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Enhancing Access Opportunities ELM Test and Trial Literature and Evidence Review and Recommendations

9th November 2020

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This report is in draft form only. The Kent Downs AONB Unit will be consulting widely through workshops, interviews and circulation of this document. Amendments will be made based on feedback that is received and this document should be viewed with this in mind.

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The Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial is being carried out by the National Association for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty on behalf of Defra. It is part of the development of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM).



1 Introduction

1.1 Abstract

This report is a review of literature, evidence and expert advice to identify the barriers that limit public access to countryside and public greenspace. It makes recommendations for the mitigation of these barriers to enable access for the full diversity of people. It provides evidence for Environmental Land Management (ELM) Test and Trials funded by Department of Food Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Kent Downs AONB Access ELM has also researched the barriers experienced by farmers, landowners and land managers in enabling more and more diverse access to their land and will bring the studies together to make recommendations to Defra,

The Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme is a key mechanism for delivering the goals of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. It is an important opportunity to work with farmers, landowners and land managers to remove barriers and enhance access to landscapes for public benefit.

This report responds particularly to the Beauty, Heritage & Engagement outcome, but greater opportunities for public access will enable delivery on other goals of the plan as well. For example, an Access ELM can provide incentives to farmers, land managers and land owners to create high quality access for the public; overcome some of the key barriers that constrain visits; and also alleviate public pressure on areas with high conservation value.

The report also draws on the results of consultation and in-depth conversations with farmers, landowners, land managers and users of public access. This has provided important insights to the Test and Trial.

This report takes a wide view of 'public good' so that all communities can receive the benefits of accessing the countryside. It primarily reflects the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010, widening the remit to highlight economic disadvantage as a significant issue impacting people's access to greenspace.

The report will support further work with the Test and Trial. This will include liaising with farmers, landowners and land managers to understand and overcome barriers they perceive while putting in place measures that increase opportunities for underrepresented groups. The Test and Trial will also consider, with farmers and land managers, how access options could lead to farm diversification opportunities designed to deliver new income streams, whilst also resulting in improvements in the health and wellbeing of people accessing the landscape.

1.2 Environmental Land Management

The ELM scheme is a key mechanism for increasing access to the landscape for the benefit of people, including building on the recommendations of the Government's Landscapes Review (Glover, 2019). Whilst scoped to include all landscapes, this literature review responds to the Landscapes Review's recommendation that landscapes need to be accessed by more diverse groups of people. The Review reiterated the need for our landscapes to become more welcoming to everyone, stating that the countryside is visited least by people aged 65 and over, members of the

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population and residents living in the most deprived areas of England.

Glover's Landscapes Review is regarded as an important context for developing ELMs that respond to the idea that many communities in modern Britain feel that key landscapes and the wider countryside (including National Parks and AONBs) hold no relevance for them. As the review states:

"We are all paying for national landscapes through our taxes, and yet sometimes on our visits it has felt as if National Parks are an exclusive, mainly White, mainly middle-class club, with rules only members understand and much too little done to encourage first time visitors" .

It is important to note that we will all be paying (substantially more) for ELMs in our taxes as well.

This observation led to what Byrne (2012) described as, *"When Green is White: If that is true, then the divide is only going to widen as society changes. Our countryside will end up being irrelevant to the country that actually exists"*. It is imperative that our countryside becomes a place that is inclusive, welcoming and open for all visitors and residents, supporting deeper and enriching engagement for all members of society without causing harm to nature and while enhancing farming and rural businesses.

The National Farmers Union (NFU) reflections on the new ELM payment scheme sees "public good" in terms of access in this way:

"The countryside is seen to provide a valuable amenity to the British public and economy in the form of attracting tourism, the film industry and recreational activities. Moreover, the health benefits it provides are seen as public good too."

Long term strategies and schemes fostered through ELMs will ensure that land managers, landowners and farmers are encouraged to find new and innovative strategies to address these inequalities.

The potential for a scheme like ELM to address inequalities of access are echoed in previous statements from the Countryside Agency (2003):

"People from under-represented groups need to have a positive experience once they get there, for instance it may be necessary to make the 'Welcome Host' approach a prerequisite of access to related agri-environment funding."

This is an opportunity that shouldn't be missed for these long-held aspirations to be realised, the opportunity is placed in ever more stark focus following the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic

2 Access to countryside and greenspace

2.1 Recognising the importance of access to greenspace

The evidence is clear that access to the countryside, and the outdoors in general, is critical for individual and collective wellbeing (Public Health England, 2020). The benefits are multiple – from exercise, to reduction in anxiety and stress, and increased contact and connection with others. Unlike other shorter-term sources of happiness and wellbeing, time spent outdoors has a lasting effect on people's health. This includes both maintenance of good health and prevention of illness and the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey data (O'Neill, 2019) showed that health is a strong motivator for people using greenspace.

It is also well recognised that contact with nature and the outdoors can help people live well with long-term health issues and disabilities; Healthy Walks are well established, some of which focus on the benefits to people with a specific health condition such as dementia (Brewin, in press). Studies have shown that spending time outdoors can enhance quality of life of people with disabilities and health issues (Bragg et al, 2012).

Studies have found that reconnecting with nature increases pro-environmental behaviour, connecting people with nature helps them be 'part of the solution'. Richard Louv (2005) emphasises the importance of prolonged contact with nature at an early age in *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. "We won't protect what we don't love, and we won't love what we don't know".

There is a growing body of research into the impacts of Green and Rural Space on young people. Research for Public Health England conducted by the Institute of Health Inequality shows that "good quality green space for all social groups is likely to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities" (Balfour and Allen, 2014).

Benefits come not just from 'connection' but active involvement of people in the stewardship and repair of the land and biodiversity. In the face of threats like climate emergency and Covid-19, this has become a key aspiration (Aronson et al, 2016).

There is increasing evidence that declining nature in itself contributes to health problems (Clarke et al, 2014). For example, young people that are passionate about nature risk increased depression and anxiety if they feel that the world they treasure is being destroyed (Burke et al, 2018). At the same time, negative messages can lead to disengagement and apathy (Arnold et al, 2018).

Experience from around the world points to exciting possibilities. There are growing examples now of how people have mobilised their communities to not just protect, but to enhance and restore nature. As Tony Kendle highlights (pers. comm), in his work at the Eden Project:

"In our work we have found that for many participants, it is an experience of great joy, relief and hope to realise that it is in the human gift, to leave the world better than we found it, rather than always be destined to be 'the great destroyers'. This change of perception can, in itself, be a healing thing".

These examples support an aspiration to empower local communities, and how this can also lead to greater social justice, skills development and new economic opportunities.

People from across most of the protected characteristics are often left out of opportunities to engage in access and stewardship opportunities, and this raises important questions of social justice.

The Government's Environment White Paper (Defra, 2011) provides the most comprehensive framework for over 20 years in recognising the importance of the natural environment, placing nature at the centre of the choices our nation must make to enhance our environment and support economic growth and health/wellbeing. Setting a vision to 2060, it is the most recent clear signal from Government about the value of nature and public access to it. The White Paper is based on research findings revealing people who spend time outside infrequently are more likely to report poor health and lower levels of life satisfaction.

The Marmot report (Marmot, 2010) highlights that "High-quality natural environments foster healthy neighbourhoods; green spaces encourage social activity and reduce crime. The natural environment can help children's learning, whilst low engagement is likely to lead to impacts such as lower involvement in wider issues of sustainability."

2.2 Inequalities of access

Research shows that the benefits of engaging with the natural environment are not enjoyed equally and some groups consistently lose out (Public Health England, 2020). The fact that this corresponds with the protected characteristics of the Equality Act shows that this has its roots in wider issues of societal inequality and their effective mitigation relies on addressing the full range of barriers in play. The Government's Natural Environment White Paper – 'The Natural Choice: Securing the value of nature' (2011) concludes that not everyone has an equal opportunity to access the benefits of a healthy environment. Burt et al (2013) show this is supported by the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey data where significant lower engagement levels with the natural environment are experienced by people from deprived urban communities.

These inequalities have been long highlighted. National organisations set up to address inequality of access to greenspace, for example Black Environment Network and Sheffield Environmental Movement with a focus on Black and Ethnic Minorities, Fieldfare Trust and Sensory Trust focused on disabled and older people, and Care Farming and City Farms addressing social and economic disadvantage.

The environmental sector has been increasing measures to support equality of access. For example, Natural England facilitates the National Outdoors for All Working Group which provides a platform for discussion and shared action for over 50 representatives from the environment, health, research, and diversity sectors. At the same time, these sectors are noted for their own lack of diversity - farmers and environment sectors are ranked one and two in a list of least ethnically diverse professions (Norrie, 2017) and 84% of farm holders and 83% of farm managers are male (Defra, 2016).

Significant public money is spent on protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural environment but the benefits of this investment are not equally distributed among the population. ELM is a vital opportunity to help readdress the balance.

2.3 Who is being left out?

There is widespread evidence to show that the health and social benefits that come from spending time outdoors are not equally available to everyone (Public Health England, 2020). People living with disabilities and older people are especially impacted by barriers to access, including physical barriers and psychosocial barriers such as concerns about personal safety and uncertainty about feeling welcome. People from Black and Ethnic Minorities are especially impacted by structural societal barriers, negative attitudes and feelings of not belonging. People experiencing social and economic disadvantage have dramatically less access to such spaces, and particularly when this disadvantage is linked with one of the protected characteristics.

Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with Natural Environment (MENE) report from 2018-19 show National Parks are visited 100 million times each year on average and there are 170 million visits within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The research also shows that visitors to National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are more likely to be older and from more affluent socio-economic groups (O'Neill, 2019). The research shows that while people from all sectors of the population visit the outdoors, the proportion of those visiting the countryside is greater in the more affluent socio-economic groups and in the age range of 45 to 64.

The research further indicates that the frequency of visits to natural spaces varied across key demographics, with larger proportions of infrequent visitors in the oldest age groups, less affluent socio-economic groups and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Children and young people are a big focus for Glover's Landscapes Review with their findings revealing that 18% of children from deprived families are never visiting the countryside at all. The Review also reports that 20% fewer Visibly Minority Ethnic children go out into green spaces weekly compared to White, middle class children.

Less research is available on how barriers may limit use in relation to LGBT+ as a protected characteristic. This is due in part to the reality that other characteristics, such as disability and ethnicity, have more obvious associations with physical barriers to access and cultural forms of social exclusion. However, negative attitudes are highlighted more generally as a significant issue for people who are LGBT+ and this is considered in the barriers and recommendations sections.

There is strong evidence to show the link between economic and social disadvantage and lack of opportunities to access public greenspace. The report 'Fairer Societies, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England' (Marmot, 2010) found that there is substantial evidence that, "The more deprived the neighbourhood, the more likely it is to have social and environmental characteristics presenting risks to health."

3 Diversity and exclusion

The Equality Act 2010 brought together around one hundred individual pieces of anti-discrimination legislation, including the Race Equality Act and Disability Discrimination Act. It recognises nine 'protected characteristics' - age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex. This helps show that efforts to open up opportunities to all members of the public requires consideration of all aspects of diversity and the way they interrelate.

This section puts a focus on the protected characteristics associated with the greatest barriers to using the countryside.

A note on terminology

Terminology is a complex issue across all protected characteristics. Terms used to describe people can be contested because of having been imposed by others and carrying negative overtones. For example, Samers (1998) shows how the use of terms like 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic minority' can be seen as colonialist, victimising and patronising. Without resolving underlying inequalities, substitute terminology is prone to carry negative connotations. In the UK the term 'elderly' has lost favour because of ageism, whilst 'elder' is a positive term in societies where ageing is treated with respect.

Even when terminology has been led by the target groups, there can be lack of consensus – there is still active debate between 'disabled people' and 'people with disabilities' for example. Bunglawala (2019) echoes the calls of many against the use of acronyms like BAME, BAMER and BME because of their failure to capture the full range of diversity, and because their research showed how few people knew what they meant. UK government guidance is to use the term ethnic minorities and ethnic groups and these terms will be used in this report, except when directly quoting the work of others.

Discomfort with the use of language can be alienating when it comes to efforts at promoting access to the countryside. Landowners and managers can feel uncertain about what terminology to use and this can limit efforts to communicate with diverse communities, while people with different protected characteristics can feel alienated by language they don't feel comfortable with. The terminology used in this report is applied with these considerations in mind.

3.1 Disability and health and barriers to access

It is estimated that one person in five in the UK is living with a limiting long-term illness, impairment or disability (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019). The number is greater when it includes people who experience temporary impairments, such as a broken limb or are in recovery from a stroke or Covid-19, and people who do not identify as disabled, such as an older person or someone living with a heart condition. The implications of any disability are shared by a group of visitors including families, friends and carers. Studies have shown that the benefits of engaging with nature are less available to groups who face disability and health barriers to accessing the outdoors, including disabled adults and children, older people and people with chronic health issues (Countryside Agency 2005, 2013; Price & Stoneham, 2001).

Despite public perceptions of disability, only 5% of disabled people use wheelchairs. There is also a tendency, from government policy to service delivery, to treat disability as a compartmentalised issue but the reality is that a diverse range of physical, sensory and mental disabilities are experienced by people of all ages, genders, ethnicities and backgrounds. Moving the government's Disability Office to the Equalities Hub will hopefully help show that service delivery should be working across government departments to ensure a joined-up approach (Disability Office, 2020).

The most commonly-reported impairment is reduced mobility and this is significant for considering visits to the countryside. Disability and health issues are diverse, ranging from physical mobility and stamina to neurological and psychological issues.

It is important to be aware of the implications of the social model of disability when thinking of the barriers that might be found in provisioning of services to people with disabilities in our National Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) and elsewhere. The social model places disability as a reflection of ableist service provision, arguing that the impacts are determined by the environment as much as by the condition.

Disabled people are also more likely to experience poverty, food insecurity, and lower mental wellbeing. Particularly significant for this report is the lower rates of participation in social activities (ONS, 2019b) and lower rates of access to parks, woods and countryside (O'Neill, 2019).

It is well recognised that there are barriers that limit access to the countryside for disabled people. However, this tends to be seen in light of physical issues like transport, inaccessible paths, and obstacles like steps and stiles. Less recognised, but equally significant, are psycho-social barriers. Sensory Trust's Reaching Communities study (2001) reports on feedback from a national survey of people with disabilities and highlights the impact of less-recognised constraints like lack of accessible information, people not feeling they belong and lacking confidence to visit somewhere unfamiliar that may present unforeseen challenges. Sensory Trust research has shown that building confidence that visits will not be stressful is key (Brewin, in press).

The benefits and motivations associated with disabled people visiting the countryside are largely ignored in the literature. Notable exceptions include the Countryside Agency's report (2005) '*What About Us – Countryside Diversity Report*' and the '*By All Reasonable Means*' (2019 and 2020) publications of Natural England and Natural Resources Wales.

Burns et al (2009) assert that "Through engagement with the outdoors, disabled people are challenging normative constructions of who they are and their purpose in being in the countryside" and argues that providers of outdoor leisure services need to go beyond barrier removal and understand disabled people's uses and views of the outdoors in planning the provision of services.

Mental health

Mental health is recognised as a growing concern in the UK. During any one year, around one in four British adults is likely to experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem (Mental Health Taskforce, 2016). Mental ill health can severely compromise an individual's quality of life and it is a leading cause of disability. Mixed anxiety and depression is the most common mental disorder

in Britain (ONS, 2009). It is predicted that depression will be the second most common cause of disability in the developed world.

There is growing empirical evidence to show that exposure to nature brings substantial mental health benefits and at the same time, physical activity is known to result in positive physical and mental health outcomes (Pretty, 2002).

The prevalence of mental health issues in young people relates especially to children living with challenging circumstances. In a recent NHS survey, nearly three-quarters of children with a mental health diagnosis have a physical health condition or developmental problem (NHS, 2017). Mental health issues such as anxiety and depression are more likely for people who identify as LGBT+ (Mental Health Taskforce, 2016).

Changes to school and social care provision, such as closures and mergers, may alter current funding mechanisms and relationship options for environmental bodies.

The Mental Health Foundation (MHF) reports that women are more likely than men to have a common mental health issue and almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with anxiety disorders. It also highlights that men are less likely to self-report or seek help for mental health issues. This suggests a need for approaches that can bring sustained support, including the provision of tools that help people maintain their own mental health.

The gap in statutory social support, and the likelihood of this declining further, implies opportunities for the environmental sector to build a more substantial role with the social and education sectors, moving beyond localised projects based on small-scale funding to larger strategic alliances. There is an important opportunity for ELM to play a part, which should include, and substantially go beyond, improving the access infrastructure.

Social isolation

Social isolation is being recognised as one of the greatest health and social issues of our time (Public Health England, 2015). It has long been recognised as a significant issue for many older people and people living in challenging circumstances, but the reality is that it brings serious wellbeing impacts to people of all ages and circumstances.

There is strong potential for working with communities to increase opportunities for people to engage with local places as a platform for building more social connections too.

3.2 Ageing and barriers to access

The UK has an ageing society with around 18% of the population over the age of 65 (ONS, 2019). While these demographic trends are often reported as huge challenges to our social and economic systems, there are calls for more focus on the positive aspects. As the Centre for Ageing Better (2019) highlights, life expectancies are longer, people in their early to mid-70s are more satisfied with life than any other age group and most people in later life report feeling connected to their communities, families and friends.

There are huge inequalities, however. The accumulation of a lifetime of advantages or disadvantages result in vastly unequal levels of health, wealth, happiness and security in later life. For example, Asian and Black older people are twice as likely to be poor in later life. “While the twentieth century’s advances in public health, nutrition and medical science have given us the gift of longevity, so far this century we have failed to respond with sufficiently radical action to ensure everyone enjoys these extra years” (Centre for Ageing Better, 2019).

Older people are recognised as a significant market by the leisure industry and as an important resource as volunteers, advocates and community leaders. However, ageism is prevalent in society, and older people tend to be portrayed as service-recipients, rather than people with an essential bank of skills, experience and advocacy to contribute.

Volunteer and mentor programmes can gain from the current young retired who may be interested in more meaningful involvement. This can open up scope for inter-generational work, including mentoring and skills-sharing (Centre for Ageing Better, 2019). This presents an important chance to rethink what volunteer and participation programmes can look like.

There are close associations with disability, health issues and social isolation, and 44% of adults with disabilities are over State Pension age (ONS, 2019c). Dementia diagnoses are increasing. Supporting good health in older age has been identified as a priority by the Government (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019). For example, people can be helped to live well with dementia, and issues like social isolation can be reduced, when people are supported by social interventions, like walking groups and shared activities (Brewin, in press).

A systematic review exploring the link between physical activity and ageing show that activity in adults over the age of 60 reduces risk of cardiovascular mortality, some cancers, dementia, recurrent falls, and depressions and promotes healthier ageing, better quality of life and improved cognitive functioning (Cunningham et al, 2020).

Many of the recommendations made for removing barriers for disabled people will benefit older members of communities. While many older people do not consider themselves disabled, many will acquire age-associated impairments such as reductions in stamina, mobility and sensory acuity.

United for All Ages (2020) identify ideas for creating a more age-friendly society. This includes opportunities for different generations to learn and share together and designing public spaces where people “want to be and mix with friendly benches, chatty cafes, good design and public art”.

Age-friendly places and communities can help ensure that retirement is an opportunity to take on new interests, a third age rather than simply an old age, and a time for engaging in participatory opportunities. There is special value in bringing young and old together, especially in times when social isolation and anxiety are impacting across the generations (United for All Ages, 2020). This is an opportunity for ELM to play a key role.

3.3 Young people and barriers to access

The benefits to young people from engaging with nature and the outdoors is widely reported. For example, research by Sheldrake et al (2019) shows how children gain wellbeing, learning, social and

self-esteem benefits from spending time participating in outdoor activities. The same report highlights how young people's access to nature can be limited by their location, socio-economic factors, and their own and others' expectations.

Much of the research on barriers to access by young people is focused on the needs of young people based in rural areas, rather than looking at young people as a whole. The Countryside Agency's Diversity Review (2005) is an exception and focuses on young people and their perceptions of the countryside. The report shows a diversity of views among young people but the main barriers to greater countryside use were negative perceptions of the countryside, other priorities, peer pressure, dependency on adults, a perceived lack of appropriate facilities and engaging activities, lack of transport and cost.

Young people's negative perceptions of rural areas can negate use (Countryside Agency, 2005). The research highlights that if people have early formative experiences of the countryside that they will develop positive environmental behaviours later in life. Encouraging early use of the outdoor is critical to the development of a long-term habit of use and more widely of developing environmentally conscious behaviours.

3.4 Gender and barriers to access

The Countryside Agency's Diversity Review (2013) highlights that countryside use is significantly higher for males than for females. Burgess (1995) shows this pattern in relation to urban fringe woodlands, noting that the majority of women interviewed feared being alone, especially women from minority ethnic groups. In addition, although men also feared attack they were less concerned for their own safety than for that of their wives, children, mothers and sisters.

The Diversity Review highlights the value of accompanied visits and walks, describing them as "the most effective way of introducing underrepresented groups to the countryside and greenspaces in a non-threatening and mutually supportive atmosphere". They add that this approach seems to be particularly successful amongst projects working with ethnic minority groups and women.

Other research reports marginal difference between women and men in participation in leisure walking. The more significant factor may therefore be women's familiarity with accessing a particular environment, or the perceived safety of the location in question.

3.5 Ethnicity and barriers to access

Since 1995 reports have addressed the lack of ethnic representation and inclusion in rural life and activity in the British countryside. The Natural England report, *Kaleidoscope* (Evison et al, 2013) and '*Capturing Richness*' (Countryside Agency, 2003) promote countryside visits by Black and ethnic minority communities specifically focused on improving support for ethnic minority communities to access services from the natural environment and heritage sectors.

Institutional racism is identified as a significant barrier. The Macpherson Report (1999) defines institutional racism as 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting

prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people”.

The complex histories that shape the landscapes of the UK, and particularly in relation to aspects like colonialism and slavery, have material implications for the way our countryside is used and who it is seen as being for. Ayamba (pers. comm) stresses that, “these histories have a very real impact on the way Black people are welcomed into our landscapes and any attempts to investigate the impacts of race in these places must take these histories into account, by raising awareness about the silences that obscure the British empire’s connection to rural life and slavery”. He argues that the discourse around race, ecology and environmental justice in the UK has not received prominence and this tends to perpetuate racial injustice in countryside access.

Lack of ethnic and cultural diversity, and to some extent social and economic disadvantage, are connected with deep seated concepts of a rural idyll and have implications for any policy attempt to promote access and diversity. Agyeman and Spooner (1997) claim that there are long established links between racial purity and ideas of rural life, “emerging social relations produced by the exigencies of colonialism were inscribed in the rural dichotomy.” establishing a contrast between dirty industrial spaces of urbanisation and the more racially pure visions of rural life. They also argue that in being “written out of history people of colour are denied a similar sense of attachment to the countryside and arguably to nation.”

If countryside management organisations are going to address these issues they need to look not only at the way in which countryside services are provisioned beyond the boundaries of their own areas, but also the stories and heritages that these schemes are set up to protect. Different cultures will perceive and experience places with different viewpoints and agendas and this needs to be accounted for. If not, these services risk falling into the definitions of institutional racism as outlined in The Macpherson Report (1999).

A wide-ranging review of the literature conducted by Slee et al (2002) suggests that participation in countryside recreation by minority ethnic communities is limited by two principal factors (Slee cites Walker, 2000; Harrison, 1991; Strelitz, 1978). The first relates to 'cultural disposition' or an inability to participate because of one's background and includes lack of spare time due to family business commitments, prohibitive dress codes, a lack of single gender activities, or fear of encountering dangerous animals, etc. (Floyd, 2001; Brown et al, 1998; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Agyeman, 1990). In some instances communities may have a deep cultural reverence and respect for the countryside but may not consider it a leisure resource (Brown et al, 1998; Agyeman, 1990; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Macnaghten and Urry, 2000).

The second factor is a 'sense of alienation' - the feeling of not 'fitting in' or belonging. This is commonly felt by minority ethnic groups as a result of artificial notions of English heritage (Floyd 2001; Macnaghten et al, 1998; Halfacree, 1996; Guibernu, 1996; Daniels, 1993; Philo, 1992; Coster, 1991; Agyeman, 1990). In traditional representations of the English countryside and nationalist discourse, the countryside is popularly perceived to be an inherently 'White landscape' (Askins, 2001; Macnaghten and Urry, 2000; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Kinsman, 1993; Taylor, 1991; Agyeman, 1993, 1989). The construction of distorted cultural representations leads to a form of 'cultural containment' which confines experience to specific areas (Agyeman, 1993, 1989). For example, minority ethnic groups are generally associated with the inner city (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Sibley, 1995). Several studies have shown that the presence (or absence) of minority ethnic

groups is rarely an issue associated with the English countryside (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Derbyshire, 1994; Bonnett, 1993; Jay, 1992).

Visitor information often does not consider people from ethnic minority groups and if they make visits to the countryside, the experience often emphasises the absence of members of their community (Slee et al, 2002; Yesson, 1999). There is a distinct lack of appropriate activities and several surveys highlight the lack of multicultural awareness on the part of countryside managers and environmental campaigners (Floyd, 2001; Dhalech, 1999). Ling Wong (2001) suggests that unease about ethnicity often results in professionals adopting colour-blind attitudes that ignore ethnic and cultural differences altogether.

Recreational activity amongst minority ethnic groups is also limited by real or perceived experiences of racism (Slee et al, 2002; Floyd, 2001; Rishbeth, 2001; Countryside Agency, 2003; Woroncow, 2001; Yesson, 1999; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Henderson and Kaur, 1999).

3.6 The search for inclusive policies and approaches

The Countryside Agency's report *What About Us?* (2005) showed that "People from under-represented groups need help to access the countryside and green outdoor spaces and to build a lifetime habit. Indeed, a degree of organisational support in accessing, discovering and making full use of green outdoor spaces would come some way towards overcoming the fact that many people from under-represented groups are poorer than the general population."

The Marmot report found that for inequalities to be addressed, "Communities need to be involved in developing and delivering their own regeneration programmes and initiatives – but that involvement needs to be real and fit for purpose (i.e. at the right spatial level and reflecting the capacity of local communities)." This is true of any programme or scheme, including ELMs, that may be put in place to address the inequalities of access in countryside spaces, including National Parks and AONBs. Long-term programmes and permanent interventions are more successful at delivering lasting change, and it must be acknowledged that putting diversity agendas into projects that are short-lived may damage lasting trust within communities.

There is also a call for new narratives that address the inequalities in the cultural constructions that are embedded in our landscapes. Interpretation and visitor information that continues to communicate from a narrow cultural perspective and fails to speak to the real diversity of potential visitors, will continue to put barriers in the way.

The Marmot Report raised this in their recommendations "much of what we recommend for reducing health inequalities – active travel (for example walking or cycling), public transport, energy-efficient houses, availability of green space, healthy eating, reduced carbon-based pollution – will also benefit the sustainability agenda." It notes an increase in this measure with 18% of the population reporting utilising green space for exercise/health reasons, nonetheless, the social gradient remains and more needs to be done to encourage those in more deprived areas to utilise green space."

The Diversity Review (Countryside Agency, 2013) highlights that access to the countryside can foster social inclusion and the regeneration of communities. contributing to improved health and wellbeing, and social and economic benefits. In *Reconnecting People and Wildlife*, English Nature

(2002) states that “the opportunity to experience nature is an important social right and an essential component of an improved quality of life”.

The same report refers to work by Hague et al (2000) that asserts that the British government has tended to conceptualise social exclusion in terms of poverty, deprivation and lack of employment opportunities, and argue that the impact of social exclusion on leisure has been largely overlooked. Despite numerous attempts to define social 'inclusion' and 'exclusion', it is important to look beyond the measurable, quantifiable, statistical indicators of exclusion that the Government and its agencies prefer (Hague et al, 2002; Slee, 2002).

4 Barriers to access and recommendations

There continues to be a tendency to address access in relation to specific group characteristics, such as disability, ethnicity or age. This can be overwhelming in its complexity for landowners and managers, who are left to work out how best to improve access across the board.

In response, the barriers and recommendations sections in this report are structured by type of barrier. Group-specific issues and mitigations are highlighted but brought together in a way that is intended to show what mitigations can best serve the diversity of people.

The literature on recreational use of the countryside, social equality and accessibility indicates seven key barriers that limit outdoor access and participation. These are each reviewed here, along with potential mitigations.

4.1 Perceptions of rural environments

Perceptions of rural areas are important in determining who feels a sense of belonging in rural spaces, and who feels alienated or excluded. Raymond Williams (2011) highlights long-held notions of the rural idyll and how rural spaces are seen as symbols of 'better times'. David Olusoga (2016) reminds us of the Enoch Powell speech about the end of colonialism in which we find that the green and pleasant land in Britain is almost synonymous with national identity. The recent Landscapes Review (Glover, 2019) also identified this link to identity "The British countryside makes more people proud of their country than anything else, even above the NHS and royal family."

Others argue that the idea of the rural idyll is a social construct that serves to exclude. Cloke and Little (1997) write that this "marginalises people from a sense of belonging to and in the rural on the grounds of their gender, age, class, sexuality, disability and so on". This cultural construction has a material past and the way the countryside looks, feels and is managed reflects histories of empire, slavery and colonisation. Recognition and positive response to these cultural narratives is an important part of addressing the deep inequalities in the countryside, as highlighted in the BBC documentary (BBC, 2020) "Colonial Countryside – Facing up to Britain's murky past".

The divisions between urban and rural are also well known and deeply seated.

The Countryside Agency's Diversity review (2005) shows that young people's negative perceptions of rural areas can negate use. Access to nature and the outdoors is critical to the development of a long-term habit of use. For their particular group, as well as problems linked a reliance on parents or adults for transport and the overall cost of visiting the countryside. There is a clear suggestion that emerges from the research that if people have early formative experiences of the countryside that they will develop positive environmental behaviours later in life. Encouraging early use of the outdoor is critical to the development of a long-term habit of use and more widely of developing environmentally conscious behaviours.

The ELM is an important opportunity to support important mitigations designed to change these perceptions.

Recommendations - Build trust and confidence through inclusive rural experiences

- Invest in community facilitators as an effective way of building links between sites and under-represented and missing communities.
- Build and sustain relationships with key local groups and organisations who can provide a gateway to under-represented and missing members of the community, identifying potential advocates from different communities as well as specifying or suggesting appropriate ELM interventions.
- Demonstrate successful inclusive opportunities to gain trust and build confidence, building associations with local groups and organisations who have a high level of trust from their community.
- Develop outreach activity, where understanding of National Landscapes and the countryside more generally is shared with people in their places of work, education and recreation, and showing how people can support environmental action in these places. For example, in schools, care settings, and town hubs.
- Establish health-based interventions, such as green social prescribing and healthy walks, to support people who do not use greenspace to begin using it. Promote these through diverse networks.
- Create a diversity of opportunities for people to participate and engage, reflecting the wide range of individual circumstances, interests and motivations.
- Develop inclusive information and communication that move away from narrow cultural interpretations of the rural environment and reflecting the rich diversity of cultural and personal perspectives.
- Invest in improvements in transport and access within and between urban and rural spaces, with a particular focus on urban fringe areas.
- Ensure highest levels of accessibility for nearby nature, including land adjacent to housing, schools and colleges, care and health settings, and workplaces.
- Develop inclusive volunteer and apprenticeship opportunities, recognising the value in changing negative perceptions to lasting, positive connections.

4.2 Attitudes to diversity

Lack of awareness of diversity and inclusion issues is often highlighted as a significant barrier (Countryside Agency, 2013). It can show itself through practices that maintain barriers to access, or through attitudes that are unsupportive towards people outside the current visitor profile.

The recent public backlash to the National Trust's proposals to diversify the visitor experience shows how pervasive attitudes can be. Even if the voices represent a minority, their narratives are amplified by the media. However, such changes in institutions like the National Trust are stimulating important debate (Kite, 2020).

Negative attitudes by site owners and managers have a major impact on people with disability and health issues. Many people visit with families and friends, and access difficulties will impact on the group, not just the individual. In fact, a Visit Britain survey showed that friends and family often react more negatively than the person who is directly impacted by an access issue (NRW, 2019).

Conversely, owners and managers can find that benefits extend to them, not only people they support. For example, farmers who took part in the Let Nature Feed Your Senses project, run by Sensory Trust and LEAF (Bragg et al, 2012) reported how much they valued being able to share what they do and the environment they work in with others, in large part from observing the positive effects the visit to their farm had on participants of different ages, disabilities and backgrounds.

Ableist attitudes are widely reported by people with disabilities, both from organisation staff and other members of the public. People with disabilities or health conditions that aren't obvious to others (often referred to as hidden or invisible disabilities) are prone to assumptions of abusing services, especially when they are seen to use facilities like accessible parking. Assistance dogs are increasingly owned by people for a wide range of support needs, from medical alert to assistance for a sight-impaired person, and emotional support for someone with autism or a mental health condition. Variability in training regimes, and regulatory cover (where only some dogs are recognised by law) makes this a prime area where disabled people can find themselves denied access and support.

The Sheffield Environment Movement (SEM) has written extensively in their research with local communities and have found that there are a lack of role models working and volunteering within the environmental sector. They found that at a national or policy level there may be a commitment to diversity but this does not translate into employment opportunities or action on the ground at a local level. They continue "In particular, those leading local work see groups that are different to them as tourists within green space, not potential participants in their use, development and management. There is a perception that migrant skills are not valued." They also suggest that the introduction to these spaces should be gentle, many urban residents may not have grown up with access to the countryside, the report also recommend that "Environmental organisations cannot and should not treat Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugees (BAMER) as a homogenous group."

Landowners and managers also experience challenges. They may lack confidence connecting with people they are unfamiliar with, or feel it is beyond their skill base. British farmers have faced significant challenges in the last thirty years, for example from disease outbreaks, climate change and volatile market prices. Many farms are struggling to remain economically viable. Bragg et al (2012) highlight the widespread concern for the state of the farming industry, with around a third of

farmers intending to either give up farming or diversify. They maintain that greater engagement between the general public and farmers and on-site education about food production could go some way to reconnect people with the land, land managers and food producers alike.

Recommendations - Foster positive attitudes to diversity

- The most challenging recommendation addresses the need to dissipate the animosity between people who see inclusive action as either positive or negative. There are no easy solutions, but successful examples show the importance of bringing people together through positive action.
- Commit to diversifying membership of governing structures so they reflect real diversity in age, social background, ethnicity, gender, disability.
- Establish local networks of landowners and managers to enable shared learning and peer support.
- Invest in community facilitators and advocates to build links between land-owners and managers and under-represented and missing communities.
- Commit to diversity awareness training for landowners, countryside managers and community facilitators, requiring it where public funding is provided. Training should draw on the experience of local organisations and groups who represent diversity across the community.
- Promote examples of inclusive practices, harnessing the support of local community members who are leading positive approaches.
- Commit to diversifying recruitment of employment and volunteer opportunities.

4.3 Lack of transport

Issues with cost, accessibility and availability of transport are identified as significant barriers to access, especially for people living with disability and health issues, older people who no longer drive, and people facing economic disadvantage (Lucas et al, 2019). The same report demonstrates that “being in a lower income group, experiencing a mobility difficulty, being a younger adult (aged 17-29) and being retired or long-term sick all act to suppress people’s travel behaviours, reducing the number and distance of trips they make”.

Transport was identified as a key barrier to disabled people by the Countryside Agency Diversity Review (2005) “because it is deemed expensive, unreliable, ill-adapted to people’s specific impairments, stressful and inflexible”. The challenges continue. 40% of people with mobility difficulties have no access to a private vehicle (placing reliance on public and voluntary transport), make 40% less trips than the average driving population, spend less time travelling and travel shorter distances (Lucas et al, 2019).

An ageing population will bring greater demand for public transport as people cease driving or have no access to a private car. Evidence from three regions in rural England (Dwyer and Hardill, 2011) shows that the cost of car ownership combined with a lack of public transport contributes to social isolation of older people.

Concessionary travel provides free off-peak bus travel for older people and studies show social benefits for older people in terms of access to healthcare services, social activities and improved quality of life (Mackett, 2014).

Economic disadvantage is linked to lack of transport options. 40% of the lowest income households do not have access to a car, make nearly 20% fewer trips and travel 40% less distance than the average household (Lucas et al, 2019). They note that “it is clear that income is a significant constraint on the ability to travel for people in lower income groups”.

The aspiration to move to electric cars could marginalise people further if costs are prohibitive, although talk of grants to help people purchase vehicles could be an important mitigation.

Gender differences in access to a car are reducing. Although more males are the main driver in the household (Lucas et al, 2019) Single parent households tend to make more trips and as around 90% of all single-parent households are headed by women the related increase in travel in this sector is highly gendered in its nature (Office for National Statistics, 2014).

Bus use is in decline for all but the lowest income groups, who remain bus dependent to a much greater extent. The lower income groups are also more reliant on walking, although walking is in decline across all groups. The number of cycle trips is increasing with peaks in more recent years among all but the middle-income quintile. It would also appear that the lowest income groups are becoming increasingly reliant on taxis. It is unclear whether this is due to the advent of on-demand taxi services, or due to the decline of bus services in many peripheral urban areas (Lucas et al, 2019).

Recommendations – Improving transport

- Develop community, volunteer or bespoke transport that can provide low-cost, accessible, flexible options for people who don't have access to standard transport options. Expand opportunities to connect people with greenspace destinations.
- Provide subsidised access to transport for people facing economic hardship.
- Support the development of inclusive cycling and e-cycling opportunities, drawing on examples like 'Experience Community' and 'PEDALL'.
- Ensure accessible infrastructure is in place, such as clearly identified accessible parking and drop-off for cars, taxis and minibuses.
- Create access to clear, reliable information about transport options, including for people without access to online information. Improve distribution by linking with local networking and support organisations.
- Focus support on improving access and access to greenspaces close to the communities that need them.
- Identify electric and car loan schemes as ways of subsidising opportunities for people who are economically disadvantaged.
- Strengthen opportunities for people to journey by foot, self-drive buggies, cycling and horse. Routes that are separated from vehicular traffic and that allow for options like companion cycling, with good accessibility standards. Equipment hire of self-drive mobility vehicles and adapted cycles for example.

4.4 Physical barriers to access

The more familiar physical barriers range from uneven terrain and steep gradients, to obstacles like steps, stiles and gates. These features are prevalent in the countryside but guidance like *Countryside for All* (Fieldfare Trust, 1997,2005) and *By All Reasonable Means* (Natural England, 2020) have helped demonstrate that access improvements are achievable. Improvements include replacement of stiles with gaps or gates, provision of gates and toilets with Radar keys and improved surfaces. When improvements are made, it becomes evident that the easier access benefits a wide range of people, from wheelchair users and people with mobility issues, to families with young children and people with health conditions.

Physical barriers have greatest impact on people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, and older people, although challenges can be shared by parents with young children and people with limited experience of venturing away from more formal, urban environments.

According to the *By All Reasonable Means* report (NRW, 2019) disability is experienced by 1 in 5 people in the UK. Mobility impairments are the most widely reported, with 5% of disabled people using wheelchairs. Stamina is a significant but overlooked issue, for example someone with a heart condition may struggle when climbing a steeper route and need somewhere to sit, or someone with chronic fatigue may need to carefully judge level of exertion against their energy reserve. Uncertainty about challenges like this will deter visits.

The same report draws attention to less recognised physical barriers, such as sound, temperature, light and sense of place. Dark, dense woodlands as places where people tend to feel more anxious and less comfortable for example, and louder environments may be overwhelming to people with autism who need calmer space to retreat to. The report therefore summarises: ‘Accessibility relies not just on good quality paths and toilets, but on a careful blend of other ingredients too – seating and shelter, information in different languages, support from staff and volunteers, water for assistance dogs etc’.

Sensory Trust’s *Access Chain* shows that successful access relies on a chain of events that leads from a person’s decision to visit a site or route, through the journey, arrival, and visit around the site or route and its facilities and then the journey home. If any one of the links in the access chain is broken, then the visit may either end unsatisfactorily or may never happen. (Sensory Trust, 2005). It also highlights the importance of accessible connections between a site’s entry point and an accessible feature, for example an accessible trail must not be undermined by a stepped route at the point of site entry.

The impact of these barriers and techniques for their mitigation are well documented. This should be a core element of the ELM.

Recommendations – Maximise accessibility

- Commit to an ambition for all sites to maximise accessibility for all, applying the principle of Least Restrictive Access and investing in improvements to infrastructure, from routes to information.
- Commit to diversifying recruitment of employment and volunteer opportunities.
- Commit to diversity awareness training for landowners, countryside managers and community facilitators, requiring it where public funding is provided. Training should draw on

the experience of local organisations and groups who represent diversity across the community.

- Require a site access review and support the involvement of local access groups, and visitor experience reviews with a wide range of local community groups.
- Adopt national standards to steer specific barrier mitigation, from path improvements to changing operational practices and attitudes.
- Invest in inclusive publicity and information, signage of walking trails, learning facilities etc to make sites more welcoming.
- Promote and inform about improvements to inclusive practices and infrastructure through visitor information.
- Require that communication materials reflect and welcome the full diversity of people.
- Adopt the principle of maximising accessibility for all and applying the principle of Least Restrictive Access to all sites. e.g. Radar key mobility gates, removal of stiles, improved path surfaces.
- Support inclusive toilet provision, including Changing Places facilities and non-gender-specific toilets.
- Support multi-use of routes, trails and wider sites, such as accessible cycling, horse riding, self-drive mobility vehicle hire, and pony drawn buggies.

4.5 Personal safety concerns

The Countryside Agency's Diversity Report (2005) states that people with disabilities can perceive the countryside as a threatening environment because it is seen as too vast, open and unmanageable. Many can feel reluctant to attempt to visit on this basis. ONS data gathered in 2019 shows that 63.3% of disabled adults said they felt "very or fairly" safe when walking alone after dark, compared with 81.3% of non-disabled adults (ONS, 2019a).

Other people's judgements on behalf of people with disabilities and health issues can also be significant. The decisions of landowners and site managers can determine what opportunities are available to disabled people. Carers and family members can take control of decisions. This can limit opportunities for disabled people to make their own choices and is a form of what has been termed psycho-emotional disablism (Reeve, 2012).

Open spaces are more accessible than any other leisure resource to ethnic minority children, but their satisfaction rates are lower; this is often related to fears over personal safety and racial abuse (Ling Wong, 2001; Rishbeth, 2001; Woolley and Amin, 1995). In a study about the leisure practices of urban ethnic minority youth, Watt (1998) notes that localism (or a strong neighbourhood attachment) plays a key role in defining the leisure lives of some respondents, but most strongly for Asian youth. This localism comes partly from fears of racist attack in 'unsafe' or less familiar areas. There is a recognised gender difference in perception of personal safety and risk when accessing the outdoors. Women are reported to have higher perceived risk and perceptions of safety often influence decisions of when and where to go.

The impact of landscape type on perceptions of personal safety are highlighted by Kendle & Forbes (1997). For example, dense woods promote greater sense of unease, while more areas with more mix of open and closed areas can be more reassuring.

Uncertainty about the 'rules' of the countryside is particularly relevant to people who are unfamiliar with rural areas. People can feel anxious about where they can go and potential hostility from landowners and managers. Conversely, owners and managers can feel frustrated by dealing with issues like gates left open and stock disturbed by dogs, from people not following good practice.

Recommendations – Maximise safety

- Require risk assessment and safeguarding procedures that reflect a wider diversity of uses and participants.
- Engage community facilitators who can help foster links between communities and sites so that participants can gain confidence in new experiences, and landowners and managers can gain confidence in working with the public.
- Commit to building links with local groups and organisations to make more use of the countryside sites on offer.
- Support measures to increase real and perceived personal safety, in some cases such as lighting, contact numbers and options for accompanied walks.
- Encourage more regular use by local groups and organisations to make more use of the countryside sites on offer. Just doing this will add to their safety.
- Provide clearly legible access through welcoming, well maintained and signed routes both on site and in information provided about the site or access route.

4.6 Lack of opportunities

The range and quality of experiences on offer in the countryside will have a major bearing on who feels motivated to engage. This issue is often overlooked. There might be a trail that doesn't have points of interest for all members of the family, making it more difficult to justify a family outing. Playgrounds that are not designed with all bodies in mind, will fail to meet the needs of a family with disabled children.

Some specific activities can become a focus for encouraging people to engage. For example, Mya-Rose Craig (also known as Birdgirl) is a young British Bangladeshi ornithologist who is sharing her passion for bird watching and inspiring young people from ethnic communities to join regular countryside activities. Experience Community is a CIC that brings keen disabled cyclists together to explore the countryside of West Yorkshire.

Facilitation can be key. The Let Nature Feed Your Senses project by Sensory Trust and LEAF is an example of building successful partnerships between vulnerable, hard to reach groups and farmers, breaking down barriers, encouraging sharing of experiences and increasing social inclusion on both sides. The participants have had contact with nature and the associated health and wellbeing benefits, in a novel and sensory way; have had insights into the workings of a farm and have increased their knowledge of food and where it comes from. Farmers have also stated that they benefitted from these workshops and valued being able to show their experiences. (Bragg et al, 2012).

Access is not always self-motivated and independent, sometimes there is organised facilitation and this can be an important way to mitigate barriers to access. One example is Care Farming which is a widely recognised method both of improving access and involvement for those that most need supported access and as a strategy for farm diversification. These programmes have been seen to deliver great benefit to all users. Natural England engaged Care Farming UK to undertake a review of the care farming sector to better define the full range of health and education services provided by the sector. For example, support for people with learning difficulties, autism, mental illness and dementia as well as skills training and support for young people at risk and offenders” (Natural England, 2014).

There is great potential for the use of farms (as well as forests and nature reserves), to provide both farm visits and programmes of green care, which could bring greater connections between people and the land (both farmed and non-farmed); foster a greater understanding of the natural environment; and deliver health, social and educational benefits (Bragg et al, 2012).

Recommendations – Diversify opportunities

- Consult with local communities to identify appetite for different activities and opportunities, to highlight factors limiting access, and to inspire a diverse range of people to get involved.
- Support the linking of farms providing educational access with groups that access greenspace the least.
- Build links with local services who can widen the range of opportunities, for example archaeology groups, birdwatching, photography, orienteering.
- Create a diversity of opportunities for people to participate and engage, reflecting the wide range of individual circumstances, interests and motivations.
- Reflect diversity of needs and interests when developing recreational opportunities.

- Support voluntary local access networks and provide resources to help facilitate visits to green spaces using mentors from within communities.
- Organise visits to existing examples of green-care initiatives to illustrate opportunities for farmers and landowners to adopt.
- Support groups that can bring existing local nature-based interest, such as a local ethnic minority birdwatching group, or a women's environmental action group.
- Support access to funding for Social or Care Farming initiatives and better connection to these initiatives for primary care providers.
- Include opportunities for group-specific activities, eg dementia-friendly, guided walks led in different languages, where these are important in maximising feelings of security and peer support.
- Work with local NHS systems and professionals, including Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships and Integrated Care Systems, to widen the range of health-related activities and potential audiences.

4.7 Communication and information barriers

One of the key findings of the Making Connections study (Sensory Trust, 2001) was the significance of the lack of accessible information as a barrier to disabled people. It was the second most-reported barrier after physical issues like steps and slopes. A 2016 report on disability and sport also found that the most common barriers cited by respondents included “not knowing what is available” (Bidey & Chloe, 2019).

Phil Chambers (2016) echoes this, saying that, “the main barrier is poor information about opportunities”. He points out that different users will require different points of access, for example a blind woman who is interested in riding horses might want to know about equestrian groups that support the needs of people with visual impairments. This indicates that communications must be sensitive to the full range of needs and abilities.

As well as information about opportunities, confidence to visit depends on information about challenges that may be encountered. For example, the difficulty of the terrain, and presence of seats, accessible toilets, choice of routes and help if needed.

The value of Access Guides, usually on a website, is highlighted by organisations like Visit Britain. Information in alternative formats like Large Print and Plain English will not only benefit people with visual impairments, but also people with limited literacy or without English as a first language. Materials in different languages, such as Portuguese or Punjabi, will allow direct communication with people in their first language. This doesn't all have to be the responsibility of the landowner or manager and can be developed through links with local organisations and groups representing different aspects of diversity.

Recommendations – Create inclusive communication

- Commit to development of pre-visit information about accessibility of sites and the experiences on offer.
- Adopt principles of inclusive design to signage, interpretation and visitor information to maximise accessibility of materials, and identifying scope for specific materials such as particular languages and formats as part of the mix.
- Reflect diversity of people in imagery and content in visitor communication materials, from promotion to information.
- Commit to widening the narratives and invite participation of diverse communities in developing communication materials.
- Recognise and support the role of voluntary, community and charitable organisations working with under-represented groups, harnessing their skills in opening up visits to the countryside or other green outdoor spaces.
- Develop learning and engagement materials to inspire closer, more meaningful connections between people and the environment.
- Share communications with community hubs, such as schools and community groups, and connect with nature-based community interest such as local bird-watching groups.
- Deliver training for landowners, managers and facilitators to raise awareness of communication techniques.
- Undertake reviews of information needs and plan new pre-visit and on-site materials, including access guides.
- Encourage local groups and individuals to engage and share their ideas and expertise.

5 How can recommendations be delivered by an Access ELM?

The literature review identified barriers to inclusive access across seven areas. These were:

1. Perceptions of rural environments
2. Attitudes to diversity
3. Lack of transport
4. Physical barriers to access
5. Personal safety concerns
6. Lack of opportunities
7. Communication and information barriers

Recommendations have been proposed to help mitigate for all of these barriers. Some of these are recommendations that require organisational changes and some of them are part of a wider shift in cultural values within the country as a whole. This presents a challenge for ELM and requires thinking that goes beyond the access offers that have been made through previous agri-environmental schemes. Some of the recommendations suggested can be directly translated into actions delivered by an Access ELM, others may indirectly be addressed as a consequence of ELM actions. There will, inevitably, be other mitigations that must be addressed through other means.

The following is a list of proposed ELM actions that aim to help mitigate for some of the barriers to access.

ELM Actions to address identified barriers to access

Action	How does it work	What will it mitigate
<p>1. Educational access visits</p>	<p>Farms and other landowners or land managers offer opportunities for groups to visit and experience the countryside and countryside activities.</p> <p>Community facilitators act as the link between those providing the opportunities and those communities that are least likely to access greenspace and the countryside.</p> <p>Those providing opportunities must meet minimum standards to ensure that inclusive opportunities are provided. Training will be provided to help those that would benefit.</p> <p>Facilitators will be given a budget to assist with transport costs if required but will aim to link communities with opportunities that are closest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of rural environments – providing opportunities for communities to meet those who live and work in the countryside • Attitudes to diversity – creating positive experiences for those providing opportunities and promoting best practice around diversity of opportunities • Lack of transport – providing support for transport costs where needed • Personal safety concerns – providing safe spaces for people to access the countryside, perhaps for the first time • Lack of opportunities – proactively providing opportunities for people to access green spaces
<p>2. Supporting community champions</p> <p>Whilst this may be an ELM initiative, additional support and funding could be provided by local health and wellbeing budget holders or other local initiatives.</p>	<p>Providing support to ‘community champions’ who are identified by the facilitators. Community champions would provide support to encourage and promote access to the countryside and greenspaces.</p> <p>Community champions would be representatives from communities that access greenspace least but must be given support and resources from the centralised facilitators. This would include, but not be limited to, arranging educational access visits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of rural environments – Use of role models or champions from within communities to encourage use of greenspaces and the countryside • Lack of transport – communities working together to overcome transport issue e.g. lift sharing for visits • Personal safety concerns – providing support for group visits that help overcome personal safety issues

	<p>Community facilitators will ensure that support is focused on those communities in most need that will be identified using multiple factors. Community champions may represent a geographic area or a specific group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of opportunities – proactively providing opportunities for people to access green spaces and for champions to emerge from within communities • Communication and information barriers – being supported by a community champion can help interpret countryside in ways relevant to the visitors
<p>3. Creating new permissive or formal access where it will have the most impact</p>	<p>Prioritise the creation of access in the places where it will have the most impact, not just in terms of the number of people who are likely to use it but also based on the communities it is likely to serve.</p> <p>Access in areas where levels of activity are lowest should be targeted as well as areas with higher percentages of people with protected characteristics and areas with higher levels of social and economic deprivation.</p> <p>Opportunities to improve access in the rural urban fringe should be prioritised but opportunities elsewhere should not be overlooked, especially where high quality experiences can be offered and access made available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transport – providing access opportunities within walking distance • Physical barriers to access – helping to overcome the lack of high-quality access opportunities in specific communities
<p>4. Improving the quality of access routes</p>	<p>Improving the quality and connectivity of permissive routes and public rights of way to increase usage will look different in different areas.</p> <p>In some areas it will be as simple as replacing stiles with kissing gates, adding radar key access or removing barriers altogether. Simple, clear signage will be eligible for funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of rural environments – providing a more positive experience of using access routes • Attitudes to diversity – more inclusive signage and welcoming experience • Physical barriers to access – improved access and more inclusive access is key to this action • Personal safety concerns – a welcoming site is less intimidating for new visitors

In more formal areas this may include surfacing of paths, interpretive signage that promotes inclusive understanding and parking or drop off points.

ELM funding could also support the provision of volunteers or staff who provide information about access, welcome visitors to an area and help to put people at ease. This would only be at peak times and could be provided at visitor attractions or for farm clusters.

5. Online resources and promotion of best practice

ELM could either part pay or fully pay towards the costs of delivery or production of these resources

Training for landowners and for general public. This action could take the form of providing face to face training, online training or the provision of attractive, easy to use resources.

Resources for landowners, farmers and land managers could include:

- Inclusivity training
- How to communicate effectively with diverse groups
- Managing access on land
- An update of Countryside for All (a guide to making greenspaces more accessible to all)

Resources for the general public could include:

- The Countryside Code
- Information on what is and isn't allowed on publicly accessible routes and land
- How to stay safe when out and about in the countryside

- Communication and information barriers – more inclusive and clearer signage will be eligible for funding

- Perceptions of rural environments – Can help to provide a positive image of the countryside as a welcoming place where people can be confident what to expect
- Attitudes to diversity – Improve levels of awareness about diversity amongst the farming and land management community
- Personal safety concerns – provide confidence that the countryside is safe and give advice to help people stay safe
- Lack of opportunities – ensure that some of the opportunities to provide training and publicity are from within communities that are under-represented in the countryside
- Communication and information barriers – production of high-quality information using inclusive language and adhering to best practice guidance

6 Implementing the recommendations

The recommendations that have been made require support. Many of them are not new, as the literature review shows. The Countryside Agency's (2005) "What about us?" report highlights many of the same issues as this report. The fact that, despite some notable advances, things have changed so little in the intervening 15 years is worthy of reflection. Funding is obviously a major driver to finally acting and implementing recommendations, but it is not the only factor. Legislation can also help but there needs to be a fundamental shift in the way that the environmental and farming sectors approach their work. With the lowest levels of diversity of any sectors, there is clearly a need to fundamentally shift attitudes towards recruitment, engagement and how the sectors communicate what they do to the whole of society.

Funding

Whilst this section will focus on funding, with a particular emphasis on the Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM), it is important to note that creating equality of access also requires changes in attitudes. How government, statutory agencies, the environmental and farming sectors as well as the media respond to committing to equalise access opportunities will play as big a role as the funding itself. This may mean that committing to fund activities and actions that have not traditionally been funded by agri-environment schemes will be necessary. This will make a strong message about the direction of travel of Defra in general and Natural England in particular.

The different funding mechanisms that are highlighted in this section will indicate how each funding stream can contribute to the implementation of the recommendations in this report. However, it will also highlight areas where a funding source can be complementary to ELM, either in the form of 'pump priming' or providing stacked payments to facilitate work that ELM alone could not support.

Feedback from farmers, community groups, charities and statutory agencies is that funding needs to be long-term to both justify capital investment as well as to make a meaningful difference to attitudes and behaviours that may be entrenched and long-held. ELM provides an opportunity to do this.

6.1 ELM

ELM payments are an important means of supporting farmers and landowners to deliver access-related measures that are genuinely more inclusive and that will drive significant sustained change. This will include payments for actions that are not usually supported by agri-environment schemes. Previous UK based agri-environment schemes have paid for the provision of permissive access on land as well as to provide educational access. Providing the kind of support to make genuine changes to who accesses greenspaces and the countryside in England will require a step change in the kind of payments that are made.

One of the outcomes of this review and the accompanying Tests and Trial on removing barriers to access might be that farmers and land managers are given payments to maintain and manage infrastructures that make the countryside more accessible and welcoming to those constituencies that would ordinarily face barriers to access. In addition, areas of land that are delivering high quality access opportunities to those for whom access is not possible in other ways could receive additional

payments that are indexed to the impact of the benefit that they provide rather than the area of land or length of access route involved.

However, in addition to providing farmers, land managers and landowners with payments for improving access infrastructure and providing permissive access, ELM has the opportunity to put in place a framework that builds on Countryside Stewardship's educational access options. This would include looking beyond providing educational visits to local schools and building a network of farms and other landowners/managers who can offer educational visits to a wide range of different groups who are under-represented in the countryside. Facilitators or convenors can also be funded by ELM to make links between under-represented communities and this network of opportunity providers.

One principle that is repeated in all the research is that any strategy for removing barriers to access needs to be sustained in the long term and can only be achieved through building trust and long-term engagement with communities and farmers. The ELM payments can be a way of encouraging infrastructure to be installed and managed to ensure that long term engagement is sustained. Indeed, they are probably our greatest chance of transforming access to green spaces for those who have never had the opportunity.

More details of proposed ELM 'actions' will be reported by Kent Downs AONB Unit in the coming months.

6.2 Grant funding

Many funders are keen to bring benefits to people who face social and economic disadvantage. Some focus specifically on heritage and environment. National Lottery Heritage Fund Priorities 2019-2024 focus on addressing under-representation in heritage. "Reflecting the priorities of National Lottery players, we will have a particular focus on reaching those millions of people in the UK who are typically under-represented in heritage or who face barriers to being involved. Through our outreach support, we will particularly encourage and enable applications from organisations that work with, and seek to benefit: disabled people, young people, people from minority ethnic and LGBT+ communities and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds" (Heritage Fund, 2019). "Our expectations of organisations receiving larger grants will be high: strong projects will offer credible and ambitious plans to reach audiences *they know to be missing*. Projects will be supported to exceed minimum standards for physical and intellectual accessibility". (Heritage Fund, 2019).

Grant funded project work and ELM could complement one another. Grant funds can also provide additional support for innovative projects that trial new approaches to providing access to under-represented groups. However, in circumstances where grant funding (rather than ELM) has provided infrastructure we envisage that ELM may be a mechanism for providing continued funding to successful projects by providing ongoing support for engagement activities and maintenance. This is the same principle to the scenario where grant funding would provide the infrastructure and initial groundwork for chalk grassland restoration projects but Countryside Stewardship would provide ongoing support for maintaining species rich grassland.

6.3 Personal payments

Personal budgets are an important source of income for services that complement health and social care services. This is particularly relevant to initiatives like Care Farming, but also to the wider community and learning activities. They do carry a significant ongoing core cost in relation to monitoring, bookings and reporting, but they can be a good way of securing regular, ongoing funds. They will also provide support for individuals to purchase equipment that is needed to help them access the countryside.

Payments such as these may provide a 'top up' for organisations receiving ELM funding to support under-represented groups in circumstances where the attendees have specific needs that can't be funded through ELM alone.

6.4 Commissioning

Commissioning has been highlighted by the environmental sector as a potential source of support for health and wellbeing work, but this has yet to be shown to live up to its potential. While some organisations have successfully secured funds, or developed partnership initiatives, the general picture seems to be one where this isn't a funding source that can be relied on with great certainty. However, there are wider motivations to engage more with health providers, for example as a way of connecting with beneficiaries and possibly harnessing support for evaluation and monitoring.

One possible method of maximising the impact of this funding stream could be for either local authorities or primary care trusts to work in partnership with ELM to provide health and wellbeing opportunities to specific communities in specific locations, according to the priorities of the partnership organisation.

7 Resources: support for future projects or schemes

These national and regional organisations promote and support equality and diversity across the range of protected characteristics. They are valuable sources of guidance, examples of good practice and networks. They can provide useful connections for community consultation and may be able signpost local groups and organisations.

General equality and diversity

Changing Places <http://www.changing-places.org>

Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Department for Works and Pensions www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions

Widgit <https://www.widgit.com/>

Age equality

Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk

Street Games www.streetgames.org

Disability equality, including dementia and mental health

Action on Hearing Loss www.hearingloss.org.uk

Disability Rights UK www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Disabled Ramblers www.disabledramblers.co.uk

Euan's Guide <https://www.euansguide.com/>

Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities>

Mencap www.mencap.org.uk

Mind www.mind.org.uk

National Autistic Society www.autism.org.uk

Sense www.sense.org.uk

Gender equality

Chwarae Teg www.cteg.org.uk

Gender Identity Research and Education Society www.gires.org.uk

LGBT Foundation <https://lgbt.foundation>

Stonewall www.stonewall.org.uk

Unique Transgender www.uniquetg.org.uk

Wipe Out Transphobia www.wipeouttransphobia.com

Equality in religion and belief

Network of Buddhist Organisations www.nbo.org.uk

Hindu Council UK www.hinducounciluk.org

Roman Catholic Archdiocese www.rcadc.org

Evangelical Alliance www.eauk.org

The Interfaith Network www.interfaith.org.uk

Baháí Community www.bahai.org.uk

Muslim Council of Britain www.mcb.org.uk

Racial equality

Black Environment Network (BEN) www.ben-network.org.uk

Black Cultural Archives <https://blackculturalarchives.org>

Displaced People in Action (DPIA) www.dpia.org.uk

Institute of Race Relations <http://www.irr.org.uk/research>

Race Equality Foundation www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk

Race Equality First www.refweb.org.uk

Sheffield Environmental Movement <http://www.semcharity.org.uk>

Outdoor access

Accessible Countryside for Everyone www.accessiblecountryside.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk

Black Environment Network <http://www.ben-network.org.uk/index.asp>

Centre for Accessible Environments www.cae.org.uk

Centrewire (specialist gates) www.centrewire.com

Experience Community <http://www.experiencecommunity.co.uk>

Mind www.mind.org.uk

Open Spaces Society www.oss.org.uk

Paths for All www.pathsforall.org.uk

Pittecroft Trust www.pittecroft.org.uk

Pony Axe S <https://ponyaxes.com>

Ramblers www.ramblers.org.uk

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) www.rnib.org.uk

Scope www.scope.org.uk

Scottish Natural Heritage www.snh.org.uk

Sensory Trust www.sensorytrust.org.uk

Thrive www.thrive.org.uk

Tourism for All www.tourismforall.org.uk

Visit Britain www.visitbritain.com

Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group www.vscg.org

Examples of good practice

Colonial countryside, working with children to tell the stories of colonial, imperial and slavery connections in the National Trust. <https://colonialcountryside.wordpress.com/>

Forestry commission writer in residence

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/11/women-nature-writing-forestry-commission-writers-in-residence>

Crowd funded book on Women's nature writing [https://unbound.com/books/women-on-nature/Disability rights](https://unbound.com/books/women-on-nature/Disability%20rights)

Access for All UK: improving accessibility improving lives <https://www.accessforalluk.com/>

UK Government [Inclusive language: words to use and avoid when writing about disability](#)

Let Nature Feed Your Senses, a partnership project by Sensory Trust and LEAF <http://letnaturefeedyoursenses.org/>

UK Government [Using a range of communication channels to reach disabled people](#)

Pony Axe S provides pony-drawn access for wheelchair users. <https://ponyaxes.com/>

Social Farms & Gardens <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/>

Centrewire Woodstock Large Mobility | Kissing Gate

<https://centrewire.com/products/woodstock-large/>

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