



Somerset Access and Inclusion Network (of  
Disabled People)

**For The Somerset Wildlife Trust**

Access to the Natural Environment for  
All Questionnaire - Summary

Managed by



**Compass Disability Services**

Pointing you in the right direction

## 1.0 Introduction

As part of the project to work with the Somerset Wildlife Trust to improve access to a number of the nature reserves in the area, the Somerset Access and Inclusion Network (SAIN) agreed to distribute a questionnaire to all of its members and have this information available at the One Somerset event on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

The questionnaire was modified from a copy provided by the Wildlife Trust. A copy is attached for information (Appendix 1).

### 1.1 Methods

599 questionnaires were sent in the post in standard print to SAIN members. 96 questionnaires were sent in Large Print.

A total number of 189 replies were received giving a return rate of 27%. The information was then entered onto an Access database in order to compile the responses.

## 2.0 Results

### 2.1 Reasons for not visiting the countryside

The first part of the questionnaire asked people to give their reasons for not visiting the countryside. Categories were given with examples alongside to clarify e.g. **Physical Access**, steps, steep gradients, stiles and gates, unsuitable pathways. We have identified each category below with the category receiving the highest responses at the top.

Reasons	No. of People
Physical Access	159
Facilities	135
Pre-visit and on site information	96
Staff at sites	82
Transport	74
Other Costs	46
Range of Activities	32
Confidence in the Outdoors	29
Lack of time	13

**Appendix 2** shows the other reasons given for not visiting the countryside such as lack of accessible toilets and no disabled parking.

### 2.2 Demographic Information

The age breakdown for responses was as follows;

**16-25** 1 (0.5%)      **46-65** 77 (41%)  
**26-44** 11 (6%)      **65+** 97 (51%)

Responses came from the following areas within Somerset;

<b>South Somerset</b>	51 (27%)
<b>West Somerset</b>	25 (13%)
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	31 (16%)
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	49 (26%)
<b>Mendip</b>	27 (14%)

82 (43%) indicated that they live in a Town and 65 (34%) live in a village. 5 people said 'other'; the remainder did not complete this section.

In response to the question concerning impairments/disabilities the following responses were received;

	<b>Number of people</b>
Physical Impairment	163
Visual Impairment	22
Hearing Impairment	45
Learning Disabilities/Difficulties	6
Mental Health Issues	6
Other	9

54 people ticked more than one option to confirm that they had more than one impairment.

**Other Impairments** which would usually be classed as a physical impairment were; Weak Legs, Poor Walking (3), Spinal Injury, Below Knee Amputee, Obesity due to glandular disease, Breathing Difficulty, ME & Arthritis.

### 2.3 Activities

Respondents were then asked to comment on the activities they currently do and those that they would like to do when visiting the countryside.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Currently Do</b>	<b>Would like to</b>
Walking	46	40
Botanising	12	12
Bird Watching	55	34
Fossil Hunting	10	24
Meet with Friends	46	21
Other Exercise		9
Picking Berries	26	28
Fishing	10	9
Enjoy View	100	35
Mammal Watching	13	29
Dog Walking	13	19
Flying Kites/Planes	3	14

Picnicing	50	44
Cycling	7	6
Rock Climbing	1	7
Horse Riding	2	16
Metal Detecting	1	9

Other activities are shown in **Appendix 3**. Photography and Painting were listed more than once in this category.

The table shows 'Enjoy View' as the activity people currently do the most. 'Picnicing' and 'Walking' received the highest response for the activity people would like to do. Other activities that scored high that people currently do were;

- Bird Watching / Picnicing / Walking / Meet with Friends

Where respondents had ticked more than three activities we asked them to highlight the two they did most often. These are detailed below with the number of responses indicated alongside.

- Enjoy the View - 42
- Walking - 30
- Bird Watching - 20
- Dog Walking - 10
- Picnicing - 15
- Picking Berries - 7

## 2.4 The main benefits of improved access.

People were then asked to circle the main benefits that improved access to nature reserves gives in their opinion?

The following have been listed from highest to lowest;

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>No of replies</b>
Fresh Air	126
Relaxation	98
Health	80
Experiencing Wildlife	78
Exercise	77
Social place to meet	45
Education	27
Exercise of dogs	23
Food for free	11

Other benefits from improved access are shown in **Appendix 4**. Freedom, peace and quiet and getting out of the house were some of the other benefits given in their opinion.

## **2.5 Problems caused by other users of the countryside.**

The next question asked people to identify the other users of the countryside that have caused them problems in the past. Motorbike Users received the highest response to this question with 50 people completing this as an answer.

The total numbers responding to each are shown below;

- Motorbikes – 50
- Dog Owners – 28
- Cyclists - 31
- Shot Gun Users - 24
- Horse Riders -16.

This question also gave people the option to complete any other users that may have caused problems for them in the past. 19 people completed this section, the responses are summarised in **Appendix 5**. Youths, Off road motorists and 4 x 4s were given as some of the other users.

## **2.6 Ideas to help people visit the Countryside**

As we received a large number of individual replies to this question we have summarised these on **Appendix 6**. Where possible responses have been collated together with the total number giving a similar response shown in brackets alongside. The replies have been broken down into 6 categories;

- Parking
- Information
- Access
- Facilities
- Transport
- Other general comments

## **2.7 Responses for future consultation**

92 people agreed to provide their details to be contacted for future consultation.

## **3.0 Summary Conclusions**

From the questionnaire responses we can clearly see that Physical Access is a significant barrier for disabled people when visiting the countryside. Facilities, information and transport also score high as a barrier for not visiting the countryside. These are also featured considerably in the ideas that would help people visit the countryside.

## Appendix 2

Other Reasons for Not Visiting the Countryside
Need info on short walks/weekends and for all the family.
Lack of seating
Availability of transport.
Too far away.
Lack of tar mac paths.
Too far for me unless I can park my electric scooter,
Lack of Toilets (disabled) - 6 responses
Live in the countryside
Someone to go with
Lack of confidence, Lack of company.
Cannot use public transport,new to area no friends with cars and no relations
Communities involvement
No disabled parking (2)
Almost housebound
Unable to carry out long walks
Lack of firm safe paths. More time tables would be useful.
Have my own leisure actiities

## Appendix 3

Other Activities
Must be wheel chair accessible
Any thing to do with motor bikes please.
Painting (3)
Enjoying what my family can do
Bird watch from own house
Photography (3)
Gardening
Used to like walking but cant anymore without assistance or transport
Exploring and enjoying the countryside
Sit in quiet pleasant area away from the hurly-burly of town life
Canoeing
Lack of mobility prohibits physical activity - used to play golf
Short walks (pub lunch)
Visiting sites of archaeological, geological, historical interest.
Carriage driving

## Appendix 4

Other Benefits from improved access
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Enjoying nature at 92 yrs old.
Getting out of the house. (2)
Be like other people.
Just being outdoors free as possible
Supporting environmental issues.
To be able to get out of town and get a much better view of the countryside
Confidence Building
Enjoyment
Freedom
Seeing the environment
Improved quality of life
Enjoy the colours of nature/earth
Sense of well being
Not being alone everyday
Relief of stress
Feeling good about being british
Photography
Peace and quiet no cars! (2)
Just get some fresh air in a nice environment
Being in the countryside and close to wildlife

## Appendix 5

<b>Other Users of the Countryside that have caused problems in the past</b>
Often dogs will run at you scared of being knocked over
Youths being aggressive towards me (2)
4 x 4s using tracks (2)
Members of the public who object to electric scooters
Anti hunt protesters
Off Road motorists (2)
Fly tipper's, litter louts
The Hunt - members and onlookers
Housing developers; charity workers
Too much of the above damage to existing resources

## Appendix 6

Realising there may be others that want to?
Not normally wheelchair user but can only walk 150m without rest. Wheelchairs on loan are good but need volunteer pushers who know routes and paths
More awareness of the needs of others problems. Little things help a lot
Assistance to and at location. Respect for the use of crutches - if I want to for a change from chair. Also we don't have a computer
Remember disabled users limited to chairs only and need toilet facilities more frequently

Ask cyclists to slow down, also have a bell fitted and use it - we don't hear them coming
Address the unfairness of Cyclists, Motobikers (offroad), Hunters/Viewers, Gun users
More places to exercise dogs, put doggie bins around more places
Needs one to one with wheelchair
More consultation
Education for those who do not live with physical disabilities
Stop destroying that which is worthwhile by unreasonable attempts to enable use by all!
To be able to drive around
Clear information as to local conditions/accessibility, based on Countryside Agencies "By all reasonable means" (2005)
Short circular walks for physical impaired that me and my 12 yr old son could enjoy.
Help with disability aids, wheelchair or similar.