

# Enhancing Access Opportunities Test & Trial Final Report



Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

March 2021



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The Kent Downs AONB Unit would like to extend thanks to all of the farmers, land managers, landowners, access professionals and other groups that have helped us to co-create this Test and Trial.

Particular thanks are due to Maxwell Ayamba (Sheffield Environmental Movement) for his help with the literature and evidence review and to all the farmers who took part in case studies and the worked examples.

We would also like to thank The Sensory Trust, Kent Wildlife Trust, BTF Partnership, Naomi Betts and Helen Theobald for their contributions as contractors.

We recognise that public access to the countryside can be an emotive and contested issue, but at the same time, is the element of the new Environmental Land Management payments that could offer the greatest benefit to public health and well-being if we get the investments right. We have sought to be inclusive and balanced in our approach and base it on the evidence before us. We have been and remain open to all views. Our ambition is that this report provides a positive intervention in the important work of Defra to include public access into the schemes that reward environmental benefits.

Front cover image of Ranscombe Farm, Medway © Plantlife

# Contents

1	Executive summary .....	4
2	Definitions and Acronyms .....	8
3	Introduction .....	9
3.1	Background .....	9
3.2	Research questions and other aims .....	13
3.3	Key themes relating to Enhancing Access Opportunities .....	14
4	Methodology .....	16
4.1	Workshops .....	16
4.2	Case studies .....	17
4.3	Literature and evidence review plus recommendations .....	17
4.4	Mapping exercise .....	18
4.5	Legal and insurance liabilities .....	18
4.6	Costings .....	18
4.7	Questionnaire .....	18
5	Results and discussion .....	20
5.1	Can schemes help address unequal levels of access to greenspaces by different demographic groups? .....	20
5.2	Can schemes provide enhanced access to the countryside and greenspaces? ....	23
5.3	Can schemes help to divert access away from the most sensitive sites? .....	26
6	Conclusions .....	29
7	Appendices .....	34
8	References .....	36

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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 Executive summary

## Background

Enhancing access to the environment is an important ‘public good’ that the Government seeks to secure through Environmental Land Management, indeed access could be the element of the schemes which offers the greatest benefit to public health and well-being if we get the investments right.

While all parts of society should benefit from enhanced access, there is a long-standing recognition that there are inequalities in those who do benefit and many, sometimes substantial, barriers remain to greater inclusion in access to the countryside. Barriers exist both before communities and individuals wishing to access and engage more with the environment and before farmers and land managers who might offer more access and engagement. This Test and Trial sought to understand these barriers and provide evidence to recommend effective and practical ways to overcome them.

Public access to the countryside can be an emotive issue; the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted this more than any event in our recent history with numbers of people visiting the countryside reaching record levels and, at the same time, barriers to access being impossible to overcome for others. The evidence is clear that carefully considered, targeted, good quality, inclusive public access to the countryside is needed now more than ever.

Although this Test and Trial was initiated a year before the Covid pandemic struck the events of this momentous year have properly and inevitably shaped the research questions, the responses that we have received and our findings.

The results are positive. The ways we might enhance access and overcome the barriers to enjoying access and engagement are often broadly the same as the ways to overcome the barriers to providing new access opportunities. Improving access and engagement can be good for everyone.

Environmental Land Management provides a once in a generation opportunity to enhance public access to the environment in a way that provides substantial benefits to more diverse people as well as for farmers and land managers.

## Research Questions

This Test and Trial attempted to answer three fundamentally important questions.

### **1. Can schemes provide enhanced access to the countryside and greenspaces?**

- a. What are the barriers to farmers and land managers to take up and how can they be overcome?
- b. To what extent could schemes pay to overcome these barriers.

2. **Can schemes help address unequal levels of access to the countryside and greenspaces by different and more diverse demographic groups?**
  - a. Where is access to the countryside and greenspace needed most?
  - b. What actions can overcome the barriers to those that are most under-represented in the countryside and greenspaces?
3. **Can schemes help to divert access away from the most sensitive sites, for instance those of nature conservation interest?**

## Methodologies

To try and answer the research questions the following activities took place:

1. **Workshops** with farmers, land managers, access professionals and representatives of communities that access the countryside less than others. These workshops allowed people to speak freely about barriers to providing access or taking up access opportunities and how these barriers could be overcome.
2. **Case studies** were carried out with 26 farmers, land managers and access professionals to explore the research questions in more detail and examine how proposed actions might be applied on the ground. This included five example farms with costed actions.
3. A **literature and evidence review** was carried out to identify which communities experienced most inequality of access and why this was the case. It also made recommendations about how this inequality could be addressed, some of which could be incorporated into schemes that reward public goods.
4. In order to establish if it was possible to prioritise where actions should be targeted, a **mapping exercise** was carried out using GIS software. This used publicly available, national datasets to identify areas where population densities are highest, pressure on public access is highest and where communities that access the countryside least often are located.
5. A report on the **legal and insurance liabilities** faced by farmers and land managers when providing permissive access was commissioned.
6. Finally, a **questionnaire** was distributed to farmers and other stakeholders asking for feedback on the actions that the Test and Trail is proposing.

## Results

The workshops, case studies and questionnaire all showed similar results. Whilst farmers and land managers were concerned about some of the issues that providing public access created, many were positive about the prospect of providing enhanced access if the payment rates provided enough of an incentive. In the questionnaire, 73% of respondents stated that they would either 'possibly' or 'definitely or almost certainly' provide permissive access through a scheme that rewards environmental benefits.

The literature review and the workshops both showed that extensive progress needs to be made to address the levels of under-representation in the countryside of some groups and that schemes that

reward farmers and land managers can play an important part in this. However, it requires innovative, inclusive thinking and a departure from some of the standard actions in agri-environment schemes. Third party facilitators and champions are required to form links between under-served groups and farmers so that those people who most need help to access the countryside are connected to those best placed to deliver those access opportunities. This work provides compelling evidence both for a need for a step change in approach and the huge opportunity that the new scheme payments provide to respond to historic, systemic inequality in access to the countryside.

All of the evidence gathered from these research methods were used to create a series of **access actions** that could be offered to farmers and land managers through the schemes. These actions address the research questions and include:

- Creating access plans for a land holding as part of a management plan;
- Providing permissive access routes where appropriate;
- Enhancing the quality of existing routes to make them more appealing to users;
- Supporting the creation of access hubs;
- Supporting an enhanced educational access programme;
- Providing community facilitators and champions to help connect communities to access opportunities, support land managers and promote responsible access to the countryside;
- Provide non typical payments for instance to support travel and equipment where this is an important barrier to access;
- Promote access opportunities as well as encouraging safe and responsible access.

## 10 Key findings:

1. There is an appetite for providing permissive and enhanced access amongst farmers and land managers but the intervention rates need to be at a level that provides an incentive to do so.
2. Improving access can be good for everyone – farmers and land managers might benefit at least equally to those enjoying the access, this might be through new payments, diversification opportunities, overcoming problematic access and overcoming social exclusion are examples.
3. There are barriers to access for some people including physical, economic, societal and perceptual barriers. Some of the barriers to greater diversity and inclusion are built into language, systems and governance; they are institutional and this should be recognised in order to effect change.
4. Investment in enhancing access should not only be for areas of land or length of path but for the intensity of benefit to the recipients, for instance small areas of land can provide transformational benefit for very troubled or traumatised people. In other areas simple changes (like short connections between public rights of way) can have a high level of benefit for low investment.
5. Facilitators and community champions can work directly with those communities that access the countryside least to help address access inequalities. They can help ensure that

educational access paid for through schemes reaches those that need it most and support farmers and land managers to provide well thought through welcoming access and engagement arrangements.

6. Investments should be long-term; it can be more damaging to have short run potentially token projects that achieve some benefit then drop away; this is as true for farmers and land managers as it is for those experiencing access inequality.
7. Educational access can achieve considerably more than it does under Countryside Stewardship but the focus should be on engaging with people and communities that have limited experiences of the countryside.
8. Providing new access should not be mandatory for farmers and land managers – it should be taken up where it makes sense to do so and farmers and land managers are willing to engage. Advisors and convenors should encourage farmers and land managers to become involved in target areas where it will have the greatest impact if schemes are to provide value for money.
9. Land management plans should include access plans and identify opportunities to divert access away from ecologically or otherwise sensitive sites. This could be either by providing alternative routes or improving the quality of surfacing to encourage use in less sensitive routes.
10. The concerns that farmers and landowners have about anti-social behaviour and that permissive access may lead to claims of rights of access must be addressed explicitly in order to give confidence in providing additional or enhanced access.

## 2 Definitions and Acronyms

Word or Acronym	Description or Definition
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Farmers and land managers	Farmers, or farmers and land managers is used in this document as a catchall term for farmers, landowners, land managers and other individuals or organisations that may be eligible to take part in schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods.
GIS	Geographical Information System
Minority ethnic groups	This term will be used in this report, in line with Government Guidance, rather than other terms such as BME or BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) which are often used in literature. Studies have shown that these acronyms are not well understood and can be contested or excluding to some minority ethnic groups.
PROW	Public Right of Way
Schemes	This term is used to reflect all of the different schemes that may reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods or schemes that reward environmental benefits. Specifically, these refer to the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery.
T&T	Test and Trial for schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods.



## 3 Introduction

### 3.1 Background

Schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods is described as the cornerstone of the government's new agricultural policy. Public engagement with the environment is one of the headline 'public goods' that farmers and land managers may be paid for by these schemes. This Test and Trial provides evidence as to how this objective can be met in a way that is beneficial to farmers and land managers as well as target publics.

Access to the countryside and greenspaces is an emotive subject. The Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in the UK have simply served to emphasise this point as record numbers of people exercised in greenspaces. Large numbers of people accessing honeypot sites and unprecedented levels of access on private land have been well documented in the press. This shows not only how much people value access to the countryside but also the pressures that increased access can place on farmers, land managers and landowners and the landscape itself as not only more people, but people who don't usually access the countryside descend upon greenspaces.<sup>1</sup>

Schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods have the potential to work with farmers, land managers and landowners to provide not only more access to the countryside, but access of a higher quality, targeted to areas where it is most needed and directed towards those that would benefit from enhanced access the most. These opportunities are the focus of this T&T. Access options were available in Higher Level Stewardship but were removed and are no longer available as options within Countryside Stewardship. This T&T provides the evidence to strongly suggest that this decision should be revisited and provides recommendations as to the issues which need to be addressed to justify their inclusions. The T&T also examines whether educational access (that is still part of Countryside Stewardship) can play an enhanced role in enhancing access to the countryside.

Perhaps most importantly, this T&T was designed to look at how schemes can address inequality of access to the countryside. Figures from Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment<sup>2</sup>, which has tracked people's use of greenspaces consistently shows that use of greenspaces is lowest amongst minority ethnic groups and those with the highest levels of deprivation. Workshops actively engaged members of those groups that are underrepresented in the countryside and a literature review of access inequality was conducted as part of the T&T. In combination, this work provides compelling evidence for a need for a step change in approach and the huge opportunity that the new scheme payments provide to respond to historic, systemic inequality in access to the countryside.

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

<sup>1</sup> The Guardian – The worst of human nature: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/14/uk-staycations-countryside-coast-visitors-trail-of-destruction>

<sup>2</sup> Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Headline report 2019: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/828552/Monitor\\_Engagement\\_Natural\\_Environment\\_2018\\_2019\\_v2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828552/Monitor_Engagement_Natural_Environment_2018_2019_v2.pdf)

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)<sup>3</sup> and 84% of farm holders and 83% of farm managers are male (Defra, 2016)<sup>4</sup>.

Although the original plan was to run all of the workshops in Kent and in person, the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions were put in place a week before the first workshop was due to take place. Consequently, all workshops were held online using online meeting software. Moving workshops online didn't prevent the T&T from reaching its target levels of participation. However, it is felt that the move to online workshops had three positive consequences:

- A wider range of participants were able to take part including representatives of national access inclusion groups.
- When workshops are held online it tends to be easier to prevent the louder and more vocal members of the group from dominating meetings. The discipline required to prevent people from talking over one another has this welcome secondary effect.
- There were cost and expected carbon emissions benefits to this approach.

### **Data supporting the need for the Test and Trial**

The tables shown in this section are taken from the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment report from 2019. Figure 1 shows that the number of visits to the natural environment annually has increased by over a billion in the last ten years. This is likely to have jumped further in 2020 following the national lockdown triggered by the Coronavirus pandemic. Interestingly, the number of countryside visits has remained fairly stable with the biggest rises in urban greenspace visits. Figure 2 shows a further breakdown of the places visited and actually shows a reduction in the number of visits to farmland and woodland in the ten years up to 2019.

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<sup>3</sup> The two sides of diversity: <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-two-sides-of-diversity-2.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Agricultural labour in England and the UK: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/771494/FS\\_S2013-labour-statsnotice-17jan19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771494/FS_S2013-labour-statsnotice-17jan19.pdf)

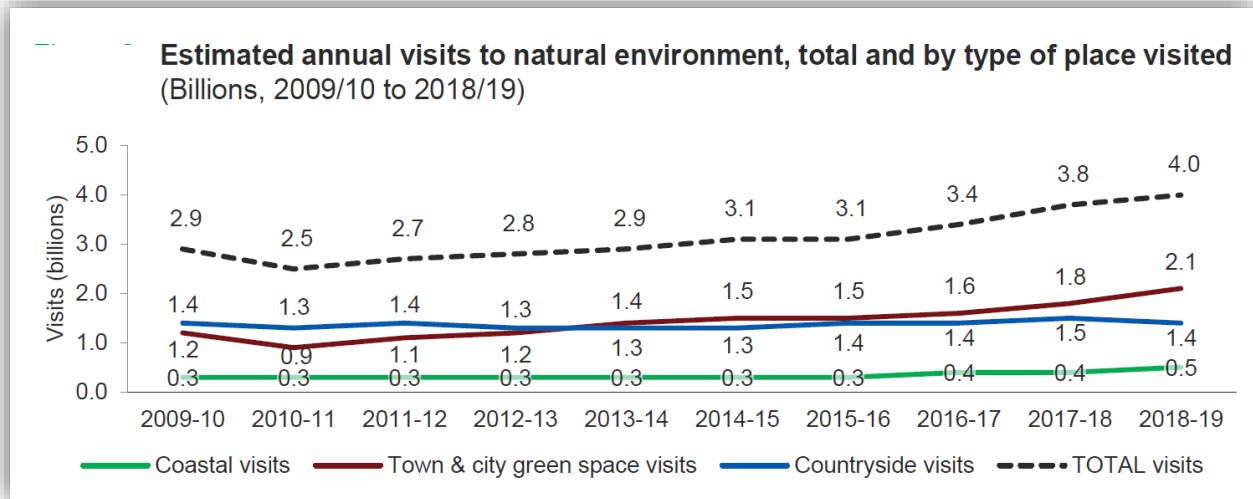


Figure 1: Annual visits to the natural environment - Source: Natural England

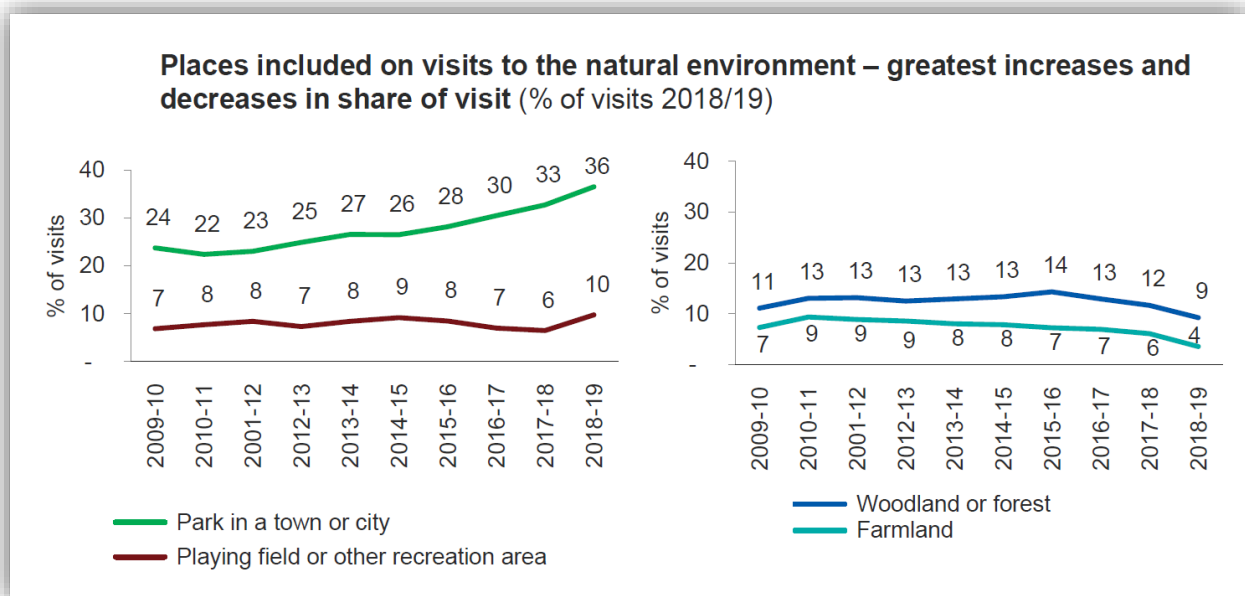


Figure 2: Percentage of visits to different location types - Source: Natural England

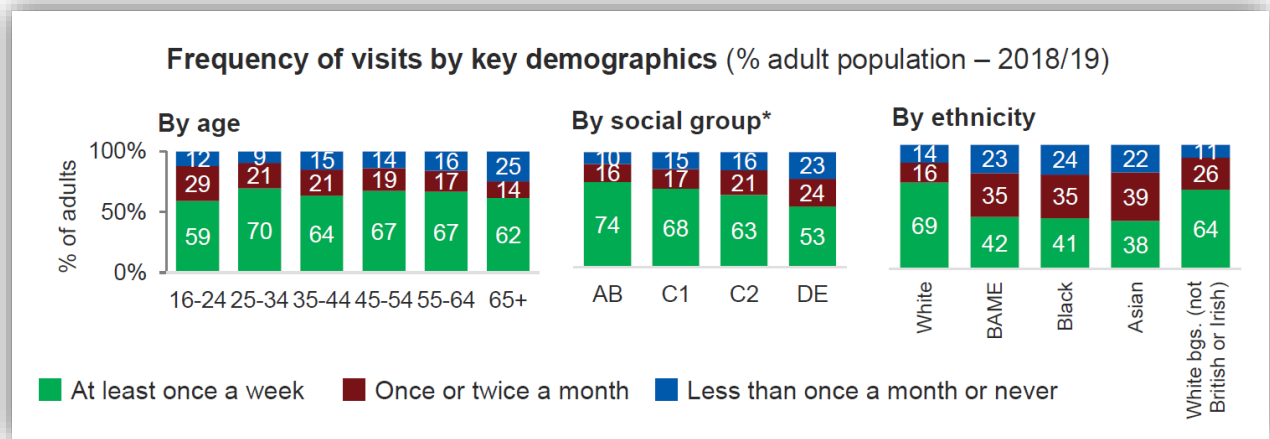


Figure 3: Visits by key demographic groups - Source: Natural England

Figure 3 shows that access to greenspace is disproportionately enjoyed by people that are ethnically white and from socio economic groups A and B. The T&T's literature review cited a number of reports showing this inequality of access. Schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods represents a once in a generation opportunity to use public funding to help farmers and land managers to make the countryside more welcoming to all in a way that is beneficial to them as well as the participants and supported by evidence. Finally, one of the reasons that this T&T is so pertinent to the Kent Downs AONB Unit is that inequality of access is, if anything, exacerbated in protected landscapes as shown in figure 4. The Landscapes Review<sup>5</sup> (Glover, 2019) highlights this as one of the key issues that protected landscapes must address.

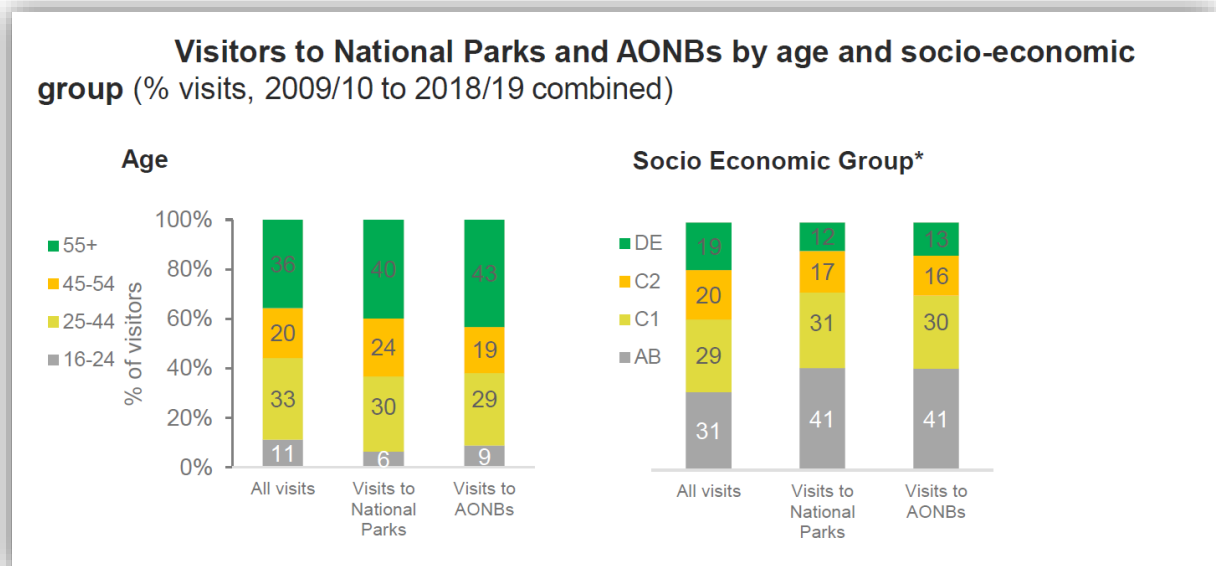


Figure 4: Age and socio-economic group of visitors to protected landscapes - Source: Natural England

<sup>5</sup> The Landscapes Review:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf)

## 3.2 Research questions and other aims

The T&T has three key research questions, two of which have sub-questions. These are:

### 1. Can schemes provide enhanced access to the countryside and greenspaces?

- a. What are the barriers to farmers and land managers to take up and how can they be overcome?
- b. To what extent could schemes pay to overcome these barriers?

This question was designed as a means of addressing whether there was demand from within the farming and land management community for payment for access enhancements and what might stop people from taking up these opportunities. All of the farmers and land managers that attended the workshops had been impacted in some way by the Covid-19 pandemic and the additional pressures this has put on access to the countryside. These range from litter and irresponsible dog walkers to thefts, criminal damage and physical threats to those that challenge behaviours. These barriers need to be acknowledged and at least addressed to a some extent for farmers to consider additional or enhanced access to their land. Equally, research centred around what kind of access infrastructure represents public benefit and what might be expected to be part of the running costs of a business. For example, paying for the provision and subsequent management and maintenance of parking spaces near a well-used public right of way could be seen as a public benefit but car parking that forms part of a retail outlet on a farm may not.

### 2. Can schemes help address unequal levels of access to the countryside and greenspaces by different and more diverse demographic groups?

- a. Where is access to the countryside and greenspace needed most?
- b. What actions can overcome the barriers to those that are most under-represented in the countryside and greenspaces?

When access is enhanced, the benefits of the improved access opportunities are not shared equally amongst all members of society. This has long been cited as an issue for public funding of farming and as long ago as 2003 the Countryside Agency<sup>6</sup> remarked that, “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 related agri-environment funding.” Sadly, in 2021 these issues are still with us and this research question will examine ways in which those communities that do not access the countryside can be encouraged to make visits and where this effort most needs to be focussed.

### 3. Can schemes help to divert access away from the most sensitive sites, for instance those of nature conservation interest?

High levels of access can damage delicate ecological or heritage features. This T&T research question aims to establish whether providing alternative permissive access or by enhancing alternative routes to make them easier to use can provide an alternative to visiting sensitive areas, whether this is throughout the year or just at particularly sensitive times (e.g., bird nesting season).

<sup>6</sup> Capturing Richness: Countryside Visits by Black and Ethnic Minority Communities:  
<http://nepubprod.appspot.com/file/292683>



The impact of disturbance on ground nesting birds from site visitors is well documented and other habitats such as chalk grassland and vegetated shingle are also sensitive to excessive trampling.

### 3.3 Key themes relating to Enhancing Access Opportunities

There are six overarching themes laid out by Defra for the T&Ts. These have been supplemented by six strategic objectives put forward by the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) as part of the Farming for the Nation group of T&Ts. Table 1 shows how the Enhancing Access Opportunities T&T contributes to each of the themes and strategic objectives. The NAAONB strategic objectives are in *italic*, while Defra themes are in roman text.

Table 1: Mapping themes, aims and T&T outputs

Theme/ <i>strategic objective</i>	Questions addressed during the research
Land management plans / <i>Integrated management plans</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is planning at a farm level essential to manage access?</li> <li>• Who should be responsible for writing plans?</li> <li>• Is there a need for a standalone access plan as part of the land management plan?</li> </ul>
Advice and guidance / <i>Testing guidance &amp; indicators for success</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What guidance and advice is needed to establish need for permissive access or educational access?</li> <li>• How does the provision of enhanced access through schemes provide public goods as outlined in Defra guidance and the 25 Year Environment Plan?</li> <li>• What mechanisms can be used to engage under-represented groups?</li> </ul>
Spatial prioritisation / <i>AONB Management Plans as strategic spatial frameworks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does provision of enhanced access require spatial prioritisation?</li> <li>• How is evidence of need established?</li> <li>• Which demographics are under-represented in the countryside and how can they be engaged?</li> </ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can land holdings work together to provide an integrated, connected network of good quality access to local and target communities?</li> </ul>
Payments / <i>Monitoring, verification and trigger payments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What measures are appropriate to trigger payments for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permissive access?</li> <li>• Enhanced access?</li> <li>• Educational access?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How will facilitators of engagement with the countryside be identified. Recruited and given targets?</li> </ul>
Innovative delivery mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What mechanisms can schemes use to connect farmers and under-represented groups?</li> <li>• What mechanism can be used to encourage under-represented groups to use the countryside more?</li> </ul>



- How can schemes provide training, education and interpretation to recipient farmers and land managers and beneficiaries of access?
- How can the provision of enhanced access address some of the barriers to participation of farmers and land managers?

It should be noted that this T&T is looking specifically at one area of on-farm activity rather than an element of the delivery mechanism for schemes. Consequently, the research questions do not easily fit into the themes laid out by Defra. Instead, the research questions posed and the evidence collected during our research cuts across multiple themes and strategic objectives.

Long-standing permissive access near Canterbury, Kent





## 4 Methodology

Central to the ethos of the tests and trails is the need to co-create proposed actions with the farming and land management community. Taking this one step further, it was also felt that access organisations and groups representing those that are most excluded from the countryside should also play a central role in the T&T and shape the eventual outputs. To these ends, the following methodology was used to gather evidence for the research questions.

### 4.1 Workshops

The main technique used for gathering information from farmers and other interested parties were workshops. Due to the restrictions on travel and meeting in groups in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all of the workshops were held using online meeting software. It was not felt that this had a detrimental impact upon the workshops and had the added advantage of being able to invite participants from across the country as well as those that may not have been able to attend because of physical or other disabilities. There were two different audience groups that were invited to workshops. All workshops lasted for two hours. This was felt to be the maximum amount of time people could reasonably be expected to engage using online meeting software. Several follow up conversations were held where this was requested.

Table 2: Summary of workshops

Group – date - attendees	Workshop themes/key questions
<b>Group 1</b> Nature conservation land management organisations, outdoor education/therapy providers and groups under-represented in the countryside. <i>3 workshops (March to July 2020)</i> 24 attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to new schemes and the T&amp;T</li> <li>• What are the barriers to people accessing greenspace?</li> <li>• How do we overcome these barriers?</li> <li>• Are there priority areas?</li> </ul>
<b>Group 2</b> Farmers, landowners, land managers, land agents and other members of the farming community. <i>3 workshops (September to December 2020)</i> 38 attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to new schemes and the T&amp;T</li> <li>• What are the barriers to providing additional and enhanced access and how do we overcome them?</li> <li>• What sort of enhanced access should be provided?</li> <li>• How can we ensure the right audience is reached?</li> <li>• How should the scheme be administered?</li> </ul>
<b>Group 1</b> <i>1 workshop (December 2020)</i> 17 attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on proposed access-based actions</li> <li>• What are the barriers to take up?</li> <li>• Is there anything missing?</li> <li>• Would you get involved?</li> </ul>
<b>Group 2</b> <i>2 workshops (November and December 2020)</i> 23 attendees	

Although invites were distributed widely the attendees were self-selecting and all would have had an interest in access related matters. Hence, they were not a truly representative sample of farmers. However, the diversity of viewpoints that were expressed suggested that a wide range of different groups had been engaged. Most of the farmers had been involved in either Higher Level Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship though some had not renewed options when their agreements expired. A significant minority were not involved in agri-environment schemes and were opposed to permissive or enhanced access on their land.

## 4.2 Case studies

Case studies were used to gain an in-depth insight into individual farms or organisations, the impact of public access, how an access-based scheme might be of benefit to them and giving examples of where permissive access has been used to manage public access. The information for case studies was gathered primarily through in depth one to one interviews with the resulting text being reviewed by the interviewee. The case studies proved to be an excellent way of understanding the issues that are relevant to a wide range of potential scheme participants and visitors to the countryside.

A total of 23 case studies were created across the course of the T&T. These can broadly be grouped into four categories:

1. **Organisations (3)** – Three organisations or teams that have an interest in how people engage with the outdoors.
2. **Farmers and land managers (14)** – A range of discussions around access issues, where additional access might be acceptable, what scheme actions would work on the landholding and how permissive access has been used in the past.
3. **Educational access providers (3)** – Three inspiring examples of how educational access transforms lives from providing therapy through nature-connectedness to opportunities on community farms.
4. **Worked examples (3)** – Three examples of how the proposed scheme actions might be applied to land holdings.

## 4.3 Literature and evidence review plus recommendations

It was important to understand the range of people that are under-represented in the countryside, why they are not visiting the countryside and what can be done to overcome these issues. This issue is not new and a review of literature and evidence was undertaken to help inform some recommendations to help address inequality of access. The bulk of the report was compiled by the Sensory Trust but significant contributions to the review were made by Maxwell Ayamba of the Sheffield Environment Movement and Madeleine Hodge of the Kent Downs AONB Unit. The final report and recommendations were refined by project staff. This collaborative approach ensured that a wider range of sources, knowledge and experience could be drawn upon and that the overall report was therefore a balanced review of the evidence available.

## 4.4 Mapping exercise

This GIS-based exercise in Kent and Medway that used publicly available datasets, most of which are replicated across other counties in England. The techniques deployed involved identifying areas where:

- Opportunities to access greenspace were lowest;
- Population density was highest;
- Activity levels were lowest;
- Levels of deprivation were highest;
- Percentages of demographic groups that accessed the countryside the least were highest.

Once these areas had been identified, either a two or four kilometre radius was drawn around them to highlight the areas that might benefit most from enhanced or additional access routes. This work took place in February and March 2020.

## 4.5 Legal and insurance liabilities

Providing enhanced or permissive access as well as educational visits to the countryside and Greenspace all have the potential to increase legal and insurance liabilities. Permissive access carries a higher level of legal responsibility than statutory access as people are invited onto land. BTF Partnership (a qualified land agency with special knowledge in this area) was commissioned to summarise the additional liabilities that farmers were likely to face by taking up access-based actions. As well as this, they estimated additional liabilities that might occur as a consequence of allowing permissive access such as litter clearance and additional tree safety work. Finally, a case study estimating the costs of providing permissive access on an estate in West Kent was undertaken. This work was carried out in summer 2020 and amended, based on feedback from workshops in January 2021.

## 4.6 Costings

Work was carried out to investigate what level of payments would be required to provide an incentive for farmers and landowners to participate in the schemes. Kent Wildlife Trust were contracted to estimate costs of providing a variety of access enhancements as well as provide costings for employing community facilitators. This data was then used, in conjunction with evidence of increased legal and insurance liabilities to provide some indicative payment rates for access based actions within schemes.

## 4.7 Questionnaire

Finally, in order to receive some quantitative feedback about how the farming community and others feel about the actions proposed by this T&T, a decision was made to send a questionnaire to everybody who had been involved in the project as well as a wider audience. This questionnaire asked closed questions that either required a yes or no answer or a score out of ten. This allows for a degree of feedback on how positive farmers and others interested in access feel about the proposed actions. A final open question was also included to allow detailed feedback for those that wished to. 122 people completed the questionnaire. A link to the form, which was distributed in February and March 2021, can be found here: <https://forms.gle/iXoV7SFd6WohVZJKA>







## 5 Results and discussion

The results for this T&T will be grouped by research question rather than by research method. It is felt this will allow for the most coherent narrative. Ultimately, this will most effectively present what is felt to be a strong case for resources to be diverted towards some exciting access opportunities.

### 5.1 Can schemes help address unequal levels of access to greenspaces by different demographic groups?

The introduction section of this report shows that there is an issue with certain demographic groups not accessing greenspace as much as others. The literature review that was commissioned by the T&T attempted, amongst other things, to identify which groups faced barriers to accessing the countryside. It then went on to establish what the barriers to accessing the countryside are and how these can be overcome.

#### Why is there unequal access?

A number of different groups are under-represented in greenspaces. For some groups there is more evidence available concerning the reasons why they don't access the countryside. However, this report will focus on barriers that cause unequal access and identify ways that these barriers can be overcome without assigning the barrier to a specific group.

These reasons are based on both the literature review and from responses received at workshops. The results are, due to the nature of the subject, qualitative in nature and reflect consensus opinions. More detail can be found in the Literature and Evidence Review ([appendix VI](#)) and the workshop reports (appendices I, II and III).

The groups that are least represented in the countryside are shown in Table 3. It should be noted that these groups include large cohorts that access the countryside regularly. The reasons for not visiting the countryside cut across groups and those that access the countryside least may be members of more than one of the under-represented groups.

#### Access issues currently addressed by cross compliance within Basic Payment Scheme

One of the elements of cross compliance (GAEC 7b<sup>1</sup>) was to ensure that all public rights of way were kept open and accessible. Both the Kent PROW and Access Team and the Ramblers raised this as one of the key achievements of BPS in interviews and felt that it was an important reason that the vast majority of PROWs are accessible to the public. Both were concerned that the one the threat of loss of BPS payments was removed the level of compliance to this obligation might drop in some instances.

It is important that compliance is addressed and some have suggested that the same cross compliance should be an obligation of any scheme application.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guide-to-cross-compliance-in-england-2020/gaec-7b-public-rights-of-way>

*Table 3: Demographic groups that are under-represented in the countryside and most cited reasons for level of engagement.*

Group	Example reasons identified
<b>People with disabilities and health issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not being able to physically access sites. (Sensory Trust, 2020)<sup>7</sup></li> <li>• Health restricting mobility either permanently or temporarily.</li> <li>• Mental health issues limiting activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Older people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability, health and social isolation may limit use of countryside.</li> </ul>
<b>Young people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of opportunities to visit.</li> <li>• Dependence on adults to visit.</li> <li>• Other priorities</li> </ul>
<b>Women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of attack, especially if visiting alone and to urban fringe sites, esp. woodland (Burgess 1995)<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Minority ethnic groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple and complex reasons. (Evison, 2013)<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Perceptions of rural areas and communities.</li> <li>• Institutional racism. (Macpherson, 1999)<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Lack of diversity in rural areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Economically deprived groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often urban-based with less access to transport.</li> <li>• More likely to have health issues. (Marmot, 2020)<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• Costs associated with access, clothing, transport etc.</li> <li>• Other income-based priorities</li> </ul>

## What are the solutions to unequal access?

Whilst access to the countryside by different groups will always vary, it is important that those barriers that are exacerbating unequal access are removed. This T&T identified the barriers to access, the ways of overcoming them and where schemes could be used to assist this process. Table 4 (overleaf) outlines the barriers to the countryside that were identified in the literature review and at workshops as well as some of the solutions that have been proposed. Finally, an indication of whether schemes could play a part in removing a barrier is made. The recommendations that are derived from this table will be detailed in the conclusions section. Some of the recommendations may equally apply to several of the identified barriers but for brevity are only included once in the table.

<sup>7</sup> By all reasonable means: Least restrictive access to the outdoors:

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/uploads/documents/ByAllReasonableMeansEnglandAug2020.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Growing in confidence: understanding people's perceptions of urban fringe woodlands:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5167122832424960>

<sup>9</sup> Kaleidoscope: Improving support for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to access services from the natural environment and heritage sectors: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4631369804152832>

<sup>10</sup> The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/277111/4262.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Fair Society, Healthy Lives – The Marmot Review: <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pdf.pdf>

Table 4: Barriers to accessing the countryside and recommendations for overcoming barriers.

Barrier	Recommendation	Scheme Action *
<b>Perceptions of the rural experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop outreach activities to bring the countryside to communities.</li> <li>• Develop inclusive volunteer and apprenticeship opportunities.</li> <li>• Create a diversity of opportunities to engage with the countryside.</li> <li>• Target community facilitators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5, 6</li> <li>• BTS</li> <li>• 5, 6</li> </ul>
<b>Attitudes to diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify membership of governing structures.</li> <li>• Establish networks of landowners and training courses to share best practice.</li> <li>• Use community facilitators to build links with under-represented communities.</li> <li>• Commit to diversifying recruitment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BTS</li> <li>• 7</li> <li>• 6</li> <li>• BTS</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise creation of good quality access where it will have the most impact.</li> <li>• Use scheme payments to provide subsidised transport for people facing economic hardship.</li> <li>• Develop community and volunteer transport to provide low-cost opportunities to access greenspace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2,3 &amp; 4</li> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 6</li> </ul>
<b>Physical barriers to access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to least restrictive access principles.</li> <li>• Review site accessibility as part of Land Management Plan.</li> <li>• Support inclusive toilet provision, including Changing Places facilities and non-gender-specific toilets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2,3 &amp; 4</li> <li>• 1</li> <li>• 4 &amp; 7</li> </ul>
<b>Personal safety concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage community facilitators to foster links between groups and farms/sites.</li> <li>• Support measures to promote real and perceived safety (e.g., group walks, clear signage)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 3,4 &amp; 6</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate successful inclusive opportunities and learn from established best practice.</li> <li>• Establish health-based interventions such as green social prescribing to provide opportunities to visit and enjoy greenspaces.</li> <li>• Prioritise creation of good quality access where it will have the most impact.</li> <li>• Support group specific activities (not just school visits) such as dementia groups, foreign language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 &amp; 6</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 2,3 &amp; 4</li> <li>• 6 &amp; 7</li> </ul>
<b>Communication and information barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop more inclusive information to reflect more diverse cultural interpretation of the countryside.</li> <li>• Require that communication materials reflect and welcome the full diversity of people.</li> <li>• Deliver training for farmers and others providing educational access to the countryside.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7</li> <li>• 3,4 &amp; 7</li> <li>• 7</li> </ul>

\* Action proposed by this T&T detailed in the conclusions section.

BTS Beyond the scope of this report or not possible for schemes to deliver this recommendation.

## 5.2 Can schemes provide enhanced access to the countryside and greenspaces?

The evidence used to answer this question comes from a variety of sources. Primarily, the views of the farming community and other landowners were sought in a series of workshops and in-depth interviews used to create case studies. Although largely qualitative in nature, these comments and case studies provide a compelling narrative to support this report's recommendations and reflect both the frustrations that are felt by landowners and land managers who provide public access as well as the desire amongst many to share access to their land and help people learn about their work.

### What are the barriers to providing access?

The first farmers' workshops were held just as the first Covid-19 lockdown was being lifted in June 2020. The increased numbers of people exercising in the countryside put pressure on the access infrastructure like never before. The Kent PROW and Access team report that their pedestrian counters recorded an increase of between 300% and 1000% in this period. Although some parts of the network coped well, others became over-burdened and were unable to cope with the numbers of cars and people (many of whom were unfamiliar with the countryside and the countryside code). Consequently, there was a lot of discussion about the barriers to providing further permissive or enhanced access. These will be grouped for the purposes of this report.

**Antisocial behaviour.** There were a wide-range of behaviours that started with increased trampling of crops, dropping of litter and parking across gates in order to gain access. Others mentioned access compromising farm activities such as spraying, the impact of dogs, particularly on livestock but also disturbing wildlife that has been encouraged back on to the land, often with the help of agri-environment schemes. Others noted that using least restrictive access sometimes encouraged off-road vehicles to enter land. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, multiple farmers reported legal access being used as a cover for illegal activities such as hare coursing and casing farm buildings prior to thefts taking place. Many reported suffering abuse when challenging those that were on land without public access.

**Payment rates.** The cost of providing permissive and enhanced access was raised as an issue during interviews and at workshops. Consequently, it is important that any payment rates provide sufficient incentive for farmers and landowners to take part. This T&T has attempted to provide indicative payment rates for the proposed actions. These are informed by a case study found in the Legal and Insurance Liabilities document provided by BTF ([appendix V](#)) as well as work carried out by Kent Wildlife Trust to cost specific interventions and the provision of facilitators ([appendices X](#) and [XI](#)).

**Practical and administrative barriers.** Numerous farmers, including several who had provided permissive access through Higher Level Stewardship, noted that it can be difficult to prevent people from accessing land once permissive access is withdrawn. Consequently, agreements need to be long-term to help negate this issue. Numerous farmers were concerned that the cost of providing and effectively managing permissive access (both in time, money and inconvenience) would not be reflected in any scheme payments. Payment rates must incentivise the provision and subsequent management of additional access or uptake may be low.

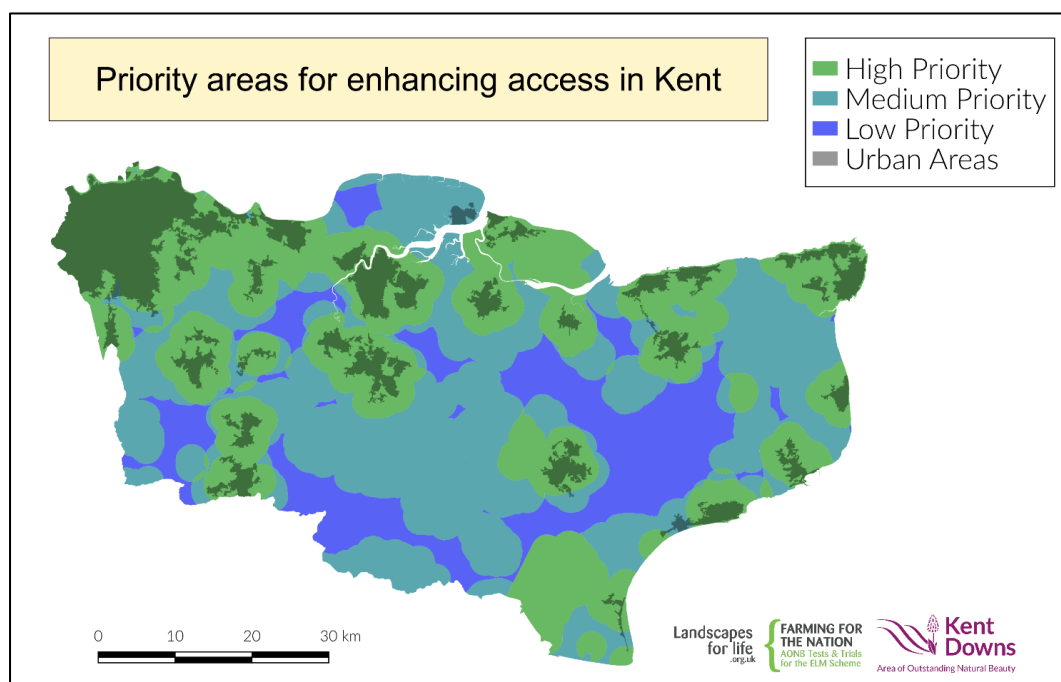


**Legal and insurance liabilities.** The liabilities of landowners who allow permissive access on their land is higher than those who provide statutory access through the PROW network. The BTF Partnership was commissioned to report on the additional costs and liabilities that were incurred by permissive access. This full report can be found in [appendix V](#). As well as noting the potential for increased insurance premiums, the report also detailed the costs involved in ensuring that permissive access was safe which may include tree surveys and remedial works. It also noted that permissive access must be notified as such to avoid statutory status being claimed at a later date. A number of farmers also stated that they were concerned about the legal liability and impact on relationships with local communities of having cows in areas with permissive access.

## Where should access be created?

The T&T used interviews with access professionals and farmers as well as creating mapping using readily available datasets. One of the criticisms of permissive access when it was included as part of Higher Level Stewardship (Powell et al, 2012)<sup>12</sup> was that often it was rarely used, particularly in more remote locations, and that people often didn't know it was available. Consequently, the value for money that it represented was relatively low. Where permissive access was used most was on the rural/urban fringe.

*Map 1: Prioritised areas for enhanced access interventions in Kent*



All local authorities have a Rights of Way Improvement Plan that addresses the kind of improvements to access that are needed. Whilst they lay out the criteria for improving access, most don't actually pinpoint access routes that should be created or enhanced. Publicly available datasets were used to identify areas that might benefit most from enhanced access in Kent. The datasets used were available across England so the processes are easily replicable. A series of maps were created by

<sup>12</sup> Higher Level Stewardship Permissive Access Evaluation, Report to Natural England: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6777029>

prioritising access interventions in areas in and around the populations that are most under-represented in the countryside. Full details of the processes carried out can be found in the mapping report ([appendix IV](#)). The resulting map of Kent shows areas where access enhancements are likely to positively impact the people who are least likely to visit the countryside.

## What kind of access improvements are favoured by farmers?

The workshops and case studies allowed farmers and other land managers to indicate the kind of access enhancements that they would be most likely to support and which factors were most likely to encourage take-up of the proposed actions. Table 5 shows the most popular responses from the workshop attendees and in-depth interviews. More information about the access improvements requested by farmers and other participants can be found in the workshop reports (appendices I, II and III) as well as the case studies ([appendix XII](#)) and example holdings ([appendix XIII](#))

### Questionnaire results

The questionnaire received 122 responses. Of those that responded, 73% would either ‘definitely or almost certainly’ or ‘possibly’ provide permissive access through a scheme. This rate jumped to 90% when considering enhancing existing access and was at 87% when considering educational access. The questionnaire also gave farmers and land managers the opportunity to comment on the provision of access in general. The comments here reflected those that were given at workshops and in interviews with concerns around anti-social behaviour, the levels of payment as well as how schemes such as this would be monitored and administered. The full results of the questionnaire can be found in [appendix VII](#).

Table 5: Factors influencing farmer take-up of enhanced access actions.

Issue	Comments
<b>Payment rates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This was the issue that was raised most often. Unless payment rates are significantly higher than during Higher Level Stewardship many said they would not participate.</li> <li>Payment rates must do more than just cover costs, otherwise there is no incentive to provide additional or enhanced access.</li> </ul>
<b>Permissive access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should provide an income as well as a useful route.</li> <li>The concept of being paid for routes where trespass is already common was popular amongst many.</li> <li>Creating routes that allowed off-road access to local people (e.g., school routes) were popular.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhanced access (furniture, surfacing)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some feel that this can be used to divert access away from sensitive areas.</li> <li>Can be used to improve statutory routes (above statutory requirements) where they are popular.</li> <li>Good and consistent signage was seen as important by many.</li> </ul>
<b>Access hubs (parking, toilets etc.)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many feel this is the best way to provide new opportunities to those who don't normally access the countryside.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some feel that infrastructure that is then charged for or near retail outlets should be supported.</li> </ul>
<b>Educational access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many attendees at workshops were keen to provide educational access on their farms or landholdings.</li> <li>Many wanted educational visits to be more in depth, allow multiple visits and to cover more groups than just schoolchildren.</li> <li>Establishing a framework that allows innovative and transformative access to under-represented groups was favoured.</li> <li>Many saw educational access as the best way of establishing good behaviours amongst future generations of countryside visitors.</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitators (linking farms to under-represented groups)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Largely popular amongst respondents. Seen as an important step in connecting farmers to under-represented communities.</li> <li>Also popular amongst access practitioners and those advocating for under-represented groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Issues around access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple farmers stated that they were keen for the Countryside Code to be promoted more effectively and many wanted it to be reintroduced into the school curriculum.</li> <li>There was criticism of the Highways Act (1980) from several farmers and the difficulty of moving existing PROWs was mentioned. Permissive access may be viewed more positively if this was addressed.</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Can schemes help to divert access away from the most sensitive sites?

The work of this T&T allowed people to make comments during in-depth interviews and workshops. However, whilst the potential impacts of access on sensitive environments was mentioned regularly, solutions were not often discussed. There were several notable exceptions that are listed below.

1. The National Trust noted how successful their access path at White Cliffs had been in reducing damage to chalk grassland. The new formal path not only allowed access for people with limited mobility to the best views of the iconic white cliffs but also established a single route which has reduced braiding and enlargement of the previous routes used.
2. Elmley National Nature Reserve, which is managed by the farmer/landowner) has also used the construction of good quality access (boardwalks) to divert public access away from the most sensitive bird breeding areas of the farm.
3. Kent Wildlife Trust see one of the solutions to perceived open access at reserves is to create good quality access paths that focus public access to certain areas. It is also felt that fencing and good quality, consistent may be necessary to allow access but protect the most sensitive areas.
4. A Natural England advisor noted that some of the areas adjacent to ecologically sensitive areas were also sensitive and attracted wildlife because there was currently no access. Care must be taken to ensure that additional access doesn't inadvertently impact on other sensitive areas.



# Case Study – Nonington Farm

Nonington Farm is a 400-acre LEAF demonstration farm in East Kent. The farm is largely arable but they also graze some sheep. Sustainable land management is at the heart of the business. Public footpaths, bridleways and the North Downs Way run through the farm. Although the farm does suffer from some trespassing it is felt that these issues can be reduced by having good quality signage both showing where people are allowed to go and letting people know more about the farm. Education is key to the aims of the farm and education visits as well as guided walks are carried out as often as possible.



## **In an ideal world, what could be achieved under schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods?**

The farm would like to do a number of things that might fit into any access-based actions. These include:

- Add a permissive path to the mill and providing a self-guided walk around the nearby fields. This would complement a visitor centre and retail outlet for flour ground at the mill and would allow people to have a day out at the farm.
- Additional signage boards that let people know about the work the farm is doing for the environment.
- Adding farming to the national curriculum and a mechanism for sharing lesson plans.
- The opportunity to run educational sessions to more groups and to have provision to work with classes that have special educational needs.
- To purchase a minibus to be shared with nearby farms to provide transport for groups that need assistance getting to the farm.
- The session rate has just been raised to £290 and this more accurately reflects the costs of delivering sessions than the previous £100.
- Capital payments to provide additional resources for educational sessions.
- Run more sessions than the current maximum.
- Would love to see Rural Ambassadors who would meet groups at a local railway station and help guide people through the countryside. Would be excellent for groups under-represented in the countryside.



Well-used permissive bridleway provided in Thanet, Kent, initially as part of a Higher Level Stewardship scheme.





## 6 Conclusions

This T&T provides a convincing case for the allocation of funds to access-based enhancements for the public good and it is felt that the evidence base has identified a number of priority areas. Evidence has been obtained from farmers, access professionals, groups under-represented in the countryside as well as those that provide educational opportunities. By necessity, much of this evidence is qualitative. This work has been backed up by a comprehensive literature review, a questionnaire to ascertain levels of support for proposed actions, a review of legal and insurance liabilities and a wide range of participants were invited to workshops and in-depth interviews. Consequently, there is a high level of confidence that the recommendations made are both based on the best evidence available and reflect the majority views of T&T participants. The draft recommendations used in discussions with farmers, land managers and other interested groups can be found in [appendix VIII](#) with the full refined recommendations that were agreed after a series of workshops can be found in [appendix IX](#) and are summarised in table 6 at the end of this chapter. The recommendations are a combined response to the three research questions and it is not felt that each question should lead to actions that stand alone. However, before the summary table, the recommendations for each of the research questions will be examined.

### **Can schemes help address unequal levels of access to the countryside and greenspaces by different and more diverse demographic groups?**

The literature review and the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment data indicates that there are still groups of people that are under-represented in the countryside. The reasons for this are complex and varied. Not all of them can be addressed by schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods, but there are a number of recommendations that will help to address inequality of access.

**Permissive Access** – The provision of permissive access in a strategic manner can make a big difference to communities. It must be provided in areas where it is needed, such as the urban fringe and where people want to exercise or it must address fragmentation in the network.

**Enhanced Access** – Improved surfaces and using the least restrictive access principles will ensure that physical access to the path network is enhanced for groups with limited mobility. The clear and consistent signage that will also form part of this action will help to give confidence to those who are beginning to explore the countryside and may be unsure of where they are allowed to go.

**Access Hubs** – Places that are well known by local communities, have good facilities and are welcoming to visitors are important to build confidence in those that are beginning to visit the countryside and can provide alternatives to sites that are currently over-visited. This level of investment must be justified and whilst the public benefit is clear, there is a need to show that each investment goes over and above what can be supported by the market.

**Supported and educational Access** – The provision of high-quality sessions that are responsive to the needs of individuals or groups that are under-represented in the countryside can provide transformational experiences. A high level of public benefit can be achieved in a relatively small area of land and payment should reflect the intensity of public benefit and not only the length of new path or number of stiles replaced with gates.

**Facilitators and community champions** – Facilitators and community champions can provide that vital link between farmers and communities that are difficult to establish without knowledge based external intervention. Facilitators can provide support for groups to visit farms that may extend to

helping cover transport costs or other appropriate support in some instances. Community champions will be representatives from within a community that encourage and provide opportunities to visit the countryside and greenspaces. Scheme payments can support the actions of these people.

**Training and publicity** – Providing training and support for farmers and people who will be delivering education can give them the confidence to deliver sessions to diverse groups of people. Good publicity for permissive access routes is essential if they are to be used by people other than those already active in the area. Where possible, this information should be available on mass mapping platforms such as Google and Bing.

### **Can schemes provide enhanced access to the countryside and greenspaces?**

The workshops and case studies have shown that schemes can provide enhanced access opportunities. Although part of this involves creating additional permissive access, the emphasis is to create new access only where there is a demonstrable need or benefit; it should be targeted. Enhanced access that allows people to access the countryside more easily and innovatively, inclusive engagement programmes where access will both be welcomed and well used. In some cases, relatively small interventions such as connecting two fragmented parts of the PROW network, creating a coherent network on the urban fringe or replacing stiles with gates can result in significant public benefits.

By giving farmers and other landowners control over where access is provided or enhanced on their land, scheme actions will be beneficial to farmers, provide additional capacity to the access network where it is needed and provide public benefits. By allowing farmers to both make an income from providing access and by receiving payments for formalising access to routes where trespass is already commonplace, it is felt that these actions have the potential to be popular amongst scheme applicants.

One challenge that will be faced is how to prioritise actions. Spatial prioritisation will be addressed later in these conclusions but it is likely that there will also be a need to add an element of competition to the provision of educational access. By widening the remit for educational access both in terms of who can be the beneficiaries and who is able to deliver, an application process may be needed for those that intend to deliver a large volume of educational access. Facilitators would need to be appointed and this could be achieved by putting these roles out to tender.

### **Primary concerns of farmers and land managers**

The questionnaire results suggest that there is an appetite for farmers and land managers to provide permissive and enhanced access. However, this can't be taken for granted and the enthusiasm for take up of the scheme will depend upon the following concerns of those who engaged with the T&T.

- Payment rates need to be attractive enough to ensure that the benefits to the farmers and land managers outweigh the issues around provision of access.
- There is a strong feeling amongst the farming community that anti-social behaviour amongst users of the countryside needs to be addressed in order to make any access actions be attractive. Additional promotion of the Countryside Code is required.
- Some will never consider enhancing access.
- There is an opportunity for the schemes to address public education about responsible access and this will impact on the attitude to providing public access of many farmers and land

managers. Currently many feel that they are being left to deal with increases in public access without any support from government.

- Farmers and land managers would also like more flexibility and quicker response times to requests for changes to PROWs in return for providing enhanced access on their land.
- It must be explicit and guaranteed in scheme agreements that at no point can rights of access be claimed where permissive access is granted.

### **Can schemes help to divert access away from the most sensitive sites?**

There is the potential to use scheme actions to divert access but the evidence collected suggests that this needs to be approached on a case-by-case basis following the identification of a need to divert access as part of the land management plan process. Examples from Elmley Nature Reserve show that by enhancing access on a preferred route, the amount of people using a more sensitive route, even if it has formal statutory access can be reduced. There are also examples of permissive access being used to encourage pedestrians to use better quality access rather than using statutory access that passes very close to farmhouses or through particularly sensitive crops that may be vulnerable to pests and diseases carried on the feet of walkers.

### **Spatial prioritisation**

The simple mapping exercise that was carried out as part of this test and trial shows that it is possible to use nationally available datasets to make decisions that prioritise the creation and enhancement of access routes. Whilst these criteria (which include proximity to urban populations and level of existing access to greenspace), can be used to help prioritise activities, local knowledge will always be necessary to make decisions about need on the ground. Ideally, a local Public Rights of Way team will be able to help prioritise access projects.

### **Capital works on permissive access routes**

A number of times during this Test and Trial the issue of receiving permissive access payments for cycle paths, multi-user paths and other routes that require significant capital investment. This puts capital investment at risk if the farmer or landowner withdraw permissive access. It would be preferable to allow capital expenditure on permissive routes, especially where this kind of collaboration could facilitate long-distance routes, cycle paths and other routes that require significant financial investment. A recent article<sup>1</sup> has highlighted how permissive access and capital works have been combined in Northern Ireland when a third party takes responsibility for costs and legal liabilities.

One solution, which often happens when statutory routes are created, is to make a payment to the landowner to compensate them for having the statutory route. Capital improvements can then be made without fear of permissive access being withdrawn.

A second possible solution that could be accommodated by schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods is to make permissive access payments for routes but for an agreement to be signed that obligates the landowner to provide public access for a minimum fixed term. Once this agreement is in place a third party (e.g. local authority, property developer through section 106 agreements etc.) would have the confidence to make capital investments in the route.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56378647>

Table 6: Summary of proposed scheme actions that enhance access opportunities.

Action	Detail
<b>1. Land Management Plans</b>  <i>Fixed payment per landholding</i>	<p>The production of an access plan for the landholding to inform a scheme application, created in collaboration with a suitably qualified advisor. Either a stand-alone document or part of a whole farm plan, the plan will identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible permissive access routes or routes that could be enhanced.</li> <li>• Opportunities for supported or educational access.</li> <li>• Who target audiences are.</li> <li>• Collaborative opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Create new permissive access</b>  <i>Annual per metre or area payment</i>	<p>Provide payments for the creation and maintenance of permissive routes. Also provide capital payments if fencing needed or hedgerow planting. The routes must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address fragmentation within the network or link to features of interest.</li> <li>• Create off-road routes that link to schools, shopping centres etc.</li> <li>• Create higher access (e.g. permissive upgrade to bridleway or cycle path from footpath).</li> </ul>
<b>3. Enhance existing access</b>  <i>Fixed one-off payments for specific items or annual payments for maintaining surfaces or features</i>	<p>Improving the quality of formal and permissive routes to increase usage and address barriers. All will follow the principle of least restrictive access and must be recommended in the land management plan: Could include a range of measures including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear, simple, consistent signage, replacing stiles and removing furniture altogether (recommend this is part of Sustainable Farming Incentive).</li> <li>• Create good quality access to attract footfall away from ecologically sensitive areas.</li> <li>• Enhanced surfacing, widening, interpretive signage that promotes inclusive access and parking/drop off spots.</li> <li>• Funding an access management and potentially wardening post for very busy times (possibly something a cluster of farms could apply for).</li> </ul>
<b>4. Access hubs</b>  <i>Either annual payments for agreed standards or one-off capital grants</i>	<p>Payments to support the provision of facilities that allow safe, easy access to greenspaces and the countryside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking and path infrastructure.</li> <li>• Support inclusive toilet provision, including Changing Places facilities.</li> <li>• Interpretation of work being supported by schemes.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Supported and educational access</b>	<p>Supported and educational sessions on farms and other landholding that promote understanding of farming, wildlife and the environmental benefits of schemes or to provide health and wellbeing public benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a base payment to plan lessons and purchase resources.</li> </ul>



<i>Payment per session and base payment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payments to run sessions.</li> <li>• Must work with facilitators to ensure a diverse audience is reached.</li> <li>• Paid training to help farms deliver sessions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Community facilitators and champions</b></p> <p><i>Centrally funded</i></p>	<p>Facilitators paid for with scheme funding to create links between under-represented communities and farmers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate sessions from groups under-represented in the countryside with farms offering sessions.</li> <li>• Work with communities to promote educational sessions and accessing the countryside.</li> <li>• Recruit and train community champions to encourage more access to greenspaces.</li> <li>• Receive a budget to support transport or other relevant (e.g., clothing) costs where the evidence shows this is needed and to facilitate innovative travel solutions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Online resources and promotion of best practice</b></p> <p><i>Centrally funded</i></p>	<p>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, inclusive and easy to use resources.</p> <p><i>Resources for landowners, farmers and land managers could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusivity training. How to communicate effectively with diverse groups.</li> <li>• Managing access on land.</li> <li>• An update of Countryside for All (a guide to making greenspaces more accessible to all).</li> </ul> <p><i>Resources for the general public could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about public rights of way and permissive access (through schemes at least) to be made freely available to all including Google, Bing and other map providers.</li> <li>• Promoted Countryside Code possibly within the national curriculum.</li> <li>• How to stay safe when out and about in the countryside.</li> </ul>



## 7 Appendices

A number of documents have been produced that have shaped this final report and give much greater detail than it has been possible to provide here. With the exception of appendices 1 to 3, all of these appendices are available online and can be found by clicking on the name of the appendix.

***Appendix I: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Workshop – March 2020***

***Appendix II: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Workshops – June 2020***

***Appendix III: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Workshops – November 2020***

These three documents contain notes from the nine workshops that were held to gather people's opinions about the provision of access and their responses to the draft actions that were proposed in November 2020.

**[Appendix IV: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Prioritisation Mapping – Kent](#)**

A short report examining how publicly available datasets can be used to help target areas where access to greenspace could be prioritised.

**[Appendix V: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Legal and Insurance Liabilities](#)**

An assessments of the costs incurred by farmers and land managers when providing permissive or enhanced access with a particular focus on legal liabilities and insurance costs.

**[Appendix VI: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Literature and Evidence Review and Recommendations](#)**

A comprehensive review of literature relating to inequality of access, the reasons for it and recommendations for addressing some of these inequalities.

**[Appendix VII: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Questionnaire Report](#)**

The full results from the questionnaire looking for responses to the proposed enhancing access opportunities actions.

**[Appendix VIII: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Draft Recommended Actions](#)**

A first draft of recommendations that formed the basis of discussions at the November workshops.

**[Appendix IX: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Recommended Actions Rationale and Payment Rates](#)**

A spreadsheet of finalised proposed actions based on feedback on the recommended actions. This also includes some costings for the actions and more detail about some of the issues raised at workshops.

**[Appendix X: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Cost Estimates – Enhanced Access](#)**

**[Appendix XI: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Cost Estimates – Facilitator](#)**

The results of costings work carried out by Kent Wildlife Trust to inform intervention rates.

**[Appendix XII: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Case Studies](#)**

**[Appendix XIII: Enhancing Access Opportunities Test and Trial Example Holdings](#)**

These two appendices contain 26 case studies. The majority are with farmers and land managers discussing access issues where they work and what they would like to see from schemes. There are also five example holdings where the proposed actions are applied to a specific land holding and some suggested payment rates are included.

## 8 References

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