

6.0 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

- 6.1 This key piece of legislation will have a significant effect on the provision of countryside access facilities, and has attracted close attention from landowners, administrators and the general public during its passage through the parliamentary system. The Act received Royal Assent on 30th November 2000.
- 6.2 The Act contains measures to improve public access to the open countryside and registered common land while recognising the legitimate interests of land owners. It amends the law relating to rights of way and modifies laws relating to nature conservation (by strengthening protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest through tougher penalties) and makes provision for extra powers for the prosecution of wildlife-related crime.
- 6.3 At County level, one of the Act's primary effects will be the creation of a duty to prepare Rights of Way Improvement Plans. Provision of these Plans will be the responsibility of the Local Highways Authority. In Lancashire, the County Council would fulfill this function.
- 6.4 Sections 60 & 61 of the Act sets out the general scope of Rights of Way Improvement Plans as follows: -
- **60.** - *(1) Every local highway authority ... shall, within five years after the commencement of this section, prepare and publish a plan, to be known as a rights of way improvement plan, containing-*
 - (a) the authority's assessment of the matters specified in subsection (2),*
 - (b) a statement of the action they propose to take for the management of local rights of way, and for securing an improved network of local rights of way, with particular regard to the matters dealt with in the assessment, and*
 - (c) such other material as the Secretary of State ... may direct.*
 - (2) The matters referred to in subsection (1)(a) are-*
 - (a) the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public,*
 - (b) the opportunities provided by local rights of way ... for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the authority's area,*
 - (c) the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems, and*
 - (d) such other matters relating to local rights of way as the Secretary of State (as respects England) ... may direct.*
 - (3) An authority by whom a rights of way improvement plan is published shall, not more than ten years after first publishing it and subsequently at intervals of not more than ten years-*
 - (a) make a new assessment of the matters specified in subsection (2), and*
 - (b) review the plan and decide whether to amend it.*
 - (4) ...*
 - (5) In this section-*
 - ... "local rights of way" in relation to a local highway authority, means-*
 - (a) the footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways within the authority's area,*
 - ... and*
 - (b) the ways within the authority's area which are shown in a definitive map and statement as restricted byways or byways open to all traffic.*
- 6.5 The Countryside Agency has prepared a set of guidelines for the implementation of Rights of Way Improvement Plans. These recognise the physical and mental benefits of walking, riding

or cycling in the rural environment, together with opportunities to develop environmental consciousness and engagement in sustainable forms of recreation.

- 6.6 The guidelines reiterate the view of the Secretary of State, that a co-ordinated approach across all relevant departments must underpin County's strategic framework for meeting its obligations relating to rights of way. Section 8.0 below investigates and describes some of the key links with other departmental policies and strategies.
- 6.7 In order to comply with the provisions of sub-section (2)(a), the scale and nature of public demand for recreational access to the countryside must be gauged. Section 3.0 of this report has demonstrated the shortcomings of existing information available to the County's countryside managers. The broader-scale County-wide survey reported in this case study, provides a framework within which these preceding studies can be set, and represents a realistic assessment of public needs, together with estimates of potential trends. This information will contribute to the preparation of Lancashire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 6.8 Although s.60 requires each Local Highways Authority to prepare a comprehensive Rights of Way Improvement Plan, the Act does not contain explicit provisions for any duty to implement the contents of the Plan. However, section 66 of the Bill provides a mechanism for publication of reports on the LHAs performance of its functions in relation to rights of way:
- **66.** - (1) *The Secretary of State (as respects England) ... may make regulations requiring local highway authorities ... to publish reports on the performance of any of their functions so far as relating to local rights of way (whether or not those functions are conferred on them as highway authorities).*
- 6.9 Future public demand surveys could, if carefully designed and implemented, provide a means of evaluating progress in accordance with s.66, and would assist in monitoring resource allocation and management of the rights of way network.
- 6.10 In addition to the requirement to produce Rights of Way Improvement Plans, the Bill also contains clauses which may be of relevance in dealing with some of the public concerns identified during the course of this study. These include:
- (a) **Safety and security:** *Sections 17 & 18* provide scope for local bylaws and wardening respectively, as a means of maintaining order and preventing damage. These would be directly relevant to public fears for personal safety and security in the countryside.
 - (b) **Bridleways:** *Section 60 and 66* could, in combination, help to prioritise processes for extending the County's bridleway network. The Bridleway Strategy for Lancashire (3.23-3.35 above) identifies mis-identification of old bridleways (during preparation of the Definitive Map & Statement), as a reason for the current deficit in provision of routes. By identifying targets for re-classification, and incorporating them in Improvement Plans, it may be possible to negotiate and plan applications for re-classification with interested parties. Periodic reporting may also help to monitor success in dealing with applications.
 - (c) **Access for people with restricted mobility:** *Sections 32,33, & 65* make provisions for improvements to stiles, gates, bridges etc., to create better means of access to appropriate land. s.65 in particular, provides for the needs of people with problems of personal mobility or other physical constraints. The qualitative and quantitative aspects of this study have illustrated a significant need for improved opportunities for more inclusive forms of access. These clauses of the

Act, possibly in conjunction with a pro-active approach to design details may stimulate significant improvements in access provision.

- 6.11 One of the more significant amendments to the CRoW Bill made provision for the formation of Local Access Forums. By placing these on a statutory basis, the 200 Act will ensure funding from central sources for these bodies, and the issue of regulations covering their composition and responsibilities.
- 6.12 The Countryside Agency has prepared a set of guidelines which outline the respective roles of the Agency, County Council and other organisations, together with suggestions for the composition of Forums and their constitutional obligations.

7.0 Local Access Forums

7.1 The Local Government Acts of 1999 and 2000 have successively increased the extent to which local authorities are required to undertake enhanced public consultation over a range of issues. This has led, in some authorities, to the formation of partnerships and local forums that provide a two-way route for information - from the public to authorities, and *vice versa*. In the field of countryside access, a pilot programme has been implemented by the Countryside Agency, focusing on selected areas in north-west and south-east England.

7.2 Guidance (from the Agency) on the form and functions of Local Access Forums (LAFs) is in the course of preparation (has been prepared), providing advice on: -

- Development of recreation and access strategies which cater for a wide range of people;
- Improvement of the rights of way network; and
- Implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside

7.3 LAFs are envisaged as operating at the highest tier of government in any specific area, and will normally be created by County Councils or Unitary Authorities.

7.4 In Lancashire, the existing Public Rights of Way and Access Forum has worked with the County Council to develop a set of criteria for selection of members for the nascent Local Access Forum. Advertisements seeking appropriately qualified members were published during November 2000.

7.5 The Forum will be charged with responsibilities for advising the County Council (and specifically the Environment Directive's Countryside Group) on implementation of the Countryside & Rights of Way Bill, following enactment. It will also serve as a means of consultation with specialist interest groups such as the Ramblers Association, British Horse Society and Cyclists Touring Club, in addition to local people and land owners. It will also have a central role in approval of policies for improvement of the rights of way network.

7.6 The summarised existing national and locally-focused studies described in preceding sections of this report, in conjunction with up-to-date primary research into demand characteristics within the County, will provide the Forum with a sound base of objective information for policy development. In addition, the Countryside Group is in the process of compiling an inventory of public access sites within Lancashire, including: -

- Towpaths
- Open access land
- Picnic sites
- Country Parks
- Wildlife Trust land

- Bridleways
- Footpaths
- Cycleways
- National Trust land
- Other free-access routes used by the general public

7.7 In combination, this case study plus results of the Countryside Group's Access Audit will provide an accurate estimate of public needs together with a list of potential resources for meeting expectations. This should enable a viable and effective strategy for the County's Rights of Way network and countryside facilities to be developed.

8.0 Related policies and strategies

8.1 Information relating to demand for recreational countryside access in Lancashire, as described in Part I of this study, can be directly applied to management and improvement of the rights of way network in the County. A number of other strategies, plans and initiatives would, however, also benefit from an understanding of public needs and concerns identified during the course of primary research into demand characteristics. These include: -

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|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| • Highways and transportation | - | Lancashire County Council |
| • Land use planning | - | LCC |
| • Economic development | - | LCC |
| • Education | - | LCC |
| • Health | - | Countryside Agency (partnership) |
| • Rural White Paper | - | Central Government |
| • Sustainability | - | Central Government |

Highways and transportation

8.2 Lancashire County Council's first Local Transport Plan (LTP) was published during 2000, and provides a strategic framework for delivery of integrated transport facilities across the County. It also serves as a comprehensive source of information for making bid applications to central government for transport-related funding. The current Plan covers the period 2001/2002 to 2005/2006.

8.3 The LTP represents the culmination of an 18-month period of research and consultation, including focus groups and questionnaire surveys. The broad methodologies used to elicit information therefore correspond with those used in the current demand study, and the previous East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project (ELRP). Detailed implementation of the LTP's primary research necessarily differed from the countryside access projects, as the type of information required covered a broader spread of transport issues.

8.4 The LTP contains general coverage of issues such as improved opportunities for walking and cycling, plus more refined proposals for each of the County's constituent Boroughs and Districts. Recreational access is not specifically included in the Plan, however rural transport issues (including recreational countryside access) comprise a significant part of the LTP.

8.5 The Greenways and Quiet Roads Strategy for the Forest of Bowland (see para. 3.86-3.108) forms an integral element of the Plan¹, and this is in turn predicated on sound primary research into demand characteristics, some of which is derived from the East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project.

8.6 Elements of the LTP are clearly based on the type of demand data generated by this case study. It is therefore probable that the findings of this project may help to support many of the other walking- or cycling-related proposals contained in the Plan. At the very least, primary

¹ Local Transport Plan 2001/02-2005/06; Lancashire County Council; 2.17.9; pp99-100

information from this project is likely to confirm some of the assumptions made during preparation of the Local Transport Plan.

Rural Transport Partnerships

8.7 The Rural Transport Partnership (RTP) is a mechanism for supporting initiatives which serve the accessibility needs of rural communities, and help to reduce social exclusion through improved access to jobs, services and social activity. Three such Partnerships are included in the County LTP, covering North, South and West Lancashire respectively.

8.8 The aims of the North and South Lancashire Rural Transport Partnerships are: -

- To investigate the unmet demand for public transport services ...
- To investigate the effects of mobility disadvantage on social exclusion ... and
- To develop with other agencies ... services and strategies, including information strategies, to improve social inclusion....

8.9 The findings of this case study are likely to contribute to the development of the RTPs and planning of individual projects, by providing realistic information on the nature and scale of support for access to the countryside. Some of the key local studies reviewed in Part I of this report including:

- The Recreational Access Study for the Lune Valley,
- The Feasibility Report & Marketing Plan for Rossendale Cycleways/Bridleways Project, and
- The Forest of Bowland Greenways & Quiet Roads Study (1999),

consider the economic effects of improved access to the countryside, which could fall within the aims of the RTPs. In addition, the significant need for better public transport identified by this case study strengthens the case for improved rural public transport services and could enhance the viability of new services.

Land use planning

8.10 A significant proportion of participants in the discussion groups, both users and non-users of countryside facilities, expressed deep-seated concerns over the future of the rural environment. In general, expectations were that continued development pressures, predominantly from housing and industrial or commercial development, would continuously erode the quality and extent of countryside available for recreation and enjoyment.

8.11 In common with many individual perceptions of the countryside, these concerns about its future are rooted in childhood. The UK Land Use Survey (para.2.70 above) identified clear issues that weighed heavily on the minds of primary and secondary schoolchildren: -

- Loss of green space to housing development; infilling of large gardens; building on parks; and loss of open spaces and allotments;
- Loss of green spaces including woodland, allotments and gardens, to roads and industrial development;

8.12 These sentiments have been echoed by adults during this case study and other projects and studies (see paras. 5.55, Table 35 and para. 5.78 above). In addition, participants in related studies - notably the Public Attitudes to the Countryside Survey (1995) and the East Lancashire Recreation Research Project (1999) - expressed deeply felt concerns for the physical future of the countryside. In the former study, some 62% of respondents felt that over-development, pollution, cutting of trees/hedges, traffic and tourism had contributed to an adverse change in countryside quality (para.2.42 above), while 37% were concerned about loss of open space in the green belt (para.2.34). In the ELRP, non-users of the countryside

expressed views that further development would be undesirable, and that the rural environment should be preserved or protected in some way².

- 8.13 Key comments noted during the qualitative element of this case study also include profound antagonism towards development of land currently designated as Green Belt, and widespread confusion over the terms "greenfield" and "brownfield" when applied to development (paras. 4.59-4.61 above).
- 8.14 Lancashire County Council is responsible for preparation and periodic review of land use planning policies through the Development Plan process. Under current procedures, the general public has a right to represent views on the provisions of draft versions of such Plans at key stages in their preparation.
- 8.15 Data underpinning proposals for inclusion in preparatory drafts, however, is normally obtained when needed, from appropriate sections of the Council - including the Countryside Group. This *ad hoc* approach to inclusion of public opinion in policy development offers scope for error through reliance on beliefs and assumptions.
- 8.16 Information generated by this case study could help to underpin aspects of land use planning policy, by providing hard evidence for sympathetic treatment of development issues, especially on the urban fringe (see also para.4.86 below).

Economic development

- 8.17 Strategies for encouraging stable conditions for economic development in Lancashire form an essential part of the County Council's work. Many of these impinge directly or indirectly on the countryside, either through planning policies or specific strategies. The County's Tourism Strategy for Lancashire, published in spring 1995, represents the one of the main economic frameworks affecting the rural environment. Tourism is a vital part of Lancashire's economy, annually contributing some £500-600 million to local businesses and organisations.
- 8.18 Around 9% of the County's workforce was deemed to be dependant on tourism-related employment in the early 1990s, accounting for some 51,000 jobs³. At the time of the Strategy's preparation, many of these were centred in Blackpool's leisure industry, however the rural hinterland was identified as an extremely important asset, both for tourists staying overnight and for day visitors (see paras.2.46-2.51).
- 8.19 The Strategy contains six main themes for implementing a broad ranging vision for tourism development in Lancashire, including: -
- A.3 Extending the availability of countryside recreation facilities and ensuring all developments in the countryside are at the appropriate scale and in a suitable location
 - A.5 Development of public transport in the context of management plans
 - A.6 Encouraging tourism projects and development to contribute towards environmental enhancement
 - A.7 Promoting understanding of the environment through interpretive facilities
 - B.1 Assessing demand from existing and potential future markets
 - B.7 Considering special needs in marketing activities
 - B.8 Encouraging green tourism which respects the character of the environment
 - C.5 Actively encouraging participation by local residents affected by the tourism industry

² East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project; 1999; paragraphs 4.2.15 & 4.2.31

³ A Tourism Strategy for Lancashire 1995; Summary; page 1

- D.2 Introducing measures to secure quality in the environment
 - D.3 Ensuring ... new developments are of sensitive design to the immediate environment, meet special needs criteria and are accessible by public transport
 - D.5 New tourism developments should be based on thorough market research and appraisal
 - F.3 Expanding and promoting public transport services
 - F.5 Formulating traffic management measures to deal with capacity problems
- 8.20 These individual policies relate directly to Lancashire's countryside resource or other infrastructure issues raised by respondents to the current case study. Part I of this report provides much relevant information which could be used to underpin and implement a substantial proportion of the Tourism Strategy's policies.
- 8.21 Since publication of the County Strategy, Blackpool has achieved Unitary Borough status, thus focusing the tourism resource base more directly on the countryside. There are, however, no current plans (on the part of Lancashire County Council) to review the overall Tourism Strategy, in order to reflect changes in boundaries or market conditions.
- 8.22 The Tourism Strategy for Lancashire has been augmented by the North West Tourist Board's strategy⁴ for sustainable tourism in the region. This sets out key aims, the first of which is:-
- To ensure an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable future for tourism in the North West.
- 8.23 Achievement of this goal incorporates a number of priorities, including: -
- Encourage the reduction in the use of cars ... by working with other parties to establish public transport and other infrastructure links that are suited to urban and rural environments;
 - Contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the character, diversity, quality and accessibility of the countryside;
 - Providing enhanced quality, physical and intellectual access to tourist facilities for all sections of the community, including visitors with disabilities.
- 8.24 There are clear areas of overlap between these aims and priorities, and the findings of this case study. This is particularly evident in aspects such as quality of the countryside, access for people with mobility restrictions, and provision of adequate public transport.

Education

- 8.25 Within the Education Department, Lancashire County Council operates an Outdoor Education Service⁵, with four residential facilities located throughout the County, plus one in Cumbria. Activity-based courses and programmes (spanning 1 - 7 days) are offered at each centre, usually linked to aspects of the National Curriculum.
- 8.26 Centres are well-distributed across Lancashire, at: -
- Knott End, near Fleetwood
 - Hothersall Lodge, Longridge

⁴ Sustaining Progress: A sustainable strategy for tourism in the North West Tourist Board region; NWTB; 1999

⁵ Based at Tower Wood, Windermere, Cumbria

- Whitehouse Outdoor Education Centre, Pendle
 - Borwich Hall, Carnforth, and
 - Tower Wood, Windermere
- 8.27 Individual centres provide experience and education linked to specific types of activity, including caving, mountain-biking, marine biology & boating (Knott End), water & mountains (Tower Wood), team building and field study facilities for geography and biology.
- 8.28 The Service promotes its courses to all of Lancashire's schools, with current take-up of places biased roughly 60%-40% towards children of primary school age⁶.
- 8.29 Key groups of children⁷ benefiting from the Service's facilities are:
- Late-primary school age (9-11), achieving their first steps in independence in a safe yet challenging environment; and,
 - Late-secondary school age (15-16), experiencing new and often difficult activities in an unfamiliar but controlled setting.
- 8.30 These two groups represent possibly the most important stage in the continuum of countryside use, from childhood to old age (see 4.32; 4.81; 5.30 and 5.88 above). The findings of this report support the ethos of the Outdoor Education Service, and serve to illustrate the wider, potentially long-term, benefits of establishing an active link with the countryside at an early age.
- 8.31 Close parallels with the national curriculum ensure that individual courses satisfy stringent educational requirements. Less tangible benefits such as improved self-confidence and self-awareness are, however, carefully nurtured by the Service in all of its activities.
- 8.32 Facilities and courses offered by the Outdoor Education Service compete with other curriculum-related trips (such as foreign exchange visits) plus increasing emphasis on classroom-based education in response to curriculum pressures and performance targets.

Lancashire Outdoor Activities Initiative

- 8.33 Although not part of the County's statutory education structure, the Lancashire Outdoor Activities Initiative (LAOI) forms an important link in public - and especially youth - involvement in countryside activities. LAOI is an independent charity, formed by Lancashire County Council, The Bowland Trust and Sport England, to promote accessibility to the outdoor environment through: -
- Provision of information on outdoor activities
 - Providing opportunities for people who would not normally take part in outdoor recreation
 - Working with local and national organisations to deliver a co-ordinated approach to outdoor recreation
 - Publicising opportunities for outdoor activities in Lancashire
- 8.34 The Initiative delivers training facilities for a wide range of specific pursuits, such as orienteering, climbing, cycling, sailing etc., and operates a dedicated outdoor training facility (with on-site accommodation) in conjunction with United Utilities Plc, at The Anderton Centre, Rivington near Chorley.

⁶ pers. comm. 24 November, 2000; Mr.S.Baggs, Head of Service; Tower Wood Centre, Windermere.

⁷ Ibid.

- 8.35 In addition to running introductory courses in individual activities, LAOI acts as a *de facto* broker for organisations such as Royal Yachting Association, British Canoe Union and other bodies that can support and encourage personal involvement in various sports or pursuits. The Anderton Centre also co-ordinates and promotes funding for inclusive involvement in outdoor recreation, plus training and education in environmental activities. The LAOI works in tandem with the County's Outdoor Education Service
- 8.36 The initiative publicises its operations principally via a newsletter which is distributed to Council Information Centres, libraries, country park information centres and youth & community groups throughout Lancashire. Approximately 1000 copies of each edition are published and disseminated through these means.
- 8.37 In 2000, the Anderton Centre catered for over 8,500 people under the age of 18, who participated in training or taster courses developed by the LAOI, and delivered by specialist organisations.

Computer-based education

- 8.38 Key findings of this case study, plus emphatic opinions expressed during the ELRP, include the need to promote the countryside through schools, and the place of computers in the lives of modern-day children. These two strands merge in the use of computers (and the Internet in particular) throughout the County's 680 (approx.) educational establishments⁸.
- 8.39 Computing facilities are available to Lancashire's educational establishments via two complementary systems:
- Lancashire Schools Intranet - a closed network reaching 99% of schools, with content provided by a centrally-based Webmaster⁹; and
 - CLEO (Cumbria and Lancashire Education On-line), a jointly-funded initiative aiming to provide an Internet-based resource for teachers, children parents and all involved in education in Lancashire & Cumbria.
- 8.40 Lancashire Schools Intranet is aimed solely at pupils in the County's schools, with content selected or developed by Local Education Authority subject specialists. Subject material focuses on curriculum areas, particularly literacy and numeracy, plus newsletters covering general topics and information updates. The Intranet is used by most of the County's primary (almost 600) and secondary schools (70), plus a small number of establishments catering for special needs.
- 8.41 CLEO is a partnership-based service provided by Lancashire and Cumbria Education Authorities, St.Martin's College (Lancaster) and Lancaster University. The project's aims include the provision of:
- Regionally generated and focused, high quality teaching and learning materials
 - An on-line community with strong emphasis on dialogue, communication and exchange of ideas, and
 - Guided access to regional, national and international Internet services and resources.
- 8.42 Primarily developed through educational hierarchies, CLEO is intended to encompass the whole sub-regional community, and is available through libraries, museums, and the Internet

⁸ Includes primary, secondary & nursery schools plus special needs and referral units.

⁹ Currently (November 2000) Mr.S.Holt; Lancashire Education Service: 01257-516510

in general (www.cleo.ucsm.ac.uk). A key objective is to provide a rolling programme of content development, capturing the characteristics of Lancashire and Cumbria through information derived from museums, galleries, libraries etc. Content relating to countryside recreation and access could be developed in conjunction with the CLEO Learning Consultant - Heritage¹⁰.

National Grid for Learning

- 8.43 CLEO is closely aligned with the aims and objectives of the Government's National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiative¹¹. The NGfL provides a framework of educationally valuable content plus (by 2002) the means to gain access to the Grid from schools, libraries, colleges, universities, the workplace and the home. The NGfL currently hosts over 5,000 pages of content, with links to over 250,000 pages of indexed material. This is available to users of the CLEO network, in addition to CLEO's own specially-developed subject matter.

Existing County Council Internet Information

- 8.44 Lancashire County Council promotes its services and functions through an existing website (www.lancashire.com), within which the Countryside Information System Quick Guide and associated pages can be viewed and downloaded. Direct access to countryside information requires the correct website address (www.lancashire.com/lcc/env/cs/htm/nfast.htm), which is clearly an unwieldy method of obtaining information.
- 8.45 From late December 2000 countryside information will be directly accessible from a new Lancashire Environment website (with links to the main Council site), making access easier and quicker. Much of the current - extremely informative and easily understood - information will be included on the new website.
- 8.46 The Environment Directorate and Countryside Group do not currently contribute pages or supporting information to the Schools Intranet or the CLEO network.

Health

- 8.47 Both qualitative and quantitative elements of this case study clearly demonstrate the countryside's importance as a place of physical and mental refreshment. Fresh air and tranquility provide an ideal framework for exercise at all levels of vigour, while natural and local history often provide an arresting and absorbing environment for those whose interests in exercise are merely subliminal.
- 8.48 The countryside, as an excellent resource for encouragement of healthier lifestyles, is central to the Walking for Health Initiative (WHI), promoted by the Countryside Agency and British Heart Foundation, with financial support from the New Opportunities Fund and Kia Car Company.
- 8.49 The WHI is aimed at encouraging people who would not normally take regular exercise, to take part in walking as part of their normal routine. The Initiative is not directly focused on use of the countryside, however the CA guidelines for development of WHI schemes acknowledges the readily available and ideally suited characteristics of walking in the countryside.

¹⁰ Currently Maggy Simms/Roger Lang; 01524-36965

¹¹ www.ngfl.gov.uk

- 8.50 The guidelines¹² include statistics and other data which describes the nature of public involvement in walking, some of which is derived from studies summarised in section 2.0 of this report. Important additional information on the groups of people least likely to take part in walking activity forms, however, an essential part of the Guidelines. These groups are noted as:-
- People from black and ethnic minorities
 - Elderly people
 - People with disabilities, and
 - Young women
- 8.51 Many of the barriers to involvement in walking (particularly in the countryside) such as fear of attack, negative perception of walking, and dislike of poor weather conditions are common to each of these groups. Conversely, each has a set of specific issues which constrain active participation in walking as a means of recreation and exercise for better health.

People of non-UK or European origins

- 8.52 The main detractors in take-up of recreational countryside walking for this group are predominantly cultural. In addition, some religious criteria may represent effective barriers for some sections of society.
- 8.53 In many Asian, African, Afro-Caribbean or Far Eastern communities, the countryside is viewed as a place of hardship and economic disadvantage, from which people may aspire to graduate towards the more attractive opportunities of urban living¹³. This may be particularly relevant for first-generation immigrants, but may also underlie attitudes of later generations.
- 8.54 The image of the English countryside is often portrayed as a "timeless, unchanging place", the "keeper of the national culture; ... the 'real' Britain"¹⁴. This is said to harbour a whole host of patriotic connotations which may be perceived by people from black or other ethnic minorities as inherently hostile¹⁵.
- 8.55 These perceptual barriers may, for specific sectors of the community such as south Asian women, operate in parallel to other cultural and religious codes including dress restrictions, single-gender customs for some activities, and the pressures of different roles within families.
- 8.56 Despite these constraints, anecdotal evidence^{16,17} suggests that although the use of countryside facilities by ethnic groups is relatively low, it is on an upward trend. Specific information on the needs and current or future aspirations of these communities is sparse however. The County Council has in the past (1994), carried out a survey of selected organisations representing specific ethnic groups, the summarised findings of which indicate that the main obstacles to countryside use were:
- Lack of awareness of opportunities
 - Lack of interest (sometimes culturally based), and
 - Pressures of time and finance (particularly related to transport costs)

Elderly people and People with Disabilities

¹² Practical Guidelines for developing Walking for Health Schemes; Countryside Agency/British Heart Foundation; January 1999 etseq.

¹³ Julian Agyeman; A positive image; *Countryside Commission News*; Sept/Oct 1990

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ D.Mackay/C.Woodruff; Lancs.County Council Forest of Bowland AONB section; 31 Oct. 2000

¹⁷ B.McQueen/S.Harper; Rivington Great Hall Visitor Centre; 15 Nov. 2000

- 8.57 The WHI Guidelines describe the practical needs of these groups under separate sub-headings. The discussion groups described in section 3.0 of this report, however, included people who visit (or would like to visit) the countryside in the company of relatives or others with mobility restrictions. The ELRP focus groups also included such members of the community. The views of these people correspond closely with consultations undertaken with organisations representing the aspirations of people with a wide range of mobility or other physical or mental problems.
- 8.58 A significant issue to resolve, in relation to inclusive access to the countryside, is the definition of terminology associated with the subject. The World Health Organisation has defined the following terms: -
- Impairment Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function
 - Disability Any restriction or lack, resulting from an impairment of ability to perform an activity within the range considered normal for a human being
 - Handicap A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social or cultural factors for that individual
- 8.59 Under this framework of definitions, impairment defines a personal (physical or mental) characteristic that departs from the norm for a healthy adult; disability represents the interaction between an impairment and the local environment which reduces an individual's ability to participate in normal activities, while a handicap is an environmental feature or facility that prevents participation.
- 8.60 Disabilities and handicaps result from features which are external to the person and their impairment. In the context of countryside access, such features could comprise steep gradients, rough ground, stiles or specific types of gate, each of which could restrict, or prevent, personal mobility for people with permanent or temporary impairments.
- 8.61 Various attempts have been made, from time to time, to estimate the proportion of the national population that may be described as disabled. In 1973, the University of Edinburgh found that 6% of the UK population could be officially described as disabled¹⁸, through either mental or physical impairment. The Government's set of sustainability indicators¹⁹ suggests that 20% of the population may have characteristics that would bring them within the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (based on a survey undertaken in 1996). Such conjectures are of limited use when the nature of mobility impairment is considered. People with a degree of restricted mobility would also include, however:
- Healthy elderly people with declining physical abilities such as balance, hearing difficulties or reduced muscle strength
 - Pregnant women
 - Parents with children in pushchairs
 - People with chronic heart ailments or recovering from cardiac surgery
 - Small children
- 8.62 Temporary conditions, added to permanent impairments, may therefore result in most of the population experiencing mobility restrictions at some time in their lives. For example, many of the problems faced by people in wheelchairs are similar to those experienced by parents with

¹⁸ Informal Countryside Recreation for Disabled People; Advisory Series No.15; Countryside Commission; 1981

¹⁹ Quality of Life counts - Indicators for a strategy for sustainable development for the UK; a baseline assessment; DETR; December 1999

pushchairs. Elderly people - with limited balance and reaction times - may encounter the same types of problems as children with developing co-ordination skills, while pregnant women may have problems with stiles or kissing-gates, as may parents with young children.

- 8.63 These broad-ranging aspects of mobility restriction tend to blur the distinction between design of facilities for 'disabled' and able-bodied people. In fact, during the course of this case study, one organisation for the promotion of inclusive countryside access²⁰ has suggested that designing specifically for disability should not be considered, since everybody is, at some point in life, disabled or handicapped - just design for real people with all their inherent imperfections.

Young women

- 8.64 The WHI identifies difficulties of visiting the countryside with small children, fear of personal attack and getting lost as, *inter alia*, significant constraints to walking as a means of exercise. These perceived issues are reinforced by the findings of the qualitative and quantitative research carried out in the course of this case study (para.4.22; Table 35 above).

WHI - Summary

- 8.65 The Walking for Health Initiative provides valuable information on the characteristics of specific sectors of society - particularly ethnic minorities - which have not been covered within the remit of this case study.
- 8.66 Conversely, information derived from non-users of the countryside, both during this study and the East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project, may help to identify issues of relevance to promoters of Walking-for-Health schemes in Lancashire.

Rural White Paper

- 8.67 The Government's White Paper²¹ sets out policies and proposals for improved quality of life in rural areas of England. Chapter 11 of the White Paper **-increasing enjoyment of the countryside** - contains measures and proposals for improvements to the rights of way network plus countryside access and enjoyment. Many of the measures described in chapter 11 will be implemented by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, the principal provisions of which are noted above.
- 8.68 The White Paper makes substantial use of the UK Day Visits Survey 1998, and includes an extremely broad-brush reference to the scale of demand for walking in the countryside, based on the Survey, together with an estimate of the economic worth of this form of recreation. Limitations to the use of the UK Day Visits Survey as a source document for estimating demand for recreational countryside access are noted in para. 2.50 above.
- 8.69 Paragraphs 11.3.1-11.3.3 of the Paper describe the importance of countryside around towns as a valuable recreational resource. This is entirely consistent with the findings of this case study and of the ELRP. Measures stated in the Paper for enhancement of this essential resource include protection of green belt areas, as a means of limiting the spread of urban development, plus reference to the Countryside Agency's activities relating to Country Parks, Community Forests and Green Spaces in Local Communities. Demand characteristics defined during this case study will help to support and shape specific projects in these schemes.
- 8.70 Paragraph 11.3.4. states that most countryside pursuits such as walking are "largely the preserve of the white, middle-class, middle-aged and able bodied". The primary research

²⁰ Personal comment 16.10.2000; R.Holmes; The Fieldfare Trust, 67a The Wicker, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S3 8HT; tel. 0114-270-1688

²¹ Our Countryside: the future; A fair deal for rural England; November 2000; DETR/MAFF

- elements of this case study and the ELRP, plus a wide range of other studies and literature, suggest that this view of countryside recreation - and walking in particular - is too narrow in its conclusion. More adventurous forms of walking, involving off-path routes and more challenging terrain have been identified (2.14 above), as being more attractive to people in social groups ABC1. All other forms of walking, however, appear to appeal to people from all parts of the social spectrum, with some studies indicating a slight bias towards those in classes C1 & C2.
- 8.71 Paragraph 11.3.6. notes the importance of links between town and country areas, and identifies the need for Rights of Way Improvement Plans to be co-ordinated with Local Transport Plans. This is an essential element in the provision of public transport for leisure purposes, and would help to resolve a significant barrier to enjoyment of the countryside, identified emphatically by participants in this case study.
- 8.72 Paragraph 11.3.7. acknowledges the vital importance of adequate information in enjoyment of the countryside. Measures identified for resolving the information deficit include the development of codes of practice for walkers & landowners, and the establishment of a National Access Database. These facilities would assist in dispelling uncertainty and lack of opportunities, but would need to be augmented by clear locally-focused information. The proposed National Access Database would be delivered via the Internet, providing potential for inclusion in the CLEO, NGfL and Lancashire Schools Intranet noted above.
- 8.73 Paragraph 11.3.8. outlines proposals for investigation of greater involvement of ethnic minorities (see 8.52-8.56 above), people with mobility problems (8.57-8.63 above), inner-city residents and young people (8.25-8.37) in countryside recreation. Parts of this case study have illustrated the complexity and subtleties associated with definition of demand and provision of facilities for these groups.
- 8.74 Paragraphs 11.3.9-11.3.13. note the importance of provision for active involvement in activities and sports such as canoeing, cycling, horse-riding and swimming etc. These pursuits - often undertaken in groups - are essential as a means of promoting life-long interest and participation in countryside recreation. Horse-riding and cycling in particular, require adequate route provision and delineation. This case study provides demand characteristics for these specific uses in the context of general access requirements, and has demonstrated the dearth of published data available for riding and cycling facility planning.
- 8.75 A separate box (p.139) outlines the Government's approach to tourism and transport issues from the perspective of environmental protection. Two measures are promoted for reducing impacts of traffic: improvements to public transport infrastructure, and road toll and car parking schemes. This case study provides information that would help to support the former, while the Forest of Bowland Greenways & Quiet Roads Study may demonstrate support for the latter (see para.3.103 above).
- 8.76 Part 4 - *a vibrant countryside* - sets out measures for achieving closer relationships between parish/town councils and higher administrative tiers. Sub-section 12.2 envisages proposals for Quality Town or Parish Councils, to which selected responsibilities would be devolved. Such councils would need to reach specified standards before attaining Quality Council status. One of the duties that may be assumed by these new types of council, would be the preparation of Village (or Town) Plans (ss.12.3). Information on the types of facilities required for countryside recreation, plus general demand characteristics, may provide support for measures included in these Plans.
- 8.77 Sub-section 13.3 of the Paper describes measures for improving co-ordination of policies in rural areas. Paragraph 13.3.2. encourages more rural data collection and sharing of information at the regional level, by organisations including the Countryside Agency, English Nature,

RDAs and Government Offices. There is a clear role for the Agency in dissemination of the range of information generated by this case study.

- 8.78 The White Paper also covers two topics which have been identified as major constraints on the enjoyment of the countryside as a recreational resource; these are transport and crime.

Transport

- 8.79 Much of the Paper's Chapter 6 is concerned with transport from the perspective of the utilitarian needs of rural residents. Encouragement and support for Rural Transport Partnerships are expressed in ss.6.3., while subsequent paragraphs cover the need for more responsive and flexible public transport services. Table 6.1 (pp.61-62 of the White Paper) outlines options for improved flexibility, ranging from shared taxis to community bus services. Paragraph 6.4.9. considers the possibility for increased relaxation of regulations covering provision of bus services, which may help to augment routes offered by established operators. This type of service could contribute to farm diversification, and could be linked to Park & Ride schemes noted in the Forest of Bowland Greenways & Quiet Roads Study. This case study has identified a clear and substantial demand for improved public transport for recreational purposes, which will help to underpin the viability of such local initiatives.
- 8.80 Sub-section 6.5 describes the need for better information on local transport services, and this fundamental requirement has been resoundingly confirmed by the findings of this case study. Methods of service promotion are mentioned, including telephone- and internet-based delivery, plus the use of local post offices and shops as information points. The County's new Environment website could be used as a base for timetable information, possibly with links into the Schools Intranet or CLEO networks.
- 8.81 Road safety has been identified as a focal constraint in greater enjoyment of the countryside. The White Paper considers this problem (sub-section 6.6.) in the context of: - more carefully defined and enforced speed limits, traffic calming measures in and around villages, and the funding of speed cameras from fines revenue. In addition, greater involvement in (day-to-day) cycling and walking is encouraged, with reference to Quiet Lanes. Greater creation of Quiet Lanes, with accompanying implications for recreational walking and cycling, will be a feature of the Transport Act 2000. Information derived from this case study will assist in supporting traffic calming, speed limitation and Quiet Road schemes.

Crime

- 8.82 Fear of crime, particularly personal violence aimed at women, has been identified by this case study and the ELRP as a significant constraint to enjoyment of the countryside, especially to infrequent visitors participating in the discussion groups. Crime in the rural environment is defined and considered in sub-section 4.5 of the White Paper.
- 8.83 Despite public fears and assumptions, actual and perceived crime in the countryside is significantly lower than in urban areas²². Between 1995 and 1999, instances of violent and vehicle crime fell consistently in rural areas, however the greater isolation and occurrence of well-publicised incidents are acknowledged as real anxieties (for rural residents and visitors alike).
- 8.84 Measures such as Crime Reduction Partnerships, Neighbourhood Watch, Horse Watch and Farm Watch are each discussed in paragraphs 4.5.4 & 5 of the White Paper. These will be essential for residents, however the neighborhood warden schemes envisaged in para. 4.5.6. could be adapted to provide a measure of reassurance and comfort for visitors too. The desire

²² *ibid.* para.4.5.1.

for wardening provision has been amply demonstrated by this case study and the ELRP, and could be used to inform local councils, possibly through Quality Town or Parish Council procedures (para.8.76 above).

- 8.85 Paragraphs 4.5.13 and .14 of the White Paper consider the vital issue of racism in rural areas. Information derived from the Walking for Health Initiative, supported by consultations and supplementary research (8.52-8.56 above), indicates that this topic is highly complex, with many inter-racial subtleties. Treatment of race-related problems for visitors to the countryside is not directly accommodated in the White Paper, while discussion of measures to combat racism in the general rural context is marginally more comprehensive. This case study has, however, identified evidence of small, but consistent, increases in recreational use of the countryside by people of (predominantly) Asian origin, which would benefit from further investigation.

Strategy for sustainable development

- 8.86 The Government's strategy²³ for achieving economic, social and environmental equity incorporates specific policies for management of the rural environment²⁴, and promotion of access and enjoyment of the landscape in particular. A series²⁵ of indicators has been developed (or identified) which will enable progress towards a sustainable future to be monitored; information derived from this case study will be directly relevant to two of these indicators, while two others may benefit indirectly.
- 8.87 Indicator S7²⁶ has protection of the wider landscape as its objective. Development of an indicator for monitoring quality of the countryside is planned, however difficulties in measuring quality in this context are acknowledged. Primary research undertaken during this case study, plus information derived from the ELRP and Public Attitudes to the Countryside Survey (1995), provide clear illustrations of factors that people define as important in the countryside. This data could provide accurate baseline information for development or refinement of Indicator S7.
- 8.88 Indicator S8²⁷ is aimed at promotion of public access and enjoyment of the landscape, and is described as being in development. Information from this case study will provide sound local baseline information on issues such as barriers to access, ease of travel to the countryside, and access to open land. The requirements of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act, for regular preparation of Improvement Plans based on public needs, will provide opportunities for updating of this benchmark information which will enable progress on Indicator S8 to be accurately measured.
- 8.89 Indicator J3 aims to ensure that disabled people have access to a wider range of goods, services and facilities. This case study has highlighted the scale of need for better, more inclusive access to the countryside in Lancashire. Monitoring of future access demand, based on the data generated during this project, would strengthen the local relevance of this Indicator.
- 8.90 Indicator K7 is designed to monitor access to local green space and, in common with S7 & S8, is in the course of development. This is predominantly aimed at the urban environment, however this case study and the ELRP, have shown that perceptions of the countryside are as varied as the number of participants in these studies. Countryside on the edge of towns is

²³ a better quality of life - A strategy for sustainable development in the UK; DETR; May 1999

²⁴ *ibid*; para.8.56

²⁵ Quality of Life counts - Indicators for a strategy for sustainable development for the UK; a baseline assessment; DETR; December 1999

²⁶ *ibid*.p219

²⁷ *ibid*. p220

sometimes not recognised as such, however it is vitally important in the lives of many people, for dog walking, exercise and fresh air. The information derived from this case study may be used to monitor levels of use of countryside on the urban fringe, plus its suitability for a range of recreational uses.

9.0 Use of countryside access demand data

9.1 This case study has been designed to complement work previously undertaken by the Boroughs of Pendle, Burnley and Hyndburn in 1999, during the East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project (ELRP). Several aspects of the 1999 Project have been amplified and expanded in the current study to include, in particular,

- Greater scope of participants in discussion groups, to include users - as well as non-users - of the countryside;
- Minor amendments to the questionnaire, to reflect views on crime and access expressed during discussion groups in Preston and Lancaster; and
- Omission of questions relating to the provision of Greenways and Quiet Roads, which formed a substantial part of ELRP.

9.2 In addition, sources of existing research findings - at national and local scales - have been expanded, to provide a more comprehensive illustration of the context within which planning and management of recreational countryside access can operate at County level.

9.3 Methods, survey sample size, and core objectives have, however, been designed to mirror corresponding aspects of ELRP, enabling comparisons to be made, and resources to be targeted efficiently.

9.4 This section of the case study describes actual uses to which information derived from the East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project has been put, providing an illustration of the practical applicability of this type of data.

9.5 Information from the 1999 Study has been used to support or shape various strategic policies, and to provide a rationale for implementation of specific rights of way improvement projects. The main strategies include:

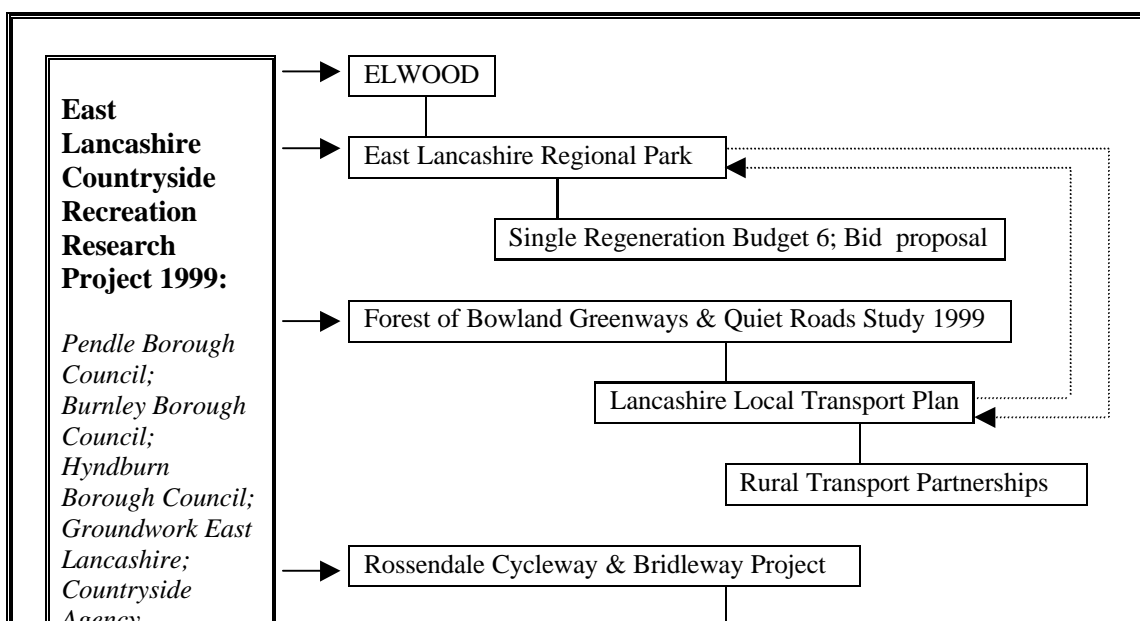




Figure 7: Information flow from East Lancs. Countryside Recreation Research Project ELWOOD - East Lancashire's forest

9.6 This initiative, promoted and developed by the Groundwork Trusts in East Lancashire - in association with local Borough Councils, the National Urban Forestry Unit, East Lancashire Partnership and the Forestry Commission - is aimed at achieving regeneration of the sub-region through development of a co-ordinated woodland planting and management strategy.

9.7 The project has gained substantial support and funding from a range of sources, based on a comprehensive assessment of opportunities, constraints and end-user benefits. The ELRP report provided clear information on the type and distribution of countryside facilities that would attract public support, plus an estimate of the scale of demand for such resources. In addition, concerns relating to personal safety were incorporated into woodland planning and design guidelines, to assist in allaying fears of crime.

9.8 Promotion of woodland as an educational resource forms an integral element of the ELWOOD Initiative, and draws on ELRP's findings to support this aspect of its planned function. In parallel with this, the Study was able to underpin the need for a comprehensive strategy for information, outlining the opportunities and benefits associated with a co-ordinated approach to woodland planting and management in East Lancashire.

9.9 Much of the work involved in developing the ELWOOD vision and subsequent development strategy was undertaken by the Groundwork Trusts and their work with a range of partner organisations. Appraisal of public needs in relation to countryside facilities, provided by ELRP, contributed to the form of the project²⁸, and helped to create a framework for subsequent funding applications.

East Lancashire Regional Park

9.10 The ELWOOD initiative helped to demonstrate the prime importance of an attractive environment for encouraging economic investment and stimulating social regeneration. Early recognition of these benefits led, through widespread discussion and development, to the project's incorporation in the East Lancashire Regional Park - a concept initially promoted by the North West Regional Development Agency. This pioneering approach to sustainable regeneration focuses on the fact that the area's population (of some 500,000) is comparable with major British cities such as Bristol, Liverpool or Cardiff, but is set within an accessible rural hinterland, containing recognised areas of outstanding beauty.

9.11 The economic, social and environmental benefits of treating East Lancashire as an entity - rather than as a series of separate towns extending from Blackburn to Colne - will enable it to compete as an equal with established centres of investment. This inclusive approach acknowledges the role that close intermingling of attractive countryside with urban areas can play in long-term regeneration, and forms an integral element of the Regional Park concept.

9.12 The Regional Park initiative has been the subject of a successful bid - co-ordinated by the East Lancashire Partnership - for funding under round 6 of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB6). This will enable strategic planning of spatial layout, transport facilities and rural linkages to be developed as a precursor to implementation of the concept.

²⁸ Pers.comm. A.J.Williams; Operations Director, Groundwork East Lancashire; 23 November 2000

- 9.13 Preparation of the SRB6 bid document²⁹ (document reproduced in Appendix C) centred on four strategic objectives:
- **Objective 1:** To establish the physical framework that will enable the positive transformation of East Lancashire as a regional asset;
 - **Objective 2:** To increase the prosperity and competitiveness of East Lancashire and contribute towards regional competitiveness;
 - **Objective 3:** To improve living environments and promote healthy lifestyles;
 - **Objective 4:** To promote involvement of and responsibility for the community environment
- 9.14 The bid document acknowledges the use of the East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project as a primary source of information, particularly as a demonstration of public need for the type of facilities envisaged by the Regional Park³⁰.
- 9.15 Strategic Objective 1 includes a commitment to develop and improve the area's network of footpaths, cycleways, bridleways and other related facilities. The ELRP report contained a preliminary network of Greenways, Quiet Roads and local Greenspaces, based on responses from participants in discussion groups and questionnaire surveys, allied to physical surveys of potential routes. Much of this information has been used to inform the Regional Park concept, and is described in the SRB6 bid under Greenways and Linkages (Appendix C; p8).
- 9.16 Objective 3 incorporates some of the central themes identified during the ELRP study; notably reference to fear of crime as a deterrent to countryside recreation. This is accommodated by proposals for a New Deal funded wardening scheme (Appendix C; p10) plus acceptance of appropriate design principles.
- 9.17 The formation of a "Virtual Park" - an Internet site describing the area's facilities and opportunities is proposed under Objective 4, together with a Community Support Network and Forum. These facets stem from, *inter alia*, the emphatic findings of the ELRP study, including the use of schools as a medium of information provision, and the need to appeal to younger generations via information technology.
- 9.18 Section C of the SRB6 bid includes a descriptive paragraph, summarising the main issues identified during the ELRP study (Appendix C; p13). This is used to demonstrate public attitudes to the countryside, and states that the Regional Park will accommodate such views.
- 9.19 The bid document concludes that the Regional Park concept will meet public needs and demand, based on the findings of the ELRP report.
- 9.20 The chief uses of information derived from the ELRP report were^{31,32}:
- Justification of proposals based on public demand for recreational countryside facilities;
 - Demonstration of public support for better facilities, especially relating to access for people with restricted mobility;

²⁹ CHANGING EAST LANCASHIRE 2: The East Lancashire Regional Park SRB6 Bid; East Lancashire Partnership.

³⁰ Appendix C: The East Lancashire Regional Park SRB6 Bid; p.6, Community Involvement

³¹ pers.comm. Carol Fern, East Lancashire Partnership; 24 October 2000

³² pers.comm. David Crowley; SRB6 bid co-ordinator; 25 October 2000

- Evidence of a clear need to accommodate fear of crime, through attention to design and provision of wardening services;
- Identification of need for a comprehensive and effective means of providing information on countryside recreation opportunities.

9.21 The SRB6 bid was successful in attracting some £5 million of funding for development of the next phase of the Regional Park's development.

Forest of Bowland Greenways & Quiet Roads Study 1999 (FoB99)

9.22 The main statistical findings of the ELRP report were included in Appendix 4 (*Recreational use of countryside roads and byways; the national and local picture*) of FoB99's comprehensive study of potential for a defined route network in the Forest of Bowland AONB (see paras.3.86-3.108 above).

9.23 These demand figures included the overall scale of participation in countryside recreation, latent demand for visiting the rural environment, proportion of visitors accompanied by people with mobility restrictions, and needs for better public transport. These were incorporated in demand appraisals for facilities in the AONB.

9.24 Direct correlation of statistics may, in this instance, provide an underestimate of demand from residents of East Lancashire (as defined in ELRP), since surveys were undertaken in November, compared with August for the Forest of Bowland Greenways & Quiet Roads Study.

9.25 Attitudinal aspects of ELRP were included in other aspects of FoB99, particularly the heading ... *propensity to use green modes of travel*. This section quoted evidence from ELRP, in support of linkages between a future network of routes in the Forest of Bowland and existing and potential routes in Pendle, Burnley and Hyndburn.

Lancashire Local Transport Plan

9.26 The County's Local Transport Plan (LTP) contains several broad references to Greenways and Quiet Roads, but also devotes a substantial section (s.2.17.9) to the Forest of Bowland Greenways & Quiet Roads Project. This draws heavily and directly on the findings and proposals of the FoB99 report, while s 2.9.3 promotes the idea of interchanges between public transport and Greenway networks in general.

9.27 The ELRP report did not contribute directly to the development of policies contained in the LTP, however a number of its findings appear to have been included via data derived from the Forest of Bowland Greenways & Quiet Roads Study 1999.

Rossendale Cycleway & Bridleway Project (RCBP)

9.28 This document cites the main findings of the ELRP report, in similar fashion to FoB99. The RCBP states that these key characteristics of the three East Lancashire boroughs are transferable to Rossendale, on the basis of similar geographic, socio-economic and demographic natures. No evidence is offered to support this contention, although the RCBP report also describes Rossendale as a "rural community" - unlike Burnley, and substantial swathes of Pendle and Hyndburn.

Project implementation

9.29 The use of ELRP as a supporting document for project implementation in Pendle, Burnley and Hyndburn has not been a successful enterprise. In total, only two schemes

are understood to have been funded as a result of schemes underpinned by information from the report. These are:

- Pendle Borough Council's Milestones Report; and
- Work on the Pendle Way.

9.30 Neither Burnley nor Hyndburn Borough Councils have been successful in their use of information from ELRP to support implementation projects.

Summary

9.31 Information derived from the East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project has been used to good effect to underpin, influence or contribute to strategies for sub-regional regeneration and other more localised initiatives. These have included landscape and community reintegration in the case of ELWOOD and the innovative, far-reaching East Lancashire Regional Park concept, as well as the more closely related access strategies for the Forest of Bowland Greenways, and Rossendale Cycleway & Bridleway projects.

9.32 The Rossendale Cycleway/Bridleway Report illustrates the possible misuse of demand statistics, by attributing the characteristics of East Lancashire (Hyndburn, Burnley and Pendle) to Rossendale.

9.33 At the project level, ELRP has not proved to be particularly effective at securing funding for on-the-ground projects.

10.0 Information analysis and conclusions

Background

10.1 Recreational use of the countryside plays an important part in the lives of many people, accounting for an estimated 1,400 million visits in 1990³³ and almost 1 in 4³⁴ of all leisure day-visits in England during 1998. Expenditure by visitors to the rural environment amounts to at least £8.4 billion³⁵ per year, while the budget for Lancashire County Council's Countryside Group stood at some £1.5 million for 2000/2001. The rural environment clearly provides an extremely important public recreational resource, with immense revenue and expenditure implications at all levels.

10.2 Guidance for countryside managers, and for providers of recreational facilities in particular, has for over half a decade, centred on two major national studies (*National Survey of Countryside Recreation & Public Attitudes to the Countryside Survey*), plus various locally relevant *ad hoc* sectoral studies. In addition, information from the series of UK Day Visits Surveys (1994-1998) has been used, from time to time, to underpin a range of strategy statements.

10.3 This case study has used these principal national sources of information as a base, but has also identified a slightly wider spread of research studies, which are available to countryside managers in Lancashire. The total inventory of information sources spans specific interests (such as cycling and horse riding), geographically defined initiatives (Forest of Bowland, East Lancashire etc), and academic studies (UK Land Use Survey), and comprises:

National:	Published
National Survey of Countryside Recreation (NSCR)	1995
Public Attitudes to the Countryside (PACS)	1995

³³ National Survey of Countryside Recreation, 1998; Section 2: The Scale of Countryside Recreation

³⁴ UK Leisure Day Visits Survey 1998; Table 4; p.17

³⁵ *ibid.* Table 10; pp 28/29

UK Day Visits Survey	1998
Ramblers Association: Telephone questionnaire survey (RAT 2000)	2000
British Waterways: Informal visitors to waterways towing paths survey	1998
The Geographical Association: Land Use - UK survey	1996
Market for Recreational Cycling in the Countryside. (MRCC)	1995

Local:

Forest of Bowland Visitor Survey (FoB 92)	1999
Recreational Access Study for the Lune Valley	1997
A Bridleway Strategy for Lancashire (BSL)	1997
East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project (ELRP)	1999
Feasibility Report & Marketing Plan for Rossendale	1999
Cycleways/Bridleways Project	
Forest of Bowland Greenways & Quiet Roads Study (FoB 99)	1999

- 10.4 None of these studies adequately describes demand characteristics for countryside recreation in the County as a whole. To redress this situation, the comprehensive programme of primary research into public demand for countryside facilities across Lancashire, carried out as part of this case study, can now be added to the inventory.

Methodologies

- 10.5 In total, the findings of these studies amount to a comprehensive appraisal of public attitudes towards, and expectations of, the countryside. Each piece of work has been commissioned, however, with a specific objective in mind; occasionally - as in the National Survey of Countryside Recreation and East Lancashire Recreation Research Project - aimed at evaluating general demand characteristics for countryside recreation. In the main however, individual projects have been designed to elicit information on a closely defined topic such as, *inter alia*, bridleway provision, economic development or route designation.
- 10.6 Each of these original objectives has been accommodated through the use of diverse methods for obtaining and processing information. Individual projects have variously employed (either singly or in combination):
- Household surveys;
 - Telephone surveys;
 - Face-to-face interviews in the street;
 - Public workshops;
 - Discussion groups;
 - Literature searches;
 - Visitor surveys;
 - Large-scale quadrat surveys by school children;
 - Postal questionnaire surveys;
 - Horse counts;
- 10.7 These techniques have been applied to demographically matched, random, or specially-selected samples of target populations, in response to circumstances and requirements. This has resulted in an exceptionally heterogeneous series of methodologies, which precludes accurate direct comparison between most of the individual studies.

- 10.8 Despite the broad sweep of objectives and research methods, many of the respective studies share some similar conclusions. This selective consensus of findings suggests a number of fundamental characteristics in demand for countryside access and facilities.

Findings:

General demand characteristics

- 10.9 The main studies (NSCR; PACS; UK Day Visits; RAT 2000; FoB 92 & 99; ELRP) all find that recreational use of the countryside has a wide, and deep, public appeal. The NSCR estimates that some 50% of the national population visit the countryside at least once per month, while the ELRP put the equivalent figure at 73.4% in the three participating boroughs³⁶. The current case study has shown, through quantitative surveys conducted across the County, that demand in some areas (Lytham St. Anne's, Preston, Ormskirk) is more closely aligned with the NSCR figure. The ELRP findings, however, fit the pattern of demand identified during the current case study, which suggests that the NSCR figure may represent the lower end of the spectrum of public demand for the countryside.
- 10.10 Interest in recreational use of the countryside spans all sectors of society. The NSCR finds that people in social classes C1 & C2 account for 59% of all visits to the countryside, but that those in classes ABC1 tend to visit more frequently. RAT 2000 also states that recreational walking is marginally more popular amongst C1/C2s, although participation is fairly evenly spread across all classes (para.2.55; Table 14 above). The ELRP identified a greater demand amongst people in groups C2DE, since these were less likely to be able to afford to take their families to other leisure attractions such as Alton Towers, Blackpool, or the Trafford Centre. Qualitative and quantitative surveys undertaken during this case study confirm these findings.
- 10.11 Greater propensity for members of classes ABC1 to make more frequent visits reflects the nature of key determinants in decisions to visit the countryside. The main factors in decisions to visit the rural environment, emerging from published literature, primary research and consultation with appropriate organisations are: **time availability; access to private transport, appropriate information, and cost**. Other extremely important factors are: **vandalism and fear of crime or personal injury; poorly maintained routes (especially mud and dog-fouling); and urban encroachment**

Time availability

- 10.12 Time availability is largely the province of the individual. Within the general subject however, the current case study has shown that while some groups have less time to spare for visiting the countryside (people with families or specific work pressures etc), others such as retired people may, in contrast, have more time. For the latter group, personal health was also defined as a constraint on enjoyment of rural facilities (see Table 25 above). With an aging population and improved health care into old age, it is possible that availability of time may become less of a constraint on overall latent demand for countryside access and facilities.

Access to private transport

- 10.13 Access to a car or other private vehicle represents a major determinant in the scale and nature of countryside use. Published literature records the proportion of visitors arriving at their rural destination by car, at between 57% (ELRP) and 80% (NSCR), while this case study has found that 64% of respondents used the car as their mode of transport into the countryside. Although participants in other studies (NSCR; ELRP; MRCC; FoB99) expressed a desire to make greater use of public transport (as did many of the discussion group members participating in

³⁶ Hyndburn, Burnley and Pendle Borough Councils

this case study), the quantitative data above (paras.5.46-5.48 & Table 31) suggests that few people - 12% of respondents - would prefer to travel by bus or train. The main reasons for this (Table 32 above) included poor reliability, absence of services, expense, and lack of time. This latter aspect is particularly important in the light of para.10.12 above.

Information provision

- 10.14 Unavailability of information represents a fundamental constraint on countryside use in the County. This encompasses both published literature - in the form of leaflets, newspaper articles, websites, posters etc - and signage, waymarking and interpretive facilities. For published material, very few participants in discussion groups knew where to obtain information (in common with participants in the ELRP), with Tourist Information Centres or the National Trust being the most frequently mentioned sources. Many participants (ELRP & this study) stated that poor waymarking, particularly relating to destination and distance information, had prevented them from taking a specific footpath route. The need for a means of grading routes was also a significant concern of discussion group participants (ELRP & this study), especially for those with impaired mobility.
- 10.15 Within the County, a number of exceptionally attractive and successful key sites cater for countryside recreation, and form a vital resource for introducing people to the rural environment. These include, amongst others, Rivington (near Chorley) and Gisburn Forest near Clitheroe. Both of these sites are, however, extremely difficult to find for first-time visitors, with few (or inconsistent) road signs from major routes. Gisburn Forest is, in fact, not even signposted from the village of Gisburn. These well-kept secrets are operated by other organisations (United Utilities Plc and Forest Enterprise respectively) and include some innovative features, such as a series of graded walks (in Gisburn Forest) for those needing to know distances and route conditions (see para.10.14 above).

Cost

- 10.16 Visits to the countryside represent a relatively inexpensive means of entertaining and educating young families, and the ELRP found this to be particularly important for people with limited incomes. This group is also, however, likely to have greater dependency on public transport as a means of arriving at their rural destinations, and excessive cost has been clearly identified as a significant factor in the use of busses and trains. In combination with time commitments and poor perceptions of public transport facilities, cost of travel comprises a major factor in decisions to visit the countryside for people with limited means.

Crime & vandalism and safety

- 10.17 Participants in the ELRP identified vandalism as a major detractor, particularly in locations such as canal towpaths or routes on disused railway lines (Padiham). These routes provide features such as bridges which provide cover for miscreants, and a largely enclosed route that may prevent rapid escape from attackers. This case study has noted a small, but significant, fear of personal crime which in turn echoes a similar finding of the PACS report (see Tables 8 & 35 above).
- 10.18 A sub-category of concern for personal safety, identified by a number of studies (MRCC, BSL, ELRP, and FoB99), centres on dangers to walkers - or other countryside users - from vehicular traffic. This is especially important to cyclists and horse riders, but is also an issue for general users, particularly those with young children. The concept of Quiet Roads was seen as a useful means of reducing the potential for accidents, by participants in the FoB99 study and ELRP.

Route maintenance

10.19 Poorly maintained routes, including muddy or dog-fouled areas, were identified as significant constraints by participants in this case study and the ELRP. In addition, children participating in the Land Use - UK survey recognised the need to improve public footpaths. Inappropriate route surfacing was specifically mentioned by people who visit the countryside accompanied by those with some form of mobility restriction. This was noted by discussion groups in Burnley, Preston and Lancaster, as being particularly important to people in wheelchairs, although similar comments were relevant to parents with children in pushchairs.

Development pressures

10.20 Encroachment by modern development on the rural environment was noted as a significant factor in discouraging recreational use of the countryside by 37% of participants in both the PACS and ELRP. An additional 31% of respondents in the current case study also expressed concerns about the future development of the countryside (Tables 4 & 35 and para.3.60 above). The relationship between town and country was acknowledged as a complicated issue by participants in discussion groups in Preston and Lancaster - with unchecked urban growth and continuing erosion of the Green Belt seen as inevitable. Emphatically expressed opinions assumed a measure of rule-bending in relation to land-use planning applications, generally resulting in unwanted (by the general public) development (see paras.4.59-4.61 above).

Farming

10.21 Despite negative feelings towards construction and development, this case study has identified a significant level of public support for farmers as custodians of the rural environment. Many participants felt that farmers should be paid for undertaking the upkeep of the countryside, and a general consensus emerged that people, in general, should be educated more fully about the rural environment and the needs of farmers.

Attitudes and expectations

10.22 These factors (10.11-10.21 above) are important influences on the choice to spend leisure time in the rural environment. They exist, however, within a framework of attitudes towards the countryside, which embodies features that participants in this case study - and many of the preceding projects - have emphatically defined as its essential characteristics. Such attitudes include deep-rooted affection for a small range of attributes which underlie the diverse perceptions noted in paras. 4.11-4.21 above, comprising:

- Natural beauty (of the landscape, especially hills, water and woodland);
- Wildlife;
- Tranquility;
- Fresh air;

10.23 Within these attributes, a wide range of expectations can be fulfilled. The PACS, MRCC, FoB92 & ELRP studies all found that spiritual or psychological relaxation and refreshment were primary stimuli for visits to the countryside, with opportunities for physical exercise being overtly or subliminally linked to such benefits. It is interesting to note that these advantages can be achieved through activities as exciting as potholing (4.32 above) or as mundane as dog-walking (ELRP).

10.24 The findings of this case study have clearly defined, and variously described, the appeal of the rural environment to recreational users of the countryside. For those who do not see themselves as users, or as not being particularly interested in rural issues, the countryside still occupies a place of importance. The ELRP noted that non-using BC1 participants of discussion groups acknowledged the intrinsic value of the countryside, despite a profound lack

of personal interest in its charms and benefits (see Appendix B; para.4.2.21). This phenomenon has been unequivocally confirmed during the course of this case study (4.80 above), and reflects the findings of PACS (Table 5 above).

- 10.25 This aspect of public attitude towards a resource of no immediate relevance to the individual - *existence value* to environmental economists - can be gauged in monetary terms, and has been used to justify large-scale investment in rural assets in Scotland³⁷.

Related strategies, policies and initiatives

- 10.26 Most of the local sources of information reviewed in Section 3.0 above have been prepared with a specific objective in mind. The findings of each relevant study have been used to prepare strategies for:

- recreational cycling and walking in the Lune Valley;
- improvement of bridleway provision, and
- co-ordinated cycleway and bridleway provision in Rossendale.

The ELRP was initially designed to gauge public demand and support for countryside access in general, and the Greenway/Quiet Road concepts in particular, within the Boroughs of Pendle, Burnley and Hyndburn.

- 10.27 Information contained in the ELRP has been used to:

- develop the concept of an East Lancashire Park, encompassing the regeneration of an area stretching from Blackburn to Colne, based on the close proximity of dense urban development with attractive open countryside; and
- to obtain a large block of funding for further development of the concept from central government sources (see Appendix C).

- 10.28 These studies show that demand characteristics for countryside recreation can be applied to a range of related - and apparently unrelated - topics for the benefit of local communities. Section 8.0 above summarises key areas of cross-interest, where demand data may be of use to other service providers, or where parallel strategies and policies can influence the delivery of countryside services. In this context, a fundamental observation of this case study is that groups, departments or organisations with responsibility for individual services, do not have an effective means of communication for areas of common concern. Many people, representing a broad spread of organisations, have contributed to the preparation of this case study, and not one of these consultees or contributors has expressed anything other than support and interest in the findings of the project. A means of disseminating the study's findings to these participants could encourage the emergence of many novel developments. A list of potential future consultees is included in para. 10.80 below.

Education

- 10.29 Of the related areas of service delivery, Education is possibly the most important - both in the short and longer terms. A prime finding of this case study (and confirmed by ELRP and other related studies) is the urgent need for effective information provision. This has been clearly linked to schools (paras. 4.34 & 4.35 above and ELRP; Appendix B; paras.4.2.36 & 4.2.40), with other supporting comments related to the increasing importance of computers in children's lives. The Countryside Group currently contributes to Lancashire County Council's

³⁷ Cobbing.P; Slee.W; (1993) A contingent valuation of the Mar Lodge Estate, Cairngorm Mountains, Scotland; *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* Vol.36 No.1; pp65-72

website, providing a large quantity of easily used and informative material. This could be made available to the Lancashire Schools Intranet and the CLEO network (8.38-8.42 above), to provide an immediate source of information in a popular format to a large and influential audience.

- 10.30 A key finding of this case study is the relationship between lifestage and countryside usage (4.28-4.32 above). One aspect of this linkage is the observation that people who undertake a specific activity such as cycling, horse riding or climbing, tend to return to it after their children have achieved independence, or occasionally, to continue with it on a curtailed basis during the early stages of child-rearing. This provision of a stimulus to life-long use and enjoyment of the countryside can clearly be delivered by the County's Outdoor Education Service and the Lancashire Outdoor Activities Initiative. In addition to tangible factors such as personal fulfillment and enjoyment of various sports and activities, the courses offered by these two organisations could instill a respect for the rural environment which may help to reduce future instances of vandalism.

Health

- 10.31 By encouraging active use of the countryside, outdoor education could promote personal activities that help to maintain health and fitness later in life. This invaluable benefit has been recognised by the Walking for Health Initiative (WHI) described in paras.8.47-8.66 above. The WHI provides much information of use to countryside managers, including a description of cultural barriers (often linked to generational attitudes) to enjoyment of the countryside by ethnic groups. Some of these groups have, for example, significantly greater likelihood of developing lifestyle-related diseases - South Asians have a 40% higher risk of coronary heart disease than the general population, while the incidence of diabetes in Asians is 3 to 4 times higher than in Europeans.
- 10.32 Evidence suggests that countryside usage by Asians in Lancashire is increasing, but is still extremely low in relation to general use. Encouragement of school children from ethnic groups may be an effective method of communicating countryside benefits to specific groups, and could be a vital means of improving long-term trends in disease patterns.
- 10.33 Other key groups identified by the WHI as important targets for improved exercise levels are elderly and disabled people, and young women. This case study has identified, via literature review and primary research, a set of findings related to access and crime issues which affect these categories of potential countryside users. For inclusive access, the question of who might be classed as disabled has been considered, and evidence indicates that almost everybody will, at some time in their life, experience impaired mobility (paras. 8.58-8.61). This concept - of viewing access facilities as a whole rather than for able-bodied or disabled users - may be an important consideration in the Local Highway Authority's obligation to address means of access under Sections 32,33, & 65 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

Rights of Way Improvement Plans

- 10.34 An additional statutory duty arising from the Countryside & Rights of Way Act, is the obligation to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the County's network. This must be based on an assessment of public need (which this case study may fulfill), and will be subject to periodic review. The County's Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out targets and proposals for walking and cycling, which may be informed by the findings of the current study, and which could be monitored as part of the review process. Public consultation procedures used during preparation of the LTP also included discussion groups and quantitative surveys. This similarity in methodology may make direct transfer of data between this study, and future LTP and CRoW Act reviews a strong possibility. Co-ordination between

Improvement Plans and the LTP is also a facet of the Government's rural White Paper (para.8.71 above).

- 10.35 The Improvement Plans required by the 2000 Act may provide opportunities for prioritising applications for re-designation of footpaths, or other routes, as bridleways. Section 58 (1) of the 2000 Act confers³⁸ the right to create new public paths and bridleways on Access Land, however such proposals must be set out with regard to the Local Highway Authority's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The two procedures could be used in parallel, to develop Lancashire's bridleway network. This issue arises from a situation described in the Bridleway Strategy for Lancashire (3.23-3.35 above), where incorrect identification of routes as footpaths (during a previous review) is held to be responsible for the County's relative lack of bridleways. In addition to route creation opportunities, RoW Improvement Plans may allow a programme of applications to be drawn up - in conjunction with the local British Horse Society branch - together with a plan for removal of obstructions (also identified in the Bridleway Strategy for Lancashire). This could enable resources be deployed effectively, and could expedite the expansion of the County's bridleway network.

Cycling

- 10.36 Bridleways are of interest to cyclists, as well as horse riders, and this case study has identified a significant lack of credible information on public demand for cycling facilities. The few studies that consider provision for cycling acknowledge the absence of underlying data on the scale of the public involvement. The main methods of estimating demand focus on membership of cycling organisations, sales of bicycles or circulation figures for cyclists' magazines. Consultation with relevant organisations (2.93 above) confirm that, at best, demand figures tend to be extrapolated from post-implementation monitoring surveys on similar projects.
- 10.37 The problem with methods noted above is that each one fails to capture information on the casual bicycle user. This case study has noted that 32% of respondents had access to a bicycle, however no characteristics of cycle use, such as frequency, destinations, likes/dislikes etc were obtained. Other estimations of cycle use range from 4% (UK Day Visits Survey) to 58% (MRCC). With such wide variation in results, any realistic assessment of the scale of need for cycling facilities is fraught with difficulty.

Rural White Paper: Village Plans

- 10.38 The Government's White Paper on quality of life in rural areas contains a significant number of proposals and policy outlines, many of which are relevant to the findings of this case study. These are summarised in paras.8.67-8.85 above. Of these, the scheme for preparation of Village (or Town) Plans (para. 8.76 above) would benefit directly from an assessment of public demand for recreational facilities in the countryside. The Countryside Agency has been charged with administering this scheme, and it may be appropriate for project briefs to incorporate the need to base plan proposals on demand data, where available.

Rural White Paper: Transport

- 10.39 Rural transportation receives significant attention in the White Paper (8.79-8.81 above), with some of the key issues, such as better information, improved road safety and greater flexibility of services being underpinned by the findings of this case study. Many of these concerns are the direct responsibility of the Local Highway Authority, but must be guided in part, by countryside managers. These aspects of the White Paper, together with the findings of this

³⁸ on the Countryside Agency, in England

case study, emphasise the need for close co-operation between the Countryside Group and the Highways Authority.

Land Use Planning

- 10.40 Strategic land use planning represents another field of public service provision that would benefit from the Countryside Group's guidance. This case study, together with findings from the ELRP, has documented a deep public concern for the future of the countryside. Changing national demographics, with a predicted growth in single-person households³⁹, suggest relentless pressures for development, some of which must take place in the rural environment. This is in direct conflict with attitudes towards development in the countryside identified during this study (para.4.59-4.61 above), expressed by users and non-users alike.
- 10.41 One of the more pernicious aspects of public attitudes towards the planning regime, is the widespread perception that rules can be bent to achieve a favourable outcome for particular development applications. This was most commonly expressed in relation to Green Belt areas (para.4.60 above), but confusion over rules and designations extended across all groups and social classes. In much the same way that information has been identified as a principal factor in accommodating public demand for countryside recreation, an effective way of communicating planning policies and decision processes would help to defuse attitudes of suspicion.
- 10.42 The Village Plans envisaged by the rural White Paper may be a useful vehicle for allaying public scepticism of measures to control indiscriminate development in the countryside. The status of such plans in relation to Town & Country Planning policy is subject to compliance with the Local Development Plan and other criteria, however close co-operation between strategic planners and countryside managers may be an essential element of the process.

Racial issues

- 10.43 Measures to combat rural crime, including racially motivated incidents, form an integral element of the White Paper (8.85 above). The experiences and perceptions of racially distinctive groups in the countryside are part of a complicated set of issues (paras.8.52-8.56 above). Little information appears to exist on ethnic groups as visitors to the countryside, and it is therefore difficult to envisage how initiatives for encouraging participation without fear of racially motivated crime can be developed.
- 10.44 The promotion of public access to the countryside, for all members of the community - black, Asian, elderly, disabled etc - is one of a set of clear indicators of progress towards a truly sustainable society. This is enshrined in the Government's policy for a socially, economically and environmentally viable nation, as Indicator S87 (para. 8.88 above). Regular monitoring of public use of countryside facilities - possibly related to reviews or reports required under provisions of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act - would help to gauge and publicise the County's performance on sustainability issues.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 10.45 This case study has identified thirteen national and local studies, which in total provide countryside managers with a vast amount of largely valuable information. Seven of the sources contribute data on national demand characteristics, and are thus too broad in coverage to identify the specific needs of Lancashire's residents for countryside recreation. Five of the local studies are aimed at particular interests or areas within the County. The remaining report

³⁹ Planning Policy Guideline No.3: Housing; DETR; March 2000; para.9 p17

contains information on general public demand in only three of Lancashire's twelve constituent boroughs or districts.

- 10.46 The following paragraphs summarise each aspect of the case study, and distill the main details to provide succinct descriptions of the principal findings. **Where appropriate, recommendations for future action are suggested. These, of course, are based on information obtained from the whole study process - literature review, primary research and consultations with specific organisations - and are shown in bold text.**

Survey specifications and procedures

- 10.47 To rectify deficiencies in public demand information for countryside facilities, a co-ordinated programme of primary research has been implemented. This has included qualitative and quantitative assessment - in the form of discussion groups and street-based questionnaire surveys at 8 locations throughout the County.
- 10.48 Survey groups were selected to match, as closely as possible, the demographic profile of the County. Where this was not possible (in some interview locations), respondents were recruited in accordance with national demographic characteristics. Random selection of participants has NOT been used.
- 10.49 The 808 participants in the questionnaire survey provided a statistically realistic sample size, from which a range of conclusions has been drawn. Sample sizes at individual interview locations varied from 69 to 113 and were thus too small to allow reliable conclusions to be made about detailed local demand characteristics. The generally similar sample sizes do, however, allow a level of comparative assessment to be made between towns.
- 10.50 The ratio between overall sample size and target population was also selected with reference to the main national studies (*National Survey of Countryside Recreation & Public Attitudes to the Countryside Survey*). For this case study, a ratio of 0.08:1 was selected - to mirror the East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project, and to provide a significantly greater level of correlation between sample and target populations than either of the main national studies.
- 10.51 A comprehensive programme of data processing has allowed analysis of survey results in greater detail than that implemented during the East Lancashire Countryside Recreation Research Project. In combination with the larger overall sample size, this has produced an extra dimension of analysis, the chief result of which is the observation that countryside usage is profoundly influenced by the user's stage in life.
- 10.52 **For future surveys** (possibly associated with duties arising from the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000) **specifications should include a measure of correlation between sample groups and demographic profiles, careful consideration of overall and local sample sizes, plus comprehensive data processing requirements.**

Findings from primary research

County level:

- 10.53 Correlation of frequency-of-visit data (from the questionnaire survey) with views expressed during the discussion groups, confirms lifestage as a key determinant in the type of people using the countryside, their main activities and the nature of facilities they are likely to require. Frequency of countryside use tends to decline during early and middle parenthood, with an estimated 20% of the County's residents (largely from people at this stage in life) visiting the rural environment between 2 and 4 times per year. In addition, some 35% of people aged over 55 years tend to visit infrequently. These less-regular users tend to place

tangible facilities such as toilets, car parking and clear waymarking & information high in their expectations of rural destinations. Such infrequent users represent a substantial proportion of the 72% of participants expressing a desire to increase their frequency of visits to the local countryside.

- 10.54 **To convert a significant proportion of the County's latent demand into actual countryside visits, more (or improved) facilities including parking, toilets, information and clear waymarking (possibly including interpretive information) will be required.**
- 10.55 The above finding from primary research - that lifestage is an important factor in recreational demand - must be added to the small number of main determinants in decisions to visit the countryside, which have been identified from the literature review. These determinants are:
- Access to a private vehicle
 - Available time
 - Information on routes and facilities
- 10.56 Correlation of frequency-of-visits information with interview locations also suggests that proximity to attractive countryside could be added to the above list.
- 10.57 The role of the private vehicle is pivotal in demand for recreational countryside access. This case study has identified contradictory attitudes towards private and public transport provision, while the Forest of Bowland Greenways/Quiet Roads study noted significant support for the park & ride concept. The need (in contrast to personal preference) for public transport is greatest amongst lower-income families (to whom countryside recreation is likely to be disproportionately more important), and has clear environmental advantages. The private vehicle is likely to remain dominant however, until the cost and flexibility of public transport outweighs the convenience of the car.
- 10.58 Park & ride facilities are expensive to operate however, and may not be particularly successful in converting people from private to public transport⁴⁰. Costs for such schemes have been noted as £2.85p⁴¹-£3.11p⁴² per passenger, and require substantial long-term subsidy. At Upper Derwent Valley (Derbyshire), however, the park & ride scheme carried some 8,000 passengers during summer 2000, and the terminus is also served by timetabled busses from Sheffield, Derby and Manchester. A shuttle service to nearby Bamford train station is planned for implementation in summer 2001.
- 10.59 A more cost-effective and focused facility is also operated throughout the Peak District National Park, via community bus schemes. This programme comprises excursions to specific sites, organised by community groups in response to identified local demand. This is dependent on efficient dissemination of information on countryside opportunities, together with a level of subsidy (approximately £1.00p per passenger in 2000). Selective deregulation for community transport services is an integral element of the Rural White Paper - mirrored, in part, in the parallel Urban White Paper - and may offer opportunities for better access to the countryside for key groups of potential users. **Reduction of the car's importance in choices to visit the countryside may be achieved by co-ordinated efforts of the Countryside Group, Highways Authority and local community groups.**
- 10.60 In addition to the main determinants, fears for personal safety - either from crime or accidental injury - have been identified as a major constraint on public propensity to visit the countryside. This was emphatically stated during the East Lancashire Countryside Research Project

⁴⁰ Pers.comm; Martin Smith; Peak District National Park Authority; telephone conversation 15th Jan.2001

⁴¹ ibid. Upper Derwent Valley scheme; Bamford, Derbyshire.

⁴² ibid. The Roaches; Leek, Staffordshire.

(ELRP), and has been reiterated during the current case study. The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 contains provisions for local authorities to create bylaws and wardening schemes for new Access Land, while the Rural⁴³ and Urban⁴⁴ White Papers also envisage the development of neighbourhood wardening projects. In combination, these types of initiative could provide warden provision that extends from open moorland and countryside, to the urban fringe. Such schemes may also be eligible for grant aid from Home Office or DETR sources. The East Lancashire Park proposals (noted in Section 9.0 of this report) are based, in substantial part, on the findings of the ELRP with its inherent observation that an effective warden service will be essential in gaining public support for better countryside facilities.

- 10.61 **It would be appropriate** to monitor the progress of the East Lancashire Park project for evidence of wardening proposals, and **to explore all avenues for the extension of existing ranger services or creation of new wardening arrangements at selected sites.**
- 10.62 Primary research and consultations have identified the involvement of children (particularly in the 10-16 year age range) in outdoor activities, as a precursor to continued involvement in the rural environment later in life. This is likely to have long-term health benefits as well as obvious recreational advantages, and possibly greater understanding of rural (and urban) issues.
- 10.63 The County is well-placed to accommodate this concept, with an established network of centres operated by the Outdoor Education Service. In addition, the Lancashire Outdoor Activities Initiative (part sponsored by the County) could play a vital role in encouraging school children, and adults to take up countryside-based sports and other activities.
- 10.64 Children may also play an essential part in the dissemination of countryside information, through internet-based education. The County's schools have direct access to two information networks - the Lancashire Schools Intranet and CLEO - both of which would benefit from access to the Council's own website. This currently includes a substantial amount of highly informative content which could be supplied to the educational networks with little additional development. Individual topics could be related to the national curriculum, and linked wherever possible, into courses offered by the Outdoor Education Service.
- 10.65 **The Countryside Group could act as a catalyst for joint promotional projects - aimed at improving education and involvement in outdoor activities - by forging closer ties with the County's education services. At the very least, existing web pages should be offered to the Schools Intranet and CLEO networks.**
- 10.66 Information provision is also extremely important at the more pragmatic level of signposting for specific attractions and locations. Examples of poor signage associated with Gisburn Forest and Rivington have been described above, and constitute an anomalous feature of these otherwise excellent facilities for countryside recreation. Both sites are managed by agencies other than the County Council, however **the Countryside Group could co-ordinate a programme of improved signage from main roads and towns, in conjunction with United Utilities Plc, Forest Enterprise and the County's Highways Authority function.** This co-ordinated approach to signage design and location could also form part of any specifications for Village (or Town) Plans.
- 10.67 A related aspect of signage - that of the level of information included on signposts - was identified as a major constraint on public enjoyment of the countryside. This was also linked to the desirability of a system of graded routes, offering potential users a level of guidance on the type of conditions - and therefore the nature of footwear etc - required to comfortably tackle individual routes. A system of this sort is currently in operation in Gisburn Forest.

⁴³ Our countryside: the future; MAFF/DETR; November 2000; para.4.5.6

⁴⁴ Our towns and cities: the future; MAFF/DETR; November 2000; para. 6.39

While the cost of upgrading all of the County's footpath signs may appear to be prohibitively expensive, the 10-year timeframe associated with Rights of Way Improvement Plans may offer a cost effective avenue of phased introduction. The announcement of completed re-signing of circular routes would also provide opportunities for advertising and other promotional initiatives.

- 10.68 **Liaison with other agencies may also include development of British Waterways' annual towpath survey, to accommodate regular monitoring of sites within Lancashire.** This would provide information for future Rights of Way Improvement Plans, and would assist in measuring various indicators of sustainability in the County. Extensive stretches of the Lancaster and Leeds/Liverpool canals may also offer opportunities for the development of well-promoted circular routes. This is likely to be particularly important in the context of nascent proposals for the East Lancashire Park concept, and recent developments associated with the Lancaster Canal-River Ribble link.
- 10.69 This case study has noted that countryside use by ethnic groups - especially Asians - is currently small in scale, but that such use is increasing. The Walking for Health Initiative has also shown that this group is more likely to suffer from cardio-vascular disease, and to be relatively sedentary. Health benefits associated with countryside activities such as walking and cycling could, therefore, be disproportionately more beneficial to some ethnic groups. Evidence has emerged, however, of the complexities of cultural characteristics that may discourage some sections of these communities from using the countryside. Unfortunately, empirical information on the actual attitudes and needs of Asians in relation to the rural environment is almost completely lacking. **To better understand the issues underpinning countryside use (or non-use) by ethnic groups, a carefully planned programme of consultation and research into cultural attitudes towards the countryside will be necessary.**
- 10.70 The significant lack of credible data defining general participation in recreational cycling has been a startling finding of this case study. In the rare instances where the scale of involvement has been gauged, figures have been based on cycle sales, specialist magazine circulation or membership of cycling organisations. None of these can provide reliable information on the average cyclist's demand characteristics, or the scale of overall involvement in recreational cycling. Even some of the nationally prominent projects for cycleways are understood to be based on user-counts of similar schemes, and a general assumption that cycling is good, therefore there must be a large demand for routes.
- 10.71 New cycle routes in Lancashire are not automatically welcomed, as some participants in discussion groups in Lancaster clearly stated. **An accurate assessment of scale and needs of the County's cycling population would be an essential pre-requisite for future route planning.** This could encompass user monitoring at selected locations, undertaken over the course of an appropriate period to include seasonal variations, or could be based on telephone or street surveys. Costs associated with user monitoring would be dependent on the number of interview points, sample size and frequency of survey etc, and cannot realistically be estimated without a draft specification. Telephone surveys would cost approximately £10-12 per interview (as of early 2001), while street surveys would cost some £13-15 per interview.
- 10.72 Provision of inclusive access also affects people with impaired mobility or other limiting conditions. In combination, the discussion groups undertaken during the course of this case study and the ELRP, have included a number of participants with personal experience of countryside recreation. These have included those with their own specific impairments, and others who care for disabled people, either as family members or as professional carers. The groups have expressed unanimous disaffection with the standard and provision of facilities which encourage use of the countryside by people with reduced physical or mental faculties.

- 10.73 This case study has demonstrated the proposition that almost all people experience some form of impairment at various stages in life. The notion that accommodating the needs of disabled people focuses a potentially high expenditure on a relatively small sector of society (a view expressed by a very small number of discussion group participants and at least one site-based countryside professional), represents a tragically constraining misperception of the issue. **The Countryside & Rights of Way Act contains duties for the provision of inclusive means of access, which should form part of future Rights of Way Improvement Plans.** This would provide opportunities for the design and implementation of a programme of work, which could substantially improve the quality of life for less able-bodied sectors of the County's communities. Design of appropriate facilities could initially be focused on high-use sites, such as Beacon Fell or Rivington, possibly with a schedule for expansion into the wider countryside. Detailed design of gates, viewing platforms, benches etc, could even be the subject of school or college-based competitions - using the countryside to bring education, the rural environment and disadvantaged groups of society together - linked, perhaps, to practical courses run by the Outdoor Education and Countryside Services.

National scale:

- 10.74 At the wider-than-County scale, this case study has identified a number of linkages between local demand characteristics and national policies and initiatives. The Walking for Health Initiative, for example, has been a valuable information source during this project, and could usefully be included on reference lists for future similar project specifications. The findings of this case study may also be of use to WHI project planners and managers, by illustrating the nature of facilities needed to encourage infrequent countryside users to partake in enjoyment of the rural environment, and the scale of potential target populations. **In the event of future research work into cultural attitudes and demand characteristics for countryside use by ethnic groups, WHI programme managers should be involved in drafting project specifications.**
- 10.75 The Government's Rural White Paper includes measures for the preparation of Village (or Town) Plans; a scheme which will be administered by the Countryside Agency. The detailed nature of these Plans has not been assessed as part of this case study, however the provision of facilities such as car parks, toilets and interpretive features will inevitably form part of some of these Plans. This is likely to be particularly so, if plan boundaries are drawn at the parish level rather than around the built-up area of the village. The main component of latent demand in Lancashire has been identified as people who are (now) relatively infrequent users of the countryside - the same group which is likely to require the facilities noted above as necessary elements of a countryside visit. **If latent needs for countryside recreation are to be turned into actual use, Village Plans will need to take account of wider public demand characteristics, with particular reference to provision of car parking and toilet facilities.**
- 10.76 If car parking and other facilities are included in some Village Plans, these selected settlements could, individually, form the nucleus of a local rights of way network. This could comprise a series of well-waymarked routes, connecting other villages and sites of interest, and creating circular routes, which have been identified as an essential characteristic of a usable network. This type of planning for countryside access will inevitably require a strategic appraisal of capacity in selected villages (or towns), together with an assessment of route development at the most local of scales. **The preparation of Village (Town) Plans may need to be undertaken in the context of a strategic overview of access and facility provision at local and County levels.** A strategic approach to Plan preparation may also provide a more cost-effective way of producing Village Plans, by reducing the likelihood of repetitive or abortive research and consultation.
- 10.77 A fairly alarming finding of this case study has been the widespread scepticism attached to the Town & Country Planning process, especially in relation to Green Belt policies. Village or Town Plans could, if capable of demonstrating accordance with Development Plans, be

adopted as local Supplementary Planning Guidance, bringing them within the established planning process. This feature of the Plans could help to restore confidence in the planning system if effective community consultation is undertaken. The ELRP found a significant public appetite for involvement in route and facility planning, to the point where one discussion group felt it to be a pre-requisite for support of individual projects. This case study has confirmed the need for greater transparency in the Town & Country Planning decision-making process, at a time of significant pessimism for the future development of the countryside. **Effective public consultation measures are likely to form an essential part in specifications for Village (or Town) Plan projects.**

- 10.78 Transport in the rural environment has been widely identified as a significant issue, and Rural Transport Partnerships have been developed to address this fundamental issue. The findings of this case study have illustrated the scale of public disaffection for public transport, but have been inconclusive in defining the scale of demand for better services. Participants in discussion groups expressed almost unanimous support for increased frequency of busses and additional routes, whereas 87% of respondents in the questionnaire survey stated that they would prefer not to use public transport. Much of the negative opinion focused on lack of adequate information, in the form of routes and timetables, and may account for some of the absence of support identified during the quantitative survey. **Information acquired during the course of this case study may be of use to Rural Transport Partnerships, as a means of identifying potential opportunities, or providing supporting information for local schemes.** The experience of other authorities with community bus services may be particularly relevant.
- 10.79 The future of the rural environment is an issue of great concern to both users and non-users of the countryside alike. Widespread scepticism and suspicion of the planning process formed a clear and commonplace set of attitudes, which may be most appropriately countered at the County level. Contrasting perceptions of agriculture, however, exposed an equally broad and profound support for farmers as custodians of the countryside's finer features. This attitude was tempered by a realisation that farming is currently in steep decline, leading to the unanimously held view that farmers should be paid to maintain the fabric of the countryside. Many participants, in different discussion groups, drew a distinction between intensive "agri-business" and smaller-scale agriculture however, with approval being aimed at the latter and abhorrence at the former. **Unequivocal support for maintenance of the countryside by farmers may assist the Countryside Agency in lobbying - at European and central government levels - for changes to the provisions of the Common Agricultural Policy.**
- 10.80 A substantial number of people, representing a wide range of organisations, have contributed to this case study. Many have shown a deep interest in various aspects of information the study is intended to produce, and have expressed wishes for future consultation. Some of these will be included as recipients of the full case study report, others may be members of Lancashire's Local Access Forum, while a few may be overlooked. To minimise likelihood of the latter, the following list summarises interested contributors and possible future consultees. Recreational countryside access in Lancashire will benefit from their continued involvement in monitoring, shaping, and delivering the conditions for satisfying public demand in the County:

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