



RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN
CONSULTATION RESPONSES 2017&2018

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RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSES 2017&2018

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ROWIP REVIEW CONSULTATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Legislation requires that a review of the 2007 Monmouthshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) takes place. The first stage of this process to undertake a consultation to advise of process, timescale and content was undertaken in Winter 2016/17. In 2018 the assessment reports were also published along with questionnaires to landowners, the public and organisations. This report summarises how these consultations took place and the responses that were received back.

2.0 PROJECT COMMUNICATION

A formal timetable outlining how we were going to undertake carrying out a review in accordance with Welsh Government guidance was produced at the beginning of September 2016. This was circulated to internal management and the Cabinet Member responsible for Countryside, before formally consulting (on 27th September 2016) the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum and then the Brecon Beacons Local Access Forum (15 November 2016).

It was the intention from the beginning that the LAF's should be involved with the process and production of a revised ROWIP.

On 8 December 2016 a paper was put before Monmouthshire County Councils Strong Communities Select Committee to seek the Committee's views on the scope of and progress on the review of the ROWIP. The review requirements and proposed timetable were discussed and the recommendations endorsed.

Formal scrutiny and approval were built into the timetable and although the timeframe has changed the level of scrutiny is not diminished and it is expected that further scrutiny will take place at the following stages:

- Reporting on the outcome of consultations on an amended/new ROWIP prior to a decision to approve/ publish a final plan
- After the approval of the new ROWIP the opportunity to consider the annual reports which are a new requirement over the period of the plan.

A website for the ROWIP review was set up in English and Welsh and all relevant documents are available here (<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/?p=39506>). Over 500+ emails (in Welsh and English) were sent out to the consultees in Appendix 1. Please note the consultee list only has titles of the organisation/group, but emails were sent both to local representatives and to National Organisations Headquarters. Individuals who have also expressed an interest have also been consulted but due to privacy may not be shown on the attached list. The consultation ran from 15th November 2016 to 29th January 2017. All replies were acknowledged.

Advertisements of the 1st Consultation also appeared in local press and on social media.

<https://twitter.com/MonmouthshireCC/status/801079341362937858>

<https://www.facebook.com/MonmouthshireCC/>

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/2016/11/22/councils-rights-way-improvement-plan-review>

A copy of the Argos article is below.

Residents are asked to comment on paths plan

MONMOUTHSHIRE County Council is inviting residents, businesses and organisations to comment on the review of its Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). The outline plan has been published on the council's website, with the existing

RoWIP published in October 2007 following extensive consultation. Its contents have enabled the authority to bid for and win grants to benefit the county's rights of way network, and also formed the basis for the council's rights of

way business plan. The review of the existing plan is required by the Welsh Government and will take into account new legislation like the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Monmouthshire's principal countryside access officer,

Ruth Rourke, said: "We invite as many groups, individuals and organisations as possible to contribute to the review of our Rights of Way Improvement Plan. "We welcome your views and any information you may have to provide a new RoWIP

document that will serve the county's communities into the future." Comments may be sent to countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk at any time until Sunday January 29. The plan can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/j2ovzf>

The Brecon Beacons and Monmouthshire Local Access Forum both were able to comment on the outline proposals or any other matter that they thought the ROWIP should take account of and received a specific report on this. They then received a report on the responses to this initial consultation in May 2017.

To supplement the responses received, on 3rd September 2018 further press was undertaken to advertise the publication of three questionnaires for landowners, the public and for organisations. On 8 November these were circulated by email to the consultee list in Appendix 1 along with a copy of the Outdoor Disability and Health Assessment Report and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Condition of the network and opportunities Assessment Report 2017/18.

In addition a public workshop was held on Wednesday 21st November 2018 at Shire Hall Monmouth. This ran from 10 to 4pm and included for the first hour a Monmouthshire LAF meeting. This workshop looked specifically at priorities and issues raised in the assessments.

3.0 RESPONSES TO INITIAL CONSULTATION 15TH NOVEMBER 2016 TO JANUARY 2017

The majority of consultees to the first consultation acknowledged receipt of the consultation but provided no comments. It is expected that most consultees will respond more fully via questionnaires or to the draft ROWIP consultation in 2019.

Consultee	Date Received	Comments
Monmouth U3A	1/11/2016	Looking forward to being involved
British Horse Society	24/11/2016	Acknowledge receipt waiting draft.
Reg Darge – Usk U3A	2/11/2016	I am chairman of Usk U3A and we do have a walking group that would be relevant. There are a number of walking groups in Usk and I have forwarded your inquiry to some 3rd parties in case they've been missed.
Myra France (Usk U3A)	2/11/2016	I am the coordinator of the Gentle Walking group who meet fortnightly on a Monday. If I can be of any help, please let me know
Eria Steggles	9/1/2017 & 11/1/2017	Harry and I Pathcare the healthy walking routes in Monmouth and have long tried/hoped for wheel chair access on Wye Valley Walk from Wye bridge to Dixon church. Happy to see upgrade in your plan. With reference to our local Healthy Walking routes;

Consultee	Date Received	Comments
		<p>1. Between Drybridge Nature Reserve and Anchor hill</p> <p>The wide metal bridge over the stream near the entry to Vauxhall Fields retains water up to about 2 inches deep on occasions; it is difficult to negotiate - especially if frozen! A hand rail is required for safety. A slight raising of the bridge at one end would allow the water to flow away. Why not ask the local army unit of engineers to do the job?</p> <p>Depressions at the three gateways and the first stile after Cowlings Lane, need to be filled in. Putting in gates instead of the three stiles would be very helpful.</p> <p>2. Between Rockfield road and the ODP an extra waymark post in the middle of the large field would be beneficial; there is some confusion because some walkers [usually with dogs] have established their own path which goes through a hedge and into a field which has no PRow.</p> <p>3. Salt's Lodge Lane - Intruding vegetation needs a drastic pruning to enable two walkers to proceed side by side, which might be a requirement for some disabled people.</p> <p>We have included major improvements as well as the general upgrading which you might like to consider</p> <p>New housing estate, Wonastow, Monmouth - There will be an increase in the need for suitable walking routes from this estate, Why not upgrade with gates where there are stiles and open up all the paths in the area? Put up signs around the edges of the estate to show where the public rights of way are, Perhaps Monmouth Walkers are Welcome and Monmouth Ramblers could be approached to be of assistance?</p>
<p>Pamela Mansfield The North Village Hall committee.</p> <p>Very similar comments were made by Chepstow U3A, Monmouth U3A and Trellech Community Council</p>	<p>12/1/2017</p>	<p>Our initial comments on the proposals set out in your document are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for the review of ROWIP being undertaken – the previous version is now 10 years old and needs to be updated to reflect the high priority being placed on countryside access by the Welsh Government. 2. Support for the principle of making a series of

Consultee	Date Received	Comments
		<p>assessments to establish a baseline for the new ROWIP.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="781 317 1409 457">3. Concern about the scale of the process to be undertaken – it will be important to make the necessary resources available if the ambition set out in the proposal is to be realised. <li data-bbox="781 464 1425 604">4. Support for looking at the wider issues that clarify the purpose and value of the PROW network and the contribution that it can make to people’s lives and wellbeing and to the economy. <li data-bbox="781 611 1425 846">5. However, a PROW network that is fit for purpose – i.e. unobstructed, appropriately signed, with a usable surface and with furniture well-maintained and in good order - lies at the heart of the countryside access policy. It is only this that will enable the delivery of the wider benefits. <li data-bbox="781 852 1430 1062">6. Support for the work of the Monmouthshire CC Countryside Management Service. A dedicated and properly resourced in-house team with a strong public service ethic and commitment to the network and its use by residents and visitors is essential. This must lie at the heart of the ROWIP. <li data-bbox="781 1068 1430 1556">7. Support for the roles that volunteers can play in helping to maintain and enhance the network and to encourage use by local communities, visitors and tourism businesses. However, volunteer input is <u>only</u> viable with the support of the dedicated Monmouthshire CC team with their integrated technical, legal and data handling resources. The availability of a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator is <u>critical</u> in encouraging and enabling volunteers to work effectively, to share best practice and in developing innovative approaches to obtaining best value from volunteer effort. The North and District Footpath Project would <u>not</u> have happened without this support. <li data-bbox="781 1562 1425 1877">8. Support for the inclusion of access land in the ROWIP. In our area, much of the land is in the ownership of Natural Resources Wales and is available for public access as a result of its dedication as Access Land under the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Plan should include a clear statement from NRW of how it will ensure that public access provision is maintained to high standard for a variety of users

Consultee	Date Received	Comments
		<p>and abilities and how it will work to ensure delivery of the wider benefits of public access from its land.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Support for joining up the management and responsibility for Unclassified County Roads (currently with MCC Highways) with the remainder of the PROW network with all becoming the responsibility of MCC Countryside Management. The distinction between these two categories of route is often indistinguishable on the ground and it is illogical for them to be in separate management, especially as they will always have a low priority for Highways. 10. Support for a clear strategy to deal with problems of misuse that are both damaging to the surface and usability of PROW and other routes on Access Land, as well as presenting a danger to legitimate users. The main category of misuse is by motorcycles and quads. 11. Concern that inclusion in the ROWIP of the PROW within Monmouthshire that lie within the Brecon Beacons National Park will lead to a further diminution and dilution of available resources across the remainder of Monmouthshire. A transfer of resources that enables a proper level of maintenance and management of the routes must accompany any transfer of responsibility. 12. Support for the production of annual Delivery Statements to enable transparent monitoring of progress.
BHS Mark Weston	24/11/2016	Received with thanks
Chepstow U3A Walking Groups	19/01/2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As per The Narth Village Hall Committee comments above.
Joan Sheldon	24/1/2017	<p>CUR 51/Public FP 21 – Fingerpost by bus top at Wye Valley Hotel needs adjusting. Add destination and distance. Condition of fp21 not suitable for blind or partially sighted persons or those with mobility issues. Monmouthshire Tourism Economy – this path needs improving as it is the only access to widely advertised Pava Farm and vineyard shop: this attracts many visitors, many from overseas. FP381/50 – Fingerposts should be improved by more information re destination and distance.</p>
Caldicot U3A	29/01/2017	At a meeting of our walking group committee there was general agreement that the ROWIP has delivered to a

Consultee	Date Received	Comments
		<p>significant degree. In the early years much work was carried out by the countryside service, backed by volunteers, to identify problem areas, and generally improve the network and make it more accessible to the public and less abled. Replacing stiles with gates is a case in point.</p> <p>At present the condition of the network is considered reasonable but concern was expressed about the future. There are signs of deterioration. Reports and complaints are not getting any response and there is a tendency not to bother to report. We bemoaned the passing of the Report It form which was easy to complete.</p> <p>The opportunities for open air recreation and enjoyment in the Caldicot area are considered reasonable with easy access to the Castle and the surrounding countryside. However this does not necessarily apply to disabled users. Paths in the Park are often in a poor state with muddy areas and large pools of water. You do not have to be “less abled” to be wary of embarking on a walk.</p> <p>Another concern is Undy. Our walkers reported paths in poor condition with sparse signage. In recent years the countryside service has declared a policy of improving and maintaining paths near the urban areas. Alongside Govt policy of getting more people walking, paths were improved and leaflets produced to encourage people to walk near their homes. Unless these paths are regularly checked and maintained the general public will deter from using them.</p> <p>Opportunities exist to open up areas to wheelchair users. For example, Dewstow Golf Club and the fields belonging to the Heavens family. There is already a linkage from the park to these areas. We suggest a survey be carried out with a view to establishing where paths can be opened up and improved for access by “less abled” and young families with prams/pushchairs.</p> <p>As far as publicity is concerned, of course there is always room for improvement. Producing leaflets is an expensive and time consuming business, but couldn’t more use be made of local publications?</p>
Trellech Community Council	20/01/2017	<p>Comments were made which were similar to those of The Narth Village Hall Committee & Chepstow U3A above. They also said: - Trellech United Community Council has a keen interest in countryside access in and around Penalt, The Narth, Trellech, Llanishen, Catbrook, Whitebrook and</p>

Consultee	Date Received	Comments
		<p>Llandogo. Residents and visitors make considerable use of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) Network and enjoy the use of Access Land in the ownership of Natural Resources Wales. Visitors and walkers make a significant contribution to the incomes of many local businesses, especially local shops, pubs and B&Bs. As with many other areas of Monmouthshire, well-maintained public rights of way are important for tourism.</p> <p>Several Community Plans, including The Narth and District Community Led Plan 2015 identified public footpaths and rights of way as being important to residents. In the Narth, this led to the establishment of a volunteer-based Narth and District Footpath Project. A comprehensive survey of public rights of way around The Narth has been undertaken and a programme of work is being implemented to improve signposting, clear some obstructed paths and otherwise improve access. In tandem with the practical work is a further initiative to encourage use of the network for healthy outdoor exercise and enjoyment.</p> <p>MCC Countryside Management has been very helpful in providing encouragement, training, support, people, materials and tools to facilitate the work of our local volunteers. Their input has been critical and we have an <u>overriding concern</u> that this review will be used to cut funding to Countryside Management and the activities and services that support countryside access.</p> <p>We look forward to the opportunity to participate in the review of the ROWIP and note that it is currently only in the early planning stage. We would like to be added to the list of consultees and will be happy to contribute in any way we can that would be of help to you.</p>
Monmouth U3A	03/02/2017	<p>Comments made as per The Narth Village Hall Committee. Also:-</p> <p>Our members make regular and extensive use of Monmouthshire's public rights of way network, and we have seen a marked deterioration of its condition over recent years and a lack of direction to work with the U3As and Ramblers to ensure obstructions to Public Footpaths are removed and essential stiles and bridges repaired.</p>

Consultee	Date Received	Comments
		<p>We hope our response to the Review will be taken into consideration and please let us know if we can be of further assistance. We would like to be included in any future consultations and to be kept up to date as the work progresses.</p>
Canals and Rivers Trust	27/01/2017	<p>Thank you for advising the Canal & River Trust (the Trust) that the council is undertaking a review of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Trust own and maintain sections of the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal and we promote the canal towpath as part of the Natural Health Service, as an outdoor gym, a perfect place for free, open air exercise, recreation and enjoyment. We are The towpath also has a part to play in the Active Travel network and forms part of NCN 49. The Usk Valley Walk includes a stretch of towpath and several walks include the canal are promoted within the World Heritage site and it is hoped that Goytre Wharf can be promoted as hub destination for walking in the future.</p> <p>The Canal & River Trust would welcome the opportunity to meet with you during the preparation of the review draft, in order to provide additional information where possible, and to explore and consider locations for possible partnership working in the future.</p>
Natural Resources Wales	26/01/17	<p>Many thanks for sending us your outline plan and timetable for the Review of Monmouthshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). We note the timeframes included in it.</p> <p>As this is the first Outline and Timetable we have received for the Review of ROWIPs, if it would be helpful to you, we would like to work with you to help explore how NRW could best help support the Review of ROWIPs.</p> <p>Our intention is to try and inform the assessment stage of the process and signpost you to information which NRW may hold and/or facilitate discussions in relation to NRW work.</p> <p>To this end Carys Drew, our Recreation and Access Advisor will contact you shortly to discuss.</p> <p>The only minor comment on the consultation is in reference to section 4. Where it states that 'NRW require information on records of limitation and the</p>

Consultee	Date Received	Comments
		processes in place for authorising this'. Although this point was originally made as part of our advice to Welsh Government in developing the draft ROWIP guidance, as it was adopted by Welsh Government it should be referred to as a requirement of WG Statutory Guidance [not NRW].

In addition to the above responses there was also a request received on 4 October 2016, from Matthew Hamar UTAG Chair, outside of the formal consultation for the inclusion of a ramp from Usk Island up onto the railway. This it is stated would provide significant barrier free circular route around Usk. It is also requested that the railway track from Usk to Lt Mill be developed as a cycle track. On 24th April 2018 Usk Trail Access Group also said they wanted the following routes created:-

1. Creation of cycletrack / footpath from Little Mill to Usk Primary School along old railway line (along length subject to current planning applications and along railway line adjacent to BAE and over river bridge, through tunnel to the old Monmouth Road where it would need to link to the highway.
2. Creation of surfaced footpath along the riverbank path running South from the road bridge (A472) to the cricket ground on the East side of the River Usk. This is currently a muddy path that is not accessible to people using wheelchairs or prams and often becomes boggy during the winter months. Whilst we understand that it is not recorded on the Definitive Map of public rights of way, it has been in use for many decades without obstruction or hindrance and so can be assumed to be a public right of way.
3. Upgrading of the public footpath to a cycletrack (or bridleway) running from the south side of the A472 (opposite the Halfway Inn) to the railway line (GR 324029). This is needed to connect the proposed cycletrack back to the main road.

In response to an invitation to the workshop and site of the assessment reports the following was received:-

The Wye Valley Ramblers said: *"I have looked up our response to you from the last ROWIP and I think our response this time would be very much the same except that we would ask for a more active effort from CAS regarding landowner obstructions to the ROW. Most of the long standing unresolved issues that I have pressed CAS to deal with are landowner obstructions and there has been a lamentable success rate with some issues now more than 10 years old."*

Monmouthshire's Enforcement Officer said *"I have scan-read the maintenance and enforcement bit and thought what was there is fair. Yes a new more prompt method required for enforcement is required – the new yellow notices have been quite effective. Also lots of Definitive Map issues come up and looking at 67 year old definitive map does not help."*

Mr Cadman *"I would be grateful if you could support the inclusion of Llanvair Kilgeddin to Nantyderry routes in the priority plan. From the surveys over the past three years there is a clear understanding of what needs to be done and support from the landowners. In addition to the benefits of local residents, there are an increasing number of accommodation options for visitors in the area that would benefit from improving the access to the countryside in our part of the Usk Valley; the Pont Kemys caravan park,*

Swanmeadow cottages, Glanusk farm bed & breakfast, the new Glamping Site and most recently the application to convert the former school in Llanvair Kilgeddin to bed and breakfast accommodation.”

4.0 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

There were three questionnaires, one for the public, one for organisations and one for land managers. They were made available via email and were on Monmouthshire’s website. They were advertised in the press also. Not everyone responded to every question.

4.1 PUBLIC QUESTIONNAIRE:

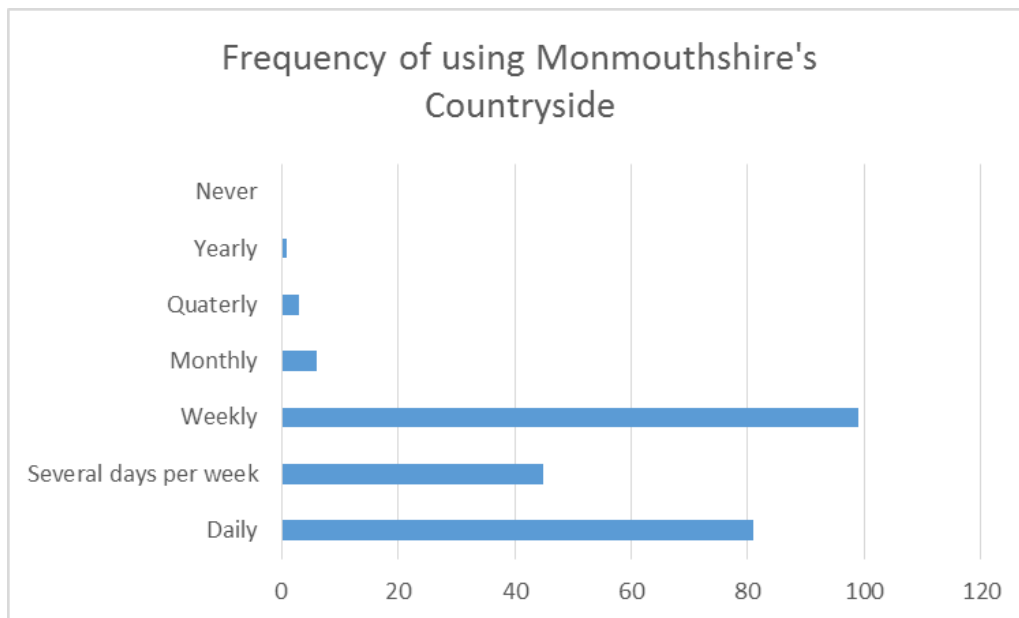
There were 235 respondents of which 52% were male, 47% were female and 1% were unknown. There was only 1 respondent of the age group 19-24 and none younger. 8% respondents were in the age group of 25-44, 8% were aged 75+, 16% were 45-59 and 68% were aged 60-74.

1. Are you a member of any of the following organisations, clubs or groups (tick all that apply)?

The results of this question showed that 98% of respondents had membership and therefore it would be worth countryside services working in partnership with these groups.

National Trust 85	Wildlife Trust 41	RSPB 34
Walking Club or association 129	BHS, Riding group, pony club or society 26	Cycling club or association 12
Woodland Trust 18	Running Club 9	Off Road Club 2
		None 5

How frequently do you visit the Monmouthshire countryside (tick one)?

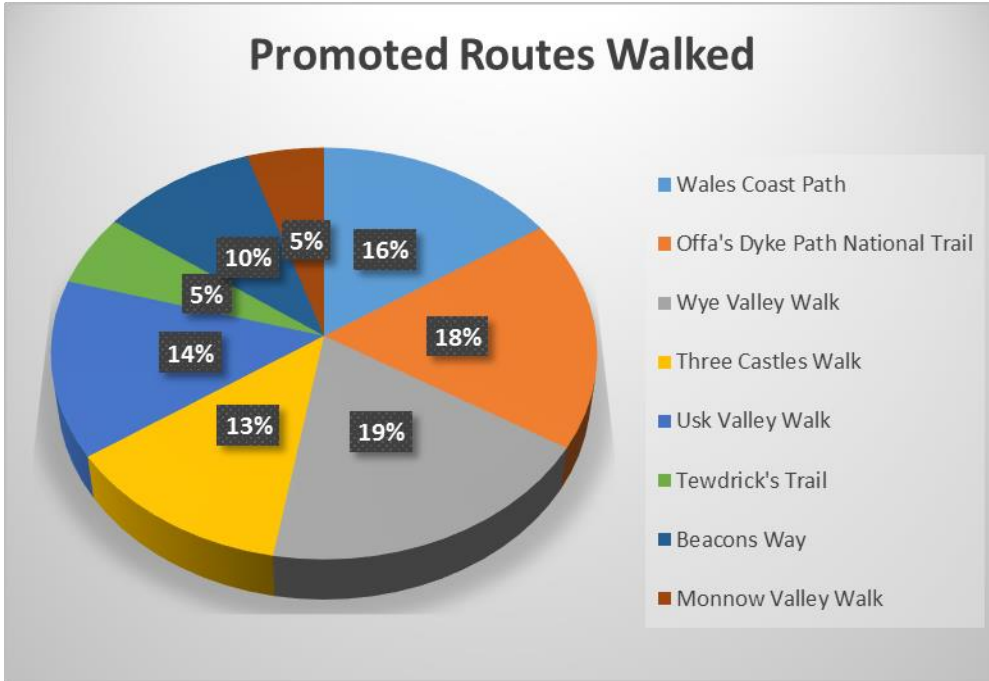


Which of the following prevent you using the countryside in Monmouthshire or affect how you use it?		
Don't like walking/cycling etc. 0	Health restrictions 11	Livestock/animals 59
Inability to read a map 0	Lack of information 12	Conflicts with landowners 68
Difficulty getting to countryside 0	Lack of secure parking 13	Unclear routes 91
Previous bad experience 1	Lack of river crossing 13	Routes overgrown with grass 110
Type of landscape 2	Lack of time 31	Routes blocked with crops/ploughing 115
Personal safety concerns 7	Problems using roads/verges to link paths 41	Other 22
Dog fouling excessive 9	Difficulty with access 48	

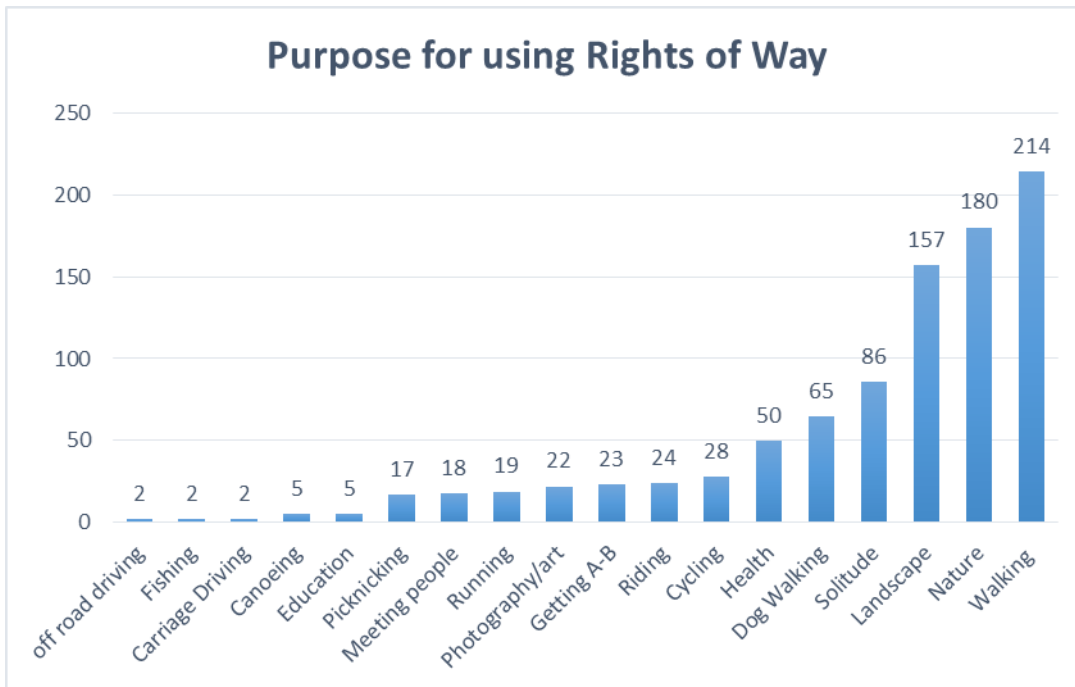
What types of places do you typically visit in Monmouthshire's countryside? (tick all that apply)



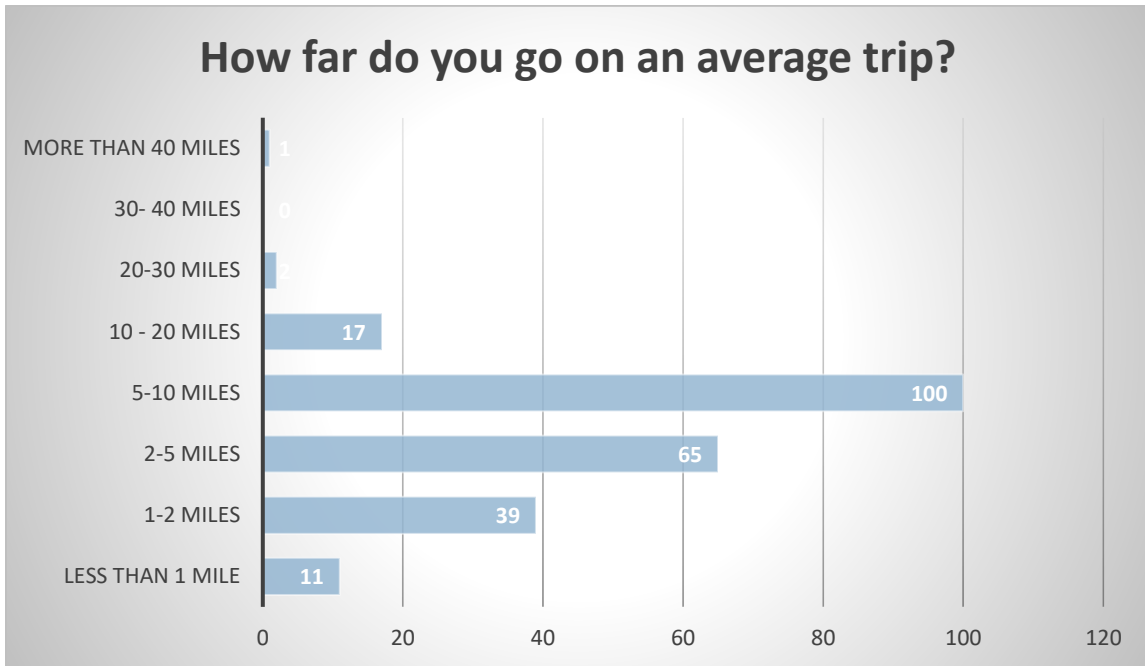
Have you ever used any of the following long distance promoted routes in Monmouthshire? Tick all that apply



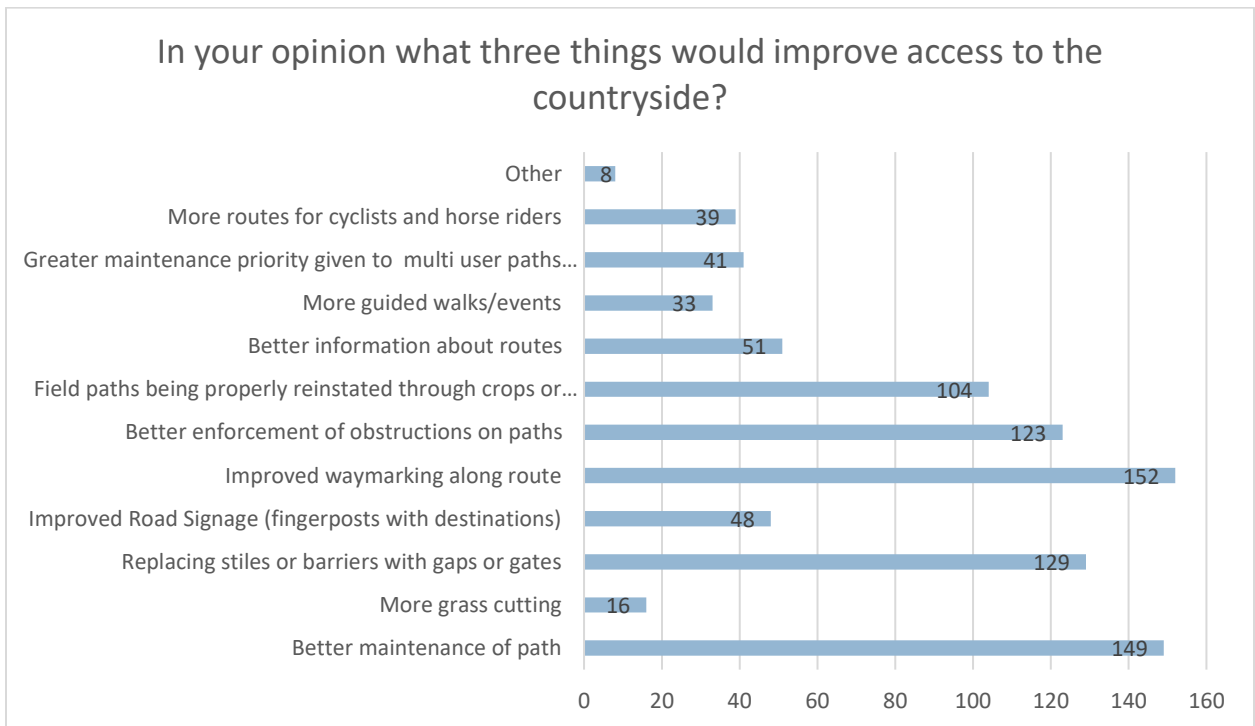
What are your reasons for using Rights of way (tick all that apply)?

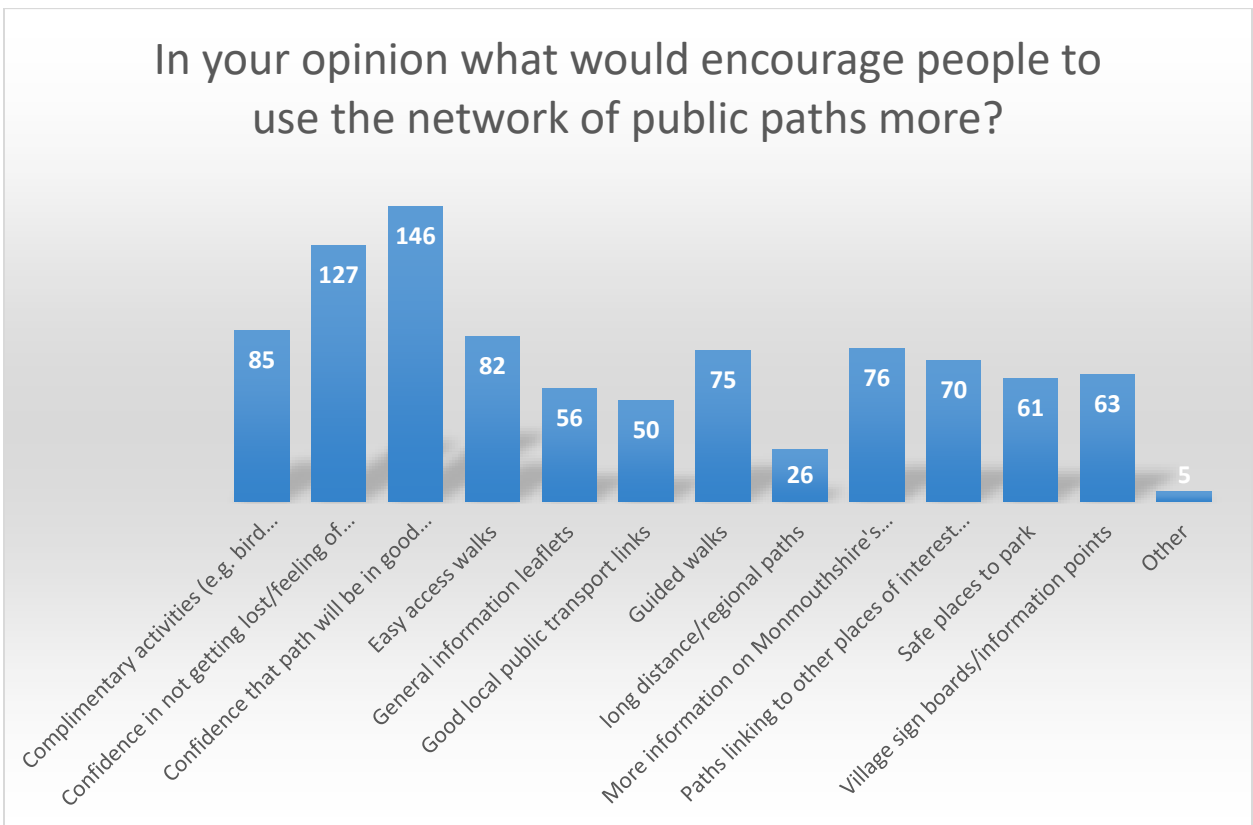
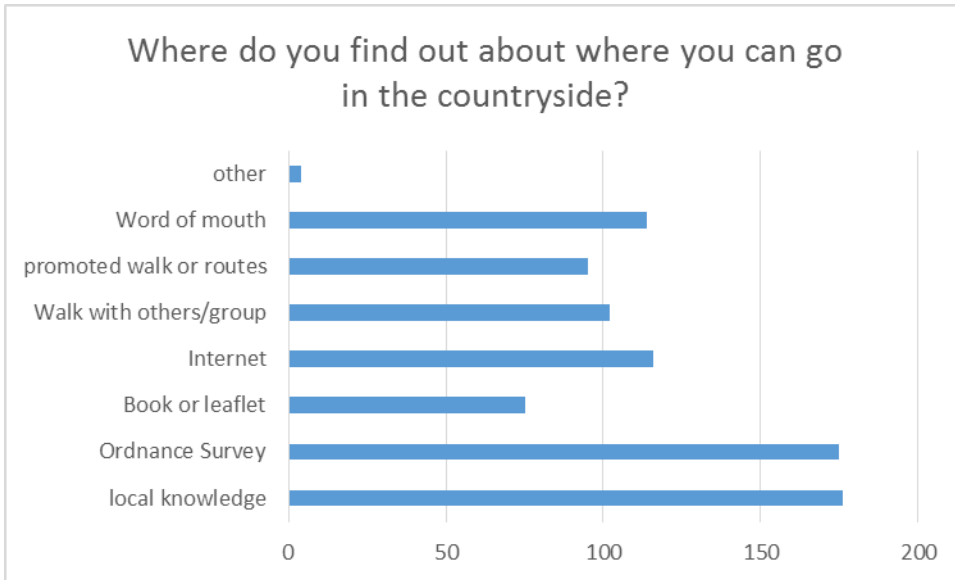


On a typical visit how far do you travel on rights of way in the countryside?



In your opinion what three things would improve access to the countryside?





When using rights of way in Monmouthshire how satisfied are you with the following provisions (one tick per question)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No opinion
Existing rights of way network	14	169	38	14
General maintenance of routes (surfaces etc.)	3	150	72	10
Accessibility for disabled people	0	51	65	119
Condition of stile and gates etc.	3	155	73	4
Signs at route/ road ends	6	137	79	13
Waymarking on routes	4	91	124	16
No of routes close to home	55	114	30	36
Information provided by MCC and partners about rights of way	4	142	50	39
General enforcement of routes (obstructions etc.)	3	86	123	23
Recording of paths and interactive electronic map provided by Countryside	6	79	54	96

When considering access to Monmouthshire’s Countryside and its rights of way are there any particular things you do not like or would like to see being done differently?

There were quite a few respondents who thought improved signage was important. There were also a few about improving structures for those less able and for dogs. Quite a few thought enforcement should increase and there were a few comments about enforcement against illegal off-roading. Several would like to see improved communication and quite a few would like to see more use of volunteers and community councils to maintain and fund improvements. There were also comments made about the lack of bridleways and maintained verges and county unclassified roads connecting them.

Here is a selection of the comments made:-

- *Fewer stiles, replaced with access for large dog!*
- *Greater enforcement re: illegal off road motorcycles. Do not over sanitise paths*
- *NRW being too precious on what is theirs.*

- *More communication on the condition of the paths and rights of way.*
- *We need effective and safe cycle routes particularly around Usk. Footpaths need better maintenance.*
- *Signage more clear...we have got lost several times when we have lost a trail.*
- *Clear marking at the entry and exit of rights of way. Suggested walks and routes with wildlife info on website.*
- *Clearer marking at times and obstructions removed. Better enforcement in respect of some landowners or tenants.*
- *We are very lucky where I live (The Narth) because local volunteers work hard to keep the footpaths in good order*
- *Tree fall is frequently an issue in and around the Wye Valley walks.*
- *Motorbikes are an absolute menace. Groups churn up the paths to slippery deep mud and the noise spoils our peaceful Sundays at home.*
- *More signage and more visitor friendly. Map boards, benches picnic areas to make you feel more welcome and encourage you to stamp and spend time. Sometimes it feels like march from a to b.*
- *I would like more leaflets with routes placed in easily accessible shops and library near me. There are too many rights of way that have effectively disappeared due to a lack of respect by landowners. This is mainly applicable in the centre of the county and has put me off planning walks in certain areas as I know I will encounter issues. Maintenance of the right of way network would encourage me to visit these under maintained areas.*
- *Replace styles by accessible gates. Also improve areas around entrances to paths which often get slippery and muddy.*
- *Needs more investment in ROW maintenance but appreciate budget constraints. Perhaps prioritise strategic routes that link key attractions and points of access e.g. bus routes, car parks etc. Also provision of safe off road cycle routes would be a priority for me.*
- *Stiles frequently have no provision for dogs which is unsatisfactory - having to lift them over stiles is not easy (and can lead to injury).*
- *I have answered several of the above as "satisfied" as the majority of times they are, but for some I am "dissatisfied" sometimes. Paths sometimes blocked, sometimes deliberately by landowners. I do not feel Monmouthshire enforce blockages strongly enough. Also gates on ROW being locked by landowner.*
- *I appreciate there must be stockproof fencing, but dog flaps next to Stiles would make it easier.*

- *More resources given to the footpaths team, i.e. some nails and spades*
- *Off-road motorcycles are a major problem in the lower Wye Valley area.*

This is in large part a problem because many tracks are nominally highways open to all vehicles. The designation of these needs changing to footpath or bridleway and responsibility transferring from Highways, who do precisely nothing to maintain these tracks to Countryside Management who, at least around The Narth, are quite active.

- *A point of contact to report blocked paths, it's difficult to access the right person. Involve walking and other interested groups routes to maintain and report on.*
- *Educating landowners about their responsibility to maintain availability of access e.g. installing safe break points in electric fence; not using barbed wire at stile access*
- *Better signs especially around farm buildings and on farm land. Landowners should be made aware of the rights of way that cross their land and that is illegal to obstruct the rights of way or prevent access to the rights of way.*
- *Updated information of condition of paths to be accessed electronically would be useful.*
- *The most important thing is for the full network to be well signed, way marked and maintained with good quality safe and usable stiles, gates, bridges, etc. So, bringing this up top scratch would be the top priority. I accept that this would require the participation of users and communities, so both the existing MCC countryside rights of way team (field wardens) and the volunteer coordinator are essential.*
- *In the south of Monmouthshire there is a distinct lack of bridleways and restricted by ways for horse riders and carriage drivers. Some restricted byways are closed, some are not marked as such. Gates are locked preventing horse riders and carriage drivers from accessing restricted byways across fields. If you can't use them, then we could potentially lose them!*
- *Verges between paths and roads are very often overgrown and often never maintained at all, it would make a big difference if the council cut all the path over the verge when cutting the grass beside the road.*
- *R65. The right of way network could be improved if landowners were encouraged to do more to maintain paths over their land by ensuring paths are kept clear, stiles etc. are kept in good condition and their hedges are not causing obstructions or a nuisance. Perhaps it would be in everyone's interest if they were encouraged to waymark paths over their land.*
- *Temporary public right of way closures can be a serious problem, it seems sometimes they are allowed without really being justified, without providing an alternative route when sometimes an alternative route could be provided and seemingly without too much consideration given to those who use the path. It seems usually temporary closure orders are granted for 6 months*

even when it is not necessary for the path to be closed for that amount of or all of that time, resulting in path users unnecessarily being prevented from using the path. Often a notice saying the path is temporarily closed is displayed out of sight of the actual closure warning people it is an offence to contravene the order, despite the fact the path is not physically closed, is actually currently open or has not yet been closed. Temporarily closing paths may sometimes be necessary but I think more should be done to prevent people from unnecessarily being stopped from using paths and where possible diversions should be provided.

- *R65. . Stiles overgrown especially at roadside where grass verges may be cut but access to stiles ignored. Same with signage either broken off by hedge trimmer or overgrown with ivy. I have photographic evidence of the very poor maintenance of footpaths in my locality, many are fast disappearing. Financial resource required to address these issues and some common sense use of available manpower/machinery.*
- *R70. More rights of way should become multi user rights if way for walkers and cyclists. The growth of mountain-biking is putting more pressure on a limited number of bridleways and byways.*
- *R77 Make access at gates wheelchair friendly and ease of use. Though I do understand about controlling livestock in fields. Tarmacking in and around gate areas so less muddy puddles and fear of getting stuck in wheelchair!*
- *R79 Would like more effective regulation of illegal off road motorised bikes and vehicles, and of illegal use of the Wye Bridge pavements by cyclists who do not dismount, because I have almost been hit several times, even in the Black Mountains.*
- *R81. I would like to see bridleways cleared twice a year - some of the hedges are so overgrown it is impossible to walk down them in foot, let alone with a horse. We have very limited bridle paths in Monmouthshire, linked by crossing fast roads but most of these paths are so overgrown or eroded they are unusable. I have been satisfied with the footpaths when I have been hiking.*
- *R82. Linking of bridleways to avoid dangerous roads (Tre-Herbert Road Llandegveth being a typical example) or safe places to park where horses could be unloaded to use the bridleways.*
- *Partner with community councils, charities and the public to replace stiles with kissing gates where possible or at least add access for dogs, many stiles elsewhere have had this for years. The public would contribute to a dedicated well-publicised fundraising campaign to increase access. This could be done on a community council and county basis. Every community council has much funding available to serve its community. What better use could there be than to support access and healthy lifestyles? Many of our villages have no facilities and no/few buses, leaving older residents feeling trapped. In our beautiful, safe and welcoming county, footpaths must be cherished.*

Discourage fencing in fields without livestock to encourage existing and create new wildlife corridors.

Creating permissive footpaths have very successfully been used elsewhere to create short and

long circular walks. I unsuccessfully proposed this to Llanover community council, regarding my own village of Llanfair Kilgeddin. The hope is to create safe off-road access for us to join the Usk Valley Walk and the nearest pub. We have no facilities, many residents are very elderly and there are several tourism businesses in the area, including my own.

Monmouthshire could partner with neighbouring councils on buying furniture like kissing gates in bulk, reducing costs and cohesion on regional and national routes.

We urgently need more cycling paths both for tourists and connecting villages and towns. We are very proud of the Velothon and we have many cyclists all-year round, but as a local resident I don't cycle here because I don't feel it's safe. Many of our roads are narrow, many drivers speed and become irritated. Also, many cyclists ride a few abreast and are otherwise inconsiderate.

- *Inadequate funding of footpath and furniture maintenance. Greater devolvement of work to volunteers, widening scope of their input.*
- *More access for horse riders. The county's roads are getting so busy they are dangerous. Many bridleways are cul-de-sacs or have a status change so you can't continue on them. Riders very often feel like second class citizens*
- *There needs to be more off road paths for cyclists and horse riders to get them off the roads which are dangerous. However the paths created/alterd also need to ensure that they are not magnets for off road motorbikers coming over from Bristol/Birmingham by using the barriers suggested by the BHS.*
- *Farm animals particularly cattle on footpaths. People I know will avoid fields with cattle in. Some signage about the cattle and how to react with them would help or possibly farm visits with a farmer to give advice. Should one walk around a herd or keep to the footpath. I avoided one field with cattle in because of the density of stocking. I have also been mock-charged by young bullocks.*
- *More field officers to support volunteers carrying out path maintenance.*
- *more local signage/small information route boards as to where paths go*
- *Attention to stiles and more gates to allow older people access. Many hip/knee problems and find wobbly stiles impossible. Prow are important for health & mobility of an increasing elderly population*
- *More joined up action - we have some great new bridges in Llanvapley area which are an expensive resource but many of them do not lead to maintained paths & so are of limited use.*

Is there anything else you would like to add which you think would benefit or improve people's use and enjoyment of the countryside in Monmouthshire?

Responses are below. Note some were repetitive and therefore not all are included where this is the case. There were also some responses similar to the previous question relating to the need for improved signage and maintenance which are also not noted due to the repetitious nature of them elsewhere in the report. Any personal details or offensive comments are not shown.

- *I would like to see a stronger commitment from Natural Resources Wales to the maintenance and provision of waymarked walks and general access routes on NRW land.*
- *Maybe more picnic sites*
- *It would be very helpful to dog owners and to encourage Monmouthshire's reputation as a dog-friendly county if any publications about footpaths etc. could comment on the suitability or otherwise for dogs of the routes described.*
- *We have to play to Monmouthshire's strengths by making it save and easy to cycle and walk. Usk, and other towns are dying when they could be centers of beauty and activity. Public rights of way should be working hand in hand with tourism and local business to make our county an even better place to visit.*
- Local bus routes are in jeopardy. It would be difficult for some groups of people such as young people to access the countryside
- Mutual respect by walkers and landholders of their respective rights. I have no doubt that there are faults on both sides but enforcement by the Council seems weak. Anti-social behaviour by some walkers who drop litter etc. could perhaps also be tackled.
- More and better guided walks.
- Off road motorcycles a problem. Perhaps give areas for them to use? And promote through associations/signage.
- Some areas are not within range of mobile phone access. Many of our walkers have some sort of disability and it would be helpful if we could contact emergence services should there be a problem.
- I do not feel Monmouthshire give enough priority and money to ROW. It is important for people's health (saving money for NHS) and also for tourism.
- Info on walks linked to bus routes to make linear walks easier.
- Management is obviously essential in places, but please keep the nature of the countryside as well. Maintaining the feeling of wildness, encouraging flora and fauna by protecting habitats. Don't lose what makes it so special.
- More tourism related publicity - promotion of Monmouthshire as a walking destination would be beneficial all round.
the occasional seat or bench
- Walking festivals for local areas within Monmouthshire.
- Better signage and more online information on walks that are easy to follow
- More easy access routes would make it easier for disabled people
- Promote that the country side is an asset that is shared by a range of individuals and groups in partnership with the land owners.
- ROW network is maintained to a higher standard than in all the neighbouring counties. It just needs to be used and schools need to teach basic map reading skills: I have seen how many walkers disregard a waymarked route through fields owned by friends.
- Useful to have a basic A to B map at the start of a public rights of way (that cover large open areas of farmland) so the user is confident they are not straying off the designated path.

- Cooperate with landowners, charities, NRW, DEFRA, neighbouring and regional councils to eradicate invasive species together consistently over several years. Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and others are out of control. No single council can eradicate it alone. The Monnow River Association have proven that it works if done over a whole geographic area consistently over a few years.
- Reopen Victorian water fountains for drinking. We are fortunate to still have a few around in some state. Let's make them usable again.
- Development of family picnic/play areas similar to those found in Forest of Dean.
- Better paths mean more use and better health benefits. Better paths mean more tourists. We need to keep them open
- Set up team of volunteers to assist in the maintenance of way marking like they do in France. Could also extend to collecting litter and assisting with track maintenance
- OS maps being keep up to date with path diversions, changes to field boundaries, etc.
- Publish a set of sustainable 4x4 promoted routes.
- increased publicity to schools
- Better promotion of health walks - advertising literature/leaflets together with distribution into surgeries, chemists etc. Improved care of health routes e.g. ensuring all of the route is accessible. For wheelchair routes - information boards or written description of what to look for.
- Send leaflets to all registered walking groups in Monmouthshire. If funding available hold a walkers conference(get a sponsor)

4.2 ORGANISATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE.

The following Organisation's representing a mix of User Groups, Government Bodies, Charities and others responded:-

1. Caldicot U3A Walking Group
2. Chepstow Walkers are Welcome
3. Monmouthshire Local Access Forum Member
4. Monmouth Rambling and Hill Walking Club
5. Usk Trail Access Group
6. Canal & Rivers Trust
7. CLA Cymru
8. Sustrans
9. St Arvans Community Council
10. Caldicot U3A Group
11. Llanbadoc Community Council
12. Llangwm Community Council
13. Pontypool & District Group of Ramblers Association Greater Gwent Area
14. Llangybi Fawr Community Council
15. Trellech United Community Council
16. The Narth and District Footpath Group
17. Water of Wales

The majority of Organisations said they were interested in Monmouthshire as a whole, but four have more regional/national interests and two said they have very local interests.

How would you rate the Monmouthshire Rights of way network for different users?

	Very good	Good	Badly	Very Badly	Don't Know	n/a or blank
For Walkers	2	12	1	1	1	0
For Riders	0	6	1	1	6	2
For Cyclists	0	5	4	1	6	0
For those with disabilities	0	1	3	6	5	1
For vehicles	0	1	0	1	12	2

Q5. How aware do you feel local people and visitors are of the rights of way in Monmouth shire?

69% of organisations ticked “aware”. 31% of organisations ticked “Not Aware”.

Q6. Is your organization aware of the Definitive Map? Yes or No. Q6b) If you are aware of the Definitive Map have you used it?

94% of organisations are aware of the Definitive Map and 81% of them have used it.

Q7. Has your organization any evidence which might be useful to the rights of way improvement plan that people require either more or different access to the countryside and where this is required?

- Chepstow Walkers Welcome: *“We think it is important to extend the RoW network to make it accessible to a wider range of users. In particular, those with limited mobility or health issues. The replacement of stiles with kissing gates has proved successful in St Arvans and could be extended to areas such as Mathern and Mounton.”*
- Monmouthshire Local Access Forum Member: *“Must consult with disabled users. Must only use data that is valid to assess requirements not useless surveys. ROWIP should not be a wish list. Should be attainable. Prioritise those parts of previous ROWIP that were not achieved. All DMMO and diversion applications must have all information clearly available on line to all.”*
- Usk Trails & Access *“Yes, we often observe wheelchair users and pushchair users unable to access paths in urban areas because they are not barrier free.”*
- Canals & Rivers Trust *“We have towpath counters which record use. None of these are in Monmouthshire. It may be possible to install more or move existing if this would be of interest.”*
- Sustrans said *“Yes The missing link in Clydach Gorge on National Cycle Route 46, Usk to Pontypool Cycle Route and Caldicot Greenway (path along disused railway)”*
- St Arvans Community Council *“Minuted correspondence usually from resident commentary about difficulty accessing pathways”*

- Caldicot U3A *“More access required. More parking facilities.”*
- The Narth & District Footpath Group: *“People tell us that they value having some routes where they can be sure of following them without fear of getting lost, especially in woodland setting. The colour-coded wm routes on the NRW woodland estate fulfil this role very well. However, we are concerned about the commitment of NRW to maintaining these routes in appropriate condition - good signing, information and surface condition. These colour coded wm routes are an essential part of the mix. In our area we are very fortunate in having large areas of (mainly NRW) Access Land in addition to the ROW network and this provides a wide range of opportunities. We support the MCC policy of Least Restrictive Access for PROW furniture”.*

Q8. There is a cross over between the ROWIP and other plans and priorities and potential partnerships that may arise from them to deliver maximum benefits to the public. What such policies and strategies do you have which we could take account of.

- *The Canal & Rivers Trust have a waterways and well-being outcomes report which will be updated regularly. [Http\[s://canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnail/33802-canal-and-river-trust-outcomes-report-waterways-and-wellbeing-ful-report.pdf\]](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnail/33802-canal-and-river-trust-outcomes-report-waterways-and-wellbeing-ful-report.pdf) We may start on further localised waterway plans in due course. The Council will be advised of this as if/we progress.*
- *Take account of the Active Travel act and MCC's integrated network map*
- *Ensuring that residents have unhampered reasonable access to countryside and its many benefits, taking into account the need for land, resource and habitat management*
- *Maintenance carried out on row*
- *Collaboration between walkers, cyclists and probably horse riders towards keeping paths clear and ensure they are as free as possible of vehicular traffic including motorcycles*
- *see our standing orders: <http://www.trellechunited.org.uk/Trellech-United-CC/UserFiles/Files/Documents/Standing%20Orders%202016.pdf>*
- *The overall objective of the Narth and District Footpath group is “to ensure that the public rights of way network and other selected routes in and around the villages (the Narth, Whitebrook, Pen y Fan and Maryland) are properly signed and in a condition that enables residents and visitors to enjoy using them”. We believe this ties in very well with the ROWIP and we depend on the ROWIP having at its centre a strong commitment to improving Rights of Way across Monmouthshire. We have largely completed phase 1 of our project which included:*
 - *an initial stocktake of the path network*
 - *identifying the works required to bring them up to an acceptable standard*
 - *putting in place the arrangements to enable the works to proceed**We are now engaged on phase 2 which includes:*
 - *implementing a prioritised programme of work to ensure that the network is maintained in a good condition*
 - *encouraging the community to engage with its network of footpaths and bridleways through village walks, volunteering and making us of it as part of everyday life.*

We have worked closely with MCC throughout the Project and we need the ROWIP to provide the framework and initiative for this collaboration to continue.

- *Establish clarity over use of RoW to access water.*

Q9. Given that resources are limited, what three improvements do you think would make using/visiting the Monmouthshire countryside easiest and most enjoyable (rank 1-3, 1 being most important?)

1. Better maintenance of paths
2. Better enforcement of obstructions on paths
3. Field paths being properly reinstated through crops

Q10. Is there any specific improvement that would encourage currently inactive people to use row in your locality?

- *With BBNPA we are working on a Step-by-Step project which is social prescribing Doctors recommend walking towpath as part of active lifestyle/well being*
- *Guided walks*
- *Safe access to a good range of circular walks with information to give guidance e.g. looking at historical artefacts, particular habitats etc. You get an increase of walkers for example when bluebells are out ... why not link some ancient trees/look at industrial residue/ get a great view...*
- *Obstructions to row removed; stiles made safe.*
- *Increased advertising to encourage membership of local walking groups (especially the Ramblers) pointing out the considerable benefits which can be gained both physically and mentally*
- *increase barrier free access*
- *Replacing stiles and barriers with accessible gates or gaps*
- *Much of this is about people feeling confident that that PRow are in good condition (surfaces, way marking, fingerposted from public highways (with destinations), easy to follow and with good furniture and minimal obstructions) and that they will not get lost. Waymarked or recommended routes can help give this confidence, as can grading of routes (easy, difficult etc.) and the opportunity for led walks or being part of a walking group of some kind. Resting places are also of great benefit to people who find walking a little difficult. It is a matter of concern that NRW has a tendency to remove seats and benches on its land and not replace them. Communities could perhaps help with some of these issues.*

Q11. What is the level of your organisation involvement in local paths?

Water of Wales, Sustrans, The Canal & Rivers Trust, Llanbadoc Community Council and The Narth have an active working group/ working party on rights of way.

Pontypool & District Ramblers Association Greater Gwent Area, Sustrans, The Canals and Rivers Trust, Caldicot U3A all have a nominated councillor/representative who monitors rights of way

Q12. What is the level of interest of your organization in being more actively involved in maintaining promoting or improving the network of paths in your local area?

	Very interested	Moderately interested	Not interested
Maintenance	Sustrans, Canals & Rivers Trust, Llanbadoc CC, Pontypool & District RA, Trellech United CC, The Narth & District Footpath Group	St Arvans CC, Llangwm CC	Caldicot U3A
Promotion	Sustrans, St Arvans CC, Llanbadoc CC, Pontypool & District RA, The Narth & District Footpath Group	Caldicot U3A, Llangwm CC, Trellech United CC	
Improvements	Sustrans, Llanbadoc CC, Trellech United CC, The Narth & District Footpath Group	St Arvans, Caldicot U3A, Llangwm CC, Pontypool & District RA	
Other (specify)	<p>Sustrans: Construction promotion and maintenance of national cycle network</p> <p>CLA Cymru: representing landowners</p> <p>The Narth: Survey and monitoring. Events village walks etc.</p> <p>Waters of Wales: We are particularly interested in RoW leading to/alongside water.</p>		

Q13. What would encourage greater participation from your organization in maintaining, improving and promoting paths?

Access to Grants or other funding	Canals & Rivers Trust, Sustrans, St Avans, Llanbadoc CC, Llangwm CC, Pontypool & District, Trellech CC
Availability of workforce or volunteer group	Canals & Rivers Trust, Sustrans, St Arvans, Caldicot U3A, Pontypool & District, Llangybi CC, Trellech CC
Nothing would	none
Other	The Narth & District Footpath Group: <i>The ability to work with NRW Estate on non-row routes on their land. It is disappointing and frustrating that NRW does not have the policies or capacity to work with volunteers. For PROW we have reached a level of activity that we are content to maintain for our area. The main issue for us in</i>

	<p><i>doing this is being able to rely on continuing support from MCC Countryside Warden Team and Volunteer Co-Ordinator</i></p> <p><i>Pontypool & District: - some "teach - ins" by cc countryside access on organisation and involvement of path volunteers could be very helpful.</i></p> <p><i>CLA Cymru : Members being represented on LAF.</i></p> <p><i>Waters of Wales: Recognition of the need to access water in order to enjoy the statutory prn on all flowing water for which there is a considerable body of evidence.</i></p>
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Q14 Overall how would you like to see the rights of way in Monmouthshire improved in the next ten years and what would be your highest priority?

- *Improve and Promote projects such as "discovery trail"*
- *Better waymarking and maintenance*
- *Have a priority list and concentrate on paths that are most likely to be used and enjoyed. Complete the missing link in Clydach Gorge, complete the Usk to Pontypool walking and cycling route, complete all the short term and medium term routes set out in MCC's INM*
- *Joined together planning through Highways and ROW and community Groups*
- *Provision of safe row without obstructions/safe stiles/gates and bridges. Good waymarking crop enforcement*
- *publicity/promotion*
- *reviewing stiles and fingerposts*
- *improved maintenance of stiles & wm*
- *Removal of obstructions (priority) and disabled access improvements*
- *Our absolute top priority is a PRoW network that is fit for purpose – i.e. unobstructed, appropriately signed, with a usable surface and with furniture well-maintained and in good order. This high quality PRoW network that MCC, communities, landowners and individual users can collectively be proud of, lies at the heart of countryside access policy and it is only this that will enable the delivery of the wider benefits that the ROWIP seeks.*
- *The highest priority has to be the identification and recording of RoW that are unrecorded or under-recorded on the definitive map. Following from that, ALL RoW need to be properly signposted so that people are aware of their existence, and are thus in a position to report obstructed and overgrown paths.*

Q15 when considering the Monmouthshire countryside and its rights of way are there any particular things you do not like or would like to be done differently?

- *We have a serious concern about Unclassified County Roads. We have quite a number of these in or area. They are heavily used by motor cycles and because many of them are on slopes they are now so badly eroded that they are dangerous for walkers, horse riders or cyclists to us. To the*

individual user, these routes are just part of the PRoW network and they are the part that we receive most complaints about. We understand that responsibility for these routes in MCC lies with Highways for whom they are low priority and we cannot see any joining up of effort with the Countryside Team to bring them back to an acceptable standard. We believe strongly that responsibility for these routes should pass from Highways to the Countryside Team with an appropriate budget, so that they can be properly integrated in to the Countryside Access Network which is a much more appropriate place for them than in the Highway Network where they currently sit in a position of sad neglect.

- *It is disappointing to see the roadside finger posts with destination place names being replaced with new ones that just have a symbol. This loses the sense of the PRoW network connecting places together, which is something that we believe is important to see promoted rather than lost. It makes the network both more accessible and inviting, and gives it a greater sense of purpose.*
- *The ROWIP should contain a clear strategy for landowners and public bodies to work together to tackle illegal use – principally by motor cycles and quads – which is damaging the network and causing users to feel unsafe. The Plan should include a clear statement from NRW as the principal owner and manager of “Access Land” to provide clarity as to how it will ensure that public access provision is maintained to high standard for a variety of users and abilities and how it will work to ensure delivery of the wider benefits of public access from its land.*
- *Rationalisation of the network - getting rid of routes which do not have any practical usage and concentrating resources on well used routes*
- *Very good team working with very limited resources. Keep up the good work.*
- *Micromanagement is not necessary - and there is always a lot of fun in wayfinding but there needs to be a balance between keeping walkers on a narrow, defined path thus ensuring safety, security and safeguarding environment and the encouragement of exploration. I wouldn't like to see too many clearly demarked pathways.*
- *Provision of funds to enable row to be maintained.*
- *Keen to strictly exclude motorcycles and other off road vehicles from all walking trails*
- *All RoW must be protected, not just the key ones. If a RoW has low usage, this could be because people are unaware of it, or feel unable to use it.*

Q16 is there anything else you would like to add which you think would benefit or improve people's use and enjoyment of the countryside in Monmouthshire?

- *Access to drinking water - human and doggies. Signage including "What to see" and how far, how long - these are great.*
- *Control of dangerous farm animals where footpaths traverse farm yards or fields. A blitz on fly-tipping in the countryside*
- *Liaising with NRW's forest-paths people re way marking paths through woodland. (New grey posts for way marking were erected in local woodlands many months ago by NRW but they have not yet affixed any way marker discs to them, despite my reminding them)*
- *We would like to see a central theme of the ROWIP being the achievement of a high quality PRoW network that MCC, communities, landowners and individual users can collectively be proud of. It is vital that support for the work of the Monmouthshire CC Countryside Management Service is maintained. A dedicated and properly resourced in-house team with a strong public service ethic and commitment to the network and its use by residents and visitors is essential. This must lie at the heart of the ROWIP if it is to be successful.*

- *There needs to be space for creative thinking and approaches to the challenge of improving the condition of Monmouthshire’s PRoW network and its Access Land and encouraging more people to use it for the many benefits that it provides.
Given the likelihood of continuing restrictions on MCC’s budget, there could be an opportunity for communities and users of the network to be prepared to play a bigger role in supporting MCC in carrying out its responsibilities in order to make its resources go further. We have been able to demonstrate that volunteers can play a big part in helping to maintain and enhance the network and to encourage use by local communities, visitors and tourism businesses. However, such volunteer and community input is only viable with the support of the dedicated Monmouthshire CC team with their integrated technical, legal and data handling resources. The availability of a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator is critical in encouraging and enabling volunteers to work effectively, to share best practice and in developing innovative approaches to obtaining best value from volunteer effort. The Narth and District Footpath Project would not have happened without this support.
We would be very happy to work with MCC to share our experience with other groups or communities who are considering taking action to improve their local PRoW networks.*
- *People are excluded from water and waterside. Strategy is all too often predicated on one opinion of the legal situation without giving due regard to other opinions. The importance of recreation in, on or beside water should be recognised, and every effort made to facilitate. Public access to open spaces (land and water) needs to be taken into consideration in all planning and development decision-making, to ensure that rights, proven or otherwise, are protected.*

4.3 LAND MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

There were 17 responses to this questionnaire. 14 stated they were landowners working the land, 1 is a public organization and 1 is an Estate.

1. What area of Land do you manage?

Under 5Ha 4 5-50HA 7 50-200Ha 4 200-500Ha 4 Over 500Ha

2. How do you principally manage your land?

Arable Livestock 4 Both 4 Other 8 (Woodlands/domestic wildflower meadow)

3. Do you have any of the following on your land?

Rights of Way 13 Permissive paths 4 Open Access 1 Glastir or other grant access 2

4. In the last week/month, have you experienced any of the following?

Please tick as many as apply	Week	Month	Never
Walkers on rights of way on your land	11	4	
Riders on rights of way on your land	5	11	
Cyclists on rights of way on your land	4		9

Motorised users on rights of way on your land		1	15
Walkers/riders/cyclists/motorised users illegally on your land	5	3	8
Dogs out of control on your land	3	3	9
Fly tipping on your land			13 3 no comment
Vandalism to crops/stock		1	12 3 no comments
Vandalism to property/machinery		2	11 3 no comment

5. In terms of rights of way law and best practice, which of the following would you like more advice on?

Ploughing and cropping 0 Signage 7 Barriers/stiles/gates 6
Changes to the network 1 Other 3

6. How well do you feel that the Rights of Way on your land meets the needs of current users?

Well 12 Badly 4 Don't know 0 Not Interested 0

7. Given that current resources are limited what THREE improvements do you think would make using/visiting the Monmouthshire countryside easiest and most enjoyable (rank 1 to 3, 1 being the most important)

1. Improved way marking along routes
2. Better maintenance of paths
3. More routes for horses and cyclists
4. Replacing stiles or barriers with gates or gaps (Increased barrier free access)

8. How aware do you feel local people and visitors are of the rights of way in Monmouthshire?

Very aware 3 Aware 8 Not aware 5

9. Are you aware of the Definitive Map?

Not aware 3 Aware 13

11b if you are aware of the Definitive Map, have you used it?

Yes 10 No 6

10. How well do you think that local plans & partnerships address countryside issues?

Very well 0 Well 7 Badly 4 Very Badly 2 Don't know 3

11. When considering the Monmouthshire countryside and its rights of way, are there any particular things you do not like or would like to see being done differently?

- *I do not like deliberate obstructions or paths where the landowners have deliberately obfuscated the path by removing signs and waymarkers. As landowners we should make sure the paths are clear and clearly marked.*
- *More localised walk leaflets - other than those centred around the 'tourist areas' and large towns. Lots of good walks around the villages of Monmouthshire - including the south of the county.*
- *The landowner is not always in the wrong. Important to foster good working relationships with landowners. Consult landowners on the problems they face with users of rights of way. Have option on MCC website for landowners to report problems. Consider help to divert paths out of farmyards to improve safety and wellbeing of users and landowners. On line access to DMMO's and diversions and closures must be accurate and up to date. System should be like planning applications with full transparency and all documents available.*
- *As a landowner I understand the fears others have about rights of way, but I think many of these fears are often exaggerated. My nearest village is isolated and has no services, the nearest bus stop is a long walk and many of my neighbours are elderly. Some have dogs. They walk their dogs on my land and meet me and others to chat. For some it's one of the few places to go. What harm would they do? What would they do if I tried to make access difficult as many others do? As it is they can't walk further because the stile is too high. A criminal is not going to be stopped by the lack of a footpath.
*Many of our footpaths are very ancient, used by our families to walk to church, to work, to school, to friends for centuries. Britain is the only country in the world I know of that grant us such privileges. We should cherish and protect that.**
- *Enforcement of dogs on leads*
- *The council does nothing for footpaths*
- *Better signage for understanding who can use which paths*
- *maintenance of gates so as they are not likely to be left open*
- *If a right of way or permissive path has not been used for a lengthy period of time by any member of the public then it should be easier for the landowner to request that the path be decommissioned.*
- *I think there should greater emphasis placed upon a 'code of conduct' for walkers i.e keeping to the path; having a map and sticking to it; keeping dogs on a lead and fouling taken away!;; being respectful to the landowner i.e treating fields in the same way they would like their gardens(if they have??) treated.*
- *It all comes down to funding so that the row can be properly & safely maintained*
- *Improved enforcement for blocked and damaged routes*

12. Is there anything else you would like to add which you think would benefit or improve people's use and enjoyment of the countryside in Monmouthshire?

- *More tourism related information*

- Improved fingerpost markers along the routes, and more localised walk leaflets or display boards available from points within villages
- Better access for people with less mobility. We have an ageing population, we all have grandparents. How can they climb over stiles?
- Maybe the council could actually do something. The footpath management is a joke
- Improve maintenance of paths
- dogs on leads through livestock
- More bridle paths
- It is a partnership which requires respect and tolerance from all parties. 99% of the walkers I have using the paths on my property are very nice people and it is a pleasure to meet them and make their experience of the countryside enjoyable. Unfortunately, it is always the minority who spoil things for everyone
- Clear, safe, unobstructed path
- MCC should CPO the land to complete the Clydach Gorge cycle route

5.0 WORKSHOP

The public workshop was attended by 27 people. Several were MCC staff but also present were private individuals, countryside volunteers and representatives of the following organisations:

- Monmouth Rambling and Hill Walking Club
- Usk U3A
- Caldicot U3A
- Lower Wye RA
- Chepstow Walkers
- Monmouthshire LAF Members

The meeting started with a presentation on the processes involved and what assessments the authority was having to make. Welsh Government Guidance for producing a new ROWIP can be found here: - <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160711rights-of-way-improvement-plans-en.pdf>

Matthew Lewis, Green Infrastructure and Countryside Manager then put this in context and talked about the Well-Being Act, Service delivery demands and resources.

5.1 THE EXTENT TO WHICH LOCAL RIGHTS OF WAY MEET THE PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC

Ruth Rourke gave a presentation on the public rights of way and other types of countryside access available. There are 2,164.83km of path 505.78 km of which are in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Footpath 89%, 1927.306 km

Bridleway 5%, 109.31km

Restricted byway 6%, 126.8km

Byway 1.52km

Other highways a, b, c roads 1609.6km

There is still a lack of off road routes for horse riders, cyclists and motor vehicles. There is also a lack of suitable routes for those with mobility and other health issues. The first ROWIP prioritised creating and maintaining bridleways over other routes. It was generally believed that this should still continue.

Other identified issues were:

- Connecting people with wildlife and landscapes
- Access to woods – uncertain what is allowed. Better promotion of what is available in each woodland is required. There is a desire to make more use of woodland tracks. Maintenance in woodlands can be a problem especially for those with physical and mental health problems.
- Limited access for those with mobility issues – Stiles still remain a problem. The Health Walk sector needs to be pushed and taken more seriously.
- Development of bite sized doorstep opportunities – more circular walks
- Links to green spaces/quality access
- Farm animals were deterrent to users
- Cropping a problem
- Lack of Car parks/toilets
- **What do children require?** – Education of countryside code important. Wild Tots Group in The North is a good example of getting children outside. NRW doesn't make it easy though. Organised walks should be targeted to children/families/schools.
- Crossing points on main roads – several main roads do not have suitable crossing points dividing communities and the network
- **What would make people go out?** – Better promotion to targeted audiences. Information and confidence. Ambassadors are underutilised they should be the "Go to People". Chepstow Walkers Welcome provide information. There are over 2000+ visitors to their website.

5.2 ENFORCEMENT/MAINTENANCE & POLICY

From March 2012 to March 2018 the Countryside Access Service received 2800 enforcement and 9400 maintenance issues, resolving approximately 55% of enforcement cases and 66% maintenance issues per year. Resourcing was considered a major issue.

It was felt that the general policy (*"The Service must prioritise where it focuses resources and standards to accurately reflect areas of most demand. It must also be able to be adaptable to cover such things as bad weather events"*) was acceptable.

Ian Blomeley the PRow Enforcement Officer gave a presentation on Enforcement with particular regards to the approach to cropping.

Do you agree policies should enable rather constrict timely action? Generally this was agreed.

How do you want enforcement prioritised? No real consensus, but some issues require a more timely approach if possible – such as cropping. It was noticed that some new crops were a problem and some things like long grass (which are a crop to farmers) are not covered by legislation so no enforcement or maintenance can be undertaken.

5.3 BRIDGES

There was a presentation regarding the maintenance of the 1326 bridges on the rights of way network in Monmouthshire. 9%+ of these bridges need repair or replacement.

All bridge work is currently prioritised according to the prioritisation used for all other maintenance and enforcement issues and includes risk and inconvenience and use. Recently Llangula Bridge in

Grosmont was removed, as it was considered highly dangerous. The river is moving very rapidly here and a new site where the river is not ox bowing needs to be sought for replacement of the bridge. The new bridge would need to be at least 13m long, designed for the site, made to order and installed by contractors. It is estimated that the costs of this would be in the region of £27,000

This bridge and others like it will therefore will only be replaced if additional funding is found. There is a question of policy here as the Council has a duty to maintain the network, but with current resources and the number of bridges that need replacing benefits to the general public must be taken into account. The previous bridge was little used but since its removal a few local people have asked for a replacement sighting that it helped supply them with a local walk and was good for their well-being. However for the costs of replacing this bridge, many other smaller bridges on well used paths, could be replaced or fixed. This resourcing dilemma is something that local people in Grosmont have specifically asked to be looked at.

What are your views? Is the prioritisation still agreeable?

There was general consensus that the prioritisation for bridges was correct and a fair approach.

5.4 DIVERSIONS/CREATIONS AND EXTINGUISMENT ORDERS

There are approximately 60 legal orders outstanding. **Should these also be prioritised according to “public benefit”? What would this be?**

Issues to consider:

- Routes where landowner has paid full costs
- Type of order – town and country planning act might be required for development
- Some diversions are required to resolve obstructions/enforcement

To be consistent with ROWIP and maintenance prioritisation public benefits could consist of

- Routes that allow more types of user – consistent with aims of ROWIP of increasing access to those with disabilities/health issues and who have little off road access
- Routes with positive health and safety benefits – such as providing safe off road routes as alternative to busy roads
- Links to amenities/tourism attractions

This proposed prioritisation of legal orders was generally agreed.

5.5 PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

The following comments were made regarding promotion and publicity:

- There is capacity to Link to visit Monmouthshire all types of walks
- Information Boards are required like in Talgarth
- The Tread & Trot route website is missing – this & other routes are being moved and put in one place under visitmonmouthshire.com
- There is a problem with many errors on the Ordnance Survey Maps and the length of time taken to reproduce them.
- There should be a Walking Festival for Monmouthshire?
- CAMS - The User Face is difficult and needs to be improved
- Volunteers can help with publicity and promotion. Efficient use of volunteers to Pathcare promoted routes
- Long distance cycle track/bridleway required

5.6 PRIORITIES

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. The last ROWIP had the following three priorities

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. Attendees thought these were still the three most important priorities.

How would you like to see countryside access in Monmouthshire improved in the next 10 years and what would be the highest priority?

Attendees said with regards to priorities there should be:

- Improved strategy for health walking
- Community links
- Connectivity
- Maintenance was considered highest priority and looking for more resources.

5.7 OTHER ISSUES RAISED DURING THE EVENT.

- Volunteers – This came up in many discussions and it was clear that volunteering and enabling volunteer groups to take part in maintenance and promotion could be expanded if simple processes, tools and staffing resources were available.
- Library of resources would be useful.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS TO ALL CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The comments made so far support the need for the ROWIP to be revised and raise a number of new issues that will need addressing by Monmouthshire County Council and also by Partners.

A range of partners have been identified which if further resources are found could assist particularly with marketing, information and promotion.

There is a strong emphasis on maintaining and improving the way in which we work with local volunteer groups particularly walking groups and with landowners.

Respondents gave a clear message that enforcement of obstructions on routes and enforcement of reinstating paths after ploughing or cropping needs to improve. Signage and waymarking is also an issue for both landowners and the public. Interestingly there is a strong desire for more signage/information boards around villages. There is also strong support for making routes easier to use and for more routes to be made available to cyclists and horse riders and a range of path improvements have been suggested.

Respondents struggled to prioritise works required, but enforcement and maintenance came over clearly as a first priority. Overall the information from this consultation showed that locals regularly

use rights of way and wish to do so more. They value the benefits that walking and riding can bring support an approach based on the Well-Being and Active Travel Plan. Views from these consultations will now be used to prepare a draft ROWIP.

This report will now be translated and made available on our website.

The Countryside Access Team would like to thank all those who have been involved with the review to date and also to those who have expressed an interest in assisting with the rest of the process.

APPENDIX ONE

CONSULTATION LIST

In many cases, both national and regional/local offices, and representatives of groups have been consulted.

Several groups consulted have also sent documents to individual members

1. Brecon Beacons National Park
2. Gloucestershire County Council
3. Herefordshire County Council
4. Balfour Beatty
5. Newport County Council
6. Powys County Council
7. Carmarthenshire County Council
8. Bleanau Gwent
9. Torfaen County Borough Council
10. Forest of Dean District Council
11. Wye Valley AONB
12. Natural Resources Wales
13. CADW
14. Environment Minister Lesley Griffiths AM
15. Members of Parliament and Welsh Government representing areas within the Brecon Beacons National Park and Monmouthshire
16. Secretary and Members of Monmouthshire Local Access Forum
17. Secretary and Members of Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum
18. All members of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
19. All members of Powys, Torfaen, Newport and Monmouthshire Local Access Forums
20. All Community Councils in Monmouthshire
21. U3A Groups – Crickhowell, Ross on Wye and District, Newport, Caldicot, Monmouth, Usk, Tredegar, Abergavenny and Chepstow
22. Ramblers Cymru
23. Ramblers Association
24. Lower Wye Valley Ramblers
25. North Gwent Ramblers
26. NW Monmouthshire Ramblers
27. Pontypool Ramblers
28. Newport Walking Club
29. The Narth and District Footpath Group
30. Monmouth Rambling and Hill Walking Club
31. Usk Trail Access Group
32. Pontypool & District Group of Ramblers Association Greater Gwent Area
33. Raglan Local Ways
34. Llanbadoc and other community Volunteer Group Leaders
35. All Walkers Welcome Groups
36. South wales group long distance walkers

37. British Driving Society (Wales)
38. Byways and Bridleways Trust
39. British Horse Society
40. Monmouthshire Pony Club
41. Llanagybi Pony Club
42. Vale of Usk Riding Club
43. Wye Valley Riding Club
44. Monmouthshire Hunt
45. Trellech Riding for the Disabled
46. Riding for the Disabled
47. Health and Social Care Co-ordinator
48. Aneurin Bevan Health Trust
49. Action for the Blind
50. Gwent Age Concern
51. Abergavenny Walking for Health
52. Chepstow Walking for Health
53. CAIR The Monmouthshire Disablement Association
54. Disability Sports Wales Officer
55. Gwent Association for the Blind/ gelligaer group
56. Gwent Outdoor Centre – Gilwern
57. LSB (Local Service Board) Development Manager
58. Melin
59. MHA
60. Monmouthshire Exercise Referral Co-ordinator & FIT4life walking group leads (all four towns)
61. Monmouthshire Voices
62. National Exercise Referral Scheme
63. North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation & Aftercare Charity, Abergavenny
64. Salvation Army Abergavenny
65. Age Concern
66. Alcoholics Anonymous UK
67. Alzheimer's Society
68. Autism Cymru
69. British Heart Foundation
70. Depression Alliance Cymru
71. Mind - Cymru
72. Wales Centre for Health
73. Wales Council for the Blind
74. Wales Council for the Deaf
75. Disability Wales
76. Disabled Ramblers
77. Fieldfare Trust
78. Gavo
79. Wales Council for Voluntary Action
80. Groundwork Wales
81. All Monmouthshire Volunteers

82. British Mountaineering Society
83. Cambrian Caving Council
84. CTC Cyclist Touring Club
85. Sustrans
86. Welsh Trail Riders Association
87. GLASS
88. Auto cycle Union
89. Treadlightly
90. All Wheel Drive Club
91. Wye and Welsh Landover Group
92. LARA
93. Green Lane Association
94. Gwent Federation of Women's Institute
95. Duke of Edingboroughs Award
96. Monmouthshire District Scout Council
97. Girl Guiding Gwent Commissioner
98. Coleg Gwent
99. Welsh Orienteering Association
100. Abergavenny and District Civic Society
101. National Farmers Union
102. CLA Cymru
103. National Trust
104. Woodland Trust Wales
105. Forest Enterprise
106. Agents for estates - Duke of Beaufort, Glanusk , Llanarth
107. British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (Cymru)
108. British Trust for Ornithology
109. RSPB Wales
110. British Upland Footpath Trust
111. Canals and Rivers Trust
112. Canoe Wales
113. Gwent Wildlife Trust
114. Coed Cadw (Woodland Trust Wales)
115. Mountain Forestry
116. Clwyd & Powys Archaeological Trust
117. Open Spaces Society
118. Keep Wales Tidy
119. Chepstow Racecourse
120. Camping and caravanning club
121. Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
122. National Grid
123. Railtrack plc
124. Western Power Distribution
125. British Telecom
126. SEWTRA

127. CPRW
128. Youth Hostel Association
129. Lower Wye Valley Society
130. Celtric Trails
131. Severn Estuary Partnership
132. Gwent Police
133. Offa's Dyke National Trail Officer
134. Wales Coast Path South Regional Officer
135. Monmouthshire County Council Equalities Officer, Sports and Well Being Project, Youth and Community Manager, All Monmouthshire County Council Green Infrastructure and Countryside Team Officers, Sustainability officer, Highways Manager, Legal Services and all Management including Chief Executive, Head of outdoor centers, Head of Community Led Delivery, Rural Programme Manager, Youth Service Manager, Equalities Manager
136. All Monmouthshire County Council Members