and a further 43.2% used them at least weekly.

It seems likely that some of the frequent regular use by the local population may be 'functional' rather than recreational use, as an alternative to car use for journeys of a short distance or to walk the dog.

2. The Dartmoor National Park Context

2.1 Statutory Purposes

Dartmoor was designated a National Park in 1951 for two purposes, redefined in the Environment Act (1995) as:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of Dartmoor, and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.

The Authority always seeks to accommodate both of these purposes but should an irreconcilable conflict occur between the two purposes, the Authority is required to afford priority to the conservation purpose. In carrying out these purposes the Authority also has a duty:

- To seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities by working closely with the agencies and local authorities responsible for these matters, but without incurring significant expenditure.

The overall context for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan within Dartmoor National Park therefore comprises:

- The statutory purposes of the National Park
- The existing extensive open access opportunities on foot and horseback under the Dartmoor Commons Act (1985), other existing and proposed statutory, agreement and de facto open access, and an extensive network of existing rights of way
- An apparently increasing use of access opportunities within the National Park, by local people and visitors alike, which needs to be accommodated within Dartmoor's special, and sometimes vulnerable, environment.

2.2 Policy Context

The Dartmoor National Park Management Plan (NPMP) provides the policy context for the management of the National Park. Through its vision statement, its objectives and priorities for action, the NPMP interprets the statutory purposes and guides the day to day work of DNPA and other bodies engaged in the pursuit of National Park purposes.

Wide consultation was undertaken during the development of the NPMP under the title of *The future for Dartmoor*. This sought to identify the special qualities of Dartmoor particularly valued by the public. Among the most important findings in relation to rights of way were the following:

- a strong feeling that erosion, caused by walkers, riders, bikers and off-road vehicles, is a serious problem and steps should be taken to prevent and repair such damage.

- a high public regard for the access and rights of way network on Dartmoor. When asked to rank their special qualities of the National Park, 'freedom to roam on foot/the footpaths network', 'open access/ready access to the moor' and 'freedom to roam on horse', were all highly placed.
- People suggested that off-road vehicles on the open moor should be restricted, that there should be more circular walks, cycle routes and rides, more access agreements and paths, and more information about access opportunities. Further suggestions were made to prevent and repair erosion, and to reduce the impacts of off-road vehicles and quad bikes.

The NPMP can be accessed through the DNPA's website [www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk] but the objectives particularly relevant to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan are set out in the box below.

NPMP overall objectives for Visitor Management:

- to encourage quiet informal recreational use of the National Park
- to guide visitors to those sites and areas best able to sustain use
- to protect more sensitive areas
- to manage all recreational uses to ensure that their impact on the special qualities of Dartmoor is minimised and their benefits to local communities and the local economy are maximised.

NPMP overall objectives for Ranger and Volunteer Services include:

- To monitor and manage visitor use of all access land and to maintain the rights of way network, in order to ensure maximum enjoyment by users and minimum interference with the daily activities of the Dartmoor community.

NPMP overall objectives for Traffic and Transport include:

- to promote alternative modes of transport for those without access to their own vehicle and as an alternative to use of the car.

The development planning framework for Dartmoor National Park comprises the *Devon Structure Plan 2001-2016* and the *Dartmoor National Park Local Plan First Review 1995-2011*. Both Plans may be accessed through the DNPA's website but the policies particularly relevant to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan are set out in the boxes opposite.

Devon Structure Plan 2001 to 2016

Policy TO6 Long Distance Recreational Footpaths and Cycle Routes

The long distance footpath and cycle route networks as identified on the Key Diagram should be maintained and extended, and proposals that would affect those routes should only be permitted where the integrity of the network can be maintained. In maintaining and developing the footpath, cycleway and bridleway networks, advantage should be taken of redundant canals and railways.

Policy TR7 Walking and Cycling

Walking and cycling will be improved by:

- (1) identifying a network of strategic routes within towns and urban areas which provides a safe and convenient means of pedestrian and cycle access to facilities;
- (2) improving pedestrian and cycle links between settlements and adjacent rural areas; and
- (3) ensuring that all development proposals make provision for pedestrians and cyclists, and that, wherever possible, such provision is well related to the defined network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

Dartmoor National Park Local Plan First Review 1995-2011, Adopted Version - October 2004

Public Rights of Way

Policy TF6 Development will not be permitted which would increase vehicular traffic on footpaths, bridleways or byways open to all traffic, to the detriment of their enjoyment by walkers and riders, unless there are overriding social, economic or conservation benefits arising from the proposal.

Alternative Modes of Transport

Policy TF8 Planning Permission will be granted for development which

- (i) Facilitates improved public transport or safe cycling opportunities

General access on foot, on horseback, and by pathway

Policy RC2 In determining development proposals, full consideration will be given to the need to protect public rights of access. The Authority will not grant permission for development which extinguishes a right of way unless a reasonable alternative route exists

Policy RC3 Planning permission will be granted for schemes designed to promote the appropriate recreational use of disused railway tracks where this will bring positive benefits to recreation provision and will not damage the wildlife, natural beauty or cultural heritage of the National Park.

2.3 Dartmoor Local Access Forum

The Dartmoor Local Access Forum was established by DNPA as an independent forum to provide advice on access and recreation issues to the Authority, to the Countryside Agency (e.g. on matters relating to mapping 'open country') and to the local highway authority, which is required to consult any LAF on the preparation of its Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Consultation with the Dartmoor LAF indicated that it considers the following issues to be priorities for this Plan to address:

- to resolve difficulties between the different users of rights of way, both recreational and farming
- to consider the balance between motorised and non-motorised transport on rights of way and linking rights of way with other quiet highways
- to improve and promote existing poorly used rights of way, where this can relieve pressures on other routes
- to promote rights of way in areas which are not well served, in order to reduce or contain demand at honeypot areas
- to allow access to new CRoW Act 'open country' (but which minimises disturbance)
- to reduce future maintenance demands
- to provide appropriate surfaces for managing heavily used or over-used rights of way
- to encourage the creation of circuits rather than new long-distance paths
- to identify missing strategic links, especially to larger settlements

3. Structure of the Dartmoor National Park Chapter

The Devon countywide consultation with users and organisations, carried out prior to the formulation of this Plan, highlighted a number of issues which are addressed in the main body of this publication. The results of this consultation did not sufficiently identify or isolate issues or deficiencies of the rights of way network in relation to Dartmoor National Park. It will be necessary to carry out further detailed consultations for the future review of this Plan to determine which issues are of particular relevance and importance to users.

DNP1: DNPA will carry out further assessments and consultations with users and other interested parties for the future review of the Dartmoor chapter of this Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

In this chapter, instead of using the issues highlighted in the general county-wide consultation, an initial attempt has been made to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the rights of way network on Dartmoor.

4. Assessment of the Network to Provide Opportunities for Recreation and to Meet the Needs of Different Classes of User

In accordance with DEFRA advice, an attempt has been made to assess the extent to which the rights of way system meets the needs of different classes of user. For the purpose of this assessment, the totality of linear access is to be considered including permissive routes and unclassified county roads. On Dartmoor, the assessment of whether sufficient provision exists to meet needs/demands of users must recognise the availability of considerable open access opportunities.

For each of the recreational user groups, an assessment has been made of the network in terms of the number of routes available, the holistic network in terms of linkages, and the quality of experience for each group. The extent to which current and future needs are being met was addressed by considering issues highlighted in DEFRA's statutory guidance, comments from Devon County Council's public consultation (where results were specific to Dartmoor) and feedback from DNPA recreational user groups.

For each user group an assessment was made and a list of priorities/issues identified.

4.1 Walkers

Walkers may use footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic (BOATs), permissive footpaths, permissive bridleways, and unclassified county roads (UCRs). There is open access on foot to all common land on Dartmoor.

Needs to be considered (identified in DEFRA guidance)

- Safe routes away from roads
- Access to attractions
- Circular routes
- Opportunities close to home for exercise, dog walking, routes to school or work
- Access to CRoW Act access land

Needs to be considered (identified through user consultation)

- Ease of use of path infrastructure (stiles and gates)
- Links to access land
- Off-road circuits
- Links and circuits close to settlements
- Vulnerability of walkers in multi-use settings



*Cyclists on
bridleway near
Dunnabridge
copyright DNPA*

Summary of assessment

A good footpath network with few areas lacking good general provision of routes. Some existing routes do not have definitive status. There are some anomalies and inadequacies in definitive lines. There is extensive open access provision; some areas could benefit from enhanced links to Dartmoor Commons Act access land and new areas of CRoW Act Open Country. The historical basis of footpath establishment (routes to church etc) means there are some gaps in the modern network. The network could be enhanced to facilitate links into the Park. There is some lack of safe off-road links especially from major settlements. There is potential for new sustainable routes to be opened up. The UCR network is a valuable supplement to the rights of way network but it is not always adequately maintained or promoted.

Priorities identified

- Inadequacies in existing definitive routes (anomalies and unsuitable or unsustainable lines)
- Links to common land and CRoW Act access land
- Small number of deficiencies or missing links in network
- Features of paths near settlements as off-road alternative links (for example to work or school), for exercise, and short recreational circuits/dog walks
- Need for safe off-road routes in specific places
- Links into the National Park
- Ease of use of infrastructure; surfacing, and maintenance
- Sustainable all-weather routes

4.2 Horse-riders

Horse-riders may use bridleways, BOATs, permissive bridleways and UCRs. There is open access on horseback to all common land on Dartmoor.

Needs to be considered (identified in DEFRA guidance)

- Safe connected network of off-road/lightly trafficked routes
- Easy to open latches on horseback

Needs to be considered (identified through user consultation)

- Extension of rights to use National Cycle Network
- Suitability of definitive lines (for safety)
- Easy-to-operate field furniture (gates/latches)
- Access links to common land
- Suitable surfacing/maintenance
- Safe off-road links
- Safety at river fording points



*Horse-riding on Dartmoor
copyright
DNPA*

Summary of assessment

A generally good bridleway network with few areas without a good number of routes. Some definitive lines are inadequate in that they are not always on the most suitable line for horse (and cycle) use (especially across open common). There is good open access provision for horse-riders through the Dartmoor Commons Act, but some areas could benefit from enhanced links to common land. UCRs provide a valuable resource but lack maintenance, information and promotion for horse-riders. There are some dangerous road crossings on the edge of the National Park.

Priorities Identified

- Suitability of definitive lines for safety and prevention of erosion
- Links to common land
- Fulfil full potential of UCR network
- Potential for new opportunities for sustainable routes (e.g. in woodland)
- Create/enhance opportunities for off-road routes (links/circuits)
- Road safety
- Suitability of field furniture
- Suitability of river fording points

4.3 Cyclists

Cyclists may use bridleways, BOATs, permissive bridleways, permissive cycle routes, National Cycle Network (NCN) routes and UCRs. The Dartmoor For Off-Road Cyclists Map details existing off-road opportunities including permissive access and UCRs as well as link routes from major settlements on the edge of the National Park.

Needs to be considered (identified in DEFRA guidance)

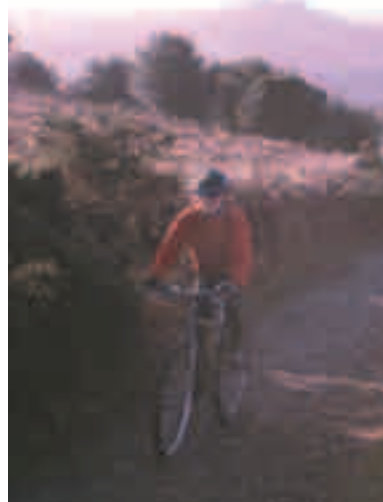
- Safe attractive long routes away from busy roads
- Provision for a range of users from family outings to experienced mountain bikers

Needs to be considered (identified through user consultation)

- New off-road provision

Summary of assessment

A generally good bridleway/permitted cycle path network with few areas without a good number of routes. There is no access to common land except via bridleways (some of which do not follow the most suitable line across open moor for safety or erosion prevention). There is patchy UCR provision but it is good in some places. Suitable routes are identified in the Dartmoor For Off-Road Cyclists Map. There is variable provision of easy family routes but this is improved by NCN routes.



*Cyclist on byway
near Black Hill
copyright DNPA*

Priorities identified

- Suitability of definitive routes for user safety and environmental protection (particularly over common land)
- Potential for new opportunities for sustainable hard surfaced routes, particularly in woodland
- Create enhanced opportunities for off-road routes (links/circuits)
- Road safety
- Links into the National Park

4.4 Carriage-Drivers

Carriage drivers may use BOATs and UCRs. They will also be able to use the new category of Restricted Byway introduced under the CRoW Act.

Needs to be considered (identified in DEFRA guidance)

- Safe connected network of off-road/lightly trafficked routes

Needs to be considered (identified through user consultation)

- Suitable routes according to width, gradient, surface, parking for boxes
- Information regarding which legal routes are suitable

Summary of assessment

BOATs provision is generally short and fragmented. The network of UCRs has some potential for use. The topography may often be difficult for carriages. Some quiet lanes without cattle grids have the potential for use but there are only a limited number of areas that would be suitable for this activity.

Priorities identified

- The assessment indicates that limited provision exists. However, DNPA is not aware of any substantial demand being expressed for off-road routes and the DCC consultation showed limited demand/usage. Latent and expressed demand must be monitored for future review of this Plan

4.5 Motorised Users

Drivers of motorised vehicles may use BOATs and UCRs where vehicular rights exist.

Needs to be considered (identified in DEFRA guidance)

- The RoWIP should address the need to manage the lawful use of rights of way with vehicular rights

Needs to be considered (identified through user consultation)

- Increasing membership of motor sports clubs creating growing demand
- Existing network of BOATs offers very limited scope for motorised users

Summary of assessment

Most existing motorised use takes place through organised events regulated by motor clubs, on a small number of appropriate routes; all usage must be managed to limit potential physical damage and disturbance and enable the special qualities of Dartmoor to be conserved. At the present time, problems are being resolved by management but as demand rises, a different approach may be necessary. Monitoring of motorised use must continue.

Priorities identified

- Where vehicular rights exist, consideration must be given to avoiding damage resulting from vehicular use and exercising control wherever required through management measures, voluntary restriction or traffic regulation orders as appropriate
- DNPA will in due course need to consider the arguments for and against reclassifying any existing BOATs as restricted byways

4.6 Proposed Actions

The foregoing section has identified a basis for a range of proposed actions. **The extent to which these actions can be pursued will ultimately depend upon the availability of resources for rights of way improvement, and will inevitably necessitate future prioritisation.**

Actions to facilitate communication with rights of way users

DNP2: DNPA will continue to consult formally with user groups. It will formalise a mechanism for users and other interested parties to make suggestions for improvements to the rights of way network as part of the ongoing RoWIP process. DNPA will review and seek to improve its communication with the wider public on rights of way matters.

Actions to improve the definitive PRow network

DNP3: DNPA will seek to divert public rights of way where it is necessary to remedy anomalies in definitive routes or to follow lines which are more acceptable for all users and interested parties. Due regard will be given to the features of interest of the existing route where a diversion is under consideration.

Actions to improve the definitive PRow network for user safety and to prevent environmental damage

DNP4: DNPA will seek to resolve inadequacies in existing definitive routes, to follow lines which are more suitable or sustainable for all users (with a priority for bridleways across open common, and routes where erosion or safety issues are important).

DNP5: DNPA will monitor routes susceptible to environmental degradation and will consider use of Traffic Regulation Orders where other management measures have not been successful.

Actions to promote use of the PRoW network radiating from settlements within the Park

DNP6: DNPA will seek to enhance the network close to towns and villages to provide short recreational walking routes and functional alternatives to road walking or short car trips. Physical enhancements on paths radiating from settlements will include changes to increase ease of use (e.g. conversion of stiles to gates) and introducing dog-friendly infrastructure when possible.

DNP7: DNPA will seek to enhance the opportunities for walkers to take advantage of the network near to settlements through promotion of suitable routes and circuits for recreational or functional use, and through targeting routes suitable for health walks.

Actions to close missing links in the network and to provide strategically important linkages within and into the Park

DNP8: DNPA will seek to create new linear routes to existing access land or that created under the CRoW Act where there is a demonstrable need and where it would prove beneficial. Such provision will be prioritised according to predicted usage of those sites and wherever possible access will be for all the groups who have a right of access to the land in question.

DNP9: DNPA will seek to expand the network in any area identified as deficient, through agreement with landowners. DNPA will seek to secure new linear access to close demonstrable missing links in the network.

DNP10: DNPA will seek to formalise access to extensively used de facto or permitted paths through creation agreements.

DNP11: DNPA will seek to facilitate essential links to the existing network from peripheral towns and villages, and from major settlements within the National Park. Emphasis will be on supporting walking and cycling strategies at the national, regional and local level.

Actions to increase access opportunities for user groups

DNP12: DNPA will seek to secure new linear access opportunities for each user group where appropriate through provision or creation of new routes or upgrading the status of existing routes.

DNP13: DNPA will work with partners to open up and promote the use of unsurfaced unclassified county roads as part of the overall network, where appropriate, for the benefit of cyclists, horse riders and walkers.

DNP14: DNPA will seek to provide new opportunities for access in areas where it will provide sustainable all-weather alternatives (e.g. in woodland) for all users as appropriate.

DNP15: DNPA will seek to provide new opportunities for cycling on firm tracks both on the moor, where they link with other suitable legal linear routes, and off the moor where opportunities exist to create access to sustainable routes.

DNP16: DNPA will support the extension of multi-use rights of NCN routes to include horse-riders.

Actions to meet specific needs of user groups (not addressed elsewhere)

DNP17: DNPA will seek to ensure wherever possible that gates on bridleways can be opened from horseback and that latches are suitable for the purpose but do not compromise other users (e.g. wheelchair users) where such usage may occur.

DNP18: DNPA will monitor demand from carriage drivers and if demand is demonstrated to exist, will consider making appropriate provision (within the constraints of the topography of the National Park).

Actions to promote safety of users

DNP19: DNPA will monitor safety issues for all users at river fording points. Works will be carried out in response to need as part of ongoing maintenance and annual capital works programmes.

DNP20: When possible, DNPA will seek to create off-road alternatives in promoted trails or popular routes/circuits which currently involve sections on unsuitable roads.

5. Assessment of the Accessibility of the Network to People with Restricted Mobility and People with Sensory Impairments

The right of access to common land created under the *Dartmoor Commons Act (1985)* also extends to those using wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters. In both open access areas and on linear routes, Dartmoor's natural terrain and challenging gradients mean that in practice it would be impossible to make all routes and areas accessible to all people with restricted mobility. Ideally the topography and the natural terrain should be the only challenge faced by people with restricted mobility. However, at present a number of other factors restrict the access opportunities for certain groups.

DNPA works closely with Dartmoor For All, a local access group formed to address and advise upon the wide range of restricted mobility and other impairment issues concerning access in the Dartmoor area. Consultations with this group and with others have suggested that the main barriers to access are created by unsuitable and/or poorly maintained field furniture. For instance many stiles create barriers to otherwise accessible paths, whilst poorly hung gates and hard to operate latches also block progress along otherwise suitable routes.

Needs to be considered (identified through user consultation)

- Removal of barriers (stiles, poor gates/latches)
- Information on a wider range of routes
- Maintenance (undergrowth and overhanging vegetation)

A *DNPA Stiles to Gates* project is focusing on removing field furniture barriers from paths radiating directly from settlements. Under this project, several routes have been made entirely stile-free, for example a section of the Two Moors Way along the River Teign at Chagford.

The publication, *Easy-Going Dartmoor*, produced jointly by DNPA and Dartmoor For All, provides information on a number of sites within the National Park that are suitable for people with special needs. Whilst the guide has been designed to enable users to make their own decisions as to the suitability of a route for their needs, it does tend to focus on the type of shorter route found mainly in forestry or reservoir areas. DNPA is also aware that *Easy-Going Dartmoor* and *Dartmoor For All* tend to focus on issues related to physical mobility and that this bias is reflected in current access projects.

A growing number of requests suggest that there is an unmet demand for longer routes (10-15 miles) which are guaranteed free of restrictive field furniture and thus suitable for people using electric buggies. This clearly highlights the importance of ensuring that a 'least restrictive access option' is enshrined in all work related to public access.

Priorities identified

- Continue to extend the network with least restrictive field furniture
- Promotion of information about existing routes suitable for users with specific needs
- Address the limited range of advice available (e.g. from people with sensory impairment)
- Particular path conditions or maintenance requirements for users with specific needs



*Walkers near Bonehill Down
copyright DNPA*

5.1 Proposed actions

The foregoing section has identified a basis for a range of proposed actions. **The extent to which these actions can be pursued will ultimately depend upon the availability of resources for rights of way improvement, and will inevitably necessitate future prioritisation.**

DNP21: DNPA will continue its 'Stiles to Gates' project.

DNP22: DNPA will seek to identify additional key routes in the National Park (linear links and circuits) for improvements to increase accessibility. Such routes will take into account potential demand and the suitability of environmental constraints. DNPA will seek to implement a programme of infrastructure changes along established priority routes and promote these key routes in a suitable manner to provide information to potential users.

DNP23: DNPA will formally adopt a policy that the least restrictive path furniture will be used when installing new or replacing existing rights of way and open access field furniture, following the principle established in British Standard 5709:2001 of 'gap, then gate, then kissing gate and then stile' in order of determining acceptability

DNP24: DNPA will seek to establish mechanisms and policies to provide a greater positive incentive to landowners to allow the conversion of stiles to gates throughout the National Park. Priority will be given to areas offering the greatest potential benefits. Issues of stock control will be taken into account.

DNP25: DNPA will seek to increase the length and range of routes for which specific access information is provided (gates/slopes/surface type etc) to increase the opportunities for use by people with special needs.

DNP26: DNPA will work with access group members to identify longer and more challenging routes suitable for people using electric buggies and provide information to promote such routes.

DNP27: DNPA will seek to increase consultation with and participation of people and/or groups who are not currently represented on Dartmoor For All, such as those with sensory impairments, and ensure that the information they provide is carefully considered and fully integrated into future access and rights of way policies.

DNP28: Through consultation, DNPA will establish the requirements of users with particular needs with regard to path maintenance. As meeting these requirements may require increased monitoring and maintenance, priority will be given to certain target paths where there is likely to be greatest benefit from such action.

6. Other Issues

6.1 Maintenance

DNPA maintains the rights of way network on Dartmoor on behalf of the Highway Authority (Devon County Council) under an annually-reviewed agency agreement. DNPA's Ranger Service has principal responsibility for maintenance work, routine inspections and surveys. External contractors are sometimes engaged both for routine maintenance and for major repairs.

In the County Council public consultation conducted prior to the draft version of this Plan, 74.6% of people who used rights of way on Dartmoor (either exclusively or with other areas) were either satisfied or very satisfied with maintenance standards. Qualitative results from the DNPA's own consultation with users showed overall satisfaction with DNPA maintenance standards. It is inevitable that problems will occur between the routine monitoring carried out by Rangers and complaints are investigated upon notification. Regular formal meetings with recreational user groups provide the opportunity for liaison and to focus on wider management issues.

Rights of way maintenance records are stored on a computerised Countryside Access Management System database which has been extended to incorporate complaints recording. A reporting mechanism has been established so that problems can be tracked from receipt to resolution.

In acting as agents for the Highway Authority, DNPA seeks to contribute towards consistency across the county in rights of way maintenance standards. DNPA will use the standard Best Value performance indicator methodology for monitoring ease of use of rights of way to ensure consistency within Devon and for national comparison with other local highway authorities. Signage and waymarking of rights of way, particularly within the wilder and remoter areas of open country on Dartmoor, must be carefully designed and modifications to standard solutions will be necessary to ensure that signage is neither inappropriate nor detracts from the special qualities of the landscape.

DNP29: DNPA will seek to continually improve standards and effectiveness of rights of way maintenance through updating and reviewing its policies and procedures.

6.2 Information

Rights of way and some permissive routes are depicted on the Ordnance Survey maps of Dartmoor. DNPA information centres and Rangers are a front line source of information for both visitors and local people and DNPA also produces a variety of literature to promote and inform about rights of way and access to open country. The *Dartmoor Visitor* newspaper provides information aimed at the general visitor and at those interested in particular activities such as walking, cycling and riding.

The Authority operates a guided walk programme and guide hire service as well as producing literature promoting circular and other routes for walkers and cyclists. Its Sustainable Development Fund is providing support for researching a new publication to assist horseriders on Dartmoor. The Authority is also promoting *walking for health* initiatives and continues to promote access to and within the National Park for those who do not have access to a car through support for and marketing of public transport services. Through the DNPA's social inclusion framework all sections of society will be encouraged to benefit from the rights of way and access opportunities available on Dartmoor.

DNPA is currently refocusing its communication of access information in the light of the changes in access to open country scheduled for August 2005.

6.3 Support for Landowners

DNPA Rangers are normally the first point of liaison and contact with landowners on rights of way matters, whether for maintenance or in connection with management issues requiring resolution. Rangers have worked closely with individual landowners and tenants to formulate plans to manage areas mapped as open country under the CRoW Act. DNPA currently provides and maintains field furniture on rights of way within the National Park. This commitment is above the statutory requirement of a local highway authority to contribute 25% of the cost of stiles and gates on rights of way.

6.4 Heritage and Nature Conservation

The Authority has established internal consultation mechanisms to ensure that archaeological, historic heritage and nature conservation issues are always considered in routine recreation management, such as assessing proposals for recreational events using rights of way and open country. These issues will always be considered, and afforded priority, in creating new linear (or area) access and in cases of existing rights of way adversely affecting heritage and conservation features or interests, the Authority will always seek to mitigate any problems by appropriate management measures, and where necessary through formal diversion.

7. Conclusion

This chapter of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan sets out an initial strategic framework for future improvements to rights of way on Dartmoor. Further development of the strategy will continue to inform and influence DNPA work programmes, budgets and funding proposals.

8. Summary of Actions and Links to DLTP 2006-2011 Objectives

Ref No.	Action Point	Link to LTP Objective
DNP 1	DNPA will carry out further assessments and consultations with users and other interested parties for the future review of the Dartmoor chapter of the RoWIP.	
DNP 2	DNPA will continue to consult formally with user groups. It will formalise a mechanism for users and other interested parties to make suggestions for improvements to the rights of way network as part of the ongoing RoWIP process. DNPA will review and seek to improve its communication with the wider public on rights of way matters.	
DNP 3	DNPA will seek to divert public rights of way where it is necessary to remedy anomalies in definitive routes or to follow lines which are more acceptable for all users and interested parties. Due regard will be given to the features of interest of the existing route where a diversion is proposed.	
DNP 4	DNPA will seek to resolve inadequacies in existing definitive routes, to follow lines which are more suitable or sustainable for all users (with a priority for bridleways across open common, and routes where erosion or safety issues are important).	
DNP 5	DNPA will monitor routes susceptible to environmental degradation and will consider use of Traffic Regulation Orders where other management measures have not been successful.	
DNP 6	DNPA will seek to enhance the network close to towns and villages to provide short recreational walking routes and functional alternatives to road walking or short car trips. Physical enhancements on paths radiating from settlements will include changes to increase ease of use (e.g. conversion of stiles to gates) and introducing dog-friendly infrastructure when possible.	Accessibility (improve access to recreation & leisure opportunities) Health & Wellbeing (improve access to countryside leisure opportunities; encourage physical activity)
DNP 7	DNPA will seek to enhance the opportunities for walkers to take advantage of the network near to settlements through promotion of suitable routes and circuits for recreational or functional use, and through targeting routes suitable for health walks.	Health & Wellbeing (improve access to countryside leisure opportunities; encourage physical activity)
DNP 8	DNPA will seek to create new linear routes to existing access land or that created under the CRow Act where there is a demonstrable need and where it would prove beneficial. Such provision will be prioritised according to predicted usage of those sites and wherever possible access will be for all the groups who have a right of access to the land in question.	

DNP 9	DNPA will seek to expand the network in any area identified as deficient, through agreement with landowners. DNPA will seek to secure new linear access to close demonstrable missing links in the network.	
DNP 10	DNPA will seek to formalise access to extensively used de facto or permitted paths through creation agreements.	
DNP 11	DNPA will seek to facilitate essential links to the existing network from peripheral towns and villages, and from major settlements within the National Park. Emphasis will be on supporting walking and cycling strategies at the national, regional and local level.	Health & Wellbeing (improve access to countryside leisure opportunities)
DNP 12	DNPA will seek to secure new linear access opportunities for each user group where appropriate through provision or creation of new routes or upgrading the status of existing routes.	Leisure & Tourism
DNP 13	DNPA will work with partners to open up and promote the use of unsurfaced unclassified county roads as part of the overall network, where appropriate, for the benefit of cyclists, horse riders and walkers	Leisure & Tourism
DNP 14	DNPA will seek to provide new opportunities for access in areas where it will provide sustainable all-weather alternatives (e.g. in woodland) for all users as appropriate.	Leisure & Tourism
DNP 15	DNPA will seek to provide new opportunities for cycling on firm tracks both on the moor, where they link with other suitable legal linear routes, and off the moor where opportunities exist to create access to sustainable routes.	Leisure & Tourism
DNP 16	DNPA will support the extension of multi-use rights of NCN routes to include horse-riders.	
DNP 17	DNPA will seek to ensure wherever possible that gates on bridleways can be opened from horseback and that latches are suitable for the purpose but do not compromise other users (e.g. wheelchair users) where such usage may occur.	
DNP 18	DNPA will monitor demand from carriage drivers and if demand is demonstrated to exist, will consider making appropriate provision (within the constraints of the topography of the National Park).	
DNP 19	DNPA will monitor safety issues for all users at river fording points. Works will be carried out in response to need as part of ongoing maintenance and annual capital works programmes.	

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DNP 20	When possible, DNPA will seek to create off-road alternatives in promoted trails or popular routes/circuits which currently involve sections on unsuitable roads.	Road safety
DNP 21	DNPA will continue its 'Stiles to Gates' project.	Accessibility (improve access to recreation & leisure opportunities) Health & Wellbeing (improve access to countryside leisure opportunities)
DNP 22	DNPA will seek to identify additional key routes in the National Park (linear links and circuits) for improvements to increase accessibility. Such routes will take into account potential demand and the suitability of environmental constraints. DNPA will seek to implement a programme of infrastructure changes along established priority routes and promote these key routes in a suitable manner to provide information to potential users.	Accessibility (improve access to recreation & leisure opportunities) Health & Wellbeing (improve access to countryside leisure opportunities)
DNP 23	DNPA will formally adopt a policy that the least restrictive path furniture will be used when installing new or replacing existing rights of way and open access field furniture, following the principle established in British Standard 5709:2001 of 'gap, then gate, then kissing gate and then stile' in order of determining acceptability	Accessibility (improve access to recreation & leisure opportunities)
DNP 24	DNPA will seek to establish mechanisms and policies to provide a greater positive incentive to landowners to allow the conversion of stiles to gates throughout the National Park. Priority will be given to areas offering the greatest potential benefits. Issues of stock control will be taken into account.	Accessibility (improve accessibility to recreation & leisure opportunities)
DNP 25	DNPA will seek to increase the length and range of routes for which specific access information is provided (gates/slopes/surface type etc) to increase the opportunities for use by people with special needs.	Accessibility (improve accessibility to recreation & leisure opportunities)
DNP 26	DNPA will work with access group members to identify longer and more challenging routes suitable for people using electric buggies and provide information to promote such routes.	Accessibility (improve accessibility to recreation & leisure opportunities)
DNP 27	DNPA will seek to increase consultation with and participation of people and/or groups who are not currently represented on Dartmoor For All, such as those with sensory impairments, and ensure that the information they provide is carefully considered and fully integrated into future access and rights of way policies.	Accessibility (improve accessibility to recreation & leisure opportunities)

DNP 28	Through consultation, DNPA will establish the requirements of users with particular needs with regard to path maintenance. As meeting these requirements may require increased monitoring and maintenance, priority will be given to certain target paths where there is likely to be greatest benefit from such action.	Accessibility (improve accessibility to recreation & leisure opportunities)
DNP 29	DNPA will seek to continually improve standards and effectiveness of rights of way maintenance through updating and reviewing its policies and procedures.	