

Rights of Way Use and Demand Study Countryside Agency



*Developing a method
to identify the
adequacy of local
rights of way*

The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to:

- conserve and enhance the countryside;
- promote social and economic opportunity for the people who live there; and
- help everyone, wherever they live, to enjoy the countryside.

In responding to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Agency commissioned Entec to research the current use and demand associated with public rights of way, and to develop a simple and cost-effective methodology which highway authorities can use to assess the adequacy of their networks.

Entec's approach included a survey of 1600 households throughout England to identify:

- the type of activities undertaken, including walking, running, cycling, horse-riding and off-road motor sports;
- perceived deficiencies in opportunities to participate in the activities; and
- the extent to which levels of use would increase if additional opportunities were made available.

Focus groups and case study investigations were used to develop and test alternative methods for assessing the adequacy of the network available to current and potential users.

The aim was to develop cost-effective guidance on how, if at all, the available network should be enhanced to ensure that it meets local needs and encourages enjoyment of the countryside for a variety of purposes.

The recommended approach included mechanisms through which specific local needs and influences could be incorporated. It will be tested by the Countryside Agency, in partnership with local authorities, in pilot areas during 2002/03. This will further develop appropriate techniques within the context of the statutory guidance on preparing Rights of Way Improvement Plans, which is expected to be issued in autumn 2002.

