

Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Questionnaire Report

22nd March 2021

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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.



1 Background

The Kent Downs AONB Unit has been commissioned to carry out a Test and Trial that explores Enhancing Access Opportunities for Defra's schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods. As part of this work a series of workshops and interviews took place with farmers, landowners and land managers as well as those that might be able to deliver access opportunities for diverse community groups. This work was backed up by several commissioned studies into spatial prioritisation, barriers to access and legal & insurance liabilities incurred by landowners through allowing public access. All of this work was used to create a series of recommendations for actions that might be appropriate for schemes that reward environmental benefits. The actions were based around three primary purposes:

1. Pay farmers and land managers to provide better access through permissive agreements and enhanced access opportunities.
2. Address inequality of access to the countryside.
3. Provide alternatives to routes that impact sensitive sites (ecology, heritage, lambing etc.)

1.1 Purpose of questionnaire

Although the Test and Trial recommendations and draft actions were co-created with farmers, land managers and representatives of groups that are under-represented in the countryside, it was considered that there was also a need to test these results. Hence, despite this work not being part of the original Test and Trial plan, a questionnaire was designed and circulated to gather opinions about the proposed actions. The questionnaire was open for responses between 19th February and 19th March 2021 and was circulated to the following groups:

- All who had attended workshops and been involved in the Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial.
- The questionnaire was advertised by the NFU and CLA in Kent.
- A selection of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) circulated the questionnaire to farmer and landowner contacts.

1.2 Limitations of questionnaire

Due to the time and resource limitations that the Test and Trial is working under, there were inevitably some compromises that needed to be made. This means that there are some limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results.

Limitation	Consequence
Self-selecting group – this questionnaire was sent to all who had taken part in the Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial. The local NFU and CLA publicised the questionnaire and a selection of AONBs distributed the questionnaire to farmer and land manager contacts.	The participating group will not be representative of all farmers. They will be farmers that have the time and interest in access issues and that already have an existing relationship with an AONB. However, the number of responses and the geographical range of responses does give a level of confidence that these views do reflect opinions in a significant percentage of the industry.

<p>Lack of depth to questions – very few questions were asked. It was considered that having a short questionnaire that only required quick responses would be completed by more people.</p>	<p>Over 100 responses were received. Also, the final question allowed respondents to give more detail about their feelings around public access. The workshops and interviews earlier in the Test and Trial also allowed farmers and land managers to have their say and were used as the basis for the draft actions presented in the questionnaire.</p>
<p>Leading questions – Some of the questions asked how respondents felt about specific actions. Hence questions such as “<i>Should farmers, landowners and land managers have the option to be paid for providing new permissive access to their land?</i>” were asked.</p>	<p>As the aim of the questionnaire was to find out how respondents felt about actions that had been co-designed with farmers and land managers, this approach was unavoidable. The primary purpose of this was to see if people fundamentally disagreed with the draft actions or supported them.</p>
<p>Absence of proposed payment rates – At the time the questionnaire was written, proposed intervention rates had not been calculated and were not included in the questionnaire.</p>	<p>Many farmers and land managers said in their response that without knowing about intervention rates it was difficult to say whether they would be interested in participating. Consequently, answers reflect whether a farmer has an appetite to be involved in enhancing access opportunities.</p>

1.3 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was carried out using Google Forms and can be found at <https://forms.gle/iXoV7SFd6WohVZJKA>

It consisted of 12 questions, only two of which were compulsory.

1. How would you describe yourself? (compulsory)
Multiple choice (Farmer, landowner or land manager, Representing an organisation or charity that owns or manages land, Representing a community group or organisation, Private individual, Other...)
2. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. RG23) - This is only collected to find out what part of the country you are responding from. (compulsory)
Short text answer
3. Should farmers, landowners and land managers have the option to be paid for providing new permissive access to their land? e.g. allowing off-road routes to schools, providing a footpath that connects two places of interest or even land that is already used by walkers without permission?
Answer between 1 and 10 (1 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree)
4. If you are a farmer, landowner or land manager, would you consider providing new permissive access?
Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)
5. Should farmers, landowners and land managers have the option to be paid for enhancing existing access to their land? e.g. providing better surfacing, less restrictive access furniture and simple, clear signage to help people understand where they can go?

Answer between 1 and 10 (1 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree)

6. If you are a farmer, landowner or land manager, would you consider enhancing existing access?

Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)

7. Should E.L.M. payments be made to those that wish to provide 'access hubs' that might provide parking, toilets and other infrastructure that would encourage visits?

Answer between 1 and 10 (1 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree)

8. Should farmers, landowners and land managers have the option to be paid to provide guided access to their land? This would include, but not be limited to, school groups. There must be an educational theme to the visit that may include learning about farming, the environmental work on the land and its wildlife?

Answer between 1 and 10 (1 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree)

9. If you are a farmer, landowner or land manager, would you consider offering guided access to your land?

Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)

10. Should E.L.M. include providing facilitators whose role is to link those groups that are under-represented in the countryside with farms providing guided access to their land? The facilitator would aim to help farmers reach a wider range of people and encourage access to the countryside in general.

Answer between 1 and 10 (1 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree)

11. Can you think of an organisation that might be able to provide the facilitator mentioned above? If so, who are they?

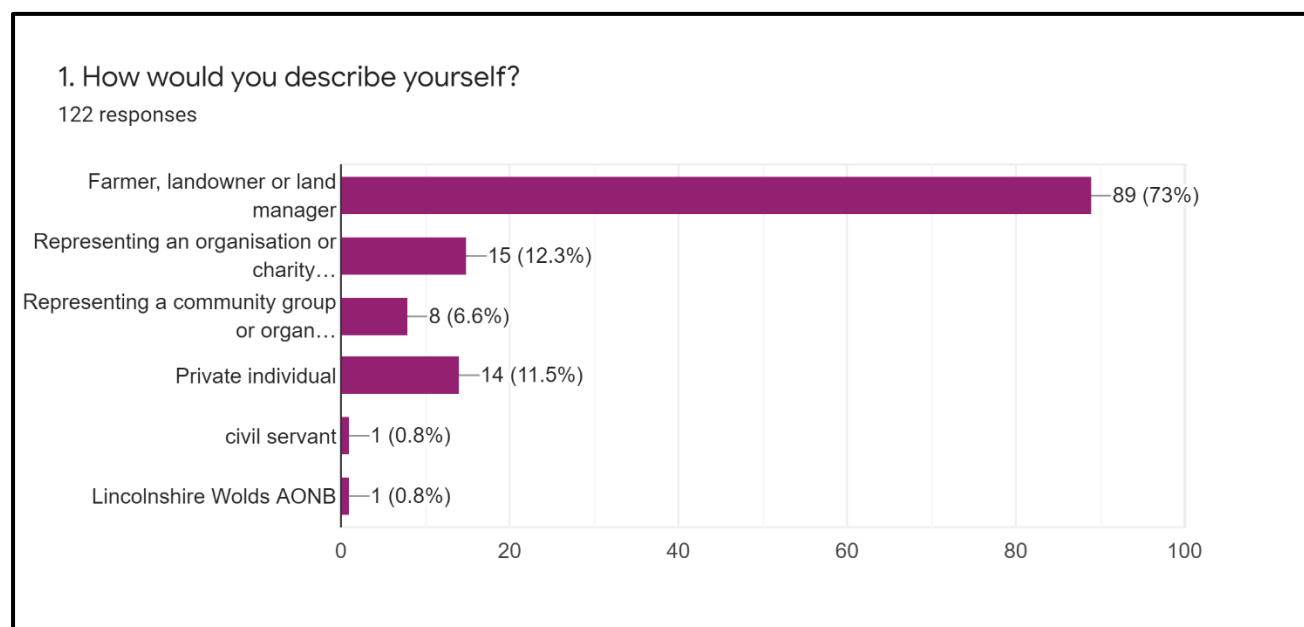
Free text answer

12. Do you have any comments about any of the questions you have been asked or any broader comments about E.L.M. and how it can be used to promote public access to the countryside?

Free text answer

2 Results

122 people answered the questionnaire. The results are summarised here and the full results can be found in the appendix.



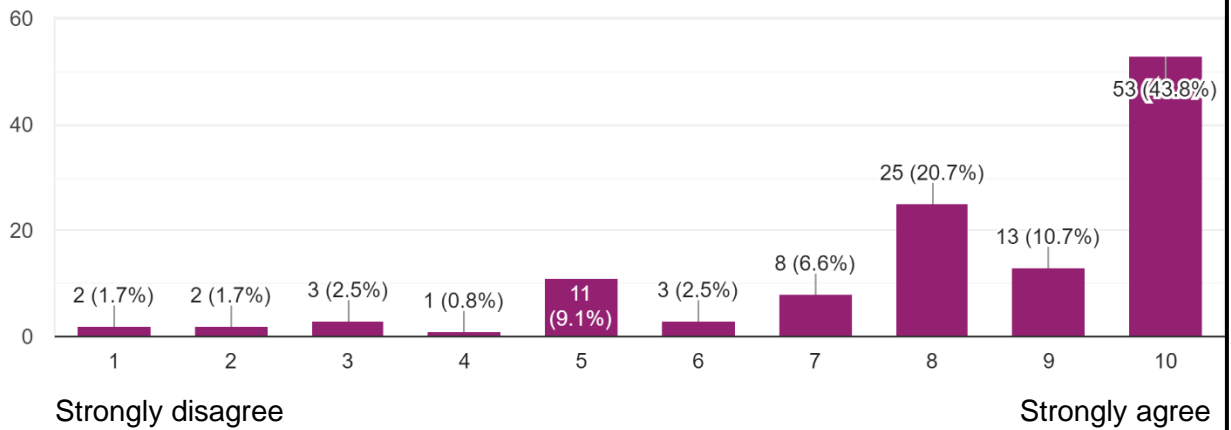
There were some who responded to this question who referred to themselves as private individuals. Based on the ways that this group answered questions they appeared to be a combination of landowners, private individuals and those that represented groups such as the British Horse Society.

2. What is the first part of your postcode?

30	Kent (CT, DA, TN, ME)	2	Berkshire (RG)
22	Northumberland (TD, NE)	2	Suffolk (IP, CO)
13	Wiltshire (SA, BA)	1	Shropshire (WV)
12	Shropshire (SY)	1	Hampshire (SO21)
10	Buckinghamshire (HP)	1	Ceredigion (SA)
6	Lincolnshire (LN)	1	Isle of Wight (PO30)
5	Lancashire (LA)	1	Oxfordshire (OX49)
4	Surrey (GU)	1	Gloucestershire (GL)
3	Cumbria (LA)	1	Devon (EX)
3	North Yorkshire (YO)	1	East Sussex (BN)
3	Somerset (TA)	1	Dorset (BH)

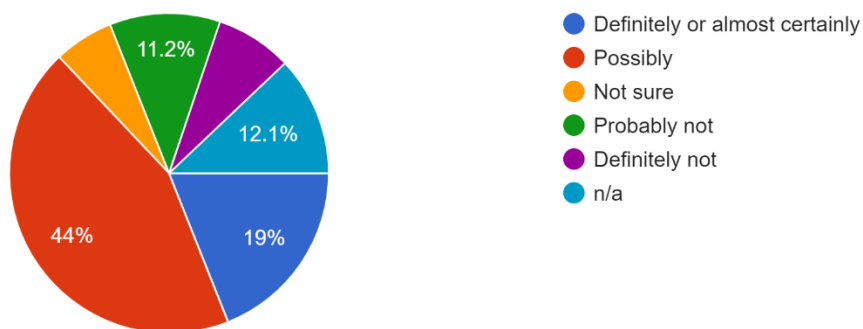
3. Should farmers, landowners and land managers have the option to be paid for providing new permissive access to their land? e.g. allowing off-...hat is already used by walkers without permission?

121 responses



4. If you are a farmer, landowner or land manager, would you consider providing new permissive access?

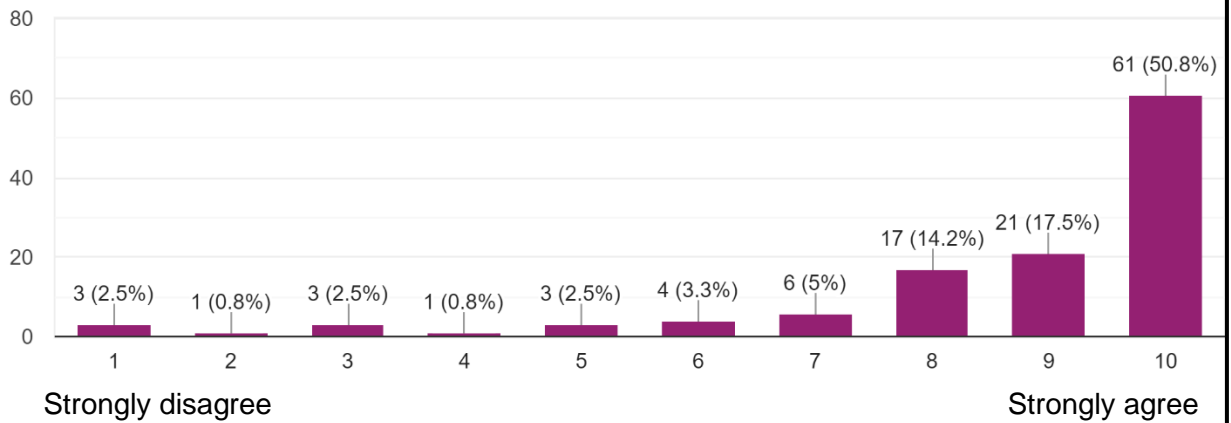
116 responses



Definitely not 7.8%
Not sure 6%

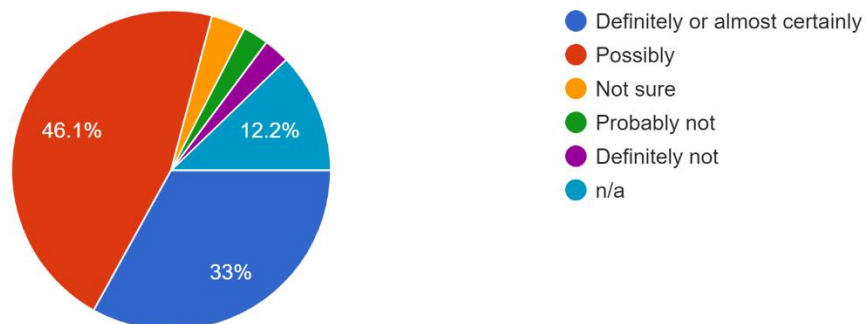
5. Should farmers, landowners and land managers have the option to be paid for enhancing existing access to their land? e.g. providing better signage to help people understand where they can go?

120 responses



6. If you are a farmer, landowner or land manager, would you consider enhancing existing access?

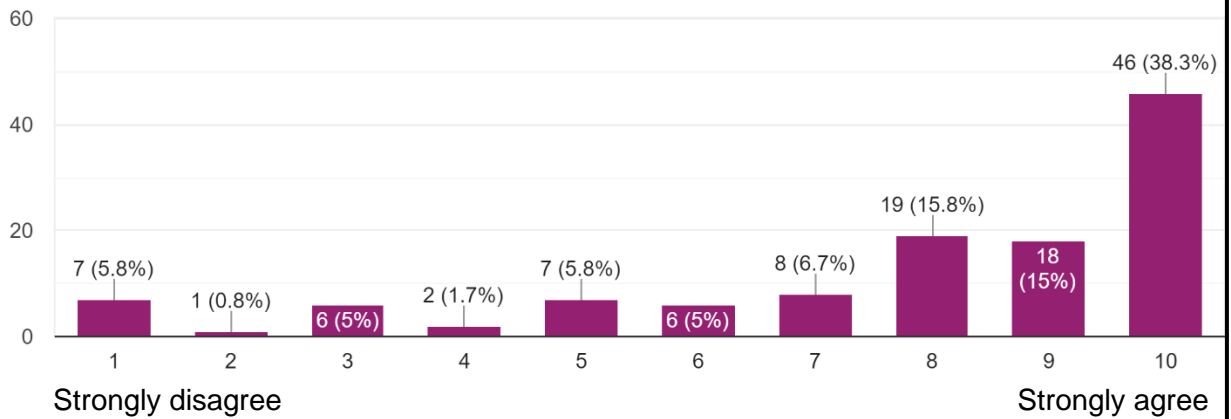
115 responses



Not sure	3.5
Probably not	2.6%
Definitely not	2.6%

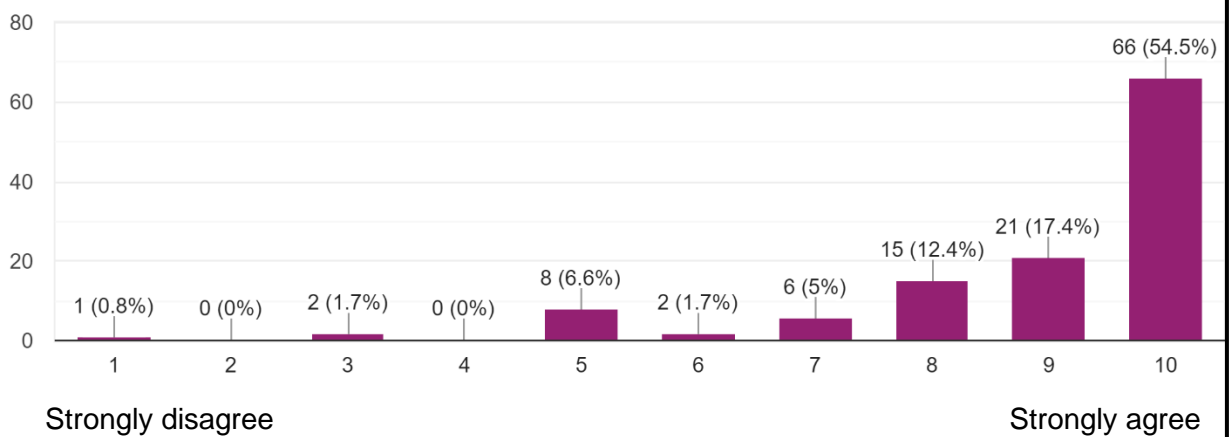
7. Should E.L.M. payments be made to those that wish to provide 'access hubs' that might provide parking, toilets and other infrastructure that would encourage visits?

120 responses



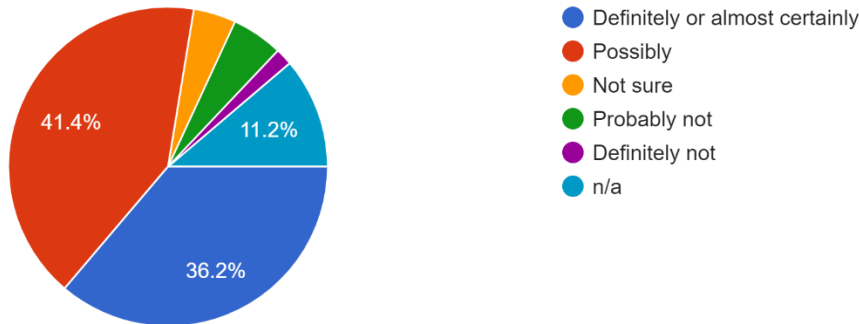
8. Should farmers, landowners and land managers have the option to be paid to provide guided access to their land? This would include, but not b...he environmental work on the land and its wildlife?

121 responses



9. If you are a farmer, landowner or land manager, would you consider offering guided access to your land?

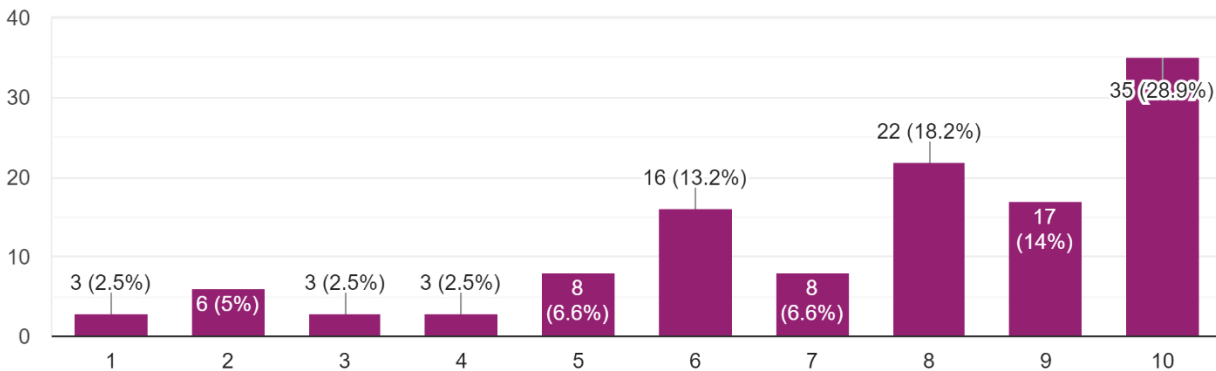
116 responses



Not sure	4.3%
Probably not	5.2%
Definitely not	1.7%

10. Should E.L.M. include providing facilitators whose role is to link those groups that are under-represented in the countryside with farms p... encourage access to the countryside in general.

121 responses



11. Can you think of an organisation that might be able to provide the facilitator mentioned above? If so, who are they?

The 68 responses that were received suggested a wide range of organisations. The most commonly suggested organisations were the AONBs, NFU and FWAG, LEAF and the Wildlife Trusts. There are also a number of smaller organisations proposed such as Wye Community Farm, Dandelion Time and Black Environment Network.

12. Do you have any comments about any of the questions you have been asked or any broader comments about E.L.M. and how it can be used to promote public access to the countryside?

The 69 responses received for this question showed the high level of engagement by those that completed the questionnaire, how much people care about access and also the wide range of issues and opinions that exist. There were a wide range of opinions noted here and these covered the subject matter that had been raised in workshops and interviews held by this Test and Trial. Concerns raised included the time and energy required to manage public access, the need to know payment rates in order to say whether the actions would be attractive, the need to teach the Countryside Code and the need for the schemes to be simple to take part in. It is impossible to do justice to the time and effort that was put into these responses and, consequently, they have all been printed in full in the appendix.

3 Preliminary Discussion

The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather some evidence for whether there was appetite within the farming community for providing permissive access through schemes. Despite the limitations of the questionnaire, the results provide clear evidence that there is a willingness to consider about access as part of the schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods.

Of those that responded, 63% would either 'possibly' or 'definitely or almost certainly' provide permissive access if it was an option within one of the schemes. This figure jumped to 79% when asked to consider enhancing existing access and was 77% when asked about educational access.

However, these results included those people who answered the question as not applicable as they were not landowners or land managers. Once the results are adjusted the percentage of farmers and land managers that would either 'possibly' or 'definitely or almost certainly' provide permissive access rose to 73%. Those that would consider enhancing access rose to 90% and 87% would consider educational access.

This, at the very least, suggests that access options should be considered as part of the offer that farmers can make as part of the new schemes. There is a perception in some circles, that very few farmers would consider permissive access as part of the schemes. This questionnaire shows that this is not the case. More research will need to be carried out to establish the attitude towards providing enhanced access amongst groups of respondents that aren't self-selecting, but these preliminary results are very encouraging.

The free text answers to the final question in the survey show that many do have grave reservations about public access to the countryside. However, they also show how committed those that work in the countryside are to providing access and education. The primary concerns are around behaviour of people who access land, particularly those that are dog owners and who are not accustomed to being in the countryside. There is genuine concern that providing additional and enhanced access to the countryside needs to be accompanied by a public education campaign about how to behave when visiting farmland. Without this, the impact on wildlife and farming activities may be an unacceptable price to pay for the provision of access. Equally, payment rates for the provision of additional and enhanced access need to be high enough to encourage farmers and land managers to join these schemes.

4 Appendix 1: Full results

The following are the results that were not able to be included in section 2.

2. What is the first part of your postcode?

HP16	TN	SP3
HP14	DA4 0JA	SO21
SY9	PO30	GU5
SY5	OX49	GU6
YO62	GL6	BA12
NE66	HP14	SP3
HP27	HP14	BA12
LA5	HP14	SP7
TN25	CO8	TA20
TN26	HP7	NE68
TN15	DA4	NE69
DA5	SY66	EX22
TN11	WV16	GU8
TN2	LD7	LA4
ME13	SY9	LA5
TN25	NE70	La7
CT15	NE70	LA2
CT21	TA3	Gu2
TN3	NE65	SA44
TN31	TA3	RG18
TN29	NE65	RG7
ME12	NE66	LA7
TN29	BH21	LA9
TN26	BN27	IP13
TN36	LN11	NE70
TN27	LN8	SP8
ME9	BA12	

11. Can you think of an organisation that might be able to provide the facilitator mentioned above? If so, who are they?

Comments
A charity who knows the area and that is given extra funds to do this job
ANOB
AONB
AONB
AONB Farm Conservation Advisors, County Wildlife Recorders
AONB or National Parks
AONBs farm groups NFU
AONB's, WT's. Romney Marsh Countryside project

Black Environment Network
Blackdown Hills AONB and BH Facilitation Fund/Farming and Woodland Group
British Horse Society
British Horse Society. Byways and Bridleways Trust Ramblers Cycling UK
Chiltern Society
Circle of Life Rediscovery
Councils
Country trust
Country Trust
Countryside trust
County Councils
Cranbourne Chase AONB
Dandelion Time, Boughton Monchelsea Amenity Trust
Dedham Vale AONB
FACE
FACE
FACE or The Country Trust run by David Thompson
FWAG
FWAG
FWAG or equivalent
GWCT
I envisage the facilitator getting a better deal than the farmer, then taking control, bogging the farmer with red tape leading to reluctance of farmers to open up the countryside
Is there not a charity that does exactly that? Can't remember what it is called.
Kent Countryside Partnerships
Kent Wildlife Trust
Kent Wildlife Trust volunteers (or any of the Wildlife Trusts).
LEAF
LEAF
LEAF or Soil Association
LEAF/FACE, Country Trust
Lincolnshire wildlife trust
Local AONB
Local District Council for paths & cycle ways to enhance Environment issues?
Local NFU or local authorities
Local NFU or local authorities
Local organisations which know their patches well, and have the right combinations of skill sets - the ability to reach under-represented groups AND an understanding of farming
Local/Regional/County agricultural societies all have a remit for outreach under their charitable status and generally speaking have a sizeable 'retired but active' membership. They are ideally placed to provide this type of facilitation.
Most cities have youth clubs for disadvantaged children, this would be a good place to start. These type of clubs are trusted in the local communities and speak 'their language' they will be well places to reach the right audience

National Trust
National Trust, RSPB or Wildlife Trusts if paid
National Trust, Shropshire Hills AONB, Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Natural England
Needs to be agricultural and understand environment.
NFU CLA
NFU retired farmers
NFU. CLA. Kent Wildlife. NOT Sussex Wildlife who have shown themselves to be anti-farming
No
No
No
No
Promar. Kite consulting
RSPB, wildlife trusts, butterfly conservation,
school activity advisor?
SCHOOL TEACHERS
Shropshire AONB
The charity M.I.N.D.
There are several national organisations often with regional reps: LEAF Ed (was FACE) NFU Ed, Social Farms & Gardens/Grow Care Farming, Council for Learning Outside the Classroom. This potential "outreach programme" should link other organisations with existing experience too: a co-ordinated approach is vital to actual achievement, as cluster groups have shown!
Wye Community Farm
YFC
young farmers groups

12. Do you have any comments about any of the questions you have been asked or any broader comments about E.L.M. and how it can be used to promote public access to the countryside?

Comments
A concerted effort to repair and reopen existing rights of way that are closed or blocked
A country code with ENFORCED punishment for idiots who do not obey the rules would be a good start. 1st rule should be you must not go anywhere without express permission and keep your dogs on leads at ALL times. 2nd rule, do not feed any animal without permission. 3rd rule, if you are involved in the injury or death of any animal you are responsible for all costs. Public access in manageable areas or routes is great but responsibility for actions is a key necessity
About 75% cyclists are male (and ride four times the distance of females); about 85% horse riders are female (and feel safer on a horse than cycling or walking alone); walkers are 50:50. Carriage drivers include many older, less able bodied people with their friends and families; carriages and vehicles for disabled people cannot always fit through kissing gates and bollard barriers although the latter may use bridleways. It would be progressive, in my view, to open suitable routes to all VRUs as a national policy, get them off unsuitable roads and away from traffic. It would be good to treat VRUs more equally, which would encourage more women and families into the countryside, and to raise awareness that policies need to change for safer access to the countryside for all groups. Good luck.

Access is a public good and should be paid as such.
Access needs to come with better publicity/education re the countryside code, understanding the impact of litter and other destructive practices, developing respect and awe for nature
access should only be with the landowner's express permission, there should never be any pressure on any landowner to open up new access upon their land
an important element of encouraging access to countryside is better education of people and children about how and why it is managed in certain ways; for wildlife, for food, for fuel and why certain areas need to be undisturbed - for ground nesting birds or lambing sheep etc It was a great shame that educational access was dropped from the current CS scheme and I would welcome its inclusion in future schemes.
Any proposal for ELMS enhancing access must have the question asked of it "Will this benefit the poorest in our society, from the inner cities? " Because if the answer is "No" then it isn't public money for public goods, it is just Middle England looking after its own desires.
Are the results of the ELM measurable - Measuring visitors and tracking their movement can be achieved by visitor counters. Understanding visitors in the countryside is still poorly understood so data here could show where schemes have been effective or highlight pressure points where more targeted support is needed.
As an industry we need to ensure the ELM scheme is simple to apply for and is paid on time
As stated before by us - James and Stephen Attwood - with farmers help we could establish a world class series of links (footpaths/cycle routes) between settlements to reduce the reliance on cars. Farmers would have to obviously have to be paid for this and construction of the links could be done via CIL or s106 agreements.
Assessing disturbance will be key, not only on protected land - disturbance to breeding animals is a huge problem and should be the main factor assessed should a farmer opt in. Allowing dog access should be optional and impacts of dogs on watercourses and disturbance should be carefully assessed, alongside funding for signage. The access should be temporary and optional. Permanent 4x4 access sounds horrendous - essentially paving over the countryside. There are enough roads, but cycle networks along existing roads should be enhanced. Walking routes linked to existing networks that the farmer feels in control of will be key, as well as monitoring.
Considering where we are now with digitalization should there be funding from ELM to monitor the impact of improved access. Many sensors could be deployed which could be used to measure the impact, but also understand the biodiversity and allow remote interaction from the classroom as a follow up to a visit. Technology is there, we should embrace its use.
creating trust by moving PRow when they are inappropriate
ELM could help Create multi-user routes so best value for money and equal opportunities for all and work to link the existing fragmented rights of way network and allow safer environmentally friendly travel for all
Enhanced payment under ELMs for educational access is crucial. I have been in Stewardship with educational access for 20 years and the payment for a visit has not increased at all!!!
Enjoyed having schools for educational access but the schools struggled funding buses to bring them out to our farm
Far too simplistic a questionnaire, I am afraid. It concentrates almost exclusively on access (which is a very legitimate issue) but fails to address how enhanced access would mesh with the requirement for wildlife to enjoy tranquillity. This is a serious issue for land managers and does not appear to have been taken into too much consideration by Defra. It is vital to consider the

downstream consequences of enhanced access, such as dog-walking, litter, disturbance, damage and other pressures.

Farm has footpaths in every field, we don't need more access we need the option to redirect paths as and when necessary. Footpaths were established to facilitate journeys to work - not for enjoyment, why do farmers have to allow access on private land at all?!

More access will equate to more problems (less wildlife, confrontations etc), if it so important create more public places and let farmers get on with farming to produce food.

For ELMS to be welcomed by the general public, there should be wider education of the people about what farmers do and how they have to balance food production with the environment. Public access should always show respect to and gratitude for the farmer and his valuable work and better farmer/public relations might follow.

Grants should be aimed more towards maximising the production and marketing of foods that we have been importing from Europe or similar climatic areas whilst Access is getting overdone. We need to improve the existing popular routes and much more emphasis should be to improve access and interpretation near to large urban areas.

I am the leader of the Stour Valley Farmer Cluster (20,000 acres, 30 farmers). Our experience as farmers during the lockdowns has been mixed: delighted to see so many people out on foot or on bicycles or on kayaks on the River Stour but heartbroken to see a minority who strayed way off paths, left gates open, left rubbish &/or let their dogs run amok in conservation areas for ground nesting birds. Our recommendation is that provision of greater public access be matched with greater promotion of the Countryside Code. Hence our support for ranger guides who lead introductory walks for those who have rarely or never walked in the countryside before - in which walks they can promote both the joys of walking and the importance of observing the code.

I have a disabled child who uses a wheelchair. We as a family would like to see the improvements in access in the urban environment be replicated in the countryside. We're just looking for fairness in opportunity to access, off road equipment has advanced now so re surfacing isn't always necessary...we often can't get over the threshold due to access furniture. A lovely loop circuit is foiled due to inaccessible kissing gates.

Can't stock proof / accessible gates be part of the payments?

I have had a public access option in a CSS followed by an ELS/HLS covering 20 years. I was offered an annual extension last year and again this year which removed the permissive access payment. This has caused uproar locally, which has meant that I have had to allow access to the route as non-funded permissive access in order to keep the peace! There is definitely a demand for public access, but for it to be successful, the route needs careful planning in order to actually end up going somewhere not just a trek across 4 or 5 fields in the middle of nowhere followed by a trek out along the same route.

I think educational access is easier, due to it being organised and at the farmer's control. random access is not so helpful esp. at certain times of year (lambling/ calving). there is a huge amount of rural crime and random access will only lead to an increase esp. in fly tipping. random access could lead to problems with chemical applications and field machinery use.

I think ELM should be used for the environmental management of the land, (incl. soil and water) and tourism and access should be achieved via other budgets.

I think it is essential that farmers.... 1) are legally protected in say law so that they are not liable for accidents 2) can withdraw permissive paths e.g. wet e.g. lambling 3) Can insist that dogs are on short leads. Unless these basic things are done then I fear farmers will not be engaged.

I think it is important that any form of increased access is optional, paid and reversible/non-permanent. If not, I think uptake and attitudes towards it from farmers and landowners will be very poor.
I think guided access & financed options for improved & informative signage are the best options suggested and have the potential to be most mutually beneficial.
I think we has farmers have got to try to get the public onto our farms
If providing more public access to the countryside then allow removal, temporary if necessary, of useless elements of the PROW network. ELMS must provide finding for capital works such as infrastructure, e.g. footbridges and styles and allow a figure for maintenance.
Improving and putting in permissive paths will depend on payments.
Include an element of lessons in good behaviour, such as shutting gates, dogs on lead in fields with sheep etc.
It ought to be more flexible to remove old footpaths and rights of way that serve no purpose and replace them with useful ones
It's all very well providing access but I along with the majority of farmers face issues of litter, dogs off leads, gates left open, camping along with toilet issues and verbal abuse about the right to walk anywhere. I have many permissive access routes around my entire farm but do feel like removing the whole lot at times when dealing with a minority of those who don't respect our farms.
Landowners should be paid for the upkeep of existing rights of way
Landowners should only have payments for access if they fulfil their responsibilities regarding existing rights of way on their land. Routes for cyclists and horse riders as well as pedestrians, to avoid roads, and improve existing networks, should be a priority.
Maintaining existing footpaths is a public benefit, there is not always a requirement for new or improved access if it already exists and is being used. All paths require maintenance whether it is arable or grassland and take productive land out of production. If the focus is public money for public goods, existing footpaths do this already, there is no need to re-invent the wheel!
Major capital costs should be funded from elsewhere, otherwise it will dilute the already reduced support to farms for food and conservation. I'd rather see ELM money go to a rewilding project than a car park and toilets.
Many farmers have tried to help with improving educational access for years, giving time and effort. Larger organisations are clever at putting monetary value on time, assigning project managers and getting grant funding, but often those who are really able to deliver do not get funding, or not at the level deserved. They put in the time and squeeze it into their day, which may mean farming suffers on visit day due to lower farm staff levels. A realistic payment and link with facilitators may help this to change. I think using ELMs to help could be excellent, but important that it it realistic and managed carefully.
Much around access is linked to education and respect - not widening footpath and trampling crops if it is muddy or walking over margins/stewardship features. For us it would be preferable to make additional permissive access seasonal - perhaps closed during the shooting season when it is wettest. I think general public do value access (many think they already have a right to roam) but don't want to pay-per-use like a parking ticket, having it as an ELM Option is a good idea since it is a public good not catered for by the market.
Needs to be dealt with at a local level so as to engage support from farmers

Parking is often a problem in semi urban countryside. Landowners should be given easier planning to have somewhere to park
Payments should be made for existing footpaths, need for maintenance, fencing signage etc. Plus increased risks from crop damage, litter, stock worrying, trespassing, hare coursing, fly tipping, Neospora (10% of our closed herd now testing positive with Neospora.) We've over 5000m on 400 acres with 25 gates/styles, costs for livestock farmers with footpaths magnified. We're providing a public good at our expense, without BPS why would we encourage people onto existing paths?
Please do not use ELMs as a mechanism to financially punish those land managers who do not want to see increased access on their land.
Please don't exclude horse riders from your plans!
please remember mobility & disability equal access - so we can all benefit
provide information boards that educate the public about crops growing in the fields that footpaths pass through
Public access to safe off road routes particularly important for horse riders as they have access to such a low percentage of public rights of way.
Question 5: not clear whether this implies payment for statutory duties which should be being done without payment. This questionnaire seems too narrow & biased with a focus on educational visits. What about identifying those user groups who are desperately crying out for better access to get off busy roads, such as horse riders & cyclists, rather than try to reach other groups who do not, or may not want, to visit the countryside - trying to be politically correct.
Remain very concerned that there will continue to be an overemphasis on access for walking only. We need bridleways and cycle tracks for save horse and cycle use, not just footpaths. Also remain very concerned that routes will not serve a strategic role - i.e. how do they fit in with ROWIP priorities, do they link in with existing rights of way, do they a fulfil wider social need, for example safe link to take horse riders and cyclists off a busy section of road, links between communities or safe routes to school. Such routes should clearly be prioritised. Delivery of circular routes from the urban fringe should be another priority area - routes that are inaccessible, or likely to only be accessed by people as a result of a car journey, should be disincentivised.
Sadly, if Defra are not extremely careful this will allow for an increase in hare coursing and deer killing from which we suffer enormously here in Oxfordshire and the surrounding counties. It's of no use claiming the police can handle this, they are so "thin on the ground" it is an impossible task for them!
Schools should teach young students the countryside code, so they understand the basic side of looking after the land they are walking over.
Seating under cover
The current footpaths cannot cope with the current quantity of people using them. if this number is to increase proper surfaced tracks need installing. perhaps the PROW system could be changed to include different grades of footpaths and only the surfaced ones encouraged to expand their numbers
The funding should go direct to Farmers/landowners. As soon as you include facilitators land agents will try to scaremonger farmers into attrition.
The key issue is ensuring that the visiting public are well educated regarding the "Countryside code". We have a footpath across our land. The majority of walkers are fine but there are those

who cannot read a map, do not keep dogs on leads and leave gates open.

The minority will make the whole process difficult to manage.

Will Farmers who already work from dawn to dusk have additional time available to manage the process of guided walks etc?

It is important to get to a position where British Farmers are paid the right price for the quality produce that they bring to market and are not undermined by cheap imports of dubious quality.

The one thing not mentioned that I would be keen to provide through ELM would be open access to an area. In my particular case a grass field on the edge of the village which would be wonderful for the village to and local area to walk in. I would willingly turn it into a private park, plant lots of trees, encourage wildflowers, mow paths and provide some benches. It would mean removing most of the stock for most of the time and would require a decent financial payment both for the initial capital works and also annual management and for the opportunity cost of what I could have used the field for.

Free parking is also a big issue for access in some areas and this should be considered as a public good to be paid for

This questionnaire is unhelpful as it is leading and will not give a true reflection of farmer responses

We are happy to provide guided access which is prebooked because we know how to approach our cattle and enjoy showing them off. More unguided access to our farm would create problems for us about safety, security (e.g. closing gates properly and uncontrolled dogs) and possibly rubbish

We had HLS access which we embraced with enthusiasm - we believe that to encourage support for the protection of the countryside it is vital that people are able to explore and discover how lovely it is. Sadly, our permitted footpaths, whilst enjoyed by many, have been abused. Dog walkers do not follow 'dogs on leads signs' and dogs were often seen chasing after ground nesting birds and hares, trampling wildflower mixes etc. Our wildlife began to suffer. Rather than keeping to the permitted access, walkers viewed the entire field as accessible and began using the perimeter as a dog walking circuit, pulling down 'no access' signs. The easy access encouraged poachers; we've chased 5 men and their dogs from the land several times and our hare population plummeted. At the end of our HLS scheme we decided to close our most troublesome access but, despite giving walkers plenty of notice that the footpath would close, we've received very angry telephone calls telling us that we have no right to close a footpath and (despite me trying to calmly explain it wasn't a public footpath) they insisted on walking it anyway. The closure was reported to the council and our local MP (needless to say they've been kind and supportive once they discovered it wasn't a public footpath). As someone who has encouraged walkers and tried to make a special place for their route, I have found the negativity very difficult.

Access to the countryside is important but it needs to be managed so that our wildlife doesn't suffer. Perhaps farmers could be offered the option of a dog-free footpath (dog walkers think 'dogs on lead please' only applies to dogs that aren't as well behaved as theirs). A farmer needs to be able to manage access to the footpath more - so that if difficulties arise it's easier to close it for a time. Lastly it needs to be very clear that the walker is there at the farmer's invitation. The general public don't understand 'permitted access' and see access to the route as 'their right'.

We've been terribly disappointed and a bit embarrassed that we've closed this lovely walk. It would be nice if the difficulties we've faced could be addressed in a new ELMS scheme.

We need all the general public to develop an enhanced understanding of access to the countryside. Most farmers and landowners welcome people into the countryside but there has to be a respect of farmers and their staff, crops and wildlife. We too often see a grass field being used as a public "park" with picnicking, wandering all over sledging etc. Without any realisation that the grass field is a crop providing food and winter forage. Education and developing understanding and respect will be key to the access issue for everyone.

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We should encourage Farmers with poor land (not Suitable for Farming for profit) to be helped and paid to be able to promote their land for public access

We strongly believe that if farmers are rewarded for access to their property, and grants to create walkable paths to suit impaired people and create more natural wilding plants, wildlife, ponds, waterways to encourage the return of nature for everyone!

We would prefer to see existing routes upgraded than to see new routes created, the public can put the countryside at risk if measures are not taken to protect it - fly tipping, poaching, dogs worrying livestock, setting fires, wild camping and leaving rubbish are all common in areas with public access.

What happens when the scheme ends? We provided a permissive circular walk under a previous scheme. At the end of the scheme we closed it as costly to maintain. We still find people walking it using old maps and guidebooks. It has not been maintained and parts are now potentially hazardous.

Whilst payments for enhanced access are a good thing, this should not result in the reduction or monetisation of existing access rights.

With only 22% of rights of way in England and Wales being Bridleways and byways, what we really need is for more footpaths to be upgraded to Bridleways/restricted byways to enable more of the countryside open to all - walkers, disabled users, horse riders and cyclists. This would also help more people to access more of Countryside on their doorstep and help with active travel routes/get the people out their cars. If the existing right of way system was funded correctly the same as Sustran routes then people would find them more easily accessible and you would not need to guide people.

1. You have omitted payment amounts, a questionnaire like this is pretty useless without that knowledge. Payments in the past have been a pittance.
Payments in the past e.g., HLS Educational access have not kept up with inflation and become almost valueless, need to be index linked.

2. Countryside Code gets a one liner mention last paragraph section 7, typical of attitude!
Needs prominence, Job of a facilitator should be to educate the public in it before they even set foot in the countryside, which is also a workplace.

3. Countryside code should be revised before landowners will allow access, particularly the control of dogs. With the upsurge of dog owning the countryside footpaths are being used as a dog lavatory and Elms should provide educational notices and Dog excrement bins which councils have a statutory duty to empty.

Dogs must be on a short or long leash not only in stock fields but where there is wildlife to harass. No landowner will permit access where dogs can run amok.

4. Car Parks and toilets should be fully funded by Elms that includes maintenance.

5. Why is an amenity building such as a Farm shop refused if one has a carpark and toilet facilities? National Trust has cafes and shops, seaside and local council car parks charge, country parks charge and have ice cream kiosks and N.T car parks make you pay for parking, why are farmers and landowners to be excluded? The cafes bring in more revenue than the facility itself. Besides which people appreciate refreshment.

6. Elms should pay for refuse bin emptying and maintenance if they want picnic benches etc