

Appendix 1 SMDR



Rights of Way Improvement Plan summary assessment of delivery of ROWIP 2007 -2017

Version 3 final (25/03/2019)

Ruth Rourke Countryside Access Manager

countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk

1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In October 2007 Monmouthshire County Council published its Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). This plan has been the means by which the Authority identified, prioritised and planned for improvements to the access available in the County. The plan sets out the priorities and objectives for countryside access since 2007 and has provided the basis for all rights of way work.

Legislation now requires that we review the plan and publish another. This report provides an evaluation of the degree to which the current RoWIP has been delivered in Monmouthshire and for that part of the RoWIP for the Brecon Beacons National Park in Monmouthshire.

2 PRIORITIES AND RESOURCES

The RoWIP went through an extensive public consultation process that informed and set our priorities and objectives. A small review of the RoWIP and business plan was undertaken in 2010. As well as continuing with our statutory work the RoWIP and 2008-10 business plan set challenging goals. The top three priorities were:

1. To achieve an up-to-date and accessible Definitive Map and Statement (Chapter 6 in the RoWIP)
2. To target improvements on rights of way so greatest public benefit is obtained (Chapter 7 Maintenance and Enforcement)
3. To improve the accessibility of the rights of way network (Chapter 8)

These objectives are all still relevant, but in light of other policy and legislative changes it would be good to review these and the other priorities in the RoWIP to ensure they are still fit for purpose now and for the next ten years. There is a high desire and need to continue providing schemes of improvement where it is of most benefit to the public. Underlying this there is a recognised need to improve the health of the population and provide for their physical and mental well-being. Furthermore these need to be considered along with BBNP. The current RoWIP is separated for that part of Monmouthshire which falls within the National Park. However, the new RoWIP will have to take into account all of Monmouthshire including that part within the BBNP area. The BBNP should then make their RoWIP from the authority's plans that make up the park.

The following chapters examine the extent to which the priorities, objectives and statement of actions have been achieved for each subject area. A summary of achievements and those targets not made appears at the front of each chapter. This is followed by tables taken direct from the current RoWIP with an additional row stating whether or not action has been achieved, partly achieved or is ongoing.

3 THE DEFINITIVE MAP AND STATEMENT.

3.1 TO ACHIEVE AN UP-TO-DATE AND ACCESSIBLE DEFINITIVE MAP AND STATEMENT AS A HIGH PRIORITY.

- 3.1.1 ROWIP Statement of Action 6a: We will clear the backlog of Legal Event Modification Orders and thereafter produce regular orders to keep the Definitive Map and Statement up to date, in order that we can produce a new Definitive Map and Statement for the County Of Monmouthshire.

The Monmouthshire RoWIP had a priority objective “To achieve an up-to-date and accessible Definitive Map and Statement as a high priority. The Brecon Beacons in their RoWIP also have “SOA4 Improvements to the Definitive Map and Statement”. Monmouthshire County Council, as Highway Authority, are responsible for maintaining the Definitive Map and producing a new one. The National Park has powers to make orders such as Evidential Modification Orders which amend the Definitive Map and Statement and therefore both authorities must work closely together to keep the Definitive records correct. The Definitive Map and Statement records the location and status of every public right of way. It is therefore the main record from which all countryside access work is undertaken.

The current Definitive Map and Statement has a relevant date of 1st July 1952. It is hand drawn and produced on an imperial scale of six inches to one mile (1:10,560). Original paper copies can be seen upon appointment at the Gwent Record Office and at County Hall. Since its publication there have been many legal orders which have been made affecting the routes shown on the Map and Statement. The landscape has also changed with new roads, housing estates etc. now in existence which are not shown on the Definitive Base maps. Legal changes have to be looked at in conjunction with the Definitive Map and Statement and therefore can be viewed at County Hall with the Definitive Map on appointment.

The Original 1952 Definitive Map, the Draft Definitive Map and modification layers have been scanned, so that it is also available to be viewed (by officers both in BBNP and Monmouthshire) as a digital layer. This also acts as protection in case the paper records are lost by fire and protects against tampering.

To improve its accessibility to the public and others and also in order to up-date the Definitive Map, the Definitive Map routes have been digitised on to a modern mapping base. Several years were spent quality assuring the records so that we were confident enough to publish a “working copy” on the internet (<http://access.monmouthshire.gov.uk/>). Over 6,000 links were checked along with 666 orders examined and 144 anomalies found. In addition, 99.8% of Monmouthshire within Brecon Beacons National Park has been quality assured, leaving a handful of routes and side roads orders to check and 176 anomalies which will require further investigation to resolve and are currently dealt with as and when opportunities arise. For instance map edge anomalies can sometimes be dealt with at the same time as a diversion order.

The public now have the ability to view current Ordnance Survey Maps at various scales with the different classes of right of way shown on them. They can also view furniture, input issues and print maps. This is a significant step forward in ensuring that staff and landowners working on the ground

have more accurate plans to use, reducing the risk of errors and making the information much more readily available to the public.

It is no longer possible to obtain the base maps required for hand drafting the Definitive Map. Technology has moved along and Welsh Government are now consulting on making changes to legislation to allow a legal digitised version of the Definitive Map in the near future. We are therefore in a good place with regards to this. It should be noted that the access.monmouthshire.gov.uk mapping is regarded as an exemplar in Wales and England. Many other authorities both from England and Wales have come to look at our mapping and database. Exegesis who we employed to make the mapping have even tried to sell it to all the other authorities in Wales and have tried to get National Resources Wales to use it as a National mapping source.

3.1.2 ROWIP Statement of Action 6c: We will continue to process claims according to the agreed review process. However we will seek additional resources to clear the backlog of applications, enabling the authority to comply with its statutory duties.

Additional funding for dealing with outstanding Modification Orders and Definitive Map work has not been found. This is partly due to the fact that this is a statutory function of the Council and therefore it is difficult to attract grant funding.

3.1.3 ROWIP Statement of Action 6d: Using examples of Best Practice from other Authorities we will consider implementing a priority system for dealing with Public Path Order applications in conjunction with the route hierarchy.

As we previously have not had a significant backlog of orders it was not deemed necessary to pursue a prioritisation. However this type of work has now increased and the matter will need reviewing again shortly.

3.1.4 ROWIP Statement of Action 6e: We will maintain communications with development control, development plans, developers and others involved in changes to land use to ensure that appropriate account is taken of public access when considering planning and other proposals.

This is an ongoing area of work. In 2006 there was a change in land charge searches and the increased amount of work has meant there is less resources available for other projects. However, the Countryside Service is part of the new planning process to look at developments that might affect a right of way and is also part of the new Green Infrastructure policy and team. Many of our current Legal Orders come from this process. The BBNP continues to give advice to their planning department regarding any planning application which affects a right of way.

The new Green Infrastructure approach enables Council teams and developers to provide a more cohesive approach to access improvements on development sites and nearby. Section 106 and other planning funding is now being sourced more proactively to benefit the environment and public access. In light of recent changes in the planning process and the Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Guidance a review now needs to take place to see if there is still a need for training planning officers and providing developers with an access development guide.

3.1.5 ROWIP Statement of Action 6c: We will investigate and provide better ways of promoting and making accessible the information held on the Definitive Map and Statement and the List of Streets.

There is now a working copy of the Definitive Map available for the whole of Monmouthshire as explained in 3.1.1. Highways are currently working on digitising their records and making their maps and List of Street publicly available as soon as possible. A draft policy has been produced which will formalise the way in which highways are put on the list of streets and removed from it.

This should be out for public consultation in 2019 and the final policy will be made available on the Council's website.

Monmouthshire CC now has on its website access to all of its current rights of way consultations.

The BBNP also has a defined Statement of Action in its RoWIP "4.6 Compile and publish statutory register of DMMOs". Public registers are required by law to be available on the Council website for searching any deposited section 31 Declarations (where landowner declares what access exists over their land), and Section 53 Modification Orders (claims). Paper records are kept, but until now there has not been the capability to put the records on the Council's website. This is now expected to be done by summer 2018.

4 MAINTENANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

4.1 OBJECTIVE: TO TARGET IMPROVEMENTS ON RIGHTS OF WAY TO ENSURE THE GREATEST PUBLIC BENEFIT IS OBTAINED.

4.1.1 ROWIP Statement of Action 7a: We will develop a hierarchy of routes to target priorities, working practices and resources to not only help meet existing responsibilities and develop proactive work programmes, but to ensure the greatest public benefit is obtained.

The 2007 RoWIP identified a need for a central mapping and database system to be installed which would not only help record issues correctly, but help move rights of way maintenance from a reactive to proactive service. A system called CAMs is now installed and is used by all Countryside Access Staff with the exception of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority who do not presently have such a database.

Using examples of best practice a prioritisation system for maintenance and enforcement issues was drafted. This took two years to develop but with the assistance of Rights of Way Improvement Grant funding which paid for consultants to undertake an extensive consultation (2 workshops, 331 consultations including all volunteers and Monmouthshire Local Access Forum, press and web advertisement and article in Countryside Newsletter sent to 500 people), the final version was agreed on 12th December 2010. A summary of how the prioritisation system works can be found on <https://monmouthshirecountryside.wordpress.com>

The prioritisation system has now been automated so it is part of the CAMS database and gives every issue a prioritisation number. From this number officers can see what it is a high and urgent priority as opposed to a medium or low priority. The prioritisation system has been showcased to all other Councils using CAMS in Wales and has been made available to English authorities on request. It should be noted that the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority have not adopted the prioritisation system in the Park and intend to review and publish a prioritisation system in 2018.

4.1.2 ROWIP Statement of Action 7b: To continue to promote the Council's and Landowner/occupiers responsibilities and responsible countryside access use.

The Council has continued to promote responsible countryside access through as many means as possible. The Countryside Service has maintained a presence at the Usk Show and/or Monmouthshire Show every year. We have put the A-Z Policies and Protocols on the Council's

website and have maintained a presence at NAFW. Advice is given to landowners who request it on an on-going basis.

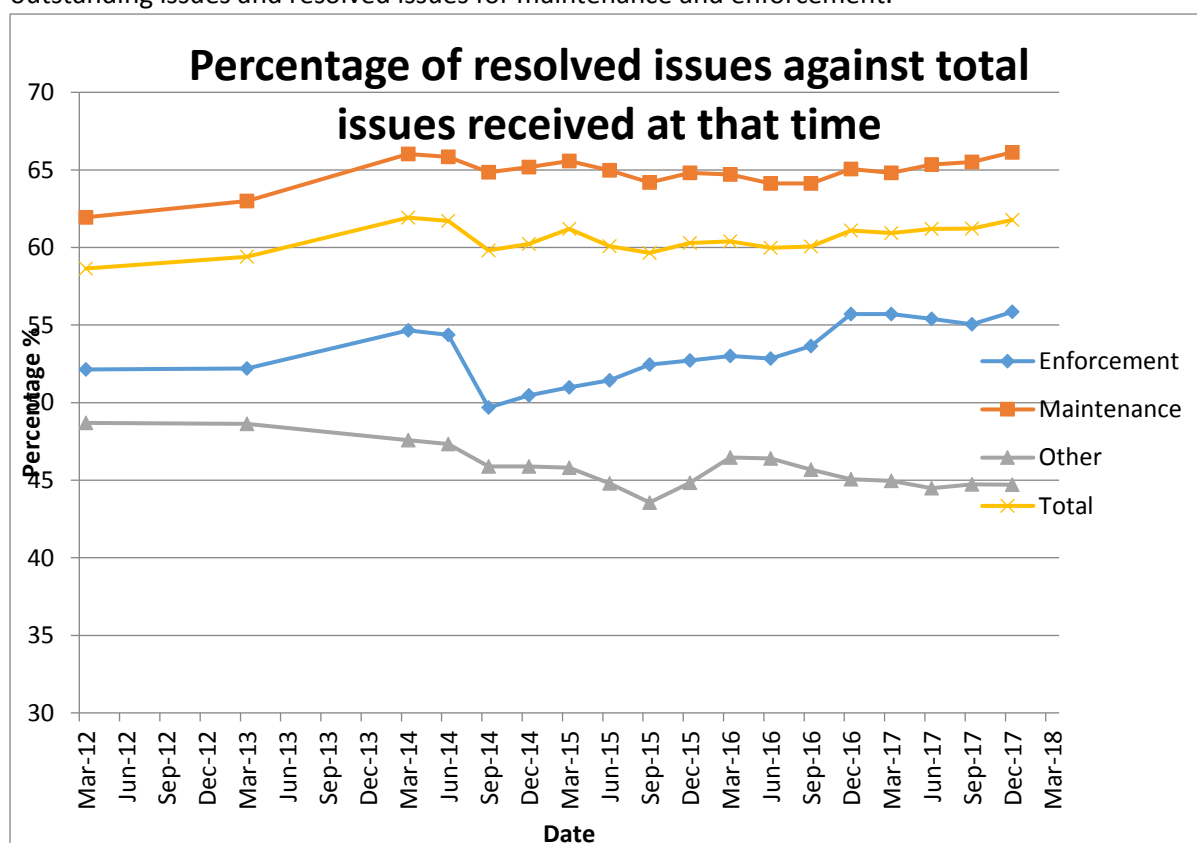
In addition Monmouthshire County Council have produced a Public Rights of Way Biodiversity Action Plan and Technical Guidance and a Countryside Access Design Guide. Public rights of way can also be seen by landowners and occupiers on our interactive countryside map.

The A-Z of Policies has not been up-dated yet, as legislation is about to change again and the review of the RoWIP is a good time to assess what policies need to change and whether we need any new ones.

4.1.3 ROWIP Statement of Action 7c: To achieve 80% of the Public Rights of Way network as open, easy to use and well signed by 2017.

Unfortunately this target has not been achieved in the National Park or other parts of Monmouthshire. However, parts of the network in Monmouthshire particularly in the Wye Valley area are now better signed and maintained than in 2007, but others are not. This is partly because it is easier to draw funding for this area than other parts of Monmouthshire. The resources available for maintenance has fluctuated and it is only in the last year with an additional Field Warden and extra hours being allocated that the amount of maintenance has begun to be more than “holding the fort”.

Until 2012 the Performance Indicator was a survey of 5% of Monmouthshire. After that Monmouthshire County Council changes its performance indicator to one of showing the amount of outstanding issues and resolved issues for maintenance and enforcement.



However there has been significant investment made into surfacing paths and installing bridges which has had a big impact on users and reduced the backlog of work in these areas. In addition the prioritisation system has meant the Field Officers could focus on those routes where the biggest problems lay and have resolved a large number of the “high” priority issues.

Prior to 2007 little work was being undertaken on bridges. The Council had no data on what type of bridges we had, their condition or even where they were. Objectives of Monmouthshire's ROWIP are:

- To ensure adequate resources for the implementation of the objectives with in the ROWIP plan.
- To target improvements on rights of way to ensure greatest public benefit is obtained

In addition various statements of action have the following targets to achieve these objectives:-

- 11C researching the full cost of addressing the backlog of infrastructure and surfacing issues
- 7c To achieve 80% of Public Rights of Way network as open, easy to use and well signed by 2017

There was therefore a clear identified need for the establishment of a programme of inspecting bridge sites and establishing a programme of bridge replacement in accordance with safety and rights of way hierarchy.

Thanks to Volunteer surveyors we now know the location and type of most bridges and there has been a large programme of surveying bridges to identify their condition. In addition Rights of Way Improvement Plan funding has paid for a Bridge Management Plan (2013) and training for staff and volunteers to survey bridges (2014). The results of the Bridge management plan was reported to Monmouthshire's Select Committee who ensured additional funding was available for essential bridge work in 2014/15. Grants have also been used to replace and maintain bridges. The Hendre Bridge has been replaced with a combination of MCC funding and Rural Development Plan funding. Bridges on Offa's Dyke have been surveyed and maintained or replaced with National Trail Grant funding and the Rights of Way Improvement Grant has funded 65 new bridges, repaired others and paid for 258 surveys.

Wherever possible new bridges have been installed with assistance of volunteers. The surveys undertaken have also identified where improvements could be made to make the bridges and footpaths they are on more accessible. In addition the Field Officers also redesigned our footbridges so that the posts at either end of the bridge were higher than previously used. This has enabled least restrictive access gates to be hung on the footbridges level with the decking.

Bridges have been identified as one area in which there are clear public benefits from undertaking the work. It is vital that all bridges on Public Rights of Way are safe. An unsafe bridge could result in injury to a user or an enforced closure of a section of a path or a promoted path. It is therefore important that any decay or damage to a bridge is addressed before the situation becomes critical.

Signage on rights of way is known to be valuable providing assurance to visitors and residents that routes are public. Promoted paths in particular need to be well signed and waymarked. Grant funding has been used to install new waymarking and destination fingerposts on the Three Castles Walk, Usk Valley Walk, St Tewdrigs Trail and Wye Valley Walk. In addition special stickers have been designed for all the Pathcare routes and these are kept refreshed by Pathcare volunteers. There have been at least 58 volunteers trained to undertake waymarking on Monmouthshire's behalf and recently such issues are being given to community groups to do. Generally fingerpost issues are dealt with along with other issues on a path.

Clearance is undertaken on promoted routes but only Offa's Dyke Path National Trail and the Wales Coast Path receive grant funding towards this activity on a regular basis. The RoWIP Grant has been

used: Improvement Projects have almost always involved opening up and surfacing bridleways, restricted byways and replacing stiles with gates to improve access for all.

The only downfall is the lack of staff resources to identify and cost improvement projects so that there is a number of them ready to go should grant or other funding opportunities arise.

European funding was sought aiming at extending the bridleway network but unfortunately although the project was successful in creating and promoting some circular routes these were confined to linking existing routes and creating circular promoted routes as landowners, including the then Forestry Commission Wales would not co-operate in creating new bridleways. A change in legislation may be necessary to resolve this issue.

4.1.4 ROWIP Statement of action 7d: Secure an increase in the numbers of local volunteers involved in the maintenance of countryside access

There is one, part time, employed volunteer co-ordinator in Monmouthshire. We were initially very successful in continuing funding for this post though a variety of grants and the post is now core revenue funded. Volunteering is seen as an important activity and essential for the future maintenance of promoted routes in Monmouthshire. It has come up as being very important during the first round of consultations on this review. Therefore, the new RoWIP will continue to seek funding to maintain and expand the volunteer co-ordinator role.

Monmouthshire has 1656 km of rights of way outside of the Brecon Beacons National Park, through a varied, historic and beautiful landscape. There are an estimated 2 million visitors to Monmouthshire spending £150 million and supporting approximately 3,000 FTE equivalent jobs in the County. Monmouthshire's Destination Development Plan therefore identifies walking as one of the key products in Monmouthshire for promotion. A Walking Product Development Strategy has been developed (with funding from RoWIP 2012) as a result which identified "*there is a substantial willingness to volunteer to help develop and maintain the access network for walking.*"

The Countryside Access team has continued to develop and provide support to volunteers and community, friends and local "Pathcare" groups including developing new green infrastructure management plans for Castle Meadows Abergavenny, with friends group and Caldicot Castle Country Park. Currently the Countryside Access Team promotes a range of countryside access management opportunities to approximately 140+ individual volunteers and is working with 12 community groups.

By Community Groups we mean Community or Town Councils, Walkers are Welcome, Local Ways Groups (i.e. Raglan Local Ways) and any other constituted group of dedicated volunteers responsible for a given area. A community Engagement Strategy was produced to assist the Volunteer co-ordinator work with more groups.

An issue identified though is that there needs to be more staff time to train and supervise groups so that they can become independent. Groups flounder when there is no active leader in a community and so it is important that this matter is also addressed.

The bridge management report, produced in 2013 with the assistance of ROWIP funding, identified a range of specific measures for inspections of bridges and in particular identified that those bridges thought to be in good condition, could be inspected by trained volunteers. But only certain categories such as sleeper bridges and small kit bridges. 10 staff and 10 volunteers have been trained and volunteers have been undertaking their inspections from March 2015. Many volunteers have also been involved with repairing and installing new bridges.

Volunteers also continue to take an active role in maintenance through assisting with inputting records into CAMs, surveying, pathcaring and assisting the Field Officers with maintenance projects.

Tourism Officers have trained volunteers as tourism ambassadors and many volunteers enjoy helping with activities and events like bat walks, or Offa's 40th birthday and Wales's coast path opening.

One of the biggest opportunities for volunteering has been through the GP referral scheme. Health walks have become very popular and it is increasingly important for assistance from volunteers to run health walks and also identify new routes and improvements.

There are now three Walkers Welcome Groups and these volunteers were trained and now run an annual walking festival.

A Saturday task group undertakes conservation and rights of way work. However some groups like Treadlightly have been enabled to work on their own on such things like road improvements.

Many of our volunteers also work with wardens within BBNP and some of our Pathcare routes co-inside with their promoted routes. Both authorities are therefore trying to look at ways of sharing resources and working proactively with volunteers.

Monmouthshire produced a Walking Tourism Strategy and Walkers Welcome Groups identified in this that they would like a toolkit to give them more advice on what they could do themselves. Rural Development Grant Funding was used to produce a website with the toolkit on it. However one of the failures of the RoWIP was to deal with the technical issues of maintaining it once staff developing it disappeared. Other information for volunteers has also been produced like Ambassador Training and Offa Festival Toolkit.

5 THE NEEDS OF THE BLIND, OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED PEOPLE AND OTHERS WITH MOBILITY PROBLEMS

5.1 PRIORITY 3, OBJECTIVE: TO IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

5.1.1 ROWIP Statement of Action 8a: To support health walk and riding initiatives and to provide guided walks for those with health or disability issues

A healthy footsteps walk was produced with assistance from Raglan Doctors Surgery and the local school. This has proved extremely popular. Therefore, a series of Health Walks have been produced in the main towns of Monmouthshire, but these are popular and there is a need to identify more and to promote them more widely. We also need to work more heavily with the Health Board in order that these walks can be disseminated to Doctors Surgeries and other health professionals so there is maximum benefit to residents and tourists.

Grant funding was also used to set up a GP referral walking scheme aimed at moving people on this scheme out of leisure centres and into walking. This scheme proved extremely popular and was expanded rapidly to all leisure centres in Monmouthshire. There is now a waiting list.

Volunteers have been trained and now run the GP referral scheme in conjunction with Leisure Services, but there is a need to identify and train more volunteers who can assist with this, to

identify routes and to ensure those on the Leisure Centre GP referral scheme are encouraged to participate.

5.1.2 ROWIP Statement of Action 8b: continue to take all reasonable steps to remove unnecessary barriers from public rights of way and access land by applying the principle of least restrictive access and using the most accessible choice of furniture wherever possible

The least restrictive access policy has been heavily implemented. Access furniture as a result has improved considerably over the past few years across the network. Gates have increased and the number of stiles has decreased. Monmouthshire was the first Authority in Wales to make the whole length of Offa's Dyke Path National Trail stile free. Condition surveys on all the regional routes have been used to carry out improvements to the surface, camber and furniture on these paths also so that they are also more accessible. Day to day maintenance work also has regard to least restrictive access and making paths accessible to as many people as possible.

The development of a Countryside Furniture Guide has helped spread best practice to contractors and landowners and others installing furniture in Monmouthshire. The guide and furniture we have developed is now being used by Scotland and other authorities in England and Wales. However a new British Standard was published in 2017 and Monmouthshire's guide will need to be revised now to take into account any new requirements.

The BBNP have delivered webpages where there is accessible access but this still needs some work in Monmouthshire. However, our interactive mapping contains routes including their surface and geography which enables people to choose routes which are more suitable to their needs.

Information is kept on what furniture exists on the rights of way network but CAMS does not allow any meaningful searches to be made at the current time and there is a need to change this so we can undertake better monitoring of improvements to the network.

5.1.3 ROWIP Statement of action 8d: We will review the directional and other information provided along promoted routes; particularly the Offa's Dyke National Trail and seek to involve our partners in other long distance walks to consider producing information and maintaining such paths in a manner that will enable more users to enjoy the paths or parts of them (see also statement of action 4d in rowip).

As in 4.3.2 we have removed all the stiles on Offa's Dyke Path in Monmouthshire and all but one bridge has been replaced with accessible furniture. The Usk Valley Walk is also stile free now. The Quality standards for Offa's Dyke Path National Trail and the Wales Coast Path contain standards for producing information and maintaining the routes in an accessible a way as possible. The BBNP has therefore also been replacing stiles with gates on the National Trail.

There is no formal written policy for the other regional routes to be managed in the same way but authorities in Wales generally are well aware of the Equality Act and Well Being Act and so should be making these routes more accessible as opportunities arise without the need for a formal policy.

6 HEALTH BENEFITS OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

6.1 OBJECTIVE: TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO INCORPORATE WALKING, RIDING AND CYCLING INTO THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES.

6.1.1 Statement of Action 3a: Assist local partners in developing health programmes that support schemes such as the health walk initiatives to provide guided walks or rides for those with health or disability issues

As outlined in 5.1.1 a GP Referral Scheme was organised from the Leisure Centres. The report produced when this scheme was first produced concluded that it would be beneficial for MCC to continue to invest in walking for health, though at a reduced level to:

- Develop the existing walking groups to provide a sustainable exercise opportunity for GP Exercise Referrals
- Work with Abergavenny Walking for Health Group to provide an exercise option for “social walkers”.
- Make health walk route information available to a wider audience through MCC and other websites.

The report then went on to make a number of recommendations to move the initiative forward in a way which would be manageable considering existing resources. The conclusion from the project was there was a demonstrated demand for walking amongst GP referral patients and others, and that providing programmes of led walks and information on routes can help to encourage people to walk for health.

It also showed that it takes several years for volunteer walking for health group members to become self-sufficient and that some form of external support is required for some time. It also showed that there was capacity available to provide this support through groups like Ramblers Cymru (who can provide training and insurance), Walkers are Welcome Groups, Leisure Centre staff and volunteers.

6.1.2 ROWIP Statement of Action 3b: We will identify partners in schools and colleges (starting with those with Travel Plans) to work to promote the health benefits of countryside access to pupils and students, testing innovative ideas when possible.

This has not been achieved through the present RoWIP due to lack of resources and may well be something can be achieved through providing information for others to deliver it through Monmouthshire’s Well Being Plan.

6.1.3 ROWIP Statement of Action 3b: We will identify partners in schools and colleges (starting with those with Travel Plans) to work to promote the health benefits of countryside access to pupils and students, testing innovative ideas when possible.

Staff resources are not available in the Countryside Service to deliver this although opportunities remain particularly at Usk Agricultural College and through other parts of the Council.

6.1.4 Statement of Action 3c: We will work with partners/colleagues in the healthcare profession, Age Concern and Adult Services to target different groups, particularly older people, people with mental health difficulties and other disabilities to promote walking, riding and cycling as a good option for improving personal health.

Talks are now occurring with the health board due to the new Well Being Act being implemented.

7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM BENEFITS OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

7.1 OBJECTIVE: TO MAXIMIZE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS IN MONMOUTHSHIRE.

7.1.1 Statement of Action 4a: We will highlight the economic benefits of Countryside Access in Monmouthshire

There has been surveys on the Coast Path and National Trail showing economic opportunities exist for businesses to develop and grow along the routes. The National Trail report showed that many businesses would not exist without the trail. More needs to be done to look at the value overall of the rights of way network though.

It is important to monitor the usage of paths particularly promoted routes like Three Castles Way and Usk Valley Walk. These are long distance routes one of which runs over three Counties. In order to seek appropriate funding to continue to maintain and improve the path and to implement good practice, monitors are required. Additionally grants nearly always require some form of monitoring data in their conditions. However monitoring long term with a professional company providing the reports can be expensive. With reducing resources in mind Countryside Services looked for a sustainable, modern system that would work in a wide range of environments, be easy to install, have a long battery life with no maintenance requirements and be easy to download information. The system chosen has no extra licence requirements for the database and it can be held on Monmouthshire's server making it more easily accessible to all officers that need the data. It has been in use for two years now and more counters are added to the network as opportunities to purchase more counters arise.

7.1.2 Statement of Action 4b: To identify and develop local circular routes around towns and villages linking to health, tourism and heritage initiatives and particularly seeking the creation of bridleways and cycle ways.

The development of local circular promoted walks is now provided by volunteer groups and communities and a toolkit was developed to assist with this. The Destination Development Plan recognises that there is a need for more focused walks for instance for dog walkers and it needs to be explored how best this can be achieved.

Five bridleways routes were achieved through a Regional Development Plan Grant called Tourism Trails. But landowner co-operation is required if there are to be any more.

7.1.3 Statement of Action 4c: To secure improvements to the coastal access in line with the objectives of the Wales Coastal Access Improvement Programme.

The Wales Coast Path is still seen by Welsh Government as worthy of international promotion and although reduced there is currently still an annual grant maintenance and improvement programme. Works are therefore continually ongoing on the Wales Coast Path as required.

7.1.4 Statement of Action 4d: To maximise economic opportunities by securing a permanent long distance trails budget and ensuring a quality of standard is applied and maintained on the National Trail and other long distance promoted routes in Monmouthshire.

Monmouthshire works with the National Trail officer to produce a three year cycle of works improving the National Trail and applies the Quality standards to all work on the trail. The trail is

also monitored by volunteers who pathcare the route and report any issues as they arise. The trail generally is therefore in a good state of repair.

8 TRANSPORT BENEFITS OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

8.1 OBJECTIVE: TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE USE OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK FOR PURPOSEFUL JOURNEYS.

8.1.1 Statement of Action 5a: We will work with County Council colleagues to raise the profile of the contribution of rights of way for purposeful journeys

This is ongoing as we work closely with green infrastructure colleagues, planners, schools, youth and highways. It is something which has become more meaningful as grants are drying up and there is a need to work more closely together where we have mutual benefits.

8.1.2 Statement of Action 5b: We will identify routes on the network for improvement to encourage pupils and students to walk or cycle to school

This has to date been achieved only through individual projects for instance through working with colleagues on the development of the new Raglan School where several paths to the Doctors Surgery and school have been improved. There is no officer time available to achieve more than this currently. However, it is something that community groups and volunteers could identify for us and which we could work better with the Highways Department who receive grant funding for improving safe routes to school

8.1.3 **Statement of Action 5c: Working with colleagues in the Highways Section and subject to the provision of additional funding, we will seek improved accommodation for vulnerable users where PROW link with the adopted highway network**

Wherever brought to our attention we seek to get Highways to take appropriate action.

8.1.4 Statement of Action 5d: (see also Statement of Action 4b) The County Council will continue to work with our partners to enhance and develop an off road long distance and circular bridleway/multi purpose network.

This has proved difficult with existing legislation and without landowner co-operation progress is extremely slow and limited.

8.1.5 Statement of Action 5f: The County Council will work with interest groups and its partners to provide a quiet network of county unclassified roads for vehicular and other users and seek to prevent the illegal use of non-vehicular paths.

Highways have worked on a small scheme of improvements with the assistance of Treadlightly but not much has occurred in the life of this RoWIP due to lack of staff resources. However a potential project to look at all issues involved and how access can be improved in Wye Valley has been put together recently and we are waiting to see if funding becomes available to further these statements of action.

9 PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

9.1 OBJECTIVE: TO IMPROVE AND INCREASE THE RANGE OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS INFORMATION

See www.visitmonmouthshire.com

Statement of Action 9a: To improve and increase the range of information on and about countryside access and its benefits (particularly for horse riders, cyclists, disabled users, carriage drivers and motorists).				
Task id	Task	Target		
	Undertake a review of current information (including signposting at view points, roads etc) and develop an interpretative plan for Monmouthshire, ensuring that all promotional information is as accessible as possible and targeted to the relevant audience. Not achieved however small review took place at Tintern as part of Overlooking the Wye Project.	2009 - 2010	LAF, AONB	
	All leaflets and books should incorporate as standard information about the gradients and furniture to allow users to make informed decisions over their possible use of any trail. New walking module on Visit Monmouthshire has capability to include some of this information.	2010 onwards		
Statement of Action 9b: To improve Countryside Services web presence				
Task id	Task	Target		
9b	Undertake a comprehensive review and update of the Countryside Service web site. Include a wider range of information for the public and establish direct links with associated websites. Make all free guides available to download from the website. Review in progress and countryside section has been	2007 ongoing	MCC IT Section	

	rewritten. Visitor facing information moved to Visit Monmouthshire site.			
9b	Create an electronic database on the website so that details of closures, traffic regulation orders etc. in Monmouthshire are available to the public. Achieved	2009		
(Also see Statement of Action 3c and 7d) Statement of Action 9c: To improve communication with Service Users, Volunteers, Community and Town Councils.				
Task id	Task	Target		
3c and 9c 7diii	We will seek to facilitate a revitalized programme of community and voluntary countryside action by improving information for volunteers, delivering training and promotional material and seeking to increase volunteer involvement. Volunteer involvement increased to 140 active volunteers. Training delivered as specified in 7diii. Newsletter produced periodically. Social media presence obtained. Several community groups established.	2009 ongoing	As specified in rowip	CCW Min Grant Programme
9c (ii)	We will continue to provide and facilitate accessible activities and education programmes to promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the countryside through the countryside activity and events programme Achieved. Ongoing.	2007 ongoing	CCW	CCW Min Grant Programme
Statement of Action 9d (see also Statement of Action 4b): In conjunction with volunteers and partners, we will seek to review and repromote Pathcare routes and any new circular/ other types of routes as they come into existence.				

9d	To review, in 2007, those routes currently being pathcared and ensure that Volunteers are given appropriate training and that the route is recorded adequately on the Internet or by other means. All volunteers given appropriate training or access to it. All Pathcare routes bar 12 are promoted. The remaining 12 will be put on the Internet before the walking Festival in October 2010. Pathcare routes also being promoted in volunteer's newsletter and where other publicity opportunities arise.	2007/ 2008	Volunteer Co Ordinator & Countryside Access Officer	CCW Min Grant Programme
9d(a)	Engage with partners, community groups and volunteers to review non-pathcared routes and seek appropriate funding and methods of re-promoting these routes plus any new circular community walks/rides. Future project	In conjunction with hierarchy	Volunteer Co ordinator, User Groups, Volunteers, LAF and as specified in ROWIP	

10 LINKS TO OTHER PLANS AND STRATEGIES

10.1 OBJECTIVE: TO PROMOTE THE WIDER BENEFITS OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS, IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN PARTNERSHIPS AND IMPLEMENT THE AIMS OF THIS PLAN.

Statement of Action 10a: We will promote the rights of way network as a mechanism for helping to achieve other appropriate internal and external aims described elsewhere in this plan.				
Task id	Task	target	partners	Resources identified
10a1	To promote the potential benefits of the rights of way network in increasing	ongoing	As specified in ROWIP	

	sustainable tourism in Monmouthshire Ongoing			
10a2	To promote the potential benefits of the rights of way network in improving health, physical activity and social well-being of users and potential users Ongoing	Health boards put up on countryside sites in 2007.	As specified in ROWIP	
10a3	To promote the potential benefits of the rights of way network as an important resource for underrepresented groups to be able to visit the countryside. Ongoing			
10a4	To promote the potential benefits of the rights of way network as an important mode of sustainable transport, increasing the numbers of local journeys that can be made on foot and bicycle. Ongoing		Highways and as specified in ROWIP	LTP, LDP etc

Statement of Action 10b: To further develop appropriate partnerships with organizations and individuals that can contribute to the objectives of this plan and add value to the rights of way network

Task id	Task	target		
10b	To work with volunteers to help maintain, improve and promote the rights of way network 130 volunteers actively working to achieve aims of 10b. Approximately half of these have had training within last three years. Most of the rest have had on the job training in the past.	Ongoing	As specified in ROWIP	ROWIP, Axis 3, CCW Main Programme

10b	To work with Community and Town Councils and Community Groups and other initiatives to help maintain, improve and promote the rights of way network. Ongoing	See also 4b, 8a,7a, 7d,	AS Specified in ROWIP	ROWIP, Axis 3, CCW Main Programme
10b	To work with government and non-government agencies, voluntary and other organizations where it will assist to maintain, improve and promote public rights of way and other forms of countryside access. Ongoing	See also 4b, 8a,7a, 7d,	As specified in ROWIP	ROWIP, Axis 3, CCW Main Programme, RDP
Row management review	To review and achieve a new delegation agreement and management arrangements with BBNP. Achieved January 2018	BY 2009/10	BBNP, Legal Services	
Row management review	To improve Member training and communication including preparation of annual report Ongoing as new members arise	To prepare an annual report from 2008/09	Countryside Manager and Countryside Access Team Leader, Legal Services	Existing staff
Row management review	To review decision making process and delegation powers Reviewed in 2008 but will now need to be done again as legislation has changed again.	Review delegations & implement training for row panel during 2008/09	BBNP, Legal Services, Countryside Manager and Access Team Leader	Existing
Statement of Action 10c: To work with internal and external partners to ensure the development of the rights of way network maximizes its contribution to wider landscape biodiversity, visitor interpretation and educational objectives.				
10c	To continually promote the benefits of countryside access through existing and new partnerships Ongoing			

10c	To continue to review and respond to consultations on any new or revised policy/strategy document. Ongoing			LTP, LDP (2008)
10c	To regularly update countryside access management procedures and undertake staff training to ensure the future development of the rights of way network needs reflect other relevant policy aims. Ongoing			

11 RESOURCES

11.1 OBJECTIVE: TO ENSURE ADEQUATE RESOURCES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROWIP.

Statement of Action 11a: To secure additional resources from internal and appropriate external sources that help to make improvements both within and beyond our statutory duties

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan was successful in improving partnerships with others and showcasing the benefits that Countryside access provision brings. It was also instrumental in bringing in an additional funding from a variety of sources. £537,184.13 was obtained directly from Welsh Government Rights of Way Improvement Grant.

The RoWIP has helped to inform and steer the development of policy covering walking and biodiversity. Other strategies that have been able to benefit from the RoWIP are Development policies, green infrastructure and Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

The authority has taken strives to record all furniture especially bridges and is continually seeking to improve its assess management records in order to show what budgets are required and to take opportunities when they arise to grant fund improvements.

12 CONCLUSIONS

There are a number of lessons that can be learnt from the 2007 RoWIP. Certain actions will always be ongoing but others need revising. Some have not been achievable. This first RoWIP was primarily written with the expectation that the Countryside Service would deliver the majority of it. The new RoWIP will have to be adapted to ensure it encompasses all the needs of the public and fits with other organisations policies in order that partnerships can be developed to deliver multiple benefits to the public.