

# The provision of access for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland

## Key Stakeholder Consultation

27<sup>th</sup> January – 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

***Sustainability** at the heart of a  
living, working, active landscape  
valued by everyone.*

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 The value of our outdoors

Northern Ireland has a mixture of extremely varied and beautiful lands and seascapes within a very small geographical area. Mountains, moorlands, forests, extensive inland waterways and a spectacular coastline all make up our local environment. Our towns and cities tend to be relatively small and therefore greenspace, such as hills, forests and parks are in close proximity to most of the people who live and work here. However, access to the natural environment is often restricted and the provision varies from area to area.

A recent survey\* identified that the benefits of spending time outdoors during the COVID-19 lockdown were significant. 84% of participants reported feeling physical health benefits and 90% reported benefits related to mental health and wellbeing. Benefits were strongest amongst people who visited the outdoors most often during lockdown and people with quality trails and greenspaces close to home. 51% of respondents expected to spend more of their free time outdoors than they did pre-lockdown. People would most like to be able to visit local parks, the countryside and coast, to walk on off-road trails and to spend time with family and friends. There was significant support for the development and improvements of walking and cycling trails.

\* Survey carried out by Outdoor Recreation NI in May 2020. The full report is available at <http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com/news/new-survey-highlights-importance-of-accessing-outdoors-safely-during-covid-19/>

Apart from health and well-being benefits, outdoor recreation contributes to Northern Ireland society in a wide range of areas, including social inclusion, community cohesion, environmental awareness, rural development and economic opportunities.

However, our natural environment is also a living, working and active environment with the majority of the land farmed and producing our food, drinking water and supporting livelihoods.

The development of the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland ([Our-Great-Outdoors-The-Outdoor-Recreation-Action-Plan-for-Northern-Ireland\\_SportNI-2014.pdf](#) ([outdoorrecreationni.com](http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com))) identified a need to review and initiate the development and consolidation of appropriate outdoor recreation legislation.

It is important that a suitable balance is struck between enabling public access to our natural environment, while protecting that environment and ensuring landowners rights.

### 1.2 Accessibility

Public access to land in Northern Ireland is more restricted than other parts of the United Kingdom. Land ownership in Northern Ireland is significantly different from the rest of the United Kingdom as most farms are of a much smaller scale, with a proportionately higher number of the population with land owning interests.

Although some areas of the countryside may have been used freely for recreation for many years, the public have no general rights to wander over open land, mountains, moorland, woodlands,

the foreshore, etc. However, many landowners tolerate access to their land without a formalised agreement.

Generally speaking, in Northern Ireland, **public access is restricted to:**

**a) Public Rights of Way;**

A Public Right of Way is “a highway which any member of the public may use as a right - not a privilege granted by the landowner”. It is a permanent legal entity and remains in existence until it is extinguished, or diverted, by due legal process. Detail on Public Rights of Way is available on NI Direct at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/public-rights-way>

**b) where the public have the landowner’s permission to visit;**

Local councils may make Permissive Path Agreements with landowners for people to use an agreed portion of their land, under agreed conditions, as a means to secure quality recreational access.

**c) areas of land which are in public ownership** and to which the public are invited to use;

Northern Ireland’s public land comprises of just over 6% of the total land area. This includes public land managed by:

- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), including;
  - Forest Service
  - NI Environment Agency (country parks, nature reserves etc.)
- Department for Communities (DfC)
- District Councils
- Loughs Agency
- Northern Ireland Water
- Waterways Ireland

Note: Permitted access to public land does not necessarily create a Public Right of Way.

## 2.0 Aim of this consultation

The aim of this consultation is to seek the views of key stakeholders on the current provision members of the public have to Northern Ireland’s natural environment for outdoor recreation, and investigate how provision can be improved, while protecting the environment and recognising the needs of landowners. **This consultation is not considering an overall “Right to Roam”, or the development of National Parks in Northern Ireland.**

Stakeholders identified for initial consultation include:

- Representative groups of those who use the outdoors for recreational purposes
- Representative groups of landowners / land managers
- Environmental groups

- Those who enforce related legislation

**A list of Key Stakeholders who have been invited to provide their views is provided at Annex A. If you feel we have omitted any significant group please contact us at the e-mail / address below.**

A broader public consultation is expected following the consideration of responses from key stakeholders.

Submissions should be:

e-mailed (preferable) to: [AccessforOutdoorRecreation@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:AccessforOutdoorRecreation@daera-ni.gov.uk)

or

hard copies sent to: Stephen Emerson  
RNRPD: Natural Heritage Policy Branch  
Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs  
Klondyke Building  
Cromac Avenue  
Belfast BT7 2JA

The closing date for submissions is **29<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

### **3.0 Alternative Formats**

On request, we can arrange to provide other formats of the documents above, such as -

- Paper Copy
- Large Print
- Braille
- Other languages

To request an alternative format, please contact us by one of the following methods:

e-mail (preferable): [AccessforOutdoorRecreation@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:AccessforOutdoorRecreation@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Write to: Stephen Emerson  
RNRPD: Natural Heritage Policy Branch  
Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs  
Klondyke Building  
Cromac Avenue  
Belfast BT7 2JA

Telephone: 028 9056 9432

Text Relay: If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via:

- Text Relay using the Next Generation Text Service (NGTS).
- Making a call from a textphone dial 18001 + number.
- Making a call from a telephone dial 18002 + number.

## 4.0 Your details:

We use this information in order to communicate with you if we need to clarify your response or for further communications.

Title (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Forename or initials Heather  
Surname Clatworthy  
Full postal address The British Horse Society HQ, Abbey Park, Stareton, Warwickshire  
Postcode CV8 2XZ  
Email address heather.clatworthy@bhs.org.uk

Are you responding as an:

a) **Individual**  / NO

If "YES", do you:

Participate in outdoor recreational activities? YES / NO

Please identify which \_\_\_\_\_

Own, or manage, land which the public may wish to use to facilitate outdoor recreation? YES / NO

Provide details (if relevant) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

b) **Organisation / Group** YES /

If "YES", does your organisation / group :

Participate in, or organise, outdoor recreational activities? YES /

Please identify which activities Equestrian

- Own, or manage, land which the public may wish to use for outdoor recreation? YES / NO  
Please identify the type of land (eg mountain, lowland farmland, woodland etc.) n/a

- Other (please state)

**Organisation / Group Details:**

- Organisation/Group name The British Horse Society
- Full postal address The British Horse Society HQ, Abbey Park, Stareton, Warwickshire
- Postcode CV8 2XZ
- Contact name Heather Clatworthy
- Contact email heather.clatworthy@bhs.org.uk; susan.spratt@bhs.org.uk
- Which category best describes your organisation (select one item)
  - Community organisation
  - Third sector / equality organisation
  - Landowner / land manager
  - Private sector organisation
  - Representative body for professionals
  - Local government
  - Community Planning Partnership
  - Public Body, including Executive Agencies, NDPBs, NHS etc.
  - Academic or Research Institute
  - Other (please state) Not for profit - Equestrian Representative

**Publication of responses - your permissions:**

We may wish to publish responses to this consultation, in summary and where possible in detail.

We would like your permission to publish your response:

Please select one item (Required)

- Publish this response with your name
- Publish this response without your name
- Do not publish this response

Type text here

Note that when we publish reports on a consultation, we do not publish your email or postal address or other information about you.

We may share your response internally with other Northern Ireland Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you. Are you content for Northern Ireland Government to contact you in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please select (Required)

Yes  No

## 5.0 Consultation:

**You are invited to respond to whichever of the following questions are relevant to you, or those who you represent. However, you should not feel obliged to respond to questions which are not.**

**Do not feel limited to the space provided. Please feel free to expand the comments boxes or attach additional pages if required.**

**PLEASE NOTE: This consultation is not reviewing specific sports in Northern Ireland, it is specifically looking at the provision of access to the countryside to partake in outdoor activities.**

## 5.1 Current Provision

Q1: Do you believe there is sufficient public access to the natural environment for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland?

YES /  NO

The Society represents 758 equestrian land based businesses, 736 in UK & Republic of Ireland with 22 overseas; and over 117,000 equestrian members in the United Kingdom and Ireland. We work proactively to facilitate and support safe off road access for both horse riders and carriage drivers. We protect and promote the interests of all horses and those who care about them, including the 3 million people in the UK and 46,799 people in the Republic of Ireland who ride or who drive a horse-drawn carriage.

There have been 4140 incidents reported to the BHS since 2010, 76% of these incidents were in rural areas and 89% of these incidents involved vehicles passing too close or too fast, or both to the horse. Last year there were 46 horses killed on rural roads, 118 horses and 130 riders injured as a result of a collision with a vehicle.

There are not enough safe places for equestrians to access in Northern Ireland. The vast majority of the equestrian population are therefore forced to use the road. Some hack to, or transport a horse to an access site such as a forest or beach however these type of sites are not readily or sufficiently available throughout Northern Ireland.

Ireland is esteemed globally for its equestrian industry and economy yet lacks the infrastructure to support critical sustainability and growth. The tourism economy relies heavily

upon “hacking out” and accessing safe off road places to ride, however this resource is very limited. Investing in the provision of equestrian routes will increase economic expenditure and tourism.

‘Direct expenditure generated by the core equine industry in Northern Ireland is estimated at £170m to £212m per year. The non-thoroughbred sector represents the large majority (£187m). While the thoroughbred industry makes up 12% (£25m) of the total expenditure, it accounts for only 6% of the equine population. The economic value of the equestrian sector, excluding racing, stands at £4.3 billion of consumer spending. There are 1.3 million regular riders in the UK’. **The Deloitte Analysis of the NI Equine Industry (2019)**

One of the key themes for further consideration included the ‘*need for development of additional infrastructure for accessible off-road routes and bridleways*’. **The Deloitte Analysis of the NI Equine Industry (2019)**

Equestrianism could be fuelled significantly by improving access infrastructure in Northern Ireland from visitors within the UK and Republic of Ireland and overseas.

‘The Irish Sport Horse Industry provides a major contribution of €816 million to the Irish Economy. The total national equine population was estimated in 2016 as 135,715’. **The Contribution of the Sport Horse Industry to the Irish Economy (2017)**

The benefits of countryside access and horse riding not only to physical health but also to mental health and wellbeing are well proven. Increasing and enhancing access supports the Government’s aims to connect people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing, particularly in more remote and rural areas.

The Covid -19 pandemic resulted in a vastly increased use of the outdoors for the general public and reenforced the need afresh for more access, and an improved infrastructure. During the Covid-19 pandemic 31% of adults increased the amount of time spent exercising outdoors and 83% of those said being in nature made them happy. DEFRA - The People and Nature Survey (2020). Current research globally is predicting that post Covid-19, demand for public access to the outdoors will continue to rise.

Additionally, with an increasingly urban society, an improved and enhanced rights of way system that encourages activities such as horse riding, and carriage driving provides vitally important opportunities to better connect the equestrian public with the natural environment and understand the critical work undertaken by farmers.

Equestrians therefore need more access to the natural environment for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland.

**Q2: Do you feel that Public Rights of Way are adequately identified to the public?**

Due to the historical evolution of the legal processes which protect Public Rights of Way in Northern Ireland, the many thousands of kilometres which once would have been frequently traversed by equestrians have been lost. Those routes would now be listed legally under Public Rights of Way as Bridleways or carriageways.

There is a staggeringly small amount of legal Public Rights of Way which include equestrian rights in Northern Ireland. A total of under 1% of the Public Right of Way Network in Northern Ireland provides access for equestrians. This is considerably less than neighbouring countries of England and Wales which make available 22% of the network, 5% of which is accessible to carriage drivers. The existing legislation does not enable users to easily claim a route which historically held equestrian rights, and to protect those rights for the immediate future. There is not therefore a legal process for the public to easily pursue to record such routes, (unlike in England and Wales with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Society fully supports any movement towards improving existing legislation to enabled equestrian rights to be restored to their true status and to be protected for future generations.

The majority of equestrians typically assume there are no Public Rights of Way holding equestrian rights where they live, other than the few who have some in their county. The general mindset of “We don’t have Bridleways in Northern Ireland” being based on a comparison of what equestrians had available historically, and is presently available in other countries.

The society welcomes any incentive designed to enhance and extend the rights of way network and the Society remains committed to the safeguarding of these public assets to ensure that equestrians, cyclists and walkers can continue to use safe off-road routes in the future. Existing Rights of Way holding equestrian rights and future rights of way should be promoted through the local authorities and equestrian bodies such as The British Horse Society Ireland to raise awareness of these routes, encourage responsible use and protection for the future.

Primarily for land owners/managers (however views are welcome from all participants):

**Q3: What difficulties have you encountered, or do you foresee, in establishing or managing public access through your land, or the land you manage?**

Case studies throughout the UK along with support and advice from user group representatives can provide reassurances to help establish and manage pilot access areas and multiuser routes to help establish and manage access provision.

We work collaboratively with partner organisations such as The Ramblers, Cycling UK, The Disabled Ramblers and others to ensure a cohesive approach to the provision of access on sites with responsible, shared use.

Primarily for land owners/managers (however views are welcome from all participants):

**Q4: What would encourage you to agree to public access through your land, or the land you manage, for recreational purposes?**

Whilst paying for access to land remains a last resort for The British Horse Society Ireland, we would support any means put in place by Government to financially support landowners encouraging and enabling them to provide and manage access to their land. The Higher Entry Level Stewardship Scheme provided this facility and was greatly successful throughout many sites in England and Wales. The Environmental Land Management Scheme is currently being developed by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to include the provision of access, as a public benefit, within the scheme. Any similar schemes to these would be welcomed and supported by The British Horse Society Ireland to improve access.

The justification for and benefits detailed. Knowing I am feeding into and supporting Government National and local plans to benefit my local community.

Financial reward where appropriate.

Reassurances on timescales of permissive agreements and sample agreements/templates made available.

Support in the research stage and any visibility study by both the local authority and user group representatives.

Support on sourcing insurance cover to enable public to access land.

Evidence and reassurances of similar case studies which are successful within the UK.

## **Public Land**

Northern Ireland's public land comprises of just over 6% of the total land area. This includes public land managed by:

- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), including;
  - Forest Service
  - NI Environment Agency (country parks, nature reserves etc.)
- Department for Communities (DfC)
- District Councils
- Loughs Agency
- Northern Ireland Water
- Waterways Ireland

**Q5: Do you believe that an adequate amount of public land is available for outdoorrecreational purposes?**

Of the public land available in Northern Ireland, it is greatly underutilised for all potential users which include equestrians. Some positive steps forward have been made through the Forest Service, ORNI and local authorities in recent months on providing multi users routes (including equestrians) and it is hope this will continue to grow.

There are many potential areas which could provide access, such as forests, disused railways, canal towpaths and public access land. Many of these are historical routes and could link to national trails. They also provide green corridors between communities. There is great public enthusiasm and support for the development of these types of routes (where it is possible), and additional funding available for these types of projects. Many case studies can be shared on successful outdoor recreation provision on these types of land. Landowners need an improved incentive and ability to dedicate or give permission for equestrians and fellow users to access land in Northern Ireland.

**Q6: How could existing public land be better used in relation to outdoor recreation?**

First and foremost, provision of off-road public access should aim to provide for all vulnerable road users and be free at point of entry.

Multiuser access (defined as including walkers, cyclists and horse riders) should be the aim for any new access development and where achievable on any existing developments.

Where necessary (due to geographical/structural restrictions), separate routes for users can be considered and provided.

Where necessary, if free public access cannot be achieved, and land owners and councils cannot achieve the creation of a public recreational facility (i.e a park, public forest, public beach or trail), then private agreements could be proposed.

Financial reward should be made available to encourage landowners to grant permissive access on field margins and agreed sections of land.

BHS Ireland therefore supports the development of a horse trail framework where other forms of public access are unachievable and does not threaten existing public rights of way in an area holding equestrian rights. Ideally such schemes would have agreements in place for a minimum of 5 years for the work entailed in development.

There have been 4140 incidents reported to the BHS since 2010, 76% of these incidents were in rural areas and 89% of these incidents involved vehicles passing too close or too fast, or both to the horse. Last year there were 46 horses killed on rural roads, 118 horses and 130 riders injured as a result of a collision with a vehicle.

It is therefore important that equestrians are included in new path proposals to enable horses to get off the road instead of having to share with vehicular traffic.

Primarily for public land managers (however views are welcome from all participants):

**Q7: What difficulties have you encountered, or do you foresee, permitting public access to the land you manage where access does not currently exist or where increased access is sought?**

Where access to land is negotiated, reassurances for the landowners on insurance matters can be problematic and hinder progress. Landowners should be supported and encouraged to dedicate or grant permission to access their land by Government.

Primarily for public land managers (however views are welcome from all participants):

**Q8: How could any difficulties identified in Q7 be reduced or negated?**

This can be achieved both through financial incentive, and reassurance of the availability of insurance which suits enabling access for the public onto your land.

Whether they do this on foot, bike or horse should not make a difference, the insurance implication is the same.

The local authority or relevant appointed body should support the landowner in route specification, infrastructure and management. Landowners should also be supported through increased education of the public in respect of responsible use at all times and the reinforcement of key messages in National Guidance such as The Countryside Code.

Landowners can be supported by following suit with other case studies based on land similar to theirs. Trial Periods can often give assurances and open opportunities.

## 5.2 Current Legislation

The **Guide to Public Rights of Way and Access to the Countryside: Guidance Notes on the Law, Practices and Procedures in Northern Ireland** is a practical manual, produced by the Environment & Heritage Service (now the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs), which aims to clarify the legal position in Northern Ireland, and the practice and procedures that should be followed.

The principle legislation relating to access to the countryside in Northern Ireland is **The Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1983/1895/data.pdf>) which deals with public rights of way and access to open country. It also identifies responsibilities on local councils and landowners.

**The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1985** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1985/170>) gives the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs powers to undertake a variety of roles for the enjoyment and conservation of the countryside and amenity lands.

**The Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1986/2232>) has been used by local councils to make Permissive Path Agreements with landowners for people to use an agreed portion of their land as a means to secure quality recreational access. A permissive path agreement can operate under limitations and can endure for whatever period of time the council and landowner are willing to agree. It does not create a new public right of way (where one did not already exist), but a route which the landowner has given permission for people to use.

**Questions 9 - 11 are aimed that those who have had cause to refer to legislation in relation to access issues, however views are welcome from all participants.**

Q9: How often would you refer to legislation in relation to access issues?

- Daily / Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- Rarely
- Never

Please feel free to comment below

As there are so few Public Rights of Way holding equestrian rights, and as the current legislation fails to protect routes claimed for the future, it is uncommon for the existing legislation to be referred to. If existing access was called into question or threatened, we would refer to it.

**Q10: Please identify any difficulties you have with current legislation and/or Guidance in relation to public access.**

Please be as specific as you can and identify which legislation and section you are referring to.

Please see response to Q2.

The existing legislation The Access to the Countryside Order (1983) does not protect existing equestrian access or enable historic routes to be claimed.

The Society would ask that the definition of 'Multi-User' be adopted holistically across all authority language to avoid misunderstanding of the term in public communications and future route development.

Multiuser access defined as including walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

**Q11: How could the issues raised in Q10 be resolved?**

Please be as specific as you can and identify which legislation and section you are referring to.

A change in legislation. Involving key stakeholders in the development of amended or new legislation moving forward.

Providing and supporting alternative means of providing access as highlighted, such as permissive access agreements.

## 5.3 Opportunities

### **Q12: How could the provision of access to the outdoors for recreational purposes be improved?**

A fit for purpose infrastructure of accessible routes for all should be delivered focussing on priority areas, and those which provide key links between existing off road access sites, therefore reducing the time spent on the road by vulnerable road users.

The needs of all users should be included, from both a local community perspective and potential visitor and tourism aspect.

Responsible use of access by all user groups should be communicated and promoted effectively.

Funding should be made available to user groups to help educate their members on responsible and safe use of outdoor recreation areas.

### **What have other jurisdictions done to improve access for outdoor recreation?**

Legislative changes in Great Britain over the past 20 years have increased the availability of access to the natural environment significantly. Under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, especially since 2005 people across England and Wales have the freedom to access land, without having to stay on designated paths. Approximately 8% of England and 20% of Wales is classed as 'access land'. In Scotland the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 established a right of non- motorised access over most land and inland water.

**The provision of a "Right to Roam"**, and the development of National Parks has previously been considered in Northern Ireland and **is not being considered as part of this consultation.** However some aspects of Scotland's Land Reform Act 2003 may provide the basis for improvement in Northern Ireland.

As a requirement of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, core path plans are drawn up by local authorities after consultation with communities, land managers and path users. **Core path networks** are interlinking routes that normally join, or are close to, communities. They are normally part of the wider path network of long distance walking and cycling routes, and local and community paths. Many Northern Ireland local councils have included the development of path networks in their current Community Plans.

**Q13: Do you believe that a Core Path Network would be a possible solution to improving access for outdoor recreation?**

The critical element for consideration of the term 'Core Path' should include the definition of users who can access and use them.

As Northern Ireland is not using the 'right to roam' solution as used in Scotland, and does not have the Public Right of Way Infrastructure of Wales and England, an alternative must be provided and supported. We would fully support the development of any Core Paths providing that where possible they are multi-user (this defined as including Walkers, Cyclists and Horse riders).

It should be considered that all routes are multiuser, unless there is a good reason to exclude particular users, at which point alternatives should be considered. A reason for exclusion could be that it is simply not safe to do so due to the environmental/physical restraints of a site. The British Horse Society Ireland is happy to provide advisory support on these sites.

Any new route development or 'Core Paths' ought to be Multi-User and include horse riders in both urban and non urban areas where appropriate.

Any new opportunity for 'open access' in less linear form such as coastal/forestry/moorland access should also be deemed as multi user and include equestrians unless it is not appropriate to do so.

**Q14: What would be the potential opportunities, benefits, or uses, of a Core Path Network in Northern Ireland?**

It would enable the improvement of the outdoor recreation infrastructure to begin far earlier than the timescale of waiting for significant change in the legislative system presently available for protecting and asserting public rights of way.

It could begin to help reduce the number of near misses, incidents and fatalities of vulnerable road users such as cyclists and equestrians by providing them with a safer alternative off road route or place to exercise.

Post Covid-19, it will support the general public in maintaining and improving their access and utilisation of the great outdoors in both urban and non urban areas. The benefits of countryside access and horse riding not only to physical health but also to mental health and wellbeing are well proven. Increasing and enhancing access supports the Government's aims to connect people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing, particularly in more remote and rural areas.

It will help secure a sustainable future for the health of the Northern Irish population, both through their own physical and mental wellbeing, and the economic boost such investment would bring through increased tourism.

**Q15: What difficulties do you foresee in establishing a Core Path Network in Northern Ireland?**

Lack of support for landowners to maintain routes to a suitably minimal or safe standard. This could be overcome through support by Government.

Inconsistency of application and management of access. Guides of good practice, design and specification guidelines should be issued by Government and adhered to.

Access should be free for all. Where any payments must be made to use a route (i.e a permit scheme), it ought to be applied fairly to all users.

Linear routes requiring numerous landowner dedication or permissive agreements could fail to come to fruition due to a minority refusal. Incentive and encouragement to feed into Government plans on a local level could help with this. Appointment of Outdoor Recreation Project Resource would oversee larger scale plans and aid consistency of delivery and communication.

**Q16: How could landowners be encouraged to provide access, through their land, to develop a CorePath Network?**

See Q7 & Q8

**Q17: What features would you like to see in a Core Path Network? (e.g. cycle lanes, circular routes etc.)**

Circular and linear routes with appropriate infrastructure for the users. Ideally all appropriate new routes should be multiuser and therefore include equestrians. A review of all existing access areas should be undertaken to identify all existing areas which could potentially be opened to horse riders and or carriage drivers.

Any routes that are suitable for equestrian access should meet the British Horse Society standard which is accepted and promote throughout the UK & Ireland and adapted with our support to each individual site. Examples of these standards and guidelines for landowners, planners and developers can be found here: <https://www.bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/free-leaflets-and-advice>.

**Q18: What other opportunities, in relation to the provision access for outdoor recreation, should be considered?**

The potential for equestrian tourism within Ireland is significant. The growth in equestrian recreation and “taking your horse on holiday” is growing annually. Currently access in Northern Ireland is limited to a small pockets of beaches and forests, without many linear or circular routes of great distance which are presently available to cyclists and walkers. Future aspirations of securing long distance routes should be a key aim for any outdoor recreation provider and with it would bring great opportunities for those along the route, such as those providing accommodation and services for horse and rider, and trail ride leaders. A popular recreation and successful business model.

## 5.4 Miscellaneous

Q19: Please feel free to provide further views on any aspect of the provision of access for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland

Submissions should be e-mailed (preferable) to: [AccessforOutdoorRecreation@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:AccessforOutdoorRecreation@daera-ni.gov.uk)

or hard copies sent to:

Stephen Emerson  
RNRPD: Natural Heritage Policy Branch  
Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs  
Klondyke Building  
Cromac Avenue  
Belfast BT7 2JA

The closing date for submissions is **29<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

## List of Groups invited to participate in “The provision of access for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland - Key Stakeholder Consultation”

If you feel we have omitted any significant group please contact us at  
[AccessforOutdoorRecreation@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:AccessforOutdoorRecreation@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Angling NI
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (Countryside Officers)
Ards and North Down Borough Council (Countryside Officers)
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (Countryside Officers)
Belfast City Council (Countryside Officers)
Belfast Hills Partnership Recreation Group
British Horse Society
Canoeing Association of Northern Ireland
Causeway Coast Adventure Racing (CCAR)
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (Countryside Officers)
Causeway Coast and Glens Outdoor Recreation Forum
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside
Cycling Ulster
Derry City & Strabane District Council (Countryside Officers)
Disability Action NI
Disability Sport NI
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council (Countryside Officers)
Horse Sport Ireland
Irish Kite Surfing Association
Irish Water Ski Federation
Leave No Trace Ireland
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (Countryside Officers)
Local Rural Support Networks
LVRP recreation forum
Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark
MENCAP
Mid and East Antrim Council (Countryside Officers)
Mid Ulster District Council (Countryside Officers)
Mountaineering Ireland
Mourne Outdoor Recreation Forum
National Outdoor Recreation Forum (NORF)
National Trust Northern Ireland
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (Countryside Officers)
NI Agricultural Producers Association (NIAPA)

NI Association for Mental Health (Niamh)
NI Environment Link
NI Greenways
NI Heritage Fund
NI Mountain Bike Alliance
NI Protected Area Network
NI Rural Women's Network
Northern Ireland Archery Society
Northern Ireland Federation of Sub Aqua Clubs
Northern Ireland Orienteering Association
Northern Ireland Sports Forum
Northern Ireland Surfing Association
Outdoor Industry Association (NI)
Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI)
Ring of Gullion Outdoor Recreation Forum
Royal Yachting Association (NIC)
Rural Action
Rural Community Network
Speleological Union of Ireland
Sperrins Outdoor Recreation Forum
Sport Northern Ireland
Strangford Lough and Lecale Outdoor Recreation Forum
Sustrans
Triathlon Ulster
Ulster Branch, Irish Amateur Rowing Union
Ulster Farmers Union (UFU)
Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs
Ulster Gliding Club
Ulster Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club
Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster