



Developing and Promoting the Meon Valley Trail

Final Report

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Development and Promotion Plan for the Meon Valley Trail

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Development and Promotion Plan for the Meon Valley Trail

1. The strategic role of the Meon Valley Trail

a. Context

The Meon Valley Trail (MVT) is a disused rail line in the Hampshire part of the South Downs National Park. It is around 12 miles long, running from West Meon in the north to Knowle in the South. The line runs parallel to the A32 and provides a traffic free route for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.

Both the South Downs National Park Authority and Hampshire County Council recognize the importance of recreation and access in the South Downs. The South Downs National Park has the longest rights of way network of all national parks in the UK, and the State of the South Downs National Park 2012 report recognizes that this is without doubt the National Park's most significant recreational resource. The South Downs Way National Trail is a key element of this resource, and is completely within the National Park. Despite this large rights of way network longer stretches of off-road cycling and riding provision are limited, and opportunities for people with mobility problems are very restricted. The Meon Valley Trail provides a opportunity to meet both of these needs, and as it connects directly with the South Downs Way National Trail it is well placed to become a key element of the promoted access network.

The economic value of the recreation network is well recognized by Hampshire County Council and the National Park Authority. Despite recent poor summers the national economic downturn appears to be resulting in increased use of local attractions, including country parks and other outdoor recreation venues. In 2012/13 Hants CC recorded over 2.5 million people visiting their principal sites, an increase on the previous 2 years. These visitors generated £1.85 million to the local economy. These figures demonstrate the value of countryside recreation, and help to justify expenditure to improve it and attract more visitors. The economic value of the Meon Valley Trail is well recognized by local businesses who are keen to help promote it, and their proximity to it.

The railway was one of the last built to main-line standards in the UK, opening in 1903, closing to passengers in 1955 and finally closing completely in 1968. It originally ran from Alton to Fareham. The section from West Meon to Knowle forms the Meon Valley Trail. This section included 3 stations, West Meon, Droxford and Wickham, with a halt at Knowle. Droxford Station is now a private house. West Meon and Wickham stations were demolished

in 1970. The platform at West Meon is still visible, although very overgrown. There is almost no evidence of Wickham station, although one platform remains in the undergrowth. Little railway infrastructure can be seen on the Trail, apart from the embankment, cuttings and bridges (two have been removed) and occasional line side huts, signal posts and telegraph lines.

The railway played a crucial role in the D-Day operations, hosting a meeting of Allied leaders in a train at Droxford station. This event is commemorated with a plaque on the station building. The station is now in private ownership, but a short section of platform can still be seen and accessed by the public. This is one of the few remaining pieces of railway heritage, and it is of increased importance due to the link to the Allied leader meeting.



Remaining platform at Droxford Station

Local historians have collated information about the area around the line that includes the earliest paper mill in the country, a 1,000 year old yew tree, Saxon churches and beautiful architecture.

b. Relevance to local access network

The MVT plays a crucial role on the local access network. Its strategic importance is recognised by both Hampshire County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). It forms an important link in Hampshire County Council's emerging Countryside

Recreation Network, an aspiration for an "easy to use, easy to follow network for walking, cycling and horse-riding, linking communities to their countryside across Hampshire". The SDNPA has identified cycling, in particular easy access, family friendly leisure routes, as an emerging priority for the forthcoming draft National Park Management Plan.

The importance of the MVT to the local access network is recognized by local residents and users of the Trail. In the recent survey many commented on its importance as a spine connecting other parts of the access network.

It crosses the South Downs Way National Trail near its northern end, providing multi-user access onwards to Winchester to the west and Sussex to the east. The Wayfarers Way, a pedestrian route, also crosses the Trail at Soberton, making a link from the South Downs Way down to the northern end of Portsmouth.

At the southern end there is currently a gap (see next section) which prevents onwards walks and rides to the coast at Titchfield, the Shipwrights Way, and urban areas of Fareham and Gosport.

c. Knowle Gap

The MVT comes to an abrupt end near Knowle, where the line meets the current railway line. This results in a dead-end section south of Wickham, and isolates the Trail from the communities to the south including Fareham and Gosport. Hampshire County Council have investigated the possibilities for developing a route to connect the MVT to Fareham, but have so far been unsuccessful.

2. Use and awareness of the Meon Valley Trail

a. Current levels and patterns of use

Walk England developed a survey to establish current levels of use of the MVT, and to establish its importance to local communities, businesses, and to non-users. 588 people responded to the survey, the full survey results are supplied in appendix 1. In addition we spoke to local business owners, including 2 cycle hire companies, 6 accommodation providers, 4 shops, 3 cafes, 4 pubs, a local trout fishery, craft shop, equestrian supplier, parish councillors, voluntary ranger, chamber of commerce, 2 schools, 4 local authority countryside / community / cycling and recreation officers, 3 walking for health / active lifestyle schemes and local residents (15 in all). We also ran a meeting for 17 people who represented: the County Council; Forestry Commission; national park; police; local residents; walkers; riders, and cyclists.

There appears to be good local awareness of the Trail and use for short, mostly dog, walks, horse rides and mountain bike trips. People living in nearby towns are less aware of the Trail. As the South Downs Way crosses the Meon Valley it also is used by long distance walkers and riders / cyclists. In addition, short sections of it appear in several walking and cycling guidebooks. Naturally, the heaviest use is at either end where there are car parks in Wickham and West Meon, as well as other key access points close to where people live. Many survey respondents commented on how popular the MVT is, although an equal number commented that the reason they enjoyed it was for the quiet; and in many cases the ability to canter horses on it without fear of meeting too many other people.

All of the pubs, shops and cafes we spoke to report getting lots of walkers and cyclists as customers. In the area around Corhampton, Exton and Warnford where the South Downs Way crosses, all of the businesses report significant trade from long distance walkers, and indeed go out of their way to encourage South Down Way-ers to stay, eat or shop with them.

There are several stables and equestrian suppliers in the valley which support the local riders. It is very clear that horse riders value the Trail because it is relatively quiet, unsurfaced and because there is a lack of other bridleways nearby.

Some locals don't use it at the moment because it's too muddy eg. local primary schools. Few walkers use the route for long walks as the terrain and views are unchanging, walkers tend to use it in short sections as part of circular walks.

b. Awareness

Despite reported high levels of awareness of the MVT, it is not very visible in the landscape, there are very few signs directing potential users to the Trail, and in places it is not easy to see how to access it. We suspect that a significant number of the local population are unaware that the Trail exists, or that they could use it. This is difficult to prove - 92% of survey respondents had heard of the Trail but as the survey was distributed through local riding, walking and cycling groups this is to be expected. Of the 48 respondents who had not heard of the MVT:

- 4 live in Soberton
- 2 live in Wickham
- 1 lives in East Meon
- others live nearby, including Fareham, Gosport, Southampton, and Winchester.

3. Benefits of improvements to the Trail

The case for improving trails and creating easy-to-use family friendly access is well made by a number of respected organisations. Sustrans, who have been responsible for the creation of a large network of cycling and multi-user routes, have carried out research showing that money spent on creating the right environment to encourage more walking and cycling could result in massive cost savings for the Treasury and major benefits to public health¹. The Forestry Commission recognise the economic benefits of accessible green space, in particular the psychological and health benefits². NICE research supports these findings; they report that evidence from three studies suggests that introduction of multi-use trails can lead to increases in levels of walking and cycling in both the short and long term³.

There is good reason to believe that improving the condition and awareness of the MVT would result in increased use, and improved health of local residents. However, it is clear that not all local residents would welcome increased levels of use.

Many residents of the villages near the Trail are opposed to any new developments on the Trail as they see it as 'urbanisation' and bringing in more people to an area they value for its quietness. This is not a universal view – some agree that getting rid of the mud and some trees would be a good idea.

Most local businesses are in favour of more visitors as they already see the value of walkers and cyclists to their shops, cafes, accommodation and pubs. They see the Meon Valley as a potential destination and any added value in the form of promotion, circular trails, signage, etc. would be welcome.

User groups of walkers and cyclists are keen on improving the Trail (surface, signage, interpretation) and better promotion. They want better links onto other promoted routes and the rights of way network to allow for longer trips and circular rides and walks. Cyclists, in particular, are keen on a link southwards towards the urban areas and joining up with other routes. The majority of horseriders do not want a hard surface on the Trail and are concerned about increased use leading to potential conflict between different users. A few, however, recognise that a multi-user route can work and drainage in some areas would benefit them as well as other users.

Officers from key agencies (local authorities, police, national park, Forestry Commission) see the Meon Valley Trail as an opportunity to develop low key recreational opportunities to a

¹ Economic Appraisal of local walking and cycling routes - Sustrans, October 2006

² Economic Benefits of Accessible Green Spaces for Physical and mental Health: Scoping study 2005. Report by CJC Consulting for the Forestry Commission.

³ Physical activity and the environment review one: transport review NICE Public Health Collaborating Centre for Physical activity September 2006

wider range of visitors than currently use it. It could significantly add to the access network and allow residents from the urban areas (including several thousand new people due to live at Knowle) to get to the Meon Valley without using a car. In particular, at the southern end nearest to urban populations in Fareham (and new residents at Knowle) there is demand for 'easy access' walking, ie short, level walks which don't need full walking gear, and are easy to navigate. Walking for Health schemes would use the MVT if it fitted their programme and was easy to get to with their groups. There is also demand for easy, family friendly cycling for people living at the southern end of the Trail. The MVT has potential for educational use (supported by local schools), as a safe route to school, and as a potential commuter route.

Several voluntary conservation groups have done clearance work on the Trail and would be happy for more involvement eg. the Fareham Society.

a. Increasing awareness

Proposals to increase awareness of the MVT include making it more visible on the ground, and on maps, and promoting it more widely.

The legal status of the MVT changes along its length, in parts access is permissive, other sections are bridleway. Because of this, the line isn't continuous on the map, and there is no requirement for it to be signed from the road. Creating a bridleway along the length of the MVT would improve clarity, as would requesting that OS name the route on their maps. The addition of signage from the road would significantly improve the visibility of the Trail, as would signing to the MVT from the villages or from other bridleways in the area.

There is some local concern about signage, with some residents being concerned that the rural beauty of the valley could be spoiled by too many intrusive signs. Sympathetic signage, using timber where appropriate, and careful choice of location of signs should be sufficient to allay these concerns.

It may also be possible, depending on later management decisions, for the MVT to be included in Sustrans' National Cycle Network, and to appear on Google maps as a cycle route.

b. Improving the condition of the Trail to encourage use by a wider range of users

Several improvements have been discussed. For each there is concern about 'urbanising' the countryside. A sensible approach to follow to reduce this concern is to zone the MVT, adopting different management standards in areas close to residential areas to those used on the more remote sections. The use of different levels of development in different 'settings' is now fairly standard countryside management practice in the UK.

c. The surface

At present the MVT offers a traffic free route, but the surface is not suitable for road bikes, and in parts is unpleasant for walkers and horse riders. Improving the surface will increase the attractiveness of the MVT to families, commuters and many walkers and cyclists.



Typical view of the surface of the trail

Research published by Sustrans Cymru in January 2013 highlights the benefits for all users, including older people and those with disabilities, of sharing walking and cycling paths. The evidence challenges the demands of some campaigners for fully separate routes for walkers and cyclists. Sustrans' 'Access for All' report points to research which shows incidents of conflict are extremely low, and reveals the benefits of routes which allow families – including older and disabled people – to undertake activities together.

Most people who responded to the survey commented on the muddy surface of the MVT. Equestrians say that in some places it has become too stony, and in others there are holes which are not apparent because of the mud, putting their horses at risk. The majority of equestrians requested that a soft surface be retained.

Walkers and cyclists commented on the mud. In places the mud is very deep, with unpredictable holes making it totally unsuitable for family cycling, although mountain bikers like it.

The issue of improving the surface will clearly be one of the most difficult to resolve, the most sensible approach is likely to be one that creates a hardened surface (which may include tarmac) in the sections closest to where people live, but a softer, less formal surface on the more remote sections. In places it may be possible to retain a soft surface for horses alongside a harder one. Depending on how hard the surface is beneath the mud / leaf mulch, one solution for some sections may be to just scrape the surface.

Whatever surface solution is implemented, drainage will be important, especially in the cuttings where water currently does not easily drain away.

d. Improving access onto the Trail

Access onto the MVT is generally reasonable for pedestrians, but poor for equestrians and cyclists. In many places the MVT is either raised up from the surrounding land, or in cuttings. Access is often via steep, rough slopes or steps. These are difficult to negotiate on horseback and bikes. The access points are also not all easy to find, as in many places they are surrounded by trees or shrubs. Making the access points more obvious would make the MVT more visible in the landscape, and attract more potential users to explore the Trail.

Access onto the MVT from West Meon is via a track and small car park. There is car parking at Wickham and at a couple of other locations along the Trail but several people have expressed concern about the need for more car parking if the Trail becomes more popular, and the need for horse box parking.

Access points should be improved, through grading the slopes, and improving the surface to make them easier to use and to find, and less liable to erosion.

e. Tree management

Much of the MVT is tree-lined. Trees have colonised the side of the Trail since it closed as a railway. In places the tree cover is dense, and gives an impression of being in an enclosed tunnel-like space. This feeling can be intimidating to many people, and over a long distance can result in a walk or ride becoming boring as there are few opportunities to see out and admire the view of the adjacent valley and Downs. The heavy tree cover also contributes to the muddy surface, with leaf build up being a serious issue.

There has been little woodland management in the past, resulting in some dense areas of spindly trees, many of which lean over the track, reducing head height and occasionally falling and obstructing the track. It is necessary to remove some of the trees, and to thin the tree cover in other places. Opening up sections by removing trees to reveal views across the countryside will add to the attractiveness of the route, and will contribute to improving the surface by allowing sunlight in to dry the surface, and reducing the number of leaves falling onto the surface.

Woodland management is often controversial, many residents are opposed to tree felling, although many also support the proposals. It is important that the community are kept informed about tree felling activities and the reasons behind them. There has, however, been some clearance work carried out by local volunteers in selected areas.

f. Benches, seating and art

There are few seats of any kind on the MVT. To improve accessibility for older and less able people more could be added in strategic and appropriate locations where there are good views. There is also the possibility of using some of the felled timber to create sympathetic artwork to help add interest to the Trail, in particular for families. Geocaching could also be encouraged as a way to engage with younger families and groups.

g. Interpretation

The story of the railway is interesting, and some low-key interpretation would add to the interest of the Trail. Our consultation revealed support for more information/trails based on the rail history as well as features in the villages, particularly some significant churches.

h. Development of circular walks and rides based on/linking to the Trail

This idea is almost universally welcomed. Many current users of the MVT make the point that it can be uninspiring to walk out and back along the same route, especially one tree-lined with few points of interest. Development of circular walks and rides will provide existing users and new visitors the option to explore further into the local area, passing the shops, cafes, pubs and other businesses as well as encourage them to try new routes.

Many survey respondents (58% of those answering the question, and 39% of all respondents) were willing to help develop circular walks/rides. Local businesses in particular welcome the development of more walks and rides, and were willing to stock / distribute leaflets.

i. Involving the local community

There is a strong sense of local ownership of the MVT. The community are keen to be involved in its management and promotion. The survey asked “Would you be interested in supporting the development or promotion of the Meon Valley Trail?”

59% of those answering the question replied that they would be interested in joining a ‘friends of the MVT’ group. This was supported by opinions expressed during meetings and face-to-face conversations. Over 100 people also offered to help with practical work to improve the MVT, confirming the high level of local interest.

Businesses are keen to support the MVT, through creating links to their businesses, or by promoting the Trail to their customers. They recognise that the MVT offers a potential attraction to bring people into the area.

4. Linking the Meon Valley Trail to the wider access network

Walk England spent some time looking at how to connect the MVT into the wider access network at the southern end, near Knowle.

The findings are attached at Appendix 2, in summary we conclude that, despite significant constraints, there are opportunities to bridge the Knowle Gap. However there is no single, simple solution.

In the short term the best solution is to improve what is currently available to make it more attractive and safer for cyclists in particular. This involves use of Mayles Lane (which is an unadopted unclassified road, but is currently used without hindrance by walker, cyclists and horse riders.) from Wickham to Knowle. South of Knowle improvements to the trail surface and improvements to the M27 underpass will be of benefit to cyclists in particular (the underpass is too low to be used by most horse riders).

This option would effectively leave the track bed of the railway at Wickham (where some improvements to the access point would be required), creating a cul de sac section of trail from Wickham to the end of the old railway line. An option here would be to close this section off, but we recommend retaining it as a resource for local equestrians and dog walkers.

In the longer term there are opportunities to create a new route through the development process. The area to the south of Knowle is designated as a development area. The timing is right to ensure that the need to connect Fareham to the Meon Valley Trail can be written into planning strategies to ensure the links are considered during development.

5. Recommendations

There is a good case to be made for improving the Meon Valley Trail, and for increasing awareness through promotion. There is a need for a family friendly off-road trail in the area, as there are no alternatives close by. The local community have clearly expressed a desire to be involved in the management of the Trail.

We recommend the following :

a. Project officer

A project officer is recommended to oversee the development of the Trail. This would enable more active community engagement, reducing the potential for conflict between the different user groups. If a dedicated officer is not a possibility, then a named officer should be given responsibility for the Trail with appropriate support, funding and time resources.

Any new developments will need careful handling to accommodate views and aspirations that may be in conflict. Careful liaison and communication is required before any work commences on the Trail. This is best managed though a dedicated officer.

In parallel, there will be vital promotional work to be done with current non-users and people who don't know about the Trail in Fareham and surrounding urban areas. Again, this is a role that would be best be carried out by a dedicated officer.

b. Zoning new developments

The Trail has a rural, unspoilt feel and this is something local residents are keen to preserve. Improvements to the Trail need to be carried out in a sympathetic way. One approach to aid this process is to zone the Trail, identifying sections close to residential areas where higher levels of intervention will be acceptable, and those where minimal intervention is desirable.

The MVT condition audit considers zoning the trail. The dead-end section south from Wickham is to be managed to a different standard to the rest of the trail. The area around Wickham is to be managed to a slightly higher standard.

c. Improving the surface

It is clear that the surface of the MVT requires upgrading. In the more remote zones, scraping the leaf mould and mud from the surface will be adequate, in others drainage and surfacing will be necessary.

New surfacing should be relatively fine, and rolled to create a semi-sealed surface, which is good for bikes and walkers. Loose aggregate surface is not recommended as this presents hazards to both cyclists and equestrians.

d. Access points

The car park at West Meon should be improved. At present it is small and narrow. It is accessed by a narrow track, and is surrounded by trees. The overall impression is not very welcoming, and could deter visitors who are not comfortable with remote/enclosed locations. Additional signage to the MVT from West Meon is also required.

Access points onto the Trail in general should be improved. Those onto embankments require grading to provide gentler slopes, improved surfacing and signage.

Parking close to the Trail is limited, better signage from the villages could be used to provide access without the need for new parking provision.

e. Tree management

There is a need for tree management on the Trail. In some areas this includes removal of overhanging branches and thinning or trimming of trees. In other areas we recommend that selected sections of trees are felled to open up the views and to bring light and air onto the Trail. This will not only increase the variety of experience for the user, but also improve the variety of habitats along the Trail.

The community could be involved in clearing some of the smaller trees and involved in choosing which sections should be opened up. Coppicing could be encouraged in some areas, using local people assisted by local coppicers. There is an opportunity to increase local support for work on the Trail by offering firewood from the trail to local residents.

f. Community involvement

We recommend establishing a “Friends of the Meon Valley Trail” group. This will allow interested local residents to be kept up to date with proposals for the Trail, and for them to be actively involved through practical work parties, contribute to interpretation, develop circular walks and rides etc, and to act as champions for the Trail. In the initial stages this group is likely to include members with conflicting views, and it is recommended that the project officer chairs the group to ensure the views of all members are heard.

g. Addition of features along the Trail

The MVT would benefit from a few features of interest, these could include seats, art, low key interpretation panels and distance markers, installed at key hub locations. In keeping with the nature of the Trail these could have a rail theme.

Whatever features are added to the Trail must be sympathetic to the rural, unspoilt nature of the place.

h. Circular walks and rides

There is a clearly identified need to develop and promote circular walks and rides based on the Trail and there is local willingness to help with this. We recommend that a friends group is established early in the project, and tasked with identifying and mapping suitable walks and rides. Leaflets can then be produced to promote the MVT and the associated walks/rides which may be themed or simply recreational.

i. The Knowle Gap

If Hampshire CC are successful in securing LSTF resources we recommend that some of these are used to help improve the short term links at Knowle, and possibly to further secure expert support to secure the longer term aims through the planning process.

6. Potential funding sources.

Hampshire CC have bid for LSTF fund to improve the MVT. If successful these funds could be used to match a potential HLF bid, or to carry out some of the recommended improvement works identified in the condition survey.

Both Hampshire County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority support the Meon Valley Trail, and both recognise the potential to improve it to appeal to a wider audience. However neither authority has the capital to carry out the necessary works without external funding being found.

Heritage Lottery Heritage Grants

We consider the most likely source of funding to be the Heritage Lottery Fund Heritage Grant. HLF fund projects that make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities in the UK. They define heritage in a broad sense as anything from the past that we value and want to pass on to future generations, for example places and objects linked to our industrial, maritime and transport history; and natural heritage including habitats, species and geology.

As a disused railway line this Trail clearly fits this definition, in addition the natural heritage is of value.

Key to success with HLF bids is not only demonstrating that as a result of their investment the heritage will be better managed and interpreted (which is clearly the case here) but also that local people will be involved, and that the community benefits.

Our recommendations for the improvements to the Meon Valley Trail meet these criteria, and we recommend that a bid to the HLF is made for the Trail.

Heritage outcomes: the Trail is better managed and remaining historical features are preserved and interpreted.

People outcomes: local people become involved in the management of the Trail gaining an increased sense of local ownership and pride, a greater number of people will enjoy the Trail and volunteer their time to help maintain it.

Community outcomes: a wider range of people will engage with heritage, the local area will have an improved attraction and therefore be a better place to visit, the local economy will benefit.

Heritage Lottery Landscape Partnerships

An alternative funding approach could be to bid for a Heritage Lottery Landscape Partnership Grant. This grant is for schemes led by partnerships of local, regional and national interests which aim to conserve areas of distinctive landscape character. The existing Meon Valley Partnership could potentially bid for funds to carry out a wider range of projects in the Meon Valley, improving the MVT being just one project.

Natural England's Paths for Communities (P4C) grants

This grant could potentially be used to help improve or create sections of paths to create the circular walks / rides. The grant is to encourage and support local communities to work with land owners to make improvements to the network of Public Rights of Way. In all cases P4C projects must include some element of new Public Right of Way creation. In most cases projects will include an element of new bridleway creation but projects that include footpath creation alone will also be considered where community and economic benefit can be demonstrated.



This grant may be of value to assist with the creation of new bridleway links in particular.

7. Action Plan

7.1 Immediate Urgent action

There are a number of minor issues which are presenting hazards to legitimate Trail users and need to be immediately addressed.

The most urgent are :


	Issue	Photo
1	Section 3 – unstable bridge. Falling masonry could present a hazard. Structural survey and/or demolition is required photos 10,11,12, 13, 14	
2	Section 8 – badger activity is creating holes in track surface. Action is required to limit the risk to users. Photos 40,41,42	

3 Section 10 – metal spike to remove near Wickham - photo 70



4 Section 23 – access steps in poor condition photo - 191



5	Section 35 - Missing bollard – creating a hole in the trail surface. Photo 287,288, 289,290	
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Other obstructions/hazards include :

- Section 1 - Large birch tree across track (point A). Photo 4
- Section 12 - snapped off bridleway sign close to Wickham car park – remove or replace - photo 85
- Section 19 – open trackside drains may be hazardous – photo 150
- Section 25 – a right of way crossing below the trail is obstructed, causing users to climb fences to cross the trail. Work is required to either open up the right of way, or improve the safety of access onto the trail. Photos 201,202,203
- Section 26 – badger activity is damaging the surface. Action has been taken but holes are still present. Photos 206,207
- Section 34 – warning signs are required to alert users to the missing bridge.
- West Meon car park – a fallen tree obstructs access north of the station. Photo 321 322

(several of these have been resolved since the survey was carried out)

7.2 Activity to improve the Trail – low budget options

Some of the work to improve the trail could be carried out by volunteers. Establishing a ‘friends’ group of people who are prepared to give their time to work on the trail. Setting up regular volunteer tasks could significantly improve the condition of much of the trail and help it appear more cared-for.

One option could be to develop ‘lengthsmen’ – volunteers with an overall responsibility for minor maintenance tasks along a section of the trail.

Volunteer group activities could include :

7.2.1 Part 1 – southern end of the trail to Wickham.

This section is a dead end, but still of value to local walkers, and to equestrians. We recommend that this section is retained even if the main route leaves the railway at Wickham. The condition of the section is generally satisfactory, maintenance tasks include:

- Clearing shrubby track-side vegetation
- Thinning or clearing trees
- Drainage work
- It may be possible to manually scrape the surface in some areas to improve the condition
- Regular inspections to monitor badger activity.

7.2.2 A West Meon Station improvement project :

- Clearing ivy from the platforms
- Clearing trees from the car park area to open the sight lines
- Removal of rubbish and fallen trees
- Erection of new signs

The added benefit of increased activity in the car park would also reduce crime levels and encourage more legitimate use of the space.

7.2.3 Tree thinning / vegetation clearance

Many of the trees along the trail are thin enough to be cleared by volunteers using hand tools. Groups of volunteers could work along the sides of the trail in many places from Wickham north thinning trees, clearing scrub and clearing bridge decks.

7.2.4 More advanced activity

If regular volunteers are prepared to commit more time to the project volunteer groups could become involved with erecting signs, improving access points and surface work. This would involve higher levels of supervision and training by staff, but would be more satisfying and enjoyable for regular volunteers.

‘Lengthsmen’ activity could include :

7.2.5 Cleaning signs

There are several signs and information boards along the trail. Due to the tree cover these quickly become green, occasional cleaning would improve the feel of the trail.

7.2.6 Maintenance of Drainage

There are several small streams crossing the trail, and a number of drains. Keeping these clear will help to maintain the trail.

7.2.7 Regular inspections

To check for fallen trees and badger damage.

7.3 Local Sustainable Transport funding

The Trail has the potential to provide traffic free access for commuters and for local residents to access schools and shops. It is not currently serving this purpose due to the condition of the surface and the issues of connectivity at Knowle. We recommend that, if funding is available through LSTF it is used to address the situation at Knowle, by providing clearer access to the south.

7.4 Major improvements

7.4.1 Signage

The Trail needs better signage. Signs should be erected at all access points clearly showing where the trail is. In addition it should be signed from the A34 and from the villages along the route.

Creating an identity for the Trail with a logo would help establish the Trail as an attraction, and make it easier for local businesses to incorporate it into their literature. The logo could be used on trail waymarkers to reaffirm the identity to trail users.

There is a risk that improving signage will draw in new users who will then be frustrated by the condition of the trail. Ideally signage would coincide with a major improvement package, but even if this is not possible the Trail should be signed.

Signage at access points should be sympathetic to the location, and the signage currently in use in the area. Timber finger posts should be used, ideally incorporating the trail logo.

To improve use of the trail as a transport route adding destinations and distances and/or times to signs would be helpful. An alternative could be to add distance-markers to the trail giving distances to the villages.

Signage from the villages could be done using standard brown tourist signage, or oak fingerposts. We recommend that there is at least one brown tourist sign identifying the Trail from the A32.

Estimated costs:

Item	number	Unit cost	Total cost
Development of trail identity and logo	1		£1,000 - £3,000
Finger posts at access points	48	£100 - £400	£4,800 - £19,200
Installation of signs	48	£200 - £400	£9,600 – £19,200

Markers on trail to show destinations	13	£200 - £400	£2,600 - £5,200
Installation of markers	13	£200 - £300	£2,600 - £3,900
Waymarkers (full colour)	500	£350	£350
Total			£20,950 – £50,850

7.4.2 Surface

The surface is generally poor. In parts the hard surface is still apparent and scraping may reveal an acceptable surface, in others the only real solution is to resurface the trail.

Part 1 – the surface is acceptable for the level of use. Scraping the surface, either manually or by machine may be all that is necessary here.

Section	length	recommendation	cost
Part 1	2Km	Volunteer input.	
Part 2	0.5Km	No surface works required	
Part 3	2Km	Professional drainage engineer to address drainage issues	£20,000
	775m	ok – no surface works required	
	370m	Scrape, top up with additional aggregate	£10,000
	900m	Resurface with crushed aggregate	£50,000
Part 4	870m	Resurface with crushed aggregate	£45,000
Part 5	1.5Km	resurface	£80,000
	4Km	Scrape, top up hollows with aggregate	£120,000
Part 6	1.5Km	Scrape, top up with aggregate	£45,000
	4.5Km	resurface	£240,000
Total			£610,000

4 contractors were asked to supply very rough costs to improve the Trail. All were asked not to spend too long on working up the costs, and that they would not be held to the figures – they are merely to help with understanding the bottom line. All 4 responded, details are given in Appendix 3.

Factors influencing cost which cannot be properly assessed by this process include the difficulties of access and the exact nature of the substrate.

One company provided an overall cost to resurface the entire trail - an approximate costing of around £600,000.00 + VAT for a 2m wide track. The costs above assume a 3m wide track.

This would cover all plant, labour and material to a specification of a 2m wide path with

geotextile membrane, 100mm crushed concrete and 100mm of Hoggin.

7.4.3 Access points

There are numerous access points onto the trail. Many are in good condition provide good, often stepped access to the trail, others are poor and in places new access points are necessary.

Part	Work required	Cost
Part 1	Additional access required at Wickham to create safe equestrian / bike access to Mayles Lane	£7,000
Part 2	Additional ramped access required in Wickham	£3,000
Part 3	No access point issues	
Part 4	Improve signage to official access points to reduce erosion.	£300
Part 5	Steps at access point on section 23 are worn and dangerous.	£2,000
	Section 26 - ramped access needs resurfacing, landing area too	£2,000
Part 6	Access to road near Hurdles pub is muddy and eroded	£1,000
	Section 29 – access point is poor	£1,000
	Section 30 – steps worn, access to road unsafe	£2,000
	Section 32 – stepped access is in poor state, better access is via ramp – consider closing off steps – access is blocked by fallen trees.	£2,000
	Section 33 – access ramp too steep and muddy	£2,000
	Section 34 – access ramp steep and muddy	£2,000
Total		£24,300

7.4.4 Trees

Work is required to manage the trackside trees for almost the entire length of the trail. In places this could be managed by volunteers, but in many areas the work requires professionals.

A realistic approach to this controversial work could be to employ a forestry contractor to remove trees on a rolling program 2 weeks per year.

Costs - £400 per day = £4,000 per year

7.4.4 Bridges

There are two main bridges missing from the trail, and one bridge that needs to be demolished.

The missing bridges are at the northern end of the trail – spanning roads 4m and 6m.

Costs to build and install 2 timber bridges would be in the region of £22,000

7.4.5 Total costs

The costs here are very rough estimates, designed to provide an overall figure to help with grant bids. There are many variables that will influence costs.

Overall total costs to improve the Meon Valley Trail are estimated to be around £700,000 with an additional £4,000 per year for tree work.

Appendix 1 - Meon Valley Trail Survey: initial analysis of results

The survey was launched on 8th November 2012, and closed on 18th December. The survey link was emailed to local user groups representing riders, cyclists and walkers, as well as a number of other local contacts, and non-users.

Several individuals requested paper copies of the survey, these were sent out but none were returned.

1. Number of respondents

(77% response rate)

- 588 people started the survey
- 451 completed it – 77%

2. Have you heard of the Meon Valley Trail?

(100% response rate)

92% of respondents had heard of the Meon Valley Trail.

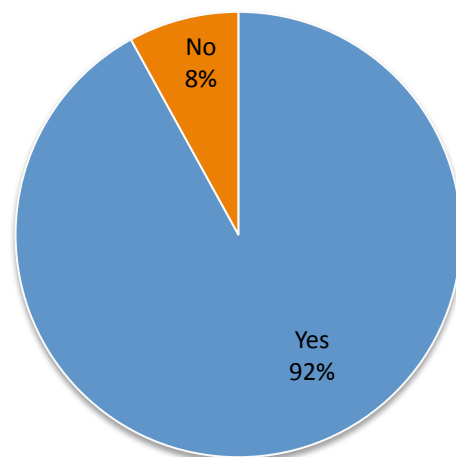


Figure 1: Have you heard of the Meon Valley Trail?

3. What is special about the Meon Valley and the Trail?

(407 responses from 540 – 75% response rate)

Responses mention the special qualities of the landscape, wildlife and habitats. These include :

“Meon Valley is a characterful part of the county, mixing attractive villages, a chalk river and plenty of opportunities for walks and cycle rides linking pubs and other attractions.”

"The Meon valley is a beautiful area with many outstanding views the Meon Valley Trail is lovely place to walk butterflies and insects and is a link to other footpaths and bridleways in the Meon valley. The trees and bushes along the route provide a pleasant rural walk in all seasons."

"It's beautiful and the views from it are stunning. I love cycling along the trail and walking my dog."

"It has an interesting flora, particularly rich in ferns."

"Historic, scenic. Warnford Churchyard (snowdrops) Chesapeake Mill, Historically important Forest of Bere. South Downs. Old Winchester Hill. Railway relics. What's not to like?"

Many comments relate to the opportunity for walking, cycling and riding offered by the Trail, and the importance of the MVT as a link in the access network.

"The old railway acts as a really useful spine that links up to lots of quiet lanes and other bridlepaths."

"It provides a unique opportunity for us to take our young children aged 5 and 7 for a walk, cycle or a ride on their pony without the need to touch a road. The track provides a wonderful opportunity by which they can explore the countryside and everything it has to offer in a safe environment, venturing as far as West Meon or Wickham for a reward at a cafe."

"It is one of the few countryside trails accessible and enjoyed by the disabled on larger and all terrain mobility scooters."

"My children regularly use this trail to ride their ponies. It is one of the very few remaining places that I know that they are safe and it is also so beautiful that them and I have had the most amazing times on it over the past 8 years. We also cycle on it and walk our dogs on a regular basis."

"It is an important recreational resource linking Wickham with West Meon. It makes an excellent stepping stone for parents who would like their children to move from cycling or riding in the safety of the garden/field or local park to longer rides. It also is an important off road resource for adults, linking Wickham, West Meon and villages along the A32 with long distance footpaths and bridleways. I have seen it used by cyclists, road and MTB, runners, walkers and horse riders."

Many also comment on current condition of the Trail :

"The vegetation and overgrowth which make it feel enclosed."

“It is fine if the weather has been dry for a month or more. If there has been rain it is likely to become very muddy and impassable by average cyclists on normal bikes. If the rain has been heavy then it becomes like a tough, sticky off-road trail, passable only by very fit cyclists on hi - specification mountain bikes. For most of this year it could not be used by families with children for leisure cycling for most of its length, or commuter cyclists travelling to Fareham on hybrid bikes. Some stretches are OK, but several are horrendous. If this trail was tarmaced and the drainage cleared it would be a valuable and safe commuter route, moving cars off the road, and reducing road deaths/injuries of cyclists. The long term cost to society of a cyclist death in terms of lost tax revenue and other outputs could be greater than the cost of upgrading this route.”

“Should this very muddy route be upgraded to be used by road cycles it will provide a good, safe alternative to the main road. Currently it is OK for walkers, but still very muddy. It passes through some beautiful country and allows access to some superb villages and their facilities.”

One person made the following comment about the D-Day meeting :

“You ask about things to promote. In early June 1944, in a train just outside Droxford station on the Meon Valley line (now the trail), Winston Churchill, General Eisenhower, General de Gaulle and other Allied commanders met and took the decision to launch the D-Day landings. June 2014 will be the 70th anniversary of that momentous decision. If you're planning to upgrade and improve the trail, the summer of 2014 might be the perfect time to publicise the improvements by linking it with the 70th anniversary of D-Day and encouraging people to come on foot or by bike to the historic spot halfway along the trail.”

4. Have you ever used the Meon Valley Trail ?

(464 responses from 540 – 86% response rate)

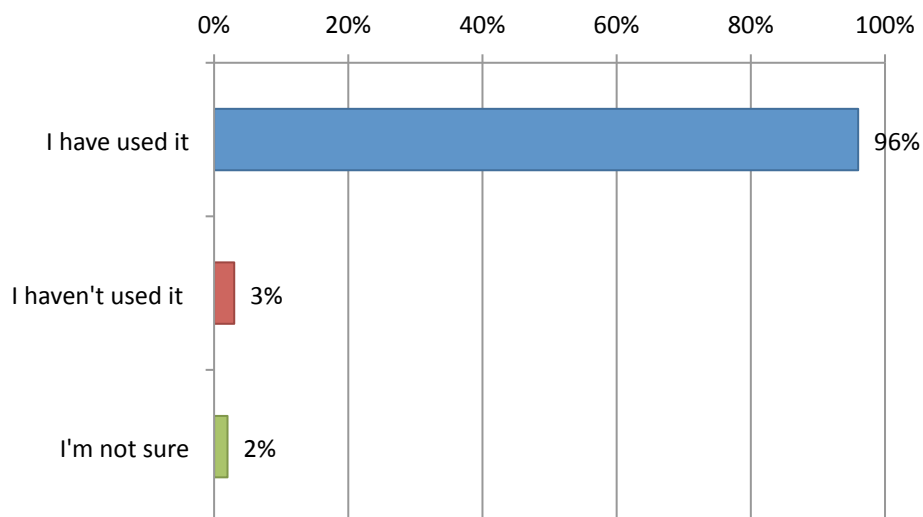


Figure 2: Have you ever used the Meon Valley Trail?

5. How have you used the Trail?

(429 of 443 users responded – 97%)

Respondents could select all that applied.

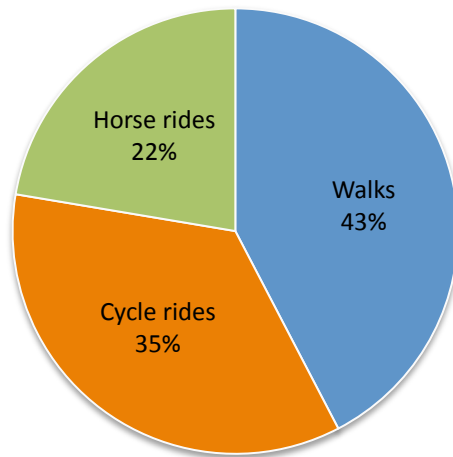


Figure 3: How have you used the Trail?

Most users identified more than one activity :

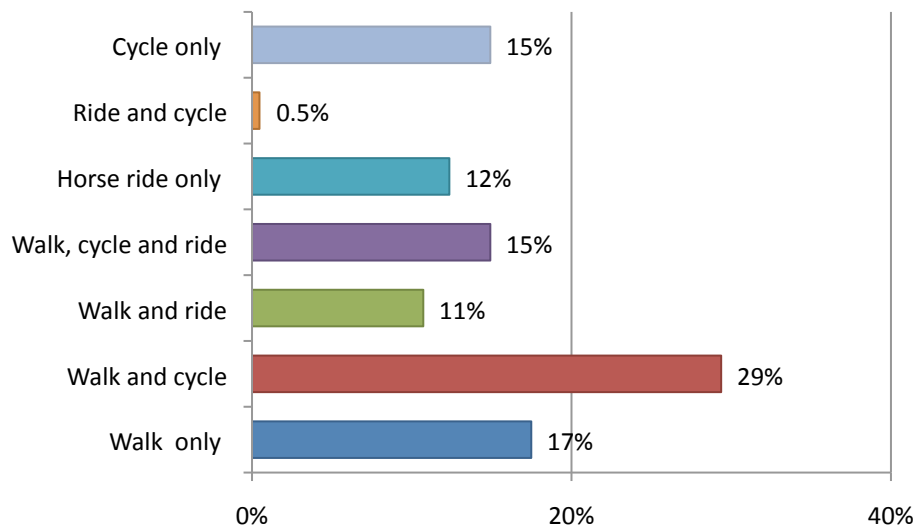


Figure 4: Users undertaking more than one activity on the Trail

Other responses included :

- Running - 18
- Dog walking - 4
- Geocaching - 2

- Carriage driving - 2

6. What is your opinion of the condition of the Trail ? (399 responses from 443 users – 90%)

This question permitted an open response, which makes establishing percentages difficult, but the majority of respondents mention the mud and poor drainage.

Cyclists generally think the trail is too muddy in places for road bikes. The following comments summarise the views of cyclists :

It is fine if the weather has been dry for a month or more. If there has been rain it is likely to become very muddy and impassable by average cyclists on normal bikes. If the rain has been heavy then it becomes like a tough, sticky off-road trail, passable only by very fit cyclists on hi - specification mountain bikes. For most of this year it could not be used by families with children for leisure cycling for most of its length, or commuter cyclists travelling to Fareham on hybrid bikes. Some stretches are OK, but several are horrendous. If this trail was tarmaced and the drainage cleared it would be a valuable and safe commuter route, moving cars off the road, and reducing road deaths/injuries of cyclists. The long term cost to society of a cyclist death in terms of lost tax revenue and other outputs could be greater than the cost of upgrading this route.

Not too bad in north, but on the 2-3 occasions I have used the section out N from Wickham it was almost impassable.

Very poor. It's promoted as a family cycle trail but most of the year it's too muddy to be usable.

Think it is excellent. Nice to be somewhere that isn't tarmac. It helps stop the motor bikes from using it.

Equestrians clearly value the route as one of the few traffic free routes they can use. They are less concerned about the mud, as horse cope better with it than bikes or feet. They do, however, have concerns about holes, stones and overhanging vegetation, the entrance and exits on and off the Trail. The following summarise their views :

It's fine, leave it alone.

It gets muddy from time to time but that's all part of the fun. If you were to put a hard surface down it would be unsuitable for horses and would be more suited to an urban environment. We live in the country, and that's muddy.

I love it and so does my barefoot horse. I have no other off road riding so this trail is invaluable to my horse's exercise.

As a horse rider I would say that some of the track could do with some looking at as there are a few holes here and there.

Generally OK but it does get muddy when continually wet. More difficult for walking than riding.

Good. Entrances to and from could be a lot safer.

It gets muddy when we have heavy rain but we like this as we can canter and trot the horses without jarring their legs. Some places are too stoney and would benefit from a sandy or soil surface. However walkers and cyclists will have a different view. Perhaps a narrow trail along one side with a firmer would benefit them

Several express the desire for a much more horse-friendly surface :

Some low hanging branches beyond Wickham, too stoney in some areas for barefoot horses to use comfortably. We use the bridleways so we don't have to use the roads, but encounter even worse ground in some areas e.g. between Wickham Railway station and Knowle (particularly both side approaches to the railway station) is very uncomfortable to walk on as the ground needs a finer grade stone.

For a faster ride it would be better as a horse rider if the surface was turf or mulch of some kind.

Walkers experience more problems with the mud. Lots of walkers mention that the horses make it muddy by using it in wet weather.

Their comments can be summarised by the following :

Generally good in summer although this year it has suffered from the rain and been wet and muddy in the poorest sections practically all year. It would definitely benefit from improved drainage in some areas.

Getting overgrown and muddy, poor !

On the whole very good however overgrown in areas and the surface needs some maintenance.

Improvements to the Trail

The question started with a summary of the planned improvements :

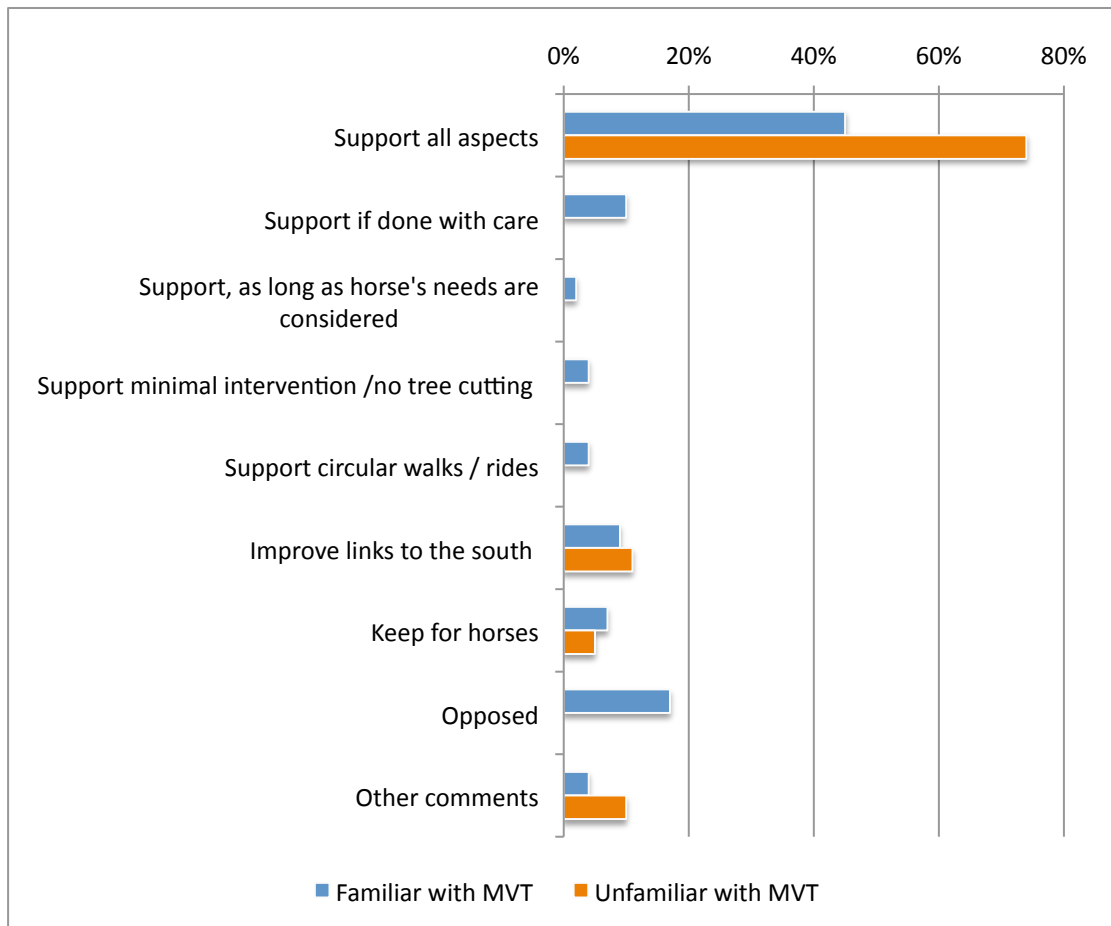
The Meon Valley Trail is a 12 mile long disused railway line, running from West Meon to just north of Fareham. It can currently be used by walkers, riders and cyclists but it is not well known and little used.

Hampshire County Council working with The South Downs National Park Authority believe there is potential to improve the Trail and to create a high quality resource for families and local people to enjoy. Improvements being considered include upgrading the surface of the Trail, new signage and promotion, creation of link routes and circular walks and rides off the Trail, and clearing or trimming of trees along the Trail.

**7. Do you have any views on the proposed improvements ?
(404 valid responses from 588)**

All respondents were asked this question, whether they had previously heard of the MVT or not. This was an open text response, the responses have been categorised into the following :

Opinion	Familiar with MVT (385 responses)		Unfamiliar with MVT (19 responses)		Total (404 responses)	% of all responses
Support all aspects	174	45%	14	74%	188	47%
Support if done with care	40	10%			40	10%
Support, as long as horse's needs are considered	9	2%			9	2%
Support minimal intervention /no tree cutting	15	4%			15	4%
Support circular walks / rides	14	4%			14	3%
Improve links to the south	36	9%	2	11%	38	9%
Keep for horses	27	7%	1	5%	28	7%
Opposed	67	17%			67	17%
Other comments	15	4%	2	10%	17	4%
	397		19		416	



The overall comments are greater than the number of respondents. An individual's response may fit into more than one category, for example if a response only comments on the need for a link to the south, this is recorded as 'Improve links to the south' if however they express support for the wider improvements, and mention the links they are recorded under both headings.

Overall the majority of users supported all or some of the proposed improvements. 47% expressed high levels of support, a further 16% expressed support qualified with concerns about how sensitively the work should be done. Major considerations here were that the surface should remain suitable for horses, and that tree cutting be kept to a minimum.

The development of circular walks and rides was supported by the majority of people, including a number of those who did not support any other improvements or promotion.

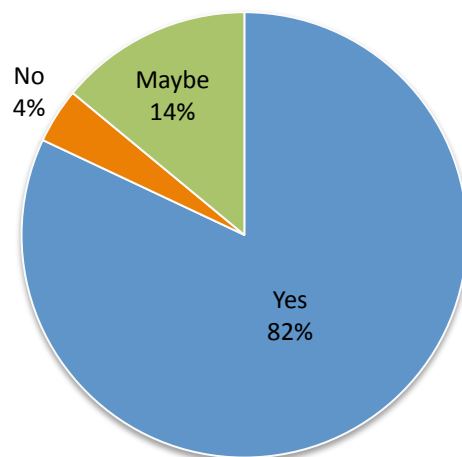
9% of users mentioned the need for improved links to the south, although a number recognised how difficult these would be to achieve.

Two main reasons were expressed opposing the proposed improvements, loss of the natural feel of the place, and the concern that improvements would be detrimental to horse riders.

Equestrians are concerned that improvements to the surface will reduce their ability to ride on the trail. In addition they are concerned that increased use will interfere with their enjoyment. They make the point that there are very few places for horse riders to canter, or even to ride off road, and that walkers and cyclists have many more opportunities.

A minority of responses expressed a sense that the MVT belongs to the riders, and that increased use by other users would be detrimental to their enjoyment. One comment was *“The trail is valuable to horse riders in this area as a place away from traffic to exercise horses, sometimes sensibly and responsibly at speed. This right should be preserved with warnings to other users of the possibility of this.”*

8. Would you use the Trail if it was improved ?



This is an interesting response, given the number of people opposed to the improvements, the majority stated that they would continue to use even if the improvements were carried out.

Respondents replying 'no' or 'maybe' were asked :

9. What would prevent you using the Trail if it was improved ? (respondents could tick all that applied to them)

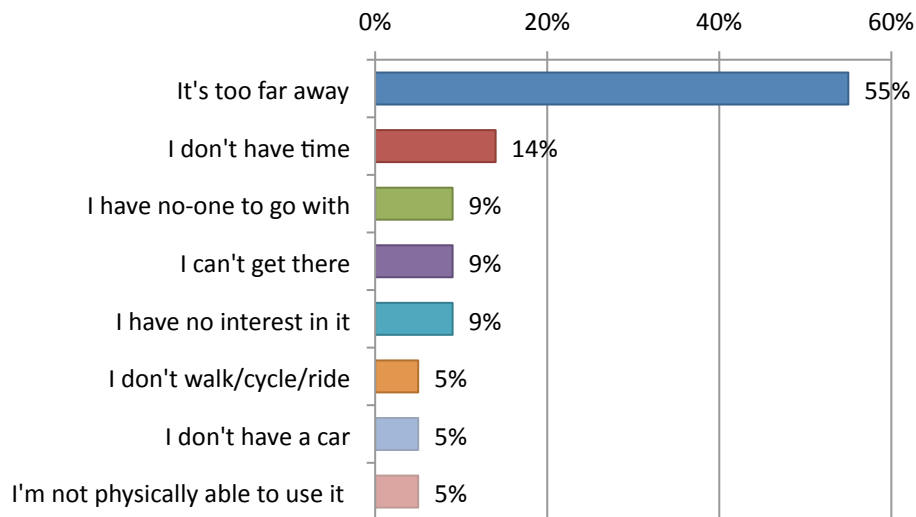


Figure 5: Would would prevent you using the Trail if it was improved?

Other comments included :

- 18 comments that if a hard surface was put down they would no longer visit as it would be unsuitable/undesirable for riders
- 29 comments saying that if it were 'improved' it would lose it's charm and appeal "I'm a regular user, I would only stop if it lost its country/natural feel."
- 10 comments saying if it became too busy it would no longer be appealing "It would become too busy, it's one of the only places to go that aren't overcrowded."

10. Where do you live ?

(460 responses)

Locations with over 5 responses are shown below A large percentage of respondents live in the villages close to the MVT :

Whickham	39	10%
Soberton	33	8%
Meonstoke	30	7%
Droxford	18	4%
West Meon	17	4%
Warnford	11	2%
Newtown	11	2%
Swanmore	8	2%
Bishop's Waltham	8	2%
Denmead	7	2%
Soberton Heath	6	1%
East Meon	6	1%

Fareham	38	9%
Southampton	16	4%
Winchester	14	3%
Portsmouth	13	3%
Titchfield	11	2%
Gosport	10	2%
Petersfield	9	2%
Hedge End	8	2%
Eastleigh	8	2%
Stubbington	6	1%

11. Please tell us how you currently enjoy the outdoors

(460 responses – respondents could answer any of the list, hence totals are over 100%)

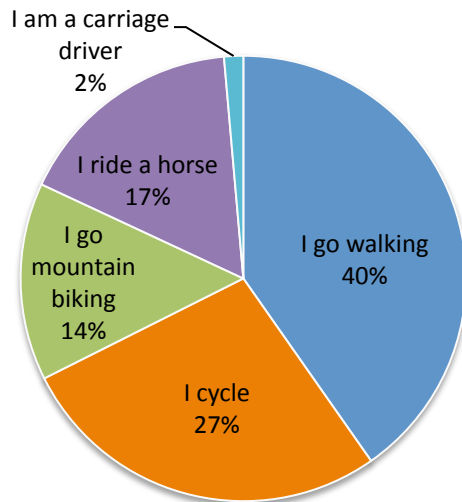


Figure 6: Please tell us how you currently enjoy the outdoors

Other responses include running, geocaching, orienteering, use mobility scooter, and interestingly “I organise the Portsmouth World Naked Bike Ride!”.

12. Which of the following would you consider ?

(287 responses)

Respondents could select as many as applied

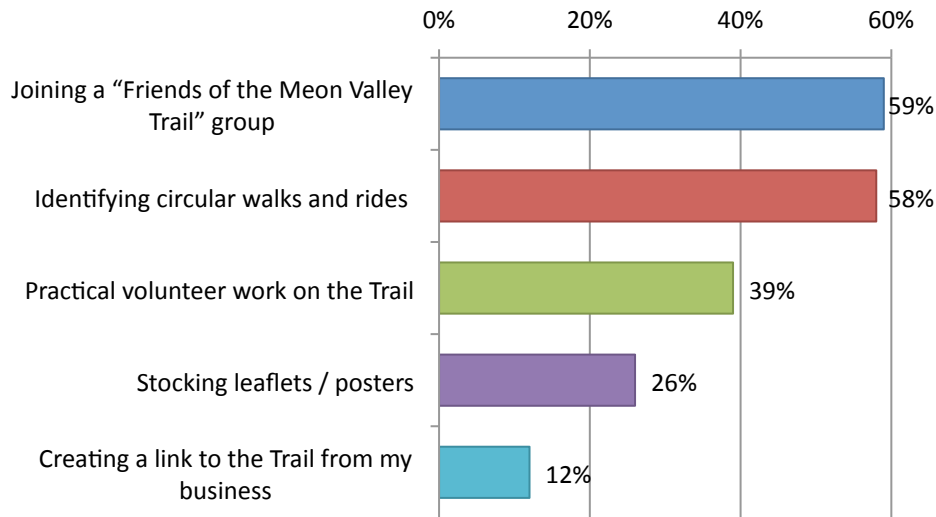


Figure 7: Which of the following would you consider?

Other comments included promoting the Trail to local cycle or horse groups, via Parish website, and creating links from other Trail or user group websites.

13. Do you wish to be kept informed ?

153 people supplied contact information.

Anything else ?

187 responses

Many respondents used this column to re-iterate their support or opposition to the proposed improvements. Other comments included :

The need for horse box parking, and concerns about increased use requiring better parking facilities.

The need for dog waste bins.

"It's a beautiful place, it should be appreciated by more people."

"A pointer to pubs so that walkers can take refreshment."

"additional horse friendly access points would be good"

Appendix 2 - Bridging the Knowle Gap

Summary

- Embedding access improvements in the development/action plans of the two planning authorities offers the best medium-term opportunity to increase the trail's connectivity and enhance non-vehicular links from Knowle to Fareham and Wickham.
- In the short term, Mayles Lane (see figures 1 and 2 and photos 1-3) and existing public rights of way and permissive routes could be better promoted, maintained and linked to raise awareness and confidence by users.
- Further documentary research and landowner consultation are needed to clarify Mayles Lane's current legal and practical status.

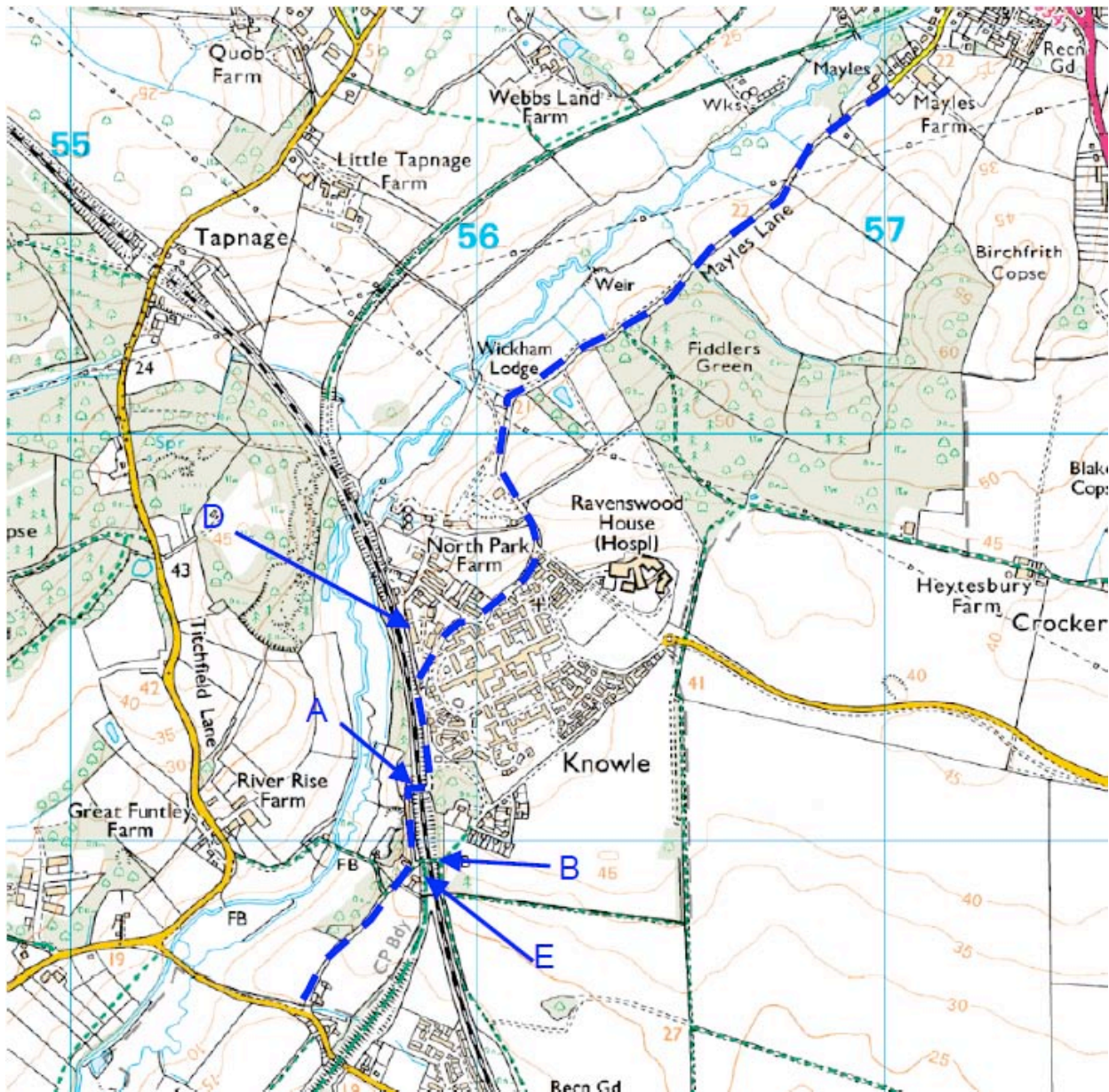


Figure 1: Mayles Lane

■ Mayles Lane

A: single carriageway northern bridge

B: pedestrian width only bridge

D: railway station at Knowle

E: link path between the disused track bed and Mayles Lane adjacent to the railway footbridge

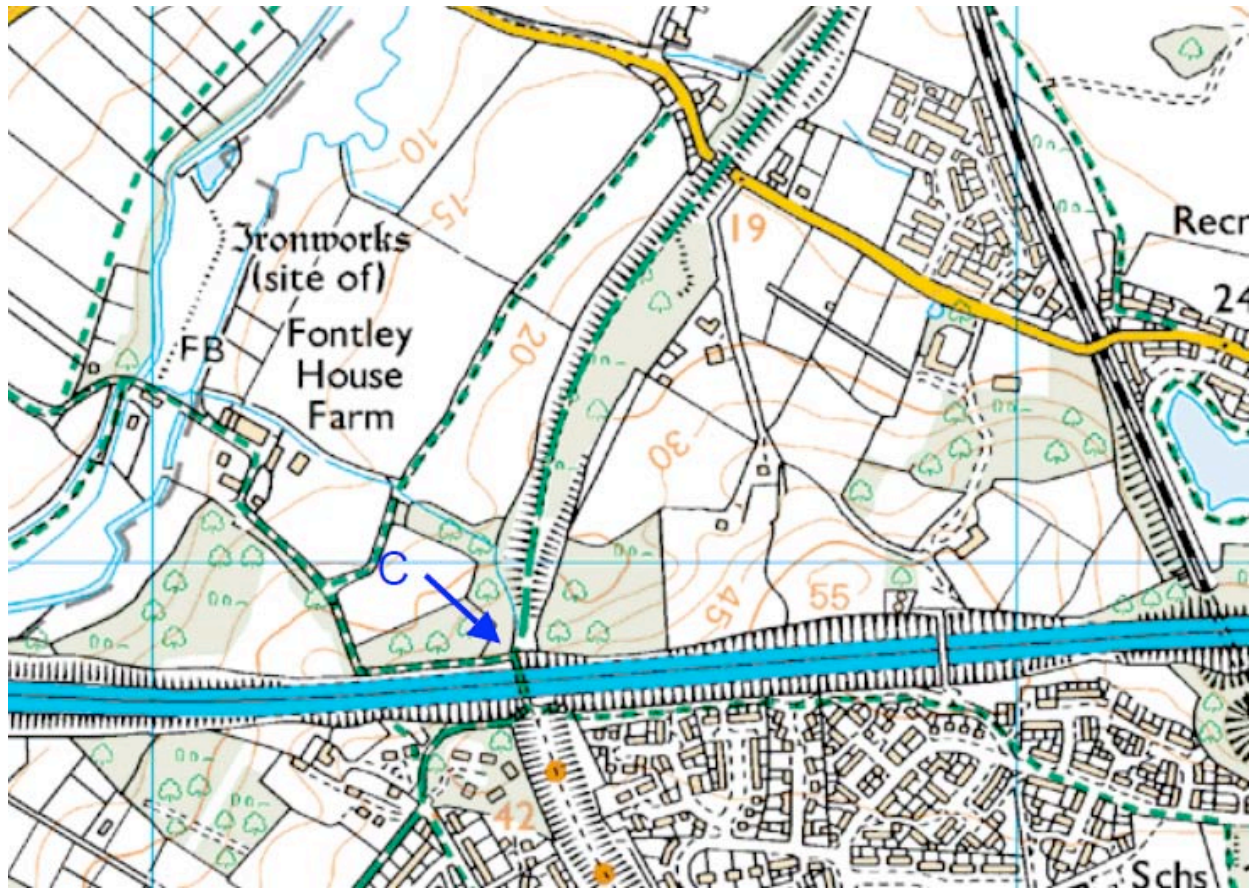


Figure 2

C: restricted M27 underpass



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

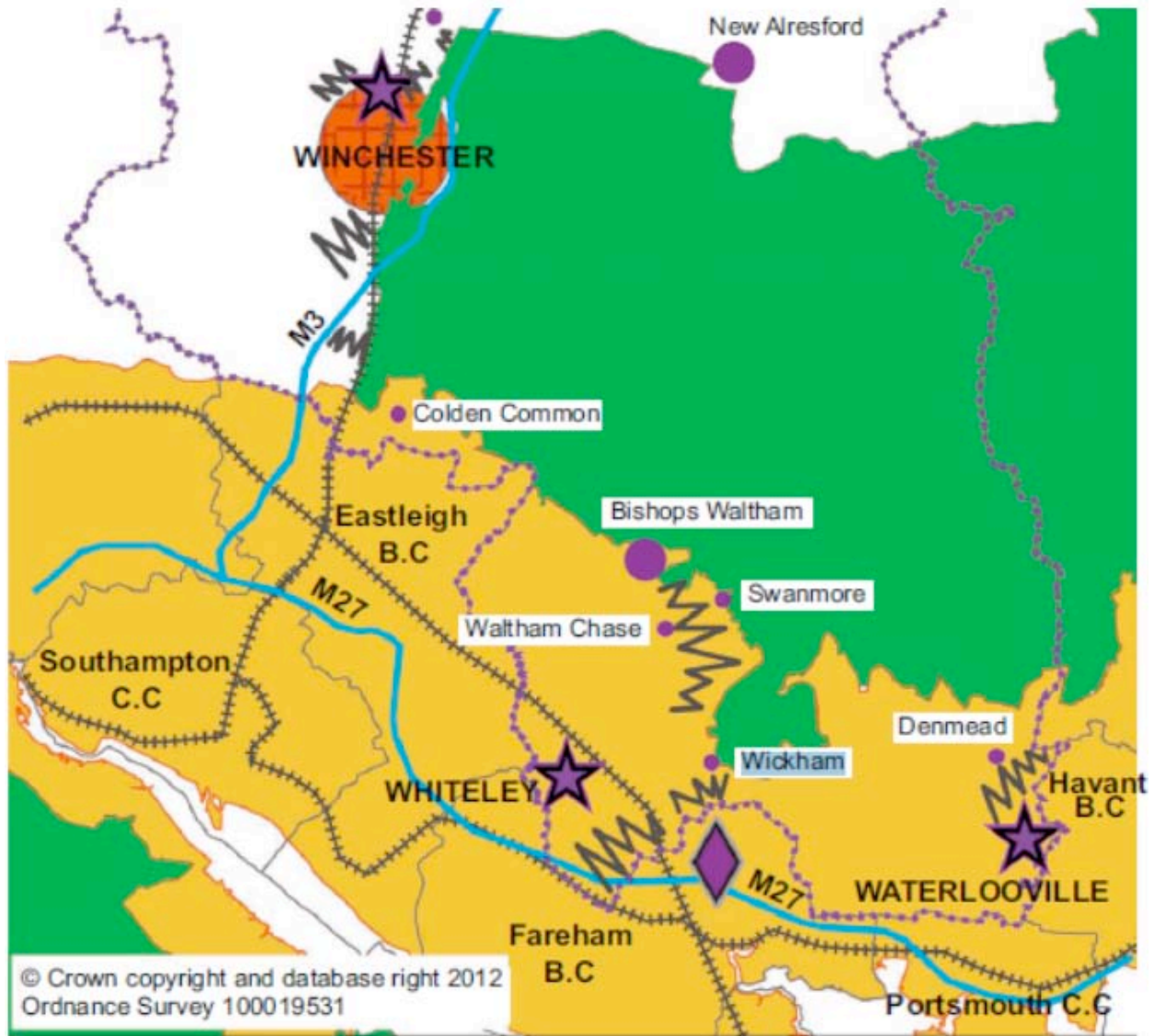
Introduction

Despite significant constraints, opportunities currently exist to bridge the “Knowle gap”; however, there is no single, neat solution. Different approaches are needed over time, also depending on the relative priorities for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

At present, the former railway track bed, both north and south of Knowle, provides useful and valued access provision, as observed during the site visits on an overcast Saturday in November. While its current offering is generally neither well-connected nor of high quality, the relative absence of access elsewhere – especially for horse riders – means it is of comparatively high value in a local context.

Opportunities from housing development

The best opportunities in the medium-term arise from the Strategic Development Area (figure 3) to the immediate south of Knowle, contained in Fareham Borough Council's adopted Core strategy, which includes the provision of around 7,000 homes.



NOT TO SCALE

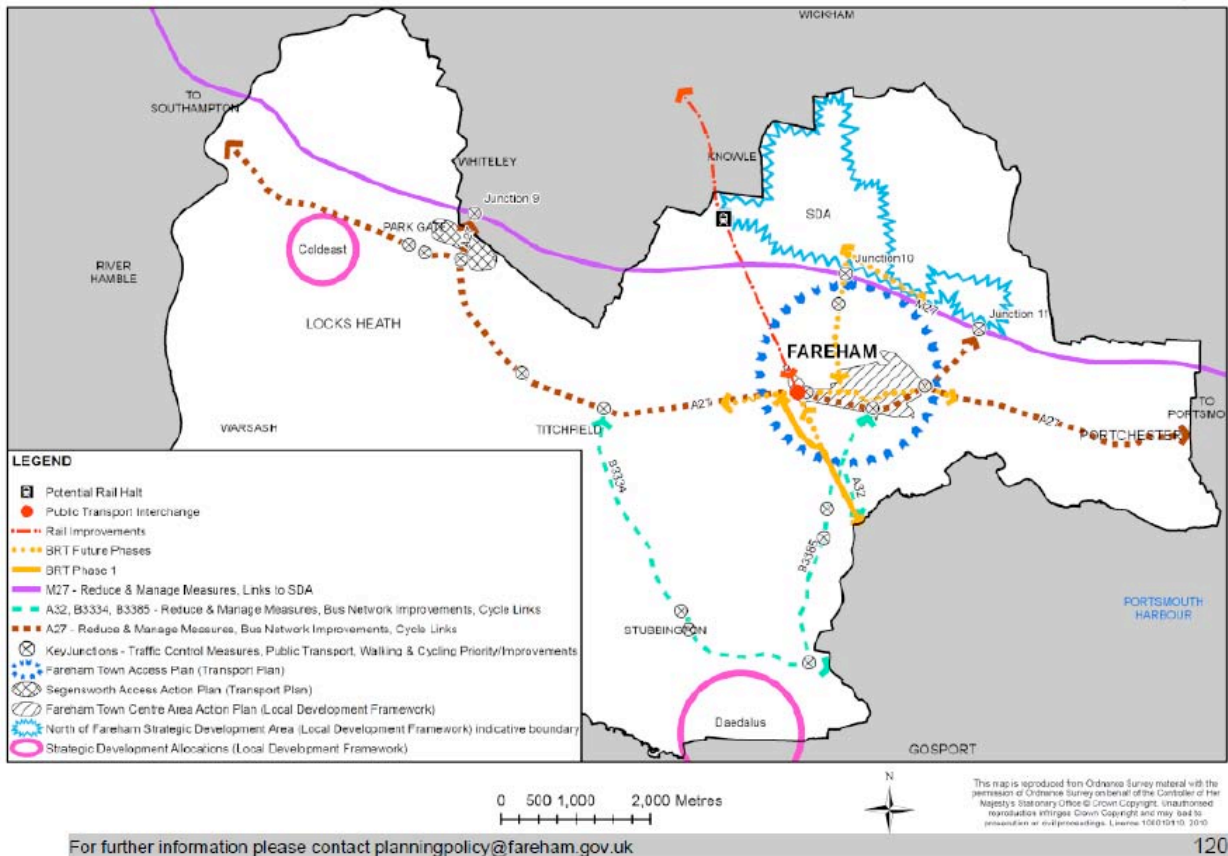
Key:

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------|
| Winchester District Boundary | Settlement Gap | NORTH |
| National Parks | Strategic Allocations | |
| Winchester Town | Strategic Development Area | |
| Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Area | | |

Figure 3: Extract from Winchester District Development Framework

The associated transportation and greenspace needs will provide a strong policy and practical context for improving utilitarian, non-vehicular links towards Fareham, as well as recreational routes to the north. Apart from direct influence within and adjacent to the SDA, the development is also likely to substantiate the legal and practical case for creation orders to provide new routes, or upgrade public footpaths to bridleways, to the north of Knowle, land currently designated as “Settlement Gap” (figure 3) in the pre-submission version (January 2012) of the Winchester District Development Framework.

The longer-term aspiration to provide a non-vehicular link to the proposed development of 3,000 homes at Whiteley. Figure 4 further supports such links.



For further information please contact planningpolicy@fareham.gov.uk

Figure 4: Plan from Fareham BC showing approx area of SDA and proposed rail halt

These recent planning-led opportunities were not envisaged in previous feasibility reports on the Trail. The challenge now for HCC is to ensure a creative and integrated approach is embedded, and closely monitored, in all the relevant development and action plans that span the two planning authority areas. Apart from this addressing the missing link itself, this can also support other aspirations contained in HCC’s Countryside Access Plan.

Key constraints

While the development proposals above could lead to an additional crossing of the live Fareham-Eastleigh railway line, in the short term the two existing bridges over it (the northern bridge being single carriageway (marked as A on Figure 1. Also see photos 4 and 5), the other pedestrians width only (marked as B on Figure 1. Also see photo 6), plus the restricted M27 underpass (marked as C on Figure 2. Also see photo 7), present fixed strategic constraints when considering links to the south of Knowle.



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7

To the north of Knowle, past HCC contact with a significant owner of land between the trail and Mayles Lane, and the well-maintained fences and locked gates (see photos 8-11) that exclude the public from this land (where tracks linking to the trail do physically exist for private use), suggest that agreement to provide additional access, even permissive, is unlikely. For this reason, in the short-term, opportunities to connect the trail's track bed to the west of Wickham are held to be unrealistic due to landowner objection and the cost to achieve through creation orders.



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



Photo 11

Research by HCC directly and that commissioned by the Countryside Access Forum, indicates an absence of unrecorded public rights of way that could have, if proven and registered, provided additional links to the trail west of Wickham.

Short term opportunities

Mayles Lane is pivotal to better connecting Wickham with Knowle in the short-term.

Historically this was an access road for the former Knowle Hospital site, first opened in 1852 (closed in 1996), with gateway lodges at the Wickham and Fareham entrances.

While on paper, Mayles Lane's current status as an unadopted, unclassified road with no through public rights of access may seem unhelpful, in practice it is currently used without hindrance by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. While more utilitarian than recreational in character, it provides a well-placed link from Wickham to Knowle, of particular value to cyclists. Its current level of unchallenged usage suggests that public rights of access may have been gained, or that a creation order could be readily made given the current level of tolerated usage and demand, if the landowner(s) will not willingly dedicate such rights.

If the proposed reopening of the railway station (marked as D on Figure 1. Also see photo 12) at Knowle goes ahead Mayles Lane, in whole or in part, is very likely to require greater public status as it is a key link, or least needs to be crossed, to access the station site.



**Photo
12**

South of Knowle, physical improvements to the trail's surface and provision of lighting in the M27 underpass would significantly improve its usability, especially for cycle commuting. The approx 2.3m square profile of the underpass does severely limit its usability by equestrians, although ponies were seen being led through it.

A key improvement to action in the short term would be re-grading and widening of the narrow link path between the disused track bed and Mayles Lane adjacent to the railway footbridge (marked as E on Figure 1. Also see photo 13) subject to landowner consultation.



**Photo
13**

Signposting and promotion would also significantly enhance the perception and usage of a through route.

While the Mayles Lane option leaves the track bed to the west of Wickham as a cul-de-sac (except for walkers for half its length) it can still serve a useful purpose, especially for horse riders for whom a linear route, largely free of other users can be a very useful resource for exercising horses.

Maps showing route options

Map 1

<http://www.walk4life.info/walk/utilitarian-route-could-be-promoted-now-currently-used.-best-cyclists-open-all-t#node-72962>



This is a utilitarian route that could be promoted now as it is currently used. Best for commuting utilitarian cyclists but open to all, though for horse riders motorway underpass will be problem for some. Some improvements to surfacing on section from motorway north to Mayles Lane by railway bridge would be helpful.

Map 2

<http://www.walk4life.info/walk/ideal-link-trail-knowle-routes>

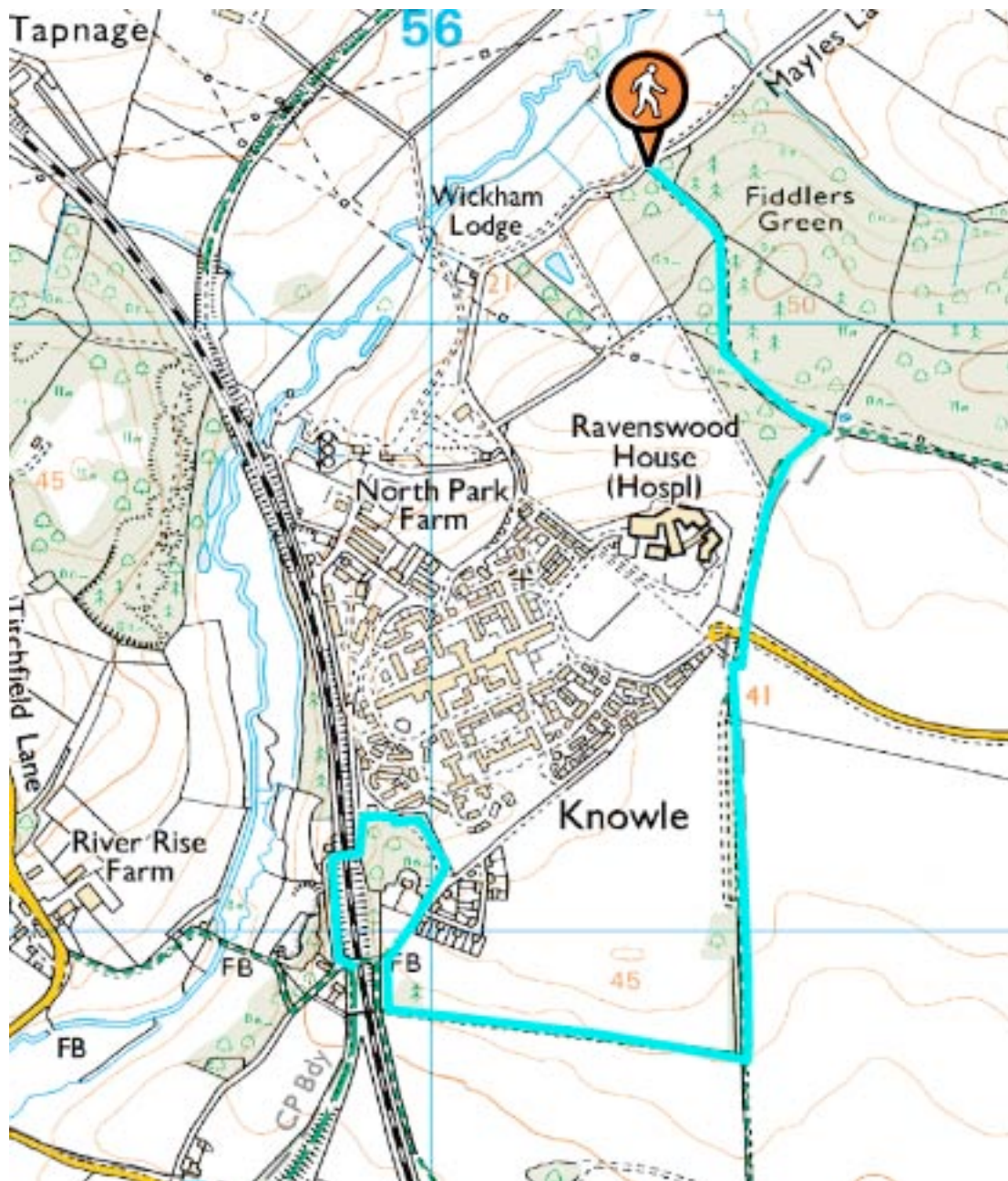


This is the most practical way to link the trail onto Mayles Lane (though it has only been surveyed from road and air photographs), as it uses existing bridges and stoned tracks and would seem less of a challenge for a creation order or planning related provision.

The route runs along a track on the field side of a wall to link with path through Fiddlers Green Wood, plus a connection by Wickham Lodge for people wanting to go south on Mayles Lane. There could also be a potential link going north-west to road somewhere around Little Tapnage Farm, but this has not been surveyed.

Map 3

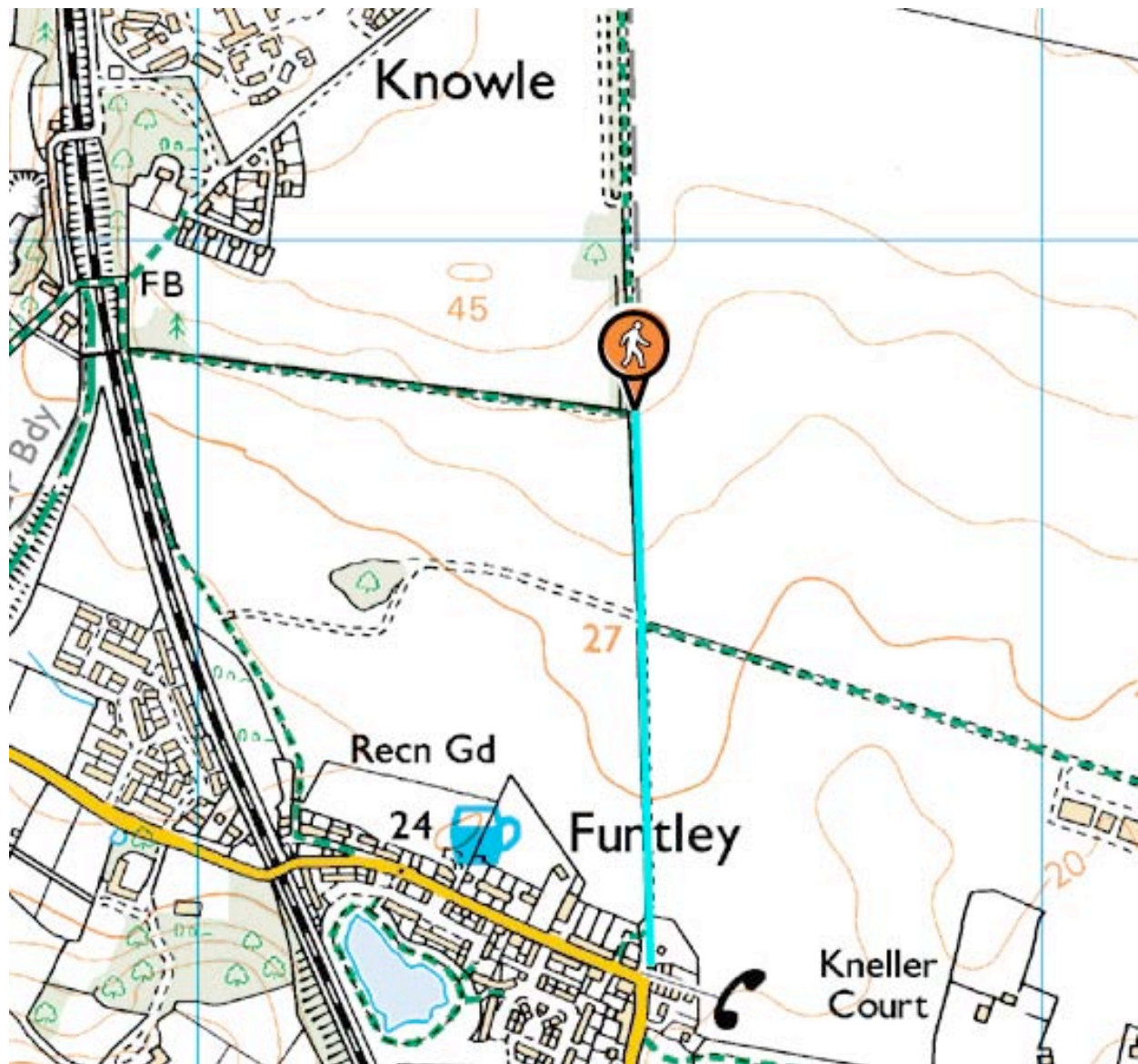
<http://www.walk4life.info/walk/more-attractive-and-recreational-route-around-knowle#node-72964>



This is the route we'd suggest for recreational users (walk, horse ride and cycle) as a more pleasant, traffic free, but longer route around Knowle. All the route is presently walked - would need creation order, dedication or planning agreement to upgrade to bridleway. Walkers could go over the more southerly railway footbridge, but riders have to go up to the road bridge as illustrated (until a new bridge is provided if ever). Allows ready access into / out of Knowle for residents and visitors to get to shops etc.

Map 4

<http://www.walk4life.info/walk/link-recreational-route-south-link-funtley>



This would link route on map 3 using an existing walked route to Funtley, which would link better with local horse riders in the area and a way to cross the motorway without using the low-ish underpass on the trail itself.

Appendix 3 – Quotes from contractors

Surface

4 companies were contacted with regard to providing rough cost estimates.

Katy Poulson, Poulson Plant Hire replied by email :

From: Katy Poulson
Subject: **RE: Works on the Meon Valley Trail**
Date: 4 June 2013 18:56:40 GMT+01:00
To: Anne Clark
▶ 1 Attachment, 78.2 KB



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Glenroona, Batt Corner, Docketfield, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4EX
T: 01252 792614 F: 01252 795707 M: 07703 519488
E: katy.poulson@btconnect.com
www.poulsonm.com
Vat Registration No: 479 7518 82



CPA



FSB

Highway Maintenance
Forage Harvesting
Ground Work
Reinstatement
Tree Surgery
Excavations

Dear Anne

Following our conversation regarding the 12 miles of track that needs up grading, an approximate costing would be around £600,000.00 + VAT.

This should be sufficient to cover all plant, labour and material to a specification of a 2m wide path with geotextile membrane, 100mm crushed concrete and 100mm of Hoggin.

I hope this is helpful to you and should you wish to discuss this further pleased do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards Katy

Mark from Wessex Land and water spoke to me and asked for more information so he could present a more accurate price.

Gary at Scandor asked for more information.

Jim Hammond replied by email :

From: jhhammond
Subject: **Re: Works on the Meon Valley Trail**
Date: 7 June 2013 15:52:42 GMT+01:00
To: Anne Clark

Hi Anne

Sorry I haven't replied before only just checked my mail.

Having worked on sections of the Meon Valley Trail in the past I am assuming you are looking for costs of surfacing works if so this is a guide to specifications we have used before.

Excavate loose soil spreading arising's to verges, install 150 mm of limestone scalplings compact & set to camber/crossfall to assist drainage.

The costs of above specification vary between £12.00 & £18.00 per m2 depending on size of job plus available access.
Installation of subbase if required, site clearance and drainage would have to be assessed on each job and added to the costing's.

I can be reached on 07802578964 or email if you require any more info.

Regards Jim Hammond

J H Hammond & Son Ltd

Bridges

A bridge quote was received from the Wooden Bridge Company. I also spoke to Don Blackburn on 07739309216 who gave me a verbal estimate for installation. Don is an engineer and can provide detailed costings and arrange all aspects of bridge work.

The Wooden Bridge Company

29 Devonshire Road, Salford. M6 8HZ

Tel 0161 831 0177 Email: info@thewoodenbridge.co.uk

Web: www.thewoodenbridge.co.uk

Anne Clark
Walk England
9th May 2013

Q5765

Dear Ms Clark,

Bridleway bridges for West Meon

We are able to quote for your enquiry as follows;

1) 6 metre effective span bridleway bridge.

8 metre long bridge 3 metres clear width with 1.8 metre parapet.

Timber hardwood Ekki, a strength Grade D60 timber used for external structural work and requires no treatment or surface finish.

Fixings hot dipped galvanized finish (not BZB) except the deck fixings which are stainless steel.

Parapet is post and four rails. If infill required to reduce the visibility for horses this is an extra cost of £590

Decking with a grooved pattern on the top face and two resin anti-slip inserts per board.

Cost £9661

2) 4 metre effective span bridleway bridge.

6 metres long and 3 metres clear width with a 1.8 metre parapet.

All details as above for 1)

Extra for infill parapet £432

Cost £6965

All timber is FSC.

Bridges supplied factory assembled for lifting in on site.

Delivery £1600

3) Installation.

I have consulted our site engineer who has indicated that without more information it is difficult to quote.

I could get him to phone you and then we would supply you with an installation. Or alternatively you can phone him on 07739309216.

All prices subject to Vat at 20%

Ron Jennings
Director

For The Wooden Bridge Company Ltd

*Registered in England No. 7481348 Vat Reg. No. 106 1676 33
FSC COC certificate: RA-COC-005535-JP*

Meon Valley Trail – condition survey report

by Walk England
February 2013



Meon Valley Trail

Condition survey

February 2013

The survey was carried out from the south end of the Trail heading north.

The southern half of the trail is used more than the north, and is in better condition. In all areas there are problems with track-side trees which have regenerated since the lines became disused, resulting in many spindly ash and other trees. These lean in towards the trail to reach the light, and many are in danger of falling onto it. Some have already fallen, others are leaning far enough to restrict head height, especially for horse riders.

Badgers use the embankments, and there are signs of numerous setts. Some of these are causing subsidence and holes to appear in the trail surface, or loose material to slip onto the surface.

There is no evidence of illegal vehicular use, including motorbikes, at any point along the trail.

The surface of the trail is generally in poor condition. Some sections are very bad, others are passable with care. The audit was carried out in February, water levels were high although the trail was not as muddy as it had been on our previous visit in autumn. In places it may be possible to scrape the mud and leaf mould off the surface, revealing the hard track beneath. In others the profile of the surface has eroded to a state where this is not an option, and only resurfacing will improve the condition.

Trees have regenerated along the length of the trail, in many places trees are lean over the trail and restrict head height or fall and obstruct the way.

The trail has minimal signage, there are no signs to it from the busy A32 or the villages along its length.

Most of the bridges are in sound condition, although most would be improved by having brambles and shrubs cleared from their decks.

There are a few benches along the trail, generally these are in good condition and have cleared areas around them.

The on-line survey carried out at the end of 2012 showed a lot of interest in the trail from equestrians, although only 2 riders were encountered on the trail during the audit. Near Wickham families were using the trail, some were geocaching, others walking or cycling. A lot of people were walking dogs, and a few cyclists and runners were seen.

Interestingly although the riders responding to the survey were very keen for the trail to retain a soft surface, the two we saw on the route were riding on the harder edge strip. Evidence on site suggested that the majority of equestrians were choosing to ride on the harder strips.

There is little parking close to the trail, very few formal car parks and narrow lanes mean roadside parking is rarely practical. There is potential to make more of the parking at West Meon.

Part 1 (2,090m) – End of Trail to Wickham A334

Overall the section south of Wickham requires only minimal maintenance work, vegetation clearance, tree thinning etc. These tasks could be carried out by volunteers.

Section 1 Length: 275 m Starts: Southernmost end of Trail adjacent to main line rail station Ends: Crossing of power lines			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is along a small embankment with birch and	Satisfactory	Clearance of shrubby track-side growth – brambles, dog rose,	Low

scrubby vegetation on both sides. Photo 1 & 2		saplings and overhanging trees	
The remains of point switching gear can be seen close to the track. Photo 3			
Large birch tree has fallen across track (point A on map). Too large for vols to do with handsaws. Photo 4	Poor	Remove	High
Beyond tree some roots are present in track surface, and more shrubby vegetation is present. Photos 5 & 6	Satisfactory	Clearance of shrubs/thinning trees	Low
Section 2 Length: 100m Starts: 1 st power line Ends: 2 nd power line			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is in small cutting. There is a lot of badger activity close to the trail, but not damaging the surface. Photo 7	Satisfactory		
Overhanging trees, and shrubby vegetation Photo 8	Satisfactory	Clearance of shrubby track-side growth – brambles, dog rose, saplings. Clearance of overhanging trees	Low
Section 3 Length: 80m Starts: 2nd power line Ends: Bridge – Tapnage farm			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section in small cutting. Shrubby veg is restricting width slightly.	Satisfactory	Clearance of shrubby track-side growth – brambles, dog rose, saplings.	Low

Photo 9			
Bridge is in poor condition, falling masonry presents a hazard. Photos 10, 11 & 12	Hazardous	Structural survey of bridge Removal of the bridge. Access to fields could be provided by creating an at-grade crossing.	High Medium
Section 4 Length: 335m Starts: Bridge – Tapnage farm Ends: End of cutting			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is in shallow cutting, surface is generally hard with covering of leaves/mud. Photo 20	Satisfactory	Scrapping of surface would improve the condition of this section.	Low
Overhanging/fallen trees Photo 15, 16, 22		Thinning and removal of some small trees is required	Low
Side drains remain, some are flowing. Drains on south side are in better condition than those on north side. Photo 17, 18, 19		Drainage of this section could be improved by clearing /reopening existing drains	Medium
Gas pipe crosses track (point B) , badger set close by. Photo 21			
Gap in fence being used as informal access. Photo 23			
Section 5 Length: 110m Starts: End of cutting Ends: Junction with right of way, Webbs Land Farm			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Small embankment. Photo 24	Satisfactory		
Surface is hard with some mud on top.		Scraping surface may be helpful here.	Low

Photo 25			
Shrubby side vegetation & overhanging trees		Clearance of shrubby veg on sides, and some tree thinning.	Low
Section 6 Length: 240 Starts: Junction with right of way, Webbs Land Farm – photo 26 Ends: Junction with right of way			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Small embankment.			
Surface is hard with some mud on top.	Satisfactory	Scraping surface may be helpful here.	Low
Shrubby side vegetation & overhanging trees Photo 27		Clearance of shrubby veg on sides, and some tree thinning.	
There is a possible vehicle access point on the trail close to ROW. Photo 29			
Section alongside vineyard (Webbs Land Farm) has trimmed trees on north side, shrubby veg on south. Photo 28			
Concrete and wire fence narrows width, generally in poor state of repair.			
Section 7 Length: 225m Starts: Right of way after vineyard Ends: Water treatment works			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Narrow section through golf course.	Satisfactory		
Brambles restrict width. Photo 31, 32		Clearance of shrubby veg/brambles.	Low
Golf course track crosses at B and C. Vehicular access possible via these tracks. Photo 33			
Warning notice at end of section is starting to peel and will need replacement. Photo 34			

Section 8 Length: 225m Starts: Water treatment works Ends: Bridge			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is on embankment, golf course is to north side.	Satisfactory	This section requires some clearance of shrubby veg and overhanging trees.	Low
Surface is muddy. Photos 37, 38	Satisfactory	Scraping surface to remove mud/leaf mould to improve the condition.	Low
Overhanging trees/brambles/roses. Photos 39	Satisfactory	Tree work /vegetation clearance	Low
Large badger set across trail at C Photo 40, 41, 42	Hazardous	Large, deep hole in centre of track, particularly dangerous to horses or cyclists.	High
Section 9 Length: 500m Starts: Bridge (photo 43 & 44) Ends: Bridge – A334			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Trail is on wide embankment here, hard surface, some leaning trees. The surface is muddy with a harder strip at the side. Photo 45, 46, 47, 48	Satisfactory		
Privet hedge has been planted on part of northern side. Photo 49			
Bridge over Meon is wide, but partly overgrown with brambles restricting the width. Photo 50		Clear vegetation	Low
North of the bridge roots are visible in surface.			
Point 8 – informal access onto trail, Horse use is evident. This is very steep, with roots forming natural steps. Not a safe access point, but its presence		Equestrian access to this section needs to be improved. There are clear desire-lines developing, These are not safe and liable to cause erosion.	Low

demonstrates a need.		Safe access can be created to the north of this section – see below.	
Second informal access point just before road bridge, very steep with deep muddy foot/hoof prints. Photo 55			
Deck of A334 bridge has ash saplings and roses. Photo 56 & 57		Clear vegetation	Low

Part 2 – Wickham – A334 to car park on northern side of Wickham (545m)

This is the most well used section of the trail. The surface is generally reasonable. Access onto the trail is provided, but there are a number of informal access points suggesting additional access provision may be required.

Section: 10 Length: 320m Starts: Bridge – A334 Bridge Ends: Bridge over Bridge Street			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Surface is good. Section is on embankment.	Satisfactory		
Southernmost access to this section is just north of the A334 bridge. Steps are provided for pedestrians. Photo 58, 59 & 60.			
Informal access is happening on the northern side of the trail at this point. Photo 64 & 65		Additional access required Essential if proposals to promote route south from here via Mayles	Medium

		Lane are adopted.	
There is an access point at D. Ramped access could be provided – photos 61 and 62 Opposite is stepped access to the Millennium Water Meadow. Photo 67 & 68		Access for equestrians and cyclists is needed here, especially if the trail is to be continued along Mayles Lane. A graded access path could be created by using a section of the public footpath running below the embankment to the south of the trail, and creating a ramp up. There is sufficient width.	
Access is also provided to the south with steps, and a dog waste bin. Photo 69			
Metal post (remnant railway equipment) is sticking out at track edge just after access point. Photo 70	Action recommended	This could potentially be a hazard, this area is used by families and children. The spike should be removed to avoid any risk.	Medium
Access point near church is via steps. Benches are provided here, with good clear view of church. Photo 71, 72, 73, 74			
Bridge would benefit from clearing veg from deck. Additional green metal sections have been added for safety. Photos 75,76,77,78			Low
Section: 11 Length: 225m Starts: Bridge – Bridge over Bridge Street Ends: Car park			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Good section, wide and clear with excellent surface. Photo 79	Good	Information boards need cleaning – photo 81 Green on dog waste bin gives uncared for impression – photo 82 There are several notices warning of dog snatching in the area – photo 84	Medium

Part 3 – Wickham car park to Forestry Commission land (Upperford Copse) 2060m

Parts of this section have been improved, but the condition of much of it remains poor. Long stretches are in cuttings where drainage is an issue. Around the car park the signs are green with algae, regular cleaning would improve the appearance.

Section: 12 Length: 225m Starts: Bridge – Car park Ends: Vehicle barrier			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
New surface recently installed on this section – aggregate with side boards, good condition despite very wet areas to either side.	Good		
Snapped off bridleway sign is resting against tree near car park.		Sign needs removing / relocating Photo 85	High – currently may mislead. Remove in short-term.
Locked vehicle barrier at end of section.		Photo 87	
Section: 13 Length: 550m Starts: Vehicle barrier Ends: Bridge near Northfields Farm			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is in a deep cutting. Surface is crushed builders' rubble. It provides a soft surface ok for pedestrians and equestrians, but is too soft and loose for bikes.	Poor	Consider using different material when track is resurfaced. Photo 89, 90, 93	Low
Drainage is an issue on this section. Original drains are blocked, some maybe could be reopened, esp on left (west) side.	Poor	Recommend drainage is addressed by professional on this section. It may be possible to re-use existing infrastructure, or dig new open side drains.	Medium

Photo 94, 95, 96			
Surface has erosion scars.		Photos 91, 92	
Section: 14 8a Length: 370m Starts: Bridge – Bridge near Northfields Farm Ends: Track at edge of Close Wood			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is in shallow cutting. Track is wide and firm. Photo 98	Satisfactory		
There is some leaf material and mud on the surface in places. In parts the mud is deep and additional aggregate is required.		Surface could be scraped to remove organic matter. Photo 104 In places muddy hollows need filling with aggregate. Photo 105, 106	Low
Access (informal) from bridge on west side, Photo 99, 100 Formal access for all users joins slightly further north. Photos 101, 102, 103,		Preventing users taking the short cut will reduce erosion close to the bridge.	
A drain crosses before the track does at the end of the section.		Needs clearing – photos 107, 108, 109	Medium
Section: 15 Length: 610m Starts: Bridge – Track at edge of Close Wood Ends: Bridge, north side of Close Wood.			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
This section is muddy. The track profile has worn to create a central muddy hollow. Scraping the surface will not be adequate for this section.	Poor	Re-grading and resurfacing. Photos 111, 114, 115, 116	Medium
Drains are not working. Photos 112		Drainage work.	Medium

Small stream crosses at E – condition ok, but will require regular clearing to ensure it does not flood track.			
Bridge at end of section is over access track (disused)			
Section: 16 Length: 305m Starts: Bridge – Bridge, north side of Close Wood. Ends: Bridge, edge of Forestry Commission land.			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
This section is on an embankment. The surface is similar to the previous section, with muddy central section, drier edges.	Poor	Re-grading and resurfacing. Photos 119, 120	
Access track under the trail at F.			

Part 4 – Forestry Commission land, Upperford Copse (870m)

The condition of this section is poor. The surface is muddy and the trackside trees are leaning over the trail.

Section: 17 Length: 530m Starts: Bridge – Bridge, southern edge of Forestry Commission land. Ends: Bridge over A32			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
The surface of this section is muddy throughout, with a dry strip alongside. Photos 123, 124		Possible re-grade and re-surface.	Low

There is informal equestrian access on the west side of the trail north of the bridge. This is steep and muddy. Photos 125, 126		Better access is provided a short distance along the minor road beyond Kingsmead. Photos 129 Signage directing people may reduce use of this access point.	Low
Old coppice to west of trail is derelict. If re-coppiced this would bring more air and light into this section. Photo 127		Clearing coppice will add interest to trail, and improve the surface.	Low
Section: 18 Length: 340m Starts: Bridge – Bridge over A32 Ends: Bridge, northern edge of FC land.			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Access to this section from FC Upperford Copse is provided at the northern and southern ends of this section.	Satisfactory		
Access at the south is informal, with muddy paths and a fenced barrier. Photos 132, 133			
Better access is provided at the north, with a 'disabled access' sign. Photos 135, 141			
Trees are leaning over / falling along this section. Photo 134, 136		Tree management is required. The south side woodland may have been coppice, restarting coppice would improve the trail.	
Surface is drier than previous section, although muddy in the middle. Photo 137, 138		Surface improvement work	low

Part 5 – End of FC land to Droxford Station (5,525m)

This is a longer section, much is in cuttings and is very muddy, parts are on embankments and are slightly drier - overall it is muddy, with leaning trees. The surface is not suitable for bikes. Badgers are causing some subsidence and holes in areas. There are a number of benches, the majority have had the views around them cleared and are in good condition.

Section: 19 Length: 840m Starts: Bridge – Bridge, northern edge of FC land. Ends: Bridge below track from Bere Farm.			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Surface is eroded at the start of the section, under the bridge. Water is flowing from small stream passing through a garden to the north of the bridge. Water flows under the trail, but clearly at times flows over and along it. Photo 142, 143,	Satisfactory	Investigate where water flows to, ensure drain is clear allowing water to flow away.	
Surface is good at the start of the section by the cottage (photo 144) becomes muddier. Photo 145		To the right of the trail is a narrow belt of small trees. (G) Clearing these will create a view, and bring light and air to the section.	
A good drain has been dug to the right (and some parts of the left) side of the track. Surface is muddy due to profile. Photo 149		Clearing drains will improve surface.	
By white house drain is blocked by a tree. Photo 148			
Near the end of the section remnant trackside drains are open and close to trail presenting a hazard. Photo 150		Cover trackside drains.	
Informal access is being created at end of section to south of bridge. Photo 153			
Section: 20 Length: 1,015m Starts: Bridge – Bridge below track from Bere Farm.			

Ends: Bridge, Little Bere Farm			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Formal stepped access is provided at north of bridge. Photo 154			
Access for all users is via a graded slope.			
Surface is muddy. Trees lean/fall over the track. Photos 155,156, 160, 161		Surface work / thinning, clearing trees	
A stream flowing under the track at H has flooded the surface in the past. Photos 157, 158, 159		Maintain water courses to ensure streams flow away from track.	
A second stream 100m further north is flowing under and onto the trail. Photo 163		Maintain water courses to ensure streams flow away from track.	
Good stepped access is provided where row crosses. A bench is located slightly north of here. Photo 162			
This section is in a cutting and is muddy. Trees have been thinned but cut branches are left on the bank sides. Photo 160		Surface work, tidy bank sides to improve habitat and appearance.	
At the end of the cutting clearing a section of trees on the west side would improve the view. (I) Photo 165		Clear section of trees to create view and improve surface	
Section : 21 Length: 1,240m Starts: Bridge, Little Bere Farm Ends: Bridge with right of way – Millennium Walk.			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
This section is on an embankment. The track is wide and dry on the edges, although muddy in the centre, and occasional muddy areas. Photos 167, 175, 176	Satisfactory	Clearing some trees mat be adequate to improve the surface here	Low
Some high trees lean over the track (need professional tree		Tree work required.	Low

surgeon). Photos 168, 169			
Bridge part way along section is ok. Photo 174			
There is possible vehicular access via field gates at J. Photo 170 & 171			
Bench has clear view. Photo 172			
Ash saplings on east side could be cleared by vols to keep trail open to light.		Vol task to keep ash under control	Low
Leaning tree to be removed at K and L. Photo 177 & 178		Remove	Medium
Section ends at bridge with right of way – Millennium Walk. Photo 179, 180, 181			
Good stepped access to ROW and road. – photo 179			
Section : 22 Length : 255m Starts: Bridge with right of way – Millennium Walk. Ends: Start of cutting			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Short section along an embankment. Wide and reasonably dry.	Satisfactory		
Bench overlooking Meon at 4. Photo 182			
Big, old trees on river side with some low branches. Photo 183		Tree work	Low
Section 23 Length: 420m Starts: Start of cutting Ends: Cutt Bridge			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is in a cutting, overall it is muddy, with a wide muddy strip down the centre. Section is unsuitable for bikes. There are no visible drains.	Poor	Surface could be scraped at start of section, further along it deteriorates and needs full resurfacing.	Medium

Photo 184, 185, 189, 190			
Fallen, ivy covered tree at start of section, photo 184		Remove	medium
Large badger sett causing chalk to slide onto track at N Photo 186, 187, 188			
Access at the end of the section to road is via steps Photo 191	Poor / hazardous	Replace steps	High
Section 24 Length: 145m Starts: Cutt Bridge Ends: start of cutting			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is in cutting. Surface is muddy. Photo 192	Poor	Could possibly be scraped, profile is ok.	Medium
Access from Cutt Bridge follows path on east side of trail, joining at the end of section and cutting. Photo 193, 194, 195, 196	Satisfactory	Sign access from road	Low
Section 25 Length: 580m Starts: Start of cutting Ends: crossing of right of way.			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is on small embankment. Surface is muddy. Photo 197	Poor	Scraping may improve surface, although parts are very muddy. Resurfacing is a better option here.	Medium
Ivy covered trees lean in. Photo 197, 199, 200		Section would benefit from tree clearance to dry surface and improve headroom.	Low
Fallen tree, part cleared at O. Photo 198		Remove	Medium
ROW crosses trail at underpass (X). Underpass is unusable – walkers are climbing fence on west side and crossing trail then rejoining via east side. Photos 201, 202, 203	Poor	Work is needed to improve this – either re-open ROW or improve access onto trail	High

Section 26 Length: 565m Starts: Where ROW crosses trail Ends: Next right of way			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
This section is on an embankment, more open and with a better surface. Trees have been cleared here in the past. Photo 204	satisfactory		
Small shrubs and saplings are growing up where trees have been cleared.	Satisfactory	Possible volunteer task to clear shrubs/saplings	Low
Large badger sett on east side of trail and crossing it, before the bridge. Pipes have been installed to protect trail, but holes are still appearing in the surface. Photos 206, 207,	Poor	Resolve hols in track.	Medium
Access to right of way good – ramp then steps. A bench is located here. Photos 208, 209			
Section 27 Length: 465m Starts: Where ROW crosses trail Ends: Access point at Droxford station			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is in a cutting. The surface is muddy, not suitable for bikes. 216, 217	Poor	Ideally resurface	Medium
Equestrian access from the bridge is via a ramp. Access is eroded and muddy. Landing is very muddy. Photos 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216	Poor	Resurface access, resolve muddy area on landing.	Medium
Track along side of station (private house) is ok Photo218	Satisfactory		
Vehicular access to the trail at Droxford Station. Access point is ok.	Satisfactory		

Part 6 – Droxford Station to West Meon (6,105m)

This section is generally in poor condition with a very muddy surface. As the trail nears West Meon it improves for the last kilometre. There are two road bridges missing on this section. Both have ramps to allow users to continue on the trail.

Section 28			
Length: 710m			
Starts: Access point at Droxford station			
Ends: End of cutting			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
This section is muddy for the entire length. Photo 222, 226, 227	Poor	Resurface entire section	Medium
Section round private house starts on concrete – muddy Photos 218, 219, 221	poor	Scrape mud off surface, fill hollow at bridge end (photo 219 & 221)	Medium
Bridge near old station – deck has brambles / shrubs Photo 223	Satisfactory	There is a clear way through, but bridge would be improved if shrubs/brambles were removed.	Low
Access to road (Hurdles Pub) is via a slope, muddy and eroded Photo 224, 225	Poor	Repair	Low
Trees lean across section		Tree work required	Low
Section 29			
Length: 335m			
Starts: End of cutting			
Ends: Bridge, south of Meonstoke			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
This section starts on an embankment. It is wide, but muddy. Photo 229		Resurface entire section	Medium
Access at the end of the section is on the west side of the track.	Poor	Improve access point	Low
Section enters cutting and surface deteriorates. This section is impassable for bikes. Trees lean over track	Poor	Resurface, clear trees	Medium

Photo 230			
Section 30 Length: 550m Starts: Bridge, south of Meonstoke Ends: Road bridge near hall			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Surface starts slightly better on this section but soon deteriorates. Photo 233, 234, 236, 239	Poor	Ideally this whole section should be resurfaced.	Medium
Vehicular access is possible 50m from bridge (P)			
Footpath crosses at Q. Photo 237. Access on foot to trail via steps (slightly eroded) and via a slope on eastern side.	Satisfactory		
Trees on embankment shade trail. Photos 239	Satisfactory	Remove stretch of trees to bring air/ light to trail	Low
Access to road at end of sec via old, worn steps. Photo 240,241, 243 At roadside metal poles obstruct access from steps to road. Photo 242	Poor		Low
Section 31 Length: 145m Starts: Road bridge near hall Ends: End of open section			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is in a cutting and is muddy. More open in parts due to removal of older trees. Photos 244,245,246	Satisfactory	Ash regeneration could be controlled by vols.	Low
Section 32 Length: 275m Starts: End of open section Ends: Missing bridge Meonstoke			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is on embankment; surface is muddy in the centre.	Satisfactory	Surface improvements are desirable, although this section isn't	Low

Photo 247, 248		as bad as previous one.	
Ivy covered trees restrict light reaching trail.		Tree clearance	Low
Bridge missing at section end. Trail users are not warned about this. Pedestrian access to the road is via eroded steps on west side. Photos 248, 249	Poor	Improve access for pedestrians, or close this and direct users to better condition ramp on eastern side of trail.	medium
Ramped access is provided for equestrians. Photos 248, 252, Access beyond ramped access towards pedestrian access is obstructed by fallen trees. Photo 250, 251	Poor	Clear / or redirect users.	Low
Section would be improved by provision of a new bridge, resolving the need to drop down to road level. Road is quiet, but floods. Photo 253	Satisfactory	6m bridge required	Low
Section 33 Length: 970m Starts: Missing bridge Meonstoke Ends: Bridge with South Down Way			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is on embankment, light and open. Surface better at first where trees have been removed on east side, some muddy patches. Soon deteriorates and becomes impassable for bikes. Photos 256, 257,	Poor	Resurface.	Medium
Access from road is via ramp, muddy and very steep at end. Photo 254	Poor	Repair and regrade ramp	Low
Bench with view. – photo 255	Satisfactory		
After bench section enters cutting and deteriorates. Photo 258, 259,	Poor		
Access points to SDW at end of sec are all ok, steps on both sides for walkers, long ramp for equestrians/bikes on eastern side.	Satisfactory		

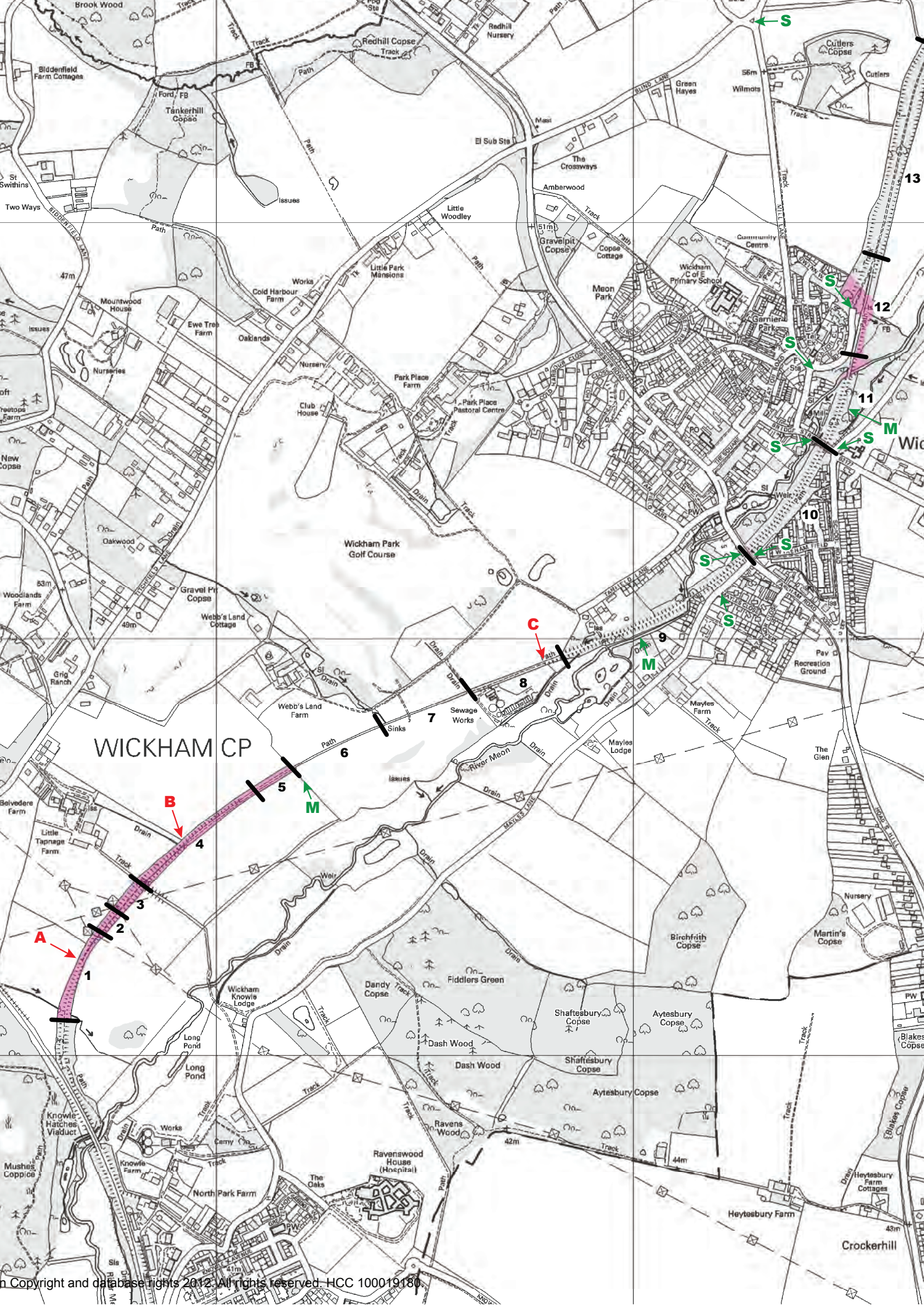
Photos 260, 261,			
Section 34 Length: 835m Starts: Bridge with South Down Way Ends: Peake New Road (missing bridge)			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Section is on an embankment, muddy in the centre with drier sides. It is not easy for bikes to negotiate. Roots are showing through surface. Photos 264, 267, 268, 272, 273, 274	Poor	Resurface	Low
Trees are leaning over the trail, limiting height in parts – esp at the edges which is where riders are choosing to ride Photo 268, 269, 273, 275	Satisfactory	Trees need thinning and leaning trees need removing	Low
Bridge at R is ok. Fence needs repair. Deck has elder saplings growing. Photos 270, 271	Satisfactory	Repair fence, clear vegetation from bridge deck.	Low
Bench is ok, although view is obstructed by shrubs	Satisfactory	Clear vegetation around bench to reveal view	Low
Bridge at S is ok, deck has saplings	Satisfactory	Clear saplings off deck	Low
Section ends at missing bridge over Peak New Road. Although access to the road is obvious there are no warning signs to alert users that they need to take the exit.	Poor	Erect signs warning of missing bridge	Medium
Access down to the road is via a ramp which is steep and muddy at the landing. This access could be used by vehicles, there is a removable bollard. Photos 279, 280, 281,282			
The missing bridge is 4m span. The bridge abutments are cracked and look unsuitable for supporting a new bridge. Photo 284 & 285			
The road is in a hollow and clearly floods. Silt has accumulated to a depth of 15cm on the sides. Photo 283, 284		It is not clear how to resolve this problem as the road is in a natural hollow, presumably further dug out to allow access beneath the previous bridge. There is no easy way to remove the water.	

There is an informal parking spot here, room for 2 vehicles. Photo 286			
Section 35 Length: 820m Starts: Peake New Road (missing bridge) Ends: Bridge at end of embankment			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
Access to this section is via a ramp up from the road. A removal bollard is missing, leaving a hazardous hole in the centre of the track Photos 287,288,289 & 290	Hazardous	Replace bollard or fill hole.	High
This section is on an embankment, and is wide and starts drier than the previous section. (ph 291) There are roots showing on the surface (ph 292) and a lot of badger activity. The surface is muddy and uneven, hard to negotiate on a bike. (photo 295)	Satisfactory	Consider top-dressing surface	Low
Some thin trees are leaning over the trail Photos 293 & 294		Tree work needed	Medium
A large badger sett has caused holes to appear in the trail. These have been fenced off and are ok. Photo 296	Satisfactory	Regular checks to ensure no further holes appear	Medium
Bench by badger sett is ok. Photo 298			
Second bench is rotting - Photo 299	Poor	Replace with new bench	Low
Bridge is ok, some brambles are appearing on the deck Photo 300	Satisfactory	Clear brambles	Low
Section 36 Length: 305m Bridge at end of embankment Ends: Crossing with Hayden Lane			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
This section is in a cutting. The surface is relatively firm although there is some mud and organic matter on top.	Satisfactory	Scrape the surface to remove mud. Infill the few deeper areas with aggregate	Low

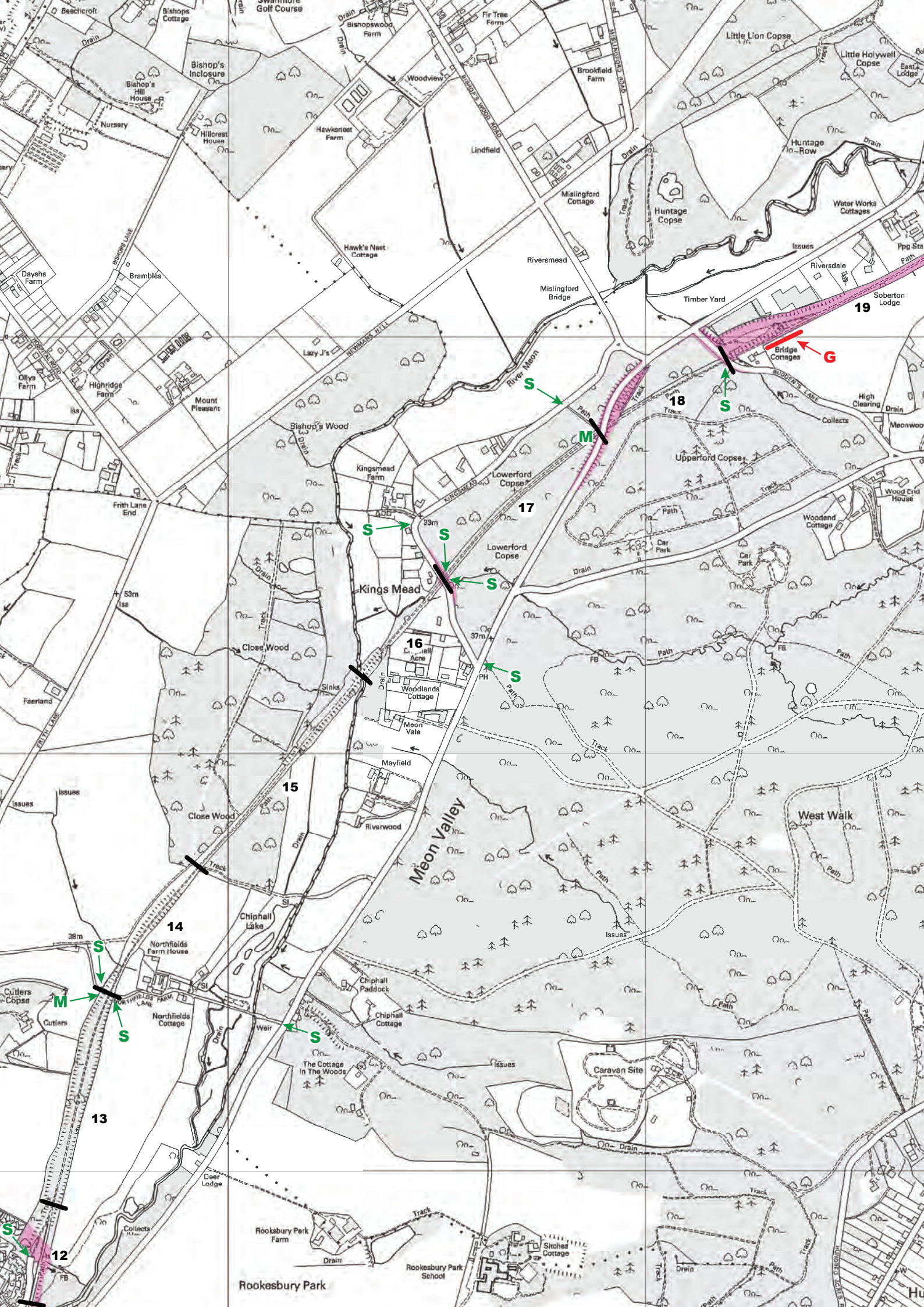
Photo 301, 303, 304			
Section ends at Hayden Lane. The cutting is very deep here, access to the bridge is not possible immediately, although there is access via a footpath further north. Photo 302			
Section 37 Length: 1,160m Starts: Crossing with Hayden Lane Ends: End of trail, West Meon car park			
Description	Condition	Work recommended	priority
This section starts in a cutting, has a section on an embankment, then back into a cutting. The surface is firm with only a few muddy areas. It has one of the best surfaces on the trail. 305, 311, 312, 313, 314	Satisfactory	Top up surface in muddy parts.	Low
Access from Hayden Lane joins at T via a footpath which is signed "Footpath" from the lane. It is muddy and steep in parts, equestrians are using it and are squeezing past a tree to avoid muddy section. Photos 305,306,307,308		Improve signage from road. Remove some of the trees on access path, and top up muddy sections.	Low
A fallen trees has lifted a root plate on the trail edge, it has fallen away from the trail. Photo 309	Satisfactory	Remove	Low
Bench is ok Photo 310	Satisfactory		
This section could be upgraded to 'access for all' standards as part of a bigger scheme to open up the West Meon end of the Trail. If so the surface would need to be sealed (tarmac) to avoid horses damaging it.			

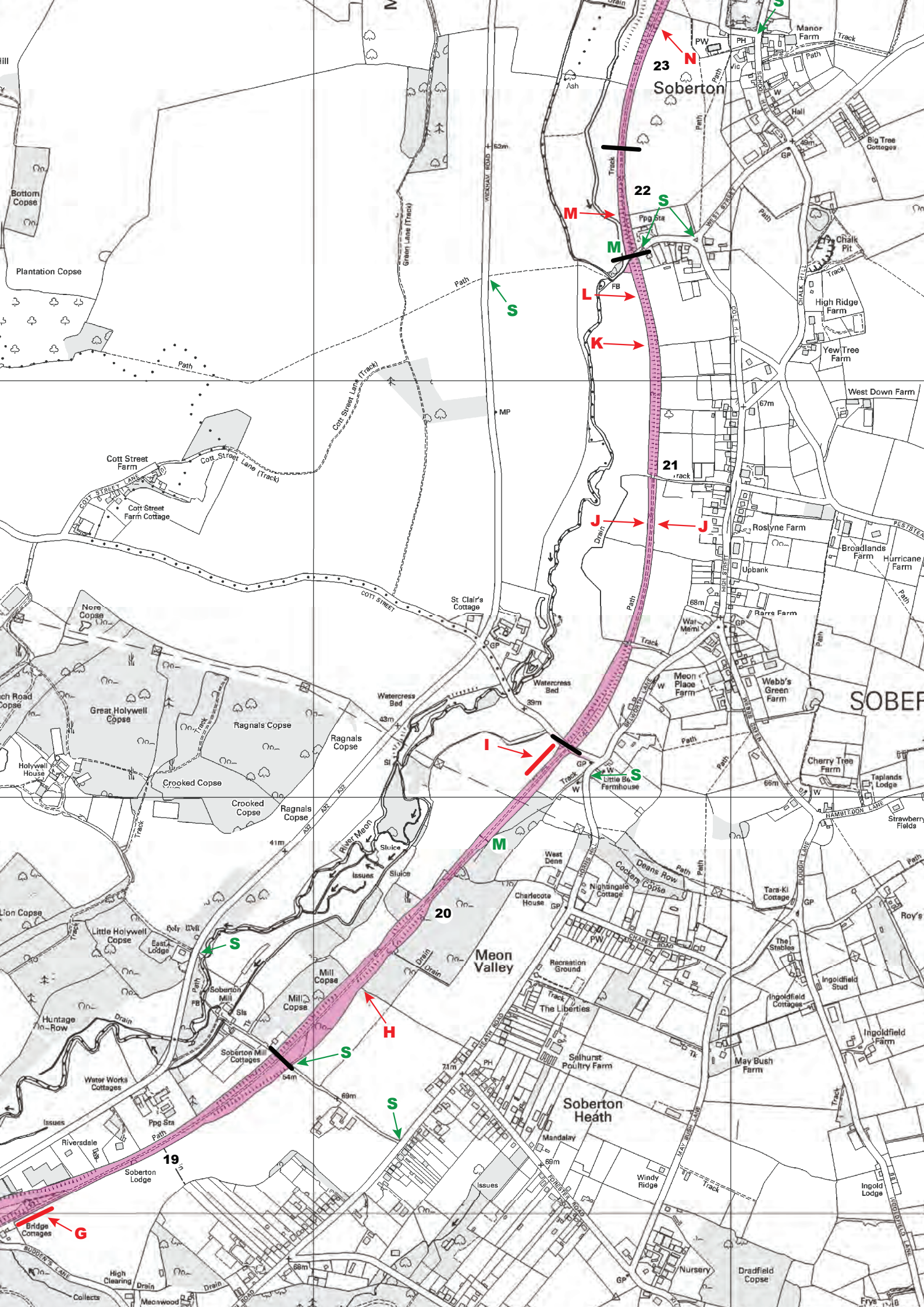
Part 7 – West Meon car park

West Meon car park			
<p>The car park is unwelcoming and had a slightly uncared for feel. The overall message given by the signage is off-putting.</p> <p>Photos 317</p>		<p>Clear ivy and trees from platforms</p> <p>Improve signage, replace warning signs with more positive messages, for example in stead of “Warning thieves target this car park” use “Police regularly patrol this car park, but please make sure you don’t leave valuables in your car”</p>	
<p>Crime is likely to be a problem here as the car park is out of sight from the road. Clearing more trees, making additional parking bays and opening up the sight lines may reduce this, and will make the place feel more welcoming.</p>		<p>Clear trees, create additional parking bays.</p>	
<p>The remnant platforms are covered in ivy and not obvious. There is great potential to improve the car park, and make it an attractive picnic area.</p> <p>Photo 318, 319, 320</p>		<p>Add picnic tables and interpretation panel.</p>	
<p>The access road has potholes.</p> <p>Photos 325, 326</p>		<p>Repair access road</p>	
		<p>Put new large sign at road side encouraging visitors into the car park</p>	
<p>The section of track beyond the station is passable. It is currently blocked by a fallen tree. Despite this is it clearly being walked</p> <p>Photo 321, 322</p>		<p>Clear fallen tree.</p> <p>Promote this section as far as the right of way that takes you back into West Meon, and sign this so visitors know they can walk this way into the village rather than on the road.</p>	



WICKHAM CP





23 N
Soberton

22 S

21 track

20

19

Meon Valley

Soberton Heath

SOBER

Bottom Copse

Plantation Copse

Cott Street Farm

Cott Street Farm Cottage

Great Holywell Copse

Crooked Copse

Little Holywell Copse

Water Works Cottages

Soberton Lodge

High Clearing

St Clair's Cottage

Watercress Bed

Mill Copse

Soberton Mill Cottages

Riversdale

Meanwood

Ash

Ppg Sta

FB

K

J

Wai Meml

Meon Place Farm

GP

West Dene

Characote House

Recreation Ground

The Liberties

Salhurst Poultry Farm

Mandaley

Issues

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Big Tree Cottages

Chalk Pit

High Ridge Farm

Yew Tree Farm

West Down Farm

Broadlands Farm

Hurricane Farm

Cherry Tree Farm

Taplands Lodge

Strawberry Fields

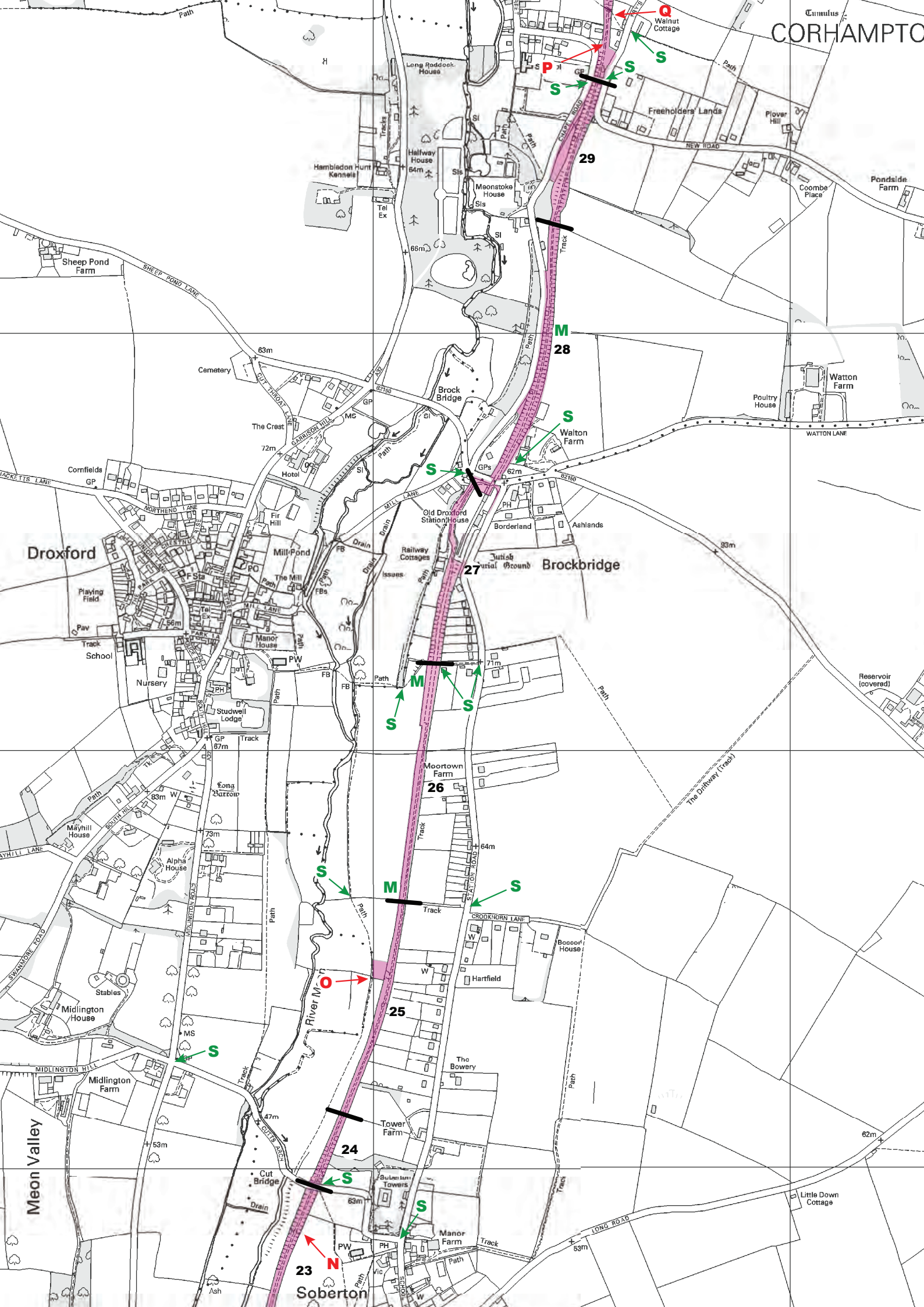
Roy's

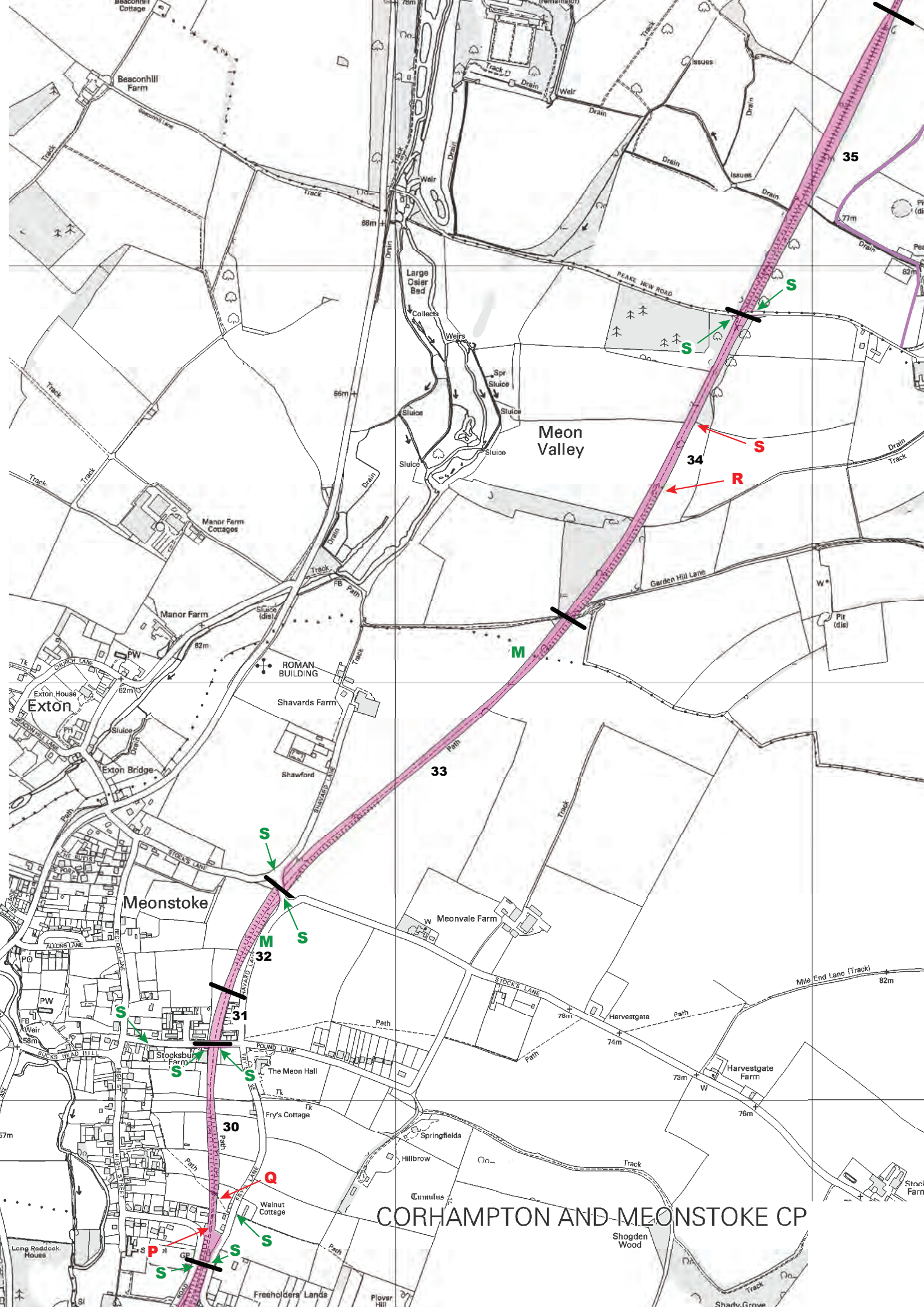
Ingoldfield Farm

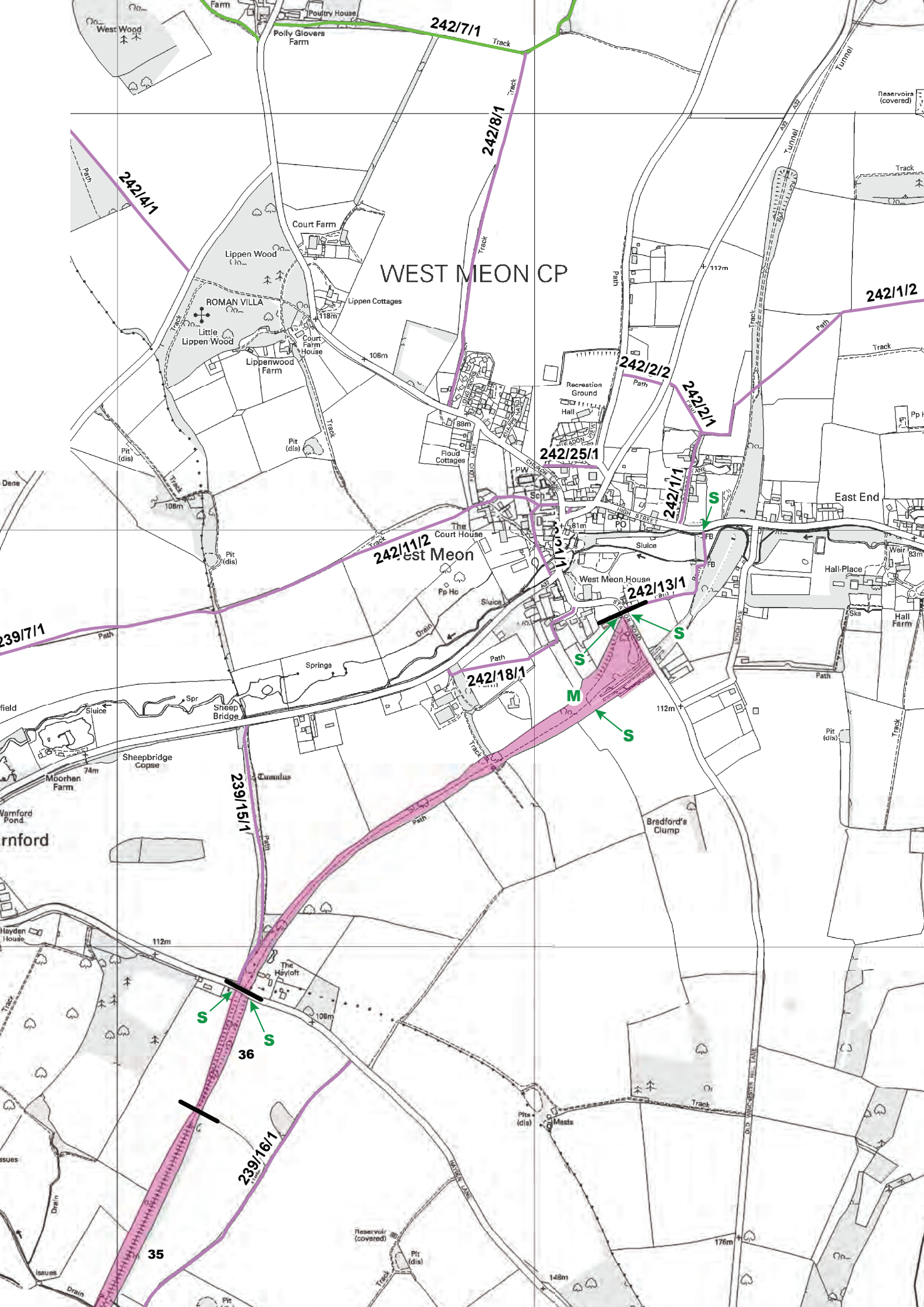
Ingoldfield Stud

Ingoldfield Cottages

Ingoldfield







WEST MEON CP

West Meon

242/1/1

242/7/1

242/8/1

242/1/2

242/2/2

242/2/1

242/25/1

242/1/1

239/7/1

242/11/2

242/13/1

242/18/1

239/15/1

239/16/1

35

36

Reservoir (covered)

East End

Hall Place

Hall Farm

Bradford's Clump

Reservoir (covered)

West Wood

Polly Glovers Farm

Lippen Wood

ROMAN VILLA

Little Lippen Wood

Lippenwood Farm

Court Farm

Lippen Cottages

Court Farm House

Recreation Ground

Hall

Floud Cottages

88m

242/11/1

The Court House

Pp Ho

West Meon House

Springs

Sheep Bridge

Sheepbridge Copse

Moorhen Farm

74m

Varnford Pond

rnford

Hayden House

112m

The Hayloft

108m

Pits (dis)

Masts

176m

148m

176m

176m

176m

176m