Key Findings report

Following a 12-week consultation on

The Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan
2018 - 2028

For consideration by and discussion with the LAF Sub Cttee and Full Group.

Date of report: January 2019
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Background to the service:

The first Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) was produced by Powys ten years ago to meet the legislation set out under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. This legislation places a duty on local authorities to review and consult on their plan on a 10-year basis.

The plan sets out how the council is going to identify, prioritise and plan for any improvements so as to aid both access to, and enjoyment of, the network for all who wish to use it.

Powys has over 12,000 individual public rights of way which are used for recreation – particularly walking, cycling, horse-riding and driving "off-road".   The network is open to everyone and a right of way can consist of roads, paths and/or tracks – some of which go through Powys towns, the countryside and over private property.

Background to the consultation/engagement etc.

To comply with the duty, Powys County Council:

- Carried out a review of its current plan to establish and check progress on the objectives and actions listed within it.
- Consulted with a mix of interested stakeholders (the public, landowners, town and community councils, older people, access groups and the Local Access Forum) to capture their views on the current use of and condition of the rights of way network prior to drafting a revised plan.
- Produced said draft Rights of Way Improvement plan for the next ten years based on the feedback given and launched a follow-up 12-week consultation to capture views. This closed on Tuesday 15 January 2019.

Report format:

This report sets out the key results from the most recent survey undertaken and highlights any significant issues that need to be given due regard prior to a final plan being amended and approved.

The report also sets out the key views given via other channels including social media, written responses and emails and provides an overall conclusion.

Response Overview

Just over 140 responses had been received via the online survey.

Alongside this a handful of more detailed email responses were received from organisations with a specific interest in the network namely:

- Powys Ramblers
- Elan Valley Trust
- National Farmers Union
- The Open Spaces Society
- Natural Resources Wales
- and a detailed response from a representative of the Local Access Forum

There were also a handful of comments made on council's corporate social media channels (Facebook and Twitter) in response to details of the consultation being announced and two emails were also received from residents again when details of the consultation were promoted via the Have Your Say webpage for the duration of the consultation period.

The legislation also sets out some very specific target groups that have to be engaged including any Local Access Forums that may exist in the county.

Both the sub group and the full Local Access Forum for Powys have been involved in previous discussions about the network and the new plan and they will be invited to discuss the findings from the consultation with a view to agreeing any changes/amendments prior to the final document being approved via the Council's Cabinet process.

Key Survey Findings:

The key findings from the final survey are below.

141 survey responses were received in total. The majority were completed on-line and a couple received in paper format and input into the database.

The question by question analysis (pages 9 to 25) provides more detail per theme, tables and charts to highlight the key findings in particular the priorities ranked by respondents that will help to shape the delivery plan for the revised plan.

Respondent Profile:

- 89% of respondents stated that they were Powys residents.
- 8% were organisations who used/promoted the network, 8% were visitors to Powys and 7% were volunteers. *(Please note: respondents could tick all answers that applied so the figures total over 100%).*
- Only three town and community councils responded to the survey – one who was involved in helping the council to monitor and maintain the network in their area. The other two had an interest in the network.

Use of network:

- 78% of respondents were regular users of the network (come rain or shine) and 8% stated they were regular but seasonal users. (86% in total being regular users) 13% said they sometimes used the network.
  Note: In the earlier survey which closed in January 2018, the response was similar with 78% of respondents using the network come rain or shine and 11% using it on a seasonal basis. In 2006, 84% of respondents said they used the network per se. This question had a yes or no answer)
- Five respondents said they didn't use the network but would like to and two people said they didn't use the network and didn't wish to.

Theme A: Public Rights of Way and Open Air Recreation.

- 14 out of the 15 actions were supported by the vast majority of respondents.
- This support ranged from 79% to 97% with the top three being:
  1) JOINT TOP PRIORITY - Provide and improve appropriate way marking and signage on public rights of way, access land and public green space. (97%) **and** Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition. (97%)
  2) Work in partnership with appropriate organisations and communities. (96%)

3) JOINT THIRD PRIORITY - Take all reasonable steps to improve access for all (95%) **and** Ensure the long term success of the National and Recreational trails in Powys (95%) **Please refer to the table on page 10 for full details on each action.**

- Prioritising higher status paths within a community was the most controversial of the 15 actions in this theme with the least support. 59% supported it whilst 41% didn't. This action is repeated in Theme B and the figures were as close but slightly in reverse with 47% supporting the action and 53% choosing not to.

- 117 respondents selected their top three priorities from the 15 actions listed.

- In terms of selecting a top priority from the 15 actions listed, 36 respondents had chosen *'to continually open and have a well-signed network'*, 25 had chosen *'to effectively manage, monitor and maintain the network'* and 21 had selected *'to improve way-marking and signage'* **Please refer to the table on pages 11 & 12 for full ranking on each priority.**

- The key reasons given by respondents not supporting the action around the higher status paths were based on the view that this process would discriminate against local walkers and communities and that instead we should work with each community to agree their priorities.

- In terms of missing actions, some comments related to the themes that followed (e.g. enforcement) but other respondents suggested actions such as the conservation of the landscape views that people enjoyed, car parking provision and access to inland water.

Theme B: Management and Enforcement of the network

- 9 out of the 11 actions were supported by the over 75% of respondents.

- This support ranged from 77% to 97% with the top three actions being:
  1) Provide and improve appropriate way marking and signage on public rights of way, access land and public green space. (97%)
  2) JOINT SECOND PRIORITY - To continually open and have a well-signed public rights of way network. (95%) **and** Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition. (95%) **and** Take all reasonable steps to improve access for all (95%)
  3) Work with external organisations to deliver improved signage and way marking. (93%) **Please refer to the table on page 14 for full details on each action.**

- The least supported action was again "Prioritise higher status paths within a community" followed by "Develop and implement the Higher Tier Approach".   Less than half of respondents (47%) were in support on the action to prioritise higher

status paths with 53% opposing it. *See bullet point under Theme A*. This action was listed in both and in both instances generated a mixed view.

- The other action around the higher tier approach had more support with 65% supporting it and 35% opposing it but this was the next less supported action in Theme B.

- 79 respondents gave a view on which of the 11 actions they would put as their top priority. Similarly, to Theme A, those listed first were *'taking all reasonable steps to have an open and well-signed network'* which was a clear priority with 24 respondents placing this first, followed by 14 who had selected to *'Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition'* and nine people choosing *''to improve way-marking and signage'* **Please refer to the chart on page 15 for full details on the ranking.**

- Respondents who were not in favour of the action to prioritise higher status paths had given similar views as per those expressed in Theme A. Some were the same respondents. In terms of the higher tier approach respondents were concerned that if adopted reports about obstructions on the network would be ignored.

- There were a few suggestions around missing actions. These included providing sculpture and events to celebrate the network, lobby for more funding and protection of staff in the service. There were also calls for the actions to be more specific and detailed.

Theme C: The Definitive Map and Statement

- Both actions received 95% support from respondents. The actions are:
- 1) Achieve an accurate and up-to-date Definitive Map and Statement.
  2) Make the Definitive Map and Statement widely available on the website and other appropriate formats.

- In terms of priorities, 65% stated that the action to achieve an accurate map should come first followed by promotion to make it fully availability. **Please refer to the table on page 18 to see the ranking.**

- From the 5% not in favour the key comments were more around individuals being aware that our budgets are stretched and not being too concerned about having an online map.

- A few ideas were put forward around missing actions. These included a suggestion that each town and community council had their own online version of the definitive map and that we commit to reducing the backlog of DMMOs and PPOs.
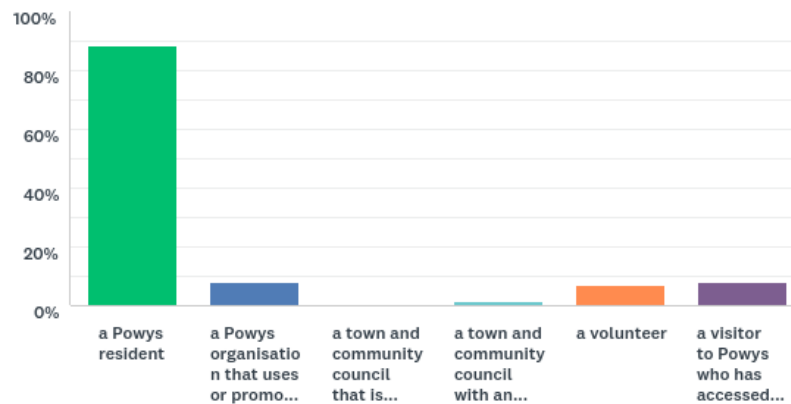
Theme D: Promotion and Publicity of the network

- All four actions were supported by the vast majority of respondents. They were:

  1) All information produced by Countryside Services will aim to be available, appropriate, accurate and accessible. (97%)

  2) Make digital information on public rights of way and open spaces available on the website. (94%)

  3) Review publications to ensure they are accurate and up to date and to distribute effectively. (90%)

  4) Increase the range and quality of public information in a variety of formats. (85%) **Please refer to the table on page 19 for full details on each action.**

- When asked to rank the actions in order of priority *"Review publications to ensure they are accurate and up to date and to distribute effectively."* was deemed to be the top priority and ranked 1st by 136 respondents. This was closely followed by 124 respondents who had chosen *"Make digital information on public rights of way and open spaces available on the website"* as their priority. **Please refer to the table on page 20 for full details on each action.**

- Those who had chosen not to support the actions had made some comments. In the main these focused on budgets and best use of money. Respondents felt in essence there was no need to produce a digital definitive map. There was also a view expressed that updating publications wasn't a priority and should be left until a point when resources were available.

- Missing Actions. There was only really one clear new action that was suggested. This was around promotion with the respondent stating "Promote large community map displays on all village halls."
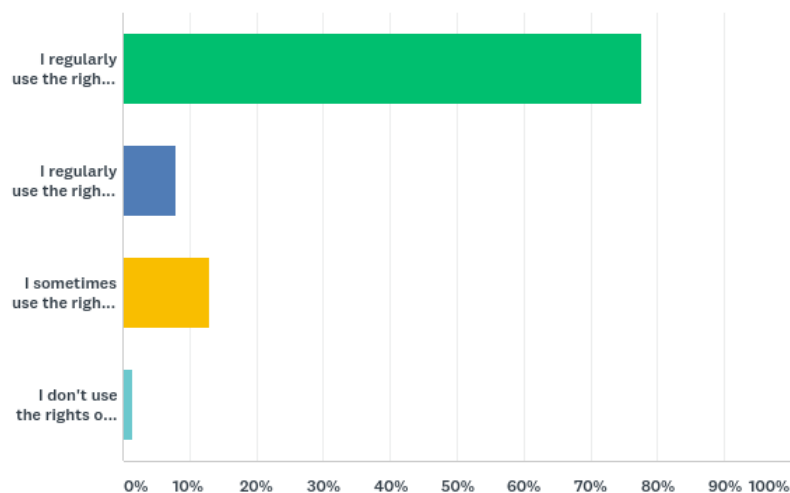
SURVEY – Question by question analysis

Q1 Firstly can you state on what basis you are responding to this survey. Are you...?

Respondents could select more than one answer. 88% of respondents were Powys residents and 8% from a Powys organisation which promoted the network. A further 8% stated they were volunteers and another 8% were tourists. Only one town and community council who was involved in the maintenance of the network responded although another two who had an interest did.

Q2 Which of the following best describes your use of the public rights of way in Powys?

78% of respondents stated that they used the network come rain or shine all year round whilst 8% stated they did so on a more seasonal basis. 13% used the network sometimes leaving 1% who didn't but said they would like to.

Theme A: Public Rights of Way and Open Air Recreation

Q3. Please look at each action and tick those you support and those you don't.

Actions with the wording "ThemeB" were also listed in Q7 under Theme B. The second figure in brackets below is the combined average percentage when adding the two scores together from both themes and dividing by 2. The figures in green with an asterisk depict the top three actions whilst the one in red depict the least supported.

Action	Supported	Not Supported
Provide and improve appropriate way marking and signage on public rights of way, access land and public green space. ThemeB	**97% *** (97%)	**3%** (3%)
Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition. ThemeB	**97% *** (96%)	**3%** (4%)
Work in partnership with appropriate organisations and communities.	**96%**	**4%**
Ensure the long term success of the National and Recreational trails in Powys.	**95%**	**5%**
Take all reasonable steps to improve access for all. ThemeB	**95%** (95%)	**5%** (5%)
To continually open and have a well-signed public rights of way network. ThemeB	**95%** (95%)	**5%** (5%)
Work with volunteers to support the surveying and maintenance of National and Recreational trails.	**94%**	**6%**
Participate in collaborative partnership working with internal and external partners to achieve mutually beneficial aims.	**93%**	**7%**
Improve and increase access onto and across access land.	**92%**	**8%**
Seek funding to support the review of non-statutory management plans for common land, to ensure that they remain up to date and relevant in terms of delivering public access opportunities.	**90%**	**10%**
Provide safe and appropriate outdoor facilities.	**88%**	**12%**
Utilise new technology such as social media, apps, websites and interactive interpretation to promote the network.	**87%**	**13%**
Improve path furniture to make National and Recreational trails accessible for all.	**87%**	**13%**
Recreational trails should not take priority over other rights of way - they should all be given equal priority.	**79%**	**21%**
Prioritise higher status paths within a community. ThemeB	**59% *** (53%)	**41%** (47%)

The vast majority of actions received support from respondents. The top two in the table above received 97% support. However, the issue of "prioritising higher status paths within a

community" is the one action that appears to be of most concern to 41% of respondents who responded in Theme A or 47% when combining the scores across both Themes A and B.

Q4. Which three would you say are a priority?

Theme A – Top Three Priority Table

The table below shows how respondents prioritised the 15 actions listed. Scoring can be done in a number of ways around prioritisation with weighting applied and an average score calculated. Currently the table sets out the basic count given by each respondent when asked to set out their top three priorities. The figures in green and an asterisk depict the top three.

Action	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Provide and improve appropriate way marking and signage on public rights of way, access land and public green space. *ThemeB	**21**	**22 ***	**10**
Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition. *ThemeB	**25**	**16**	**14 ***
Work in partnership with appropriate organisations and communities.	0	6	10
Ensure the long term success of the National and Recreational trails in Powys.	0	1	0
Take all reasonable steps to improve access for all. *ThemeB	12	13	10
To continually open and have a well-signed public rights of way network. *ThemeB	**36 ***	**18**	**7**
Work with volunteers to support the surveying and maintenance of National and Recreational trails.	1	4	9
Participate in collaborative partnership working with internal and external partners to achieve mutually beneficial aims.	2	2	0
Improve and increase access onto and across access land.	1	11	10
Seek funding to support the review of non-statutory management plans for common land, to ensure that they remain up to date and relevant in terms of delivering public access opportunities.	0	1	0
Provide safe and appropriate outdoor facilities.	0	2	0

Utilise new technology such as social media, apps, websites and interactive interpretation to promote the network.	3	0	12
Improve path furniture to make National and Recreational trails accessible for all.	5	3	2
Recreational trails should not take priority over other rights of way - they should all be given equal priority.	0	1	0
Prioritise higher status paths within a community. ***ThemeB**	4	0	2

Q5. For any that your feel shouldn't be in the plan can you please tell us why and share your reasons so we can consider them further.

51 respondents choose to answer this question.
A PDF showing the full responses and reasons given is appended at the end of this report.

Actions that attracted specific comments.

- **Prioritise higher status paths**

The key action which is not clear cut is the issue of high status paths. This action has been raised previously and discussed in the stakeholder group which consists of user groups like the Ramblers and British Horse Society, with staff in the service and at the Local Area Forum. There are advantages and disadvantages with the approach.   In Theme A 59% of respondents were in favour of this action and supported it but 41% did not. However overall when considering the views given in Theme B the average mean percentage is 53% in favour and 47% against.   Note: *This action was also listed in Theme B with 47% in support and 53% not in favour. When combining the views of respondents to both Theme A and Theme B the mean average is 53% respondents in support of taking this approach and 47% opposed to this being our proposed action.*

- **Effectively manager, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition.**

A handful of respondents had expressed concerns about the council trying to do too much and had commented that in their view the council should focus resources of sustaining open paths first and foremost before opening new footpaths. Another respondent felt there was too much emphasis placed on walkers and little on motorised activities. Another said: *"I think emphasis should be placed on existing and not on new. Powys has so many already - put money into keeping those open and updated otherwise you will be spread too thinly and do a poor job on it all."*

- **To continually open and have a well-signed public rights of way network.**

As above some respondents who were less in favour of this approach had expressed concerns about funding and being able to deliver on this action. One respondent had stated: *"Trying to bring every single public right of way signposted and accessible cannot be feasible when some maintained paths are hardly used."*

- **Utilise new technology such as social media, apps, websites and interactive interpretation to promote the network.**

One person felt this wasn't something they could support. They commented: *"There have been many attempts over the years to provide interpretative panels and nobody uses them."* He added *"Don't waste money on social media - walking groups such as the local Ramblers will do it much better. Think about better tourist promotion."*

Q6. Are there any missing actions under Theme A that you'd like to see included within the plan?

Missing Actions

65 respondents had given their views. The majority were more comments rather than new actions and some were relating to actions in Themes B, C and D e.g. enforcement.
A selection is listed here:

I. Make provision for car parking at start, along and at end of trails or provide public transport (bus) so users can take linear routes as well as circular.

II. Conserve landscapes and landscapes views as they are the major, taken for granted attraction for recreational users. Circular routes.

III. Plans for motorised access

IV. Staffing and retaining staff/protecting jobs in this portfolio

V. Consult communities to identify currently inaccessible PRoW with a view to opening these

VI. Access for horse riding prioritised

VII. Mountain bike trails/park for the youth.

VIII. Schools in the local community... use them to walk routes & tell us what needs altering

IX. Actions to secure access to water

A PDF showing responses around missing actions is appended at the end of this report.

Theme B: Management and Enforcement of the network

Q7. Theme B looks at the management & enforcement of the network. Tick all those that you support and those that you don't.

(Actions marked with the wording "ThemeA" were also listed in Theme A. The results per theme are listed in the tables with the combined average percentages given below in brackets) Those in green with an asterisk depict the three most supported actions, those in red the least supported.

Action	Supported	Not Supported
Take all reasonable steps to improve access for all. ThemeA	95% * (95%)	5% (5%)
Be effective and efficient in the recruitment, retention and management of the volunteer workforce.	92%	8%
Identify and provide opportunities to increase the responsibilities and scope of the work that volunteers can carry out.	87%	13%
To continually open and have a well-signed public rights of way network. *ThemeA	95% * (95%)	5% (5%)
Take enforcement action when and where necessary (in accordance with our policy and the Higher Tier Approach).	92%	8%
Develop and implement the Higher Tier Approach.	65%	35%
Prioritise higher status paths within a community. *ThemeA	47% (53%)	53% (47%)
Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition. *ThemeA	97% * (96%)	3% (4%)
Provide and improve appropriate way marking and signage on public rights of way, access land and public green space. *ThemeA	97% * (97%)	3% (3%)
Work with external organisations to deliver improved signage and way marking.	94%	6%
Any changes to the subsidy payments for landholders should be a consideration in how the Council priorities its resources in the future. *(By this we mean that payments to farmers/landholders are like to change post Brexit).*	77%	23%

The majority of the actions were again largely supported by respondents with the exception of the action around "prioritise higher status paths" which had less support with 47% of respondents stating they were in favour of this whilst 53% were not.   Overall across the two themes where this action was duplicated, the overall figures are close with 53% in support and 47% not.

The other action with less support than the rest was the "develop and implement the Higher Tier Approach." Followed by the action around subsidy payments however this still had three quarters of respondents saying they did support this action.

Q8. Which three would you say are a priority?

Theme B – Top Three Priority Table

The table below shows how respondents prioritised the 11 actions listed.

Action	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Take all reasonable steps to improve access for all. ***ThemeA**	**10**	**7**	**7**
Be effective and efficient in the recruitment, retention and management of the volunteer workforce.	**3**	**5**	**5**
Identify and provide opportunities to increase the responsibilities and scope of the work that volunteers can carry out.	**1**	**6**	**0**
To continually open and have a well-signed public rights of way network. ***ThemeA**	**24 ***	**11**	**3**
Take enforcement action when and where necessary (in accordance with our policy and the Higher Tier Approach).	**8**	**7**	**17 ***
Develop and implement the Higher Tier Approach.	**0**	**1**	**0**
Prioritise higher status paths within a community. ***ThemeA**	**2**	**1**	**1**
Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition. ***ThemeA**	**14**	**17 ***	**15**
Provide and improve appropriate way marking and signage on public rights of way, access land and public green space. ***ThemeA**	**9**	**13**	**10**
Work with external organisations to deliver improved signage and way marking.	**0**	**3**	**1**
Any changes to the subsidy payments for landholders should be a consideration in how the Council priorities its resources in the future. *(By this we mean that payments to farmers/landholders are like to change post Brexit).*	**3**	**0**	**3**

When looking at this table the three top priorities when looking purely at the numbers are in order of preference "to continually open and have a well-signed public rights of way network"; "to effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory

condition" and "to take enforcement action when and where necessary (in accordance with our policy and the Higher Tier approach).

Interestingly, when comparing Themes A and B, two actions stand out as being ones that respondents feel should be a priority.   They are:

- To continually open and have a well-signed public rights of way network.
- Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition.

What's even more interesting is that although the "manage, monitor and maintain" action refers to the Higher Tier approach in brackets, the action which specifies the "development and implementation of the Higher Tier approach" received less support by respondents than nearly all other actions bar the action to "prioritise higher status paths".

Q9. For any that your feel shouldn't be in the plan can you please tell us why and share your reasons so we can consider them further.

33 respondents choose to answer this question.
A PDF showing the full responses and reasons given is appended at the end of this report.

Actions that attracted specific comments.

- **Prioritise higher status paths**

The key reason people were opposed to the higher status path action was around a view that all paths should be a priority, that each community would have a different view of which type of paths are most important and this could be problematic and that it would be detriment to other footpaths used by local people.

- **Develop and implement the Higher Tier Approach.**

For the higher tier approach there was a clear view given by a handful of respondents that the policy prevents other issues being resolved because these are put to the bottom of the pile. One respondent wrote: *"This policy entirely ignores reports received about obstructions and problems on the network leading to problems reported over 20 years ago still not being resolved. In particular obstructions and lack of signing."*

- **Any changes to the subsidy payments for landholders should be a consideration in how the Council priorities its resources in the future.**

There were concerns that this would be reduced significantly following Brexit but there were also some comments and suggestions made that subsidises should be made with a view to landholders ensuring that footpaths were not obstructed and kept open.

A few other comments were also made in this section around the council being realistic and managing our budgets so that we managed to deliver on some if not all of the actions. A few respondents commented that they would be supportive of the council sustaining current paths not opening new ones. Other views were made about us becoming over reliant on volunteers and enforcement being a last resort only where we had a strong case and would be likely to win in court.

Q10. Are there any missing actions under Theme A that you'd like to see included within the plan?

Missing Actions

37 respondents had given their views. A number were comments rather than new actions. The following appeared to be new actions:

I.   PROWs threatened by development should have a higher status

II.   Biodiversity and access to water

III.   Car parking on trails or bus services to and from trails to centres / car parking.

IV.   Celebrate the rights of way with sculpture, performance and other cultural activities to encourage more people to use them

V.   Argue at a national level for increased funding for the network in Powys as a provider of employment and argue that it should be seen in rural areas as part of industrial strategy.

VI.   Better cooperation with local communities

VII.   Better relations with farmers

A PDF showing responses to Q10 on missing actions.

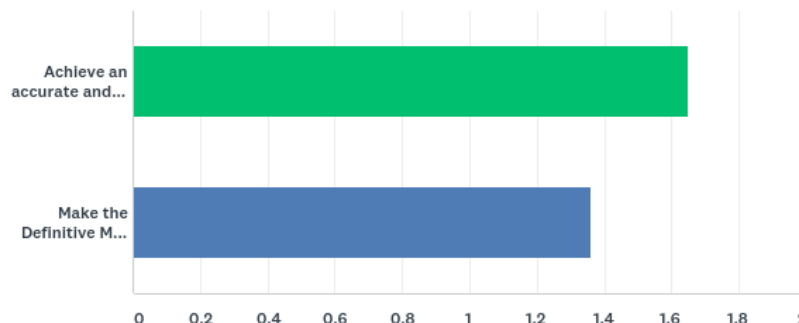## Theme C: The Definitive Map and Statement

Q11. The plan lists 2 actions. Please tick those that you support and those that you don't. Both actions were supported by 95% of respondents. The actions and response from respondents was as follows:

Action	Supported	Not Supported
Achieve an accurate and up to date Definitive Map and Statement.	**95%**	**5%**
Make the Definitive Map and Statement widely available on the website and other appropriate formats.	**95%**	**5%**

Both actions were nearly fully supported by those respondent to Theme C.

Q12. How would you prioritise these?

Q12 How would you prioritise these?

As can be seen in chart above 65% of respondents felt the first action to achieve an accurate map should be the first priority followed by then making it available on the website.

Q13. For any that your feel shouldn't be in the plan can you please tell us why and share your reasons so we can consider them further.

Only sixteen respondents gave a view. One person said *"The present maps should be considered sufficient until council funding issues are more relaxed."* Another said they used OS maps and didn't require this. A few more comments were made. One was around access for everyone not being feasible.   Said respondent stated *"Noble but impossible to achieve and not necessarily useful in some parts of the county."*

A PDF showing the response to Q13 on priorities on actions not supported is appended to the report.

Q14. Are there any missing actions under this section that you'd like to see included within the plan?

Although 23 respondents answered this question the majority had written "n/a" or "No". There were only four specific comments around missing actions for this theme. They are as follows:

I. Action Statements that (i) commit to reducing the backlog of DMMOs and PPOs and (ii) set out the priorities for dealing with applications for these orders statements about working with others to (i) find solutions to connectivity issues arising from cul de sacs and (ii) recording lost ways where there is evidence to demonstrate their inclusion as a right of way. (2 comments)

II. Use QR codes and apps for ease of location and trails

III. Community Councils be encouraged to have an online definitive map of their area which they publicise and encourage local people to use.

Theme D: Promotion and Publicity of the network

Q15. Theme D lists 4 key actions. Please tick whether you agree or disagree with each action. Respondents gave the following view.

Action	Supported	Not Supported
Review publications to ensure they are accurate and up to date and to distribute effectively.	**90%**	**10%**
Increase the range and quality of public information in a variety of formats.	**85%**	**15%**
Make digital information on public rights of way and open spaces available on the website.	**94%**	**6%**
All information produced by Countryside Services will aim to be available, appropriate, accurate and accessible.	**97%**	**3%**

As shown in the table above all four actions received support. The action gaining the most support was the one around accurate and accessible information whilst the least supported action was around increasing the range of formats that would be provided for the public although 85% of respondents were supportive of this action.

Q16. Please rank these in order of importance

As there were only four options respondents were asked to rank these four in order of preference. The following table shows how respondents ranked their first choice.

Ranking	Action
1	Review publications to ensure they are accurate and up to date and to distribute effectively.
2	Make digital information on public rights of way and open spaces available on the website.
3	All information produced by Countryside Services will aim to be available, appropriate, accurate and accessible.
4	Increase the range and quality of public information in a variety of formats.

When weighting all four choices and calculating the overall figures the chart was the same.

Q17. For any that your feel shouldn't be in the plan can you please tell us why and share your reasons so we can consider them further.

18 respondents gave a view but as per the previous theme a number had just stated "not applicable" with only a handful giving a reason.

Primarily all of these were around the cost implications of achieving the actions in particular the production of several different formats.   One person felt that having all publications in digital format would allow savings to be made and that we should sustain all libraries so as to allow people to access information this way if they needed to.

Another stated *"Accuracy and availability are key. Fancy booklets are not necessary."*

A PDF showing the responses is appended to this report.

Q18. Are there any missing actions under this section that you'd like to see included within the plan?

26 individual comments were received around missing actions although again the majority had not offered a missing action. Those that did were around signage and bilingual signage being important. One person said *"Use new technology for improved tracking and footfall"* whilst another stated *"I believe that the town and community councils provide a valuable network across the county that could aid you in the publicity and possibly need a distinct action."*

A PDF showing all comments is appended to this report.

Q19. If there is anything else, you would like to say about the themes in the draft plan please use this space to do so.

23 individuals used the space to comment although a few had not actually done so. The word cloud below takes all the responses and pulls out the key words that were used by the 23 respondents who commented. This gives a flavour of the points made.

Q19 If there is anything else you would like to say about the themes in the draft plan please use this space to do so.

paths increasing need action made must using people will many access appears plan one better

There were only a couple of themes emerging from the 18 comments given. These were around the actions listed and the plan itself. A couple of respondents felt that the actions were quite vague and needed to be clearer with dates and details. A couple of respondents felt the plan was too big, ordered in the wrong way with one person stating it would've been better to have two versions – one in English and one in Welsh.

A couple of examples of the comments made are listed here:

- *"Careful consideration should be given to how surface maintenance/improvement is done. The attraction for mountain bikers is to ride routes that have a degree of technical interest e.g. rock steps, ruts, water crossings etc. However, drainage of surface water is to be considered desirable. So, as an example, recent work done on the Golf Links byway near Rhayader, is not seen as beneficial by mountain bikers, but rather reduces the technical interest by eradicating the rock steps."*

- *"It must be stressed how many benefits walking gives; increased health and tourism, decreased pollution (for all town/village footpaths). Users need to be educated (e.g. in schools) on responsible use, landowners need to see the benefits of a lived-in countryside."*

- *"Equestrian tourism contributes significantly to the local economy but there are no statistics to support the value of equestrians unlike walkers and cyclists. I am encouraged by the plan to improve access for all and obtain benefit for most users with the available funds by prioritising higher status paths."*

A PDF showing all the comments is appended to this report.

Section 3 – The Needs of Network Users

Q20. This section focuses on the needs of network users - current and future - and lists actions that would improve access for all users e.g. disabled residents, horse riders, families with small children etc. Please read the statements of action and then tick those that you agree with and those you don't.

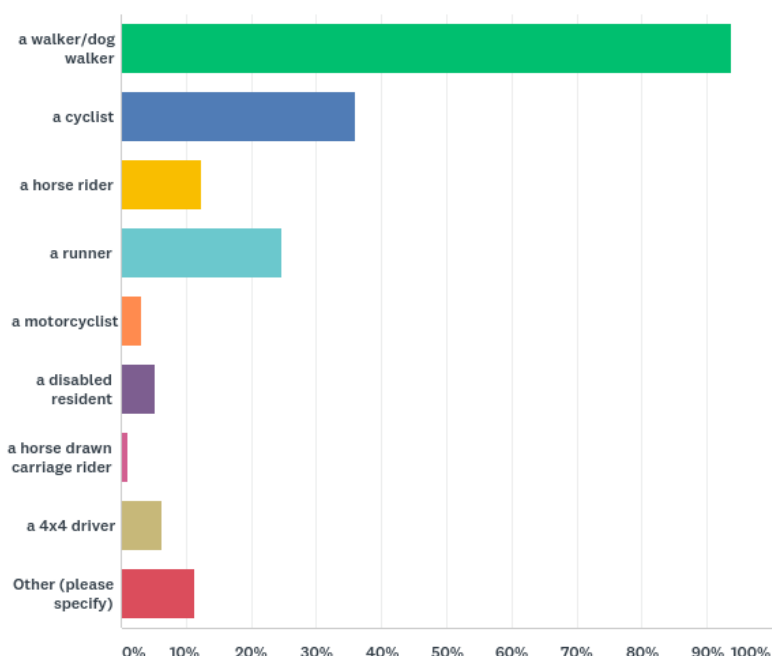| Action	Supported	Not Supported
Implement 'least restrictive' access practices.	94%	6%
Work with internal and external partners to improve countryside access in Powys.	95%	5%
Give priority to higher status paths within communities.	49%	51%
Work with internal and external partners to improve countryside access in Powys.	96%	4%
Ensure high quality gates and installation to allow easy access for horse-riders.	77%	23%
Seek resources to manage and maintain the byway open to all traffic network.	67%	33%
Work with stakeholders to improve provision, education and enforcement with regards to legal and illegal motorised access.	96%	4%
Replace stiles with gates wherever possible.	78%	22%
Identify and improve routes that are most likely to be accessed by people with mobility and sensory difficulties.	89%	11%
Ensure all information produced by Countryside Services will aim to be available, appropriate, accurate and accessible in all required formats.	94%	6%

The two actions with the most support were both involving working with others to improve the network and also to consider and improve the use of motorised access on the network. Naturally there is both legal and illegal use and respondents were very supportive of this action.

The least supported action was to "give priority to higher status paths within communities" with just over half (51%) of respondents not supporting this approach. However, 49% did. This aligns again with the views given by respondents in Theme A and B - naturally it is worth noting that these will all be the same respondents - so the overall sample is in essence split on this issue. This is a key area which needs due regard prior to a final decision being made.

The remainder of the actions appear to have more support than not although the action to "seek resources to manage and maintain the byway open to all traffic network" was the second least popular one with a third of respondents stating that they didn't support this.

Q21. On what basis do you use the network? 97 respondents answered this question.

Q21 On what basis do you use the network? (please tick all that apply)

The chart above shows that the vast majority of respondents to the survey classed themselves as walkers or dog walkers. (94%). Respondents were invited to tick all categories that applied to them so one person may have ticked four or five categories. Around a third classed themselves as cyclists and a tenth horse riders. One person was riding a horse drawn carriage and three were motorcyclists.

See the full table below for the number of responses per category.

Basis	Number	Percentage
A walker/dog walker	91	94%
A cyclist	35	36%
A horse rider	12	12%
A runner	24	25%
A motorcyclist	3	3%
A disabled resident	5	5%
A horse drawn carriage rider	1	1%
A 4 x 4 driver	6	6%
Other (please specify)	11	11%

The 11 respondents who choose "other" had an array of descriptions who themselves from a rambler, a buggy walker, someone with small children, a companion to a disabled resident, a long distance walker, a canoeist, a volunteer, a mountain biker and someone who did adventure type sports. One person had stated they were someone who was "fed up with the council wasting money".

Section 7 – Partnerships

Q22. Under Section 7 the focus is on partnerships and there are nine actions listed. Please tell us if you agree or disagree with each one.

Action	Supported	Not Supported
Seek planning gain at every available opportunity.	**86%**	**14%**
Develop and promote how public access contributes to health and well-being through the Council, Powys Teaching Health Board and Public Health Wales.	**88%**	**12%**
Liaise with Town and Community Councils before implementing works as part of a Project Area Approach.	**91%**	**9%**
Work in partnership with Town and Community Councils or constituted cluster groups to repair, maintain and improve public access.	**95%**	**5%**
Work with internal and external partners to improve countryside access in Powys.	**95%**	**5%**
Develop efficient working practices that are mutually beneficial to the Council and the National Park Authority.	**95%**	**5%**
Participate in collaborative partnership working with internal and external partners to achieve mutually beneficial aims.	**92%**	**8%**
Work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities. Consider and participate in cross-border initiatives, where benefits exceed investment.	**96%**	**4%**
Take the opportunity to learn from the best practice of other local authorities.	**96%**	**4%**

The feedback from respondents in this section showed support for all actions overall.

Two received support of 96%. There were:

- Take the opportunity to learn from the best practice of other local authorities
- Work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities. Consider and participate in cross-border initiatives, where benefits exceed investment.

These two actions which involve collaboration and discussion with other local authorities, in essence, could be said to replicate the findings from Section 3 whereby the top two supported actions were also around partnership working to help address the needs of all users of the network.

This perhaps suggests that there is growing recognition from respondents that Powys is facing difficult budgetary pressures and that the whole ethos around better partnership working is something they support and feel is a sensible way to sustain the network going forward. A number of comments throughout the survey highlight that people are aware of the

financial situation facing the council and are mindful and giving this consideration in their responses.

Q23. Final comments.

The word cloud below takes all the responses and pulls out the key words that were used by the 46 respondents who commented. This gives a flavour of the points made.   A PDF listing all comments is appended to this report.

Q23 Finally if you have any other comments about the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and how the council plans to maintain the network over the next ten years please use this space to share them. Thank you for responding.

improvement walking Please network areas good plan
council need time action use think footpaths make

A small selection of comments are as follows:

"It seems to me that since you continually mention lack of funding that using a volunteer force effectively and efficiently is a priority. My husband and I signed up in May 2018 and have yet to be used at all."

"I have read the document and can find no clear plan to achieve improvements. The action statements are a series of good intentions and guiding principles with no specific goals or accountability. It is significant that the 2007-17 plan failed to deliver any overall improvement to Powys ROWs and further deterioration occurred. It follows from this that a more effective approach is needed. I feel the proposed plan should be rejected and sent back to those responsible with an instruction to produce a proper plan of action, which can be monitored by elected representatives."

"The less popular areas of the network are dying."

"Well produced with lovely photos. Interested in evaluation of ROWIP 2007 - 17 but should have liked numbered pages. Thought sources of funding would be more explained?"

"In a time of austerity where libraries are being closed roads not being repaired use your funds wisely, improve access do not waste it on producing a map."

"Many of the Statements of Actions are aims and methods rather than positive proposals. More detailed and quantifiable actions are needed: what exactly is going to be done, when and by whom. That would give confidence in the plan and allow progress to be monitored."

A PDF listing all the comments is appended to this report and will be given due regard and contribute to the final version of the plan.

Responses from other channels

Alongside the survey responses, a number of organisations/charities and a few residents had contacted the council to comment via email or letter. A number of the responses from organisations were very detailed and will be given due regard in terms of finalising the plan. This section provides a basic summary of the key points.

There were also comments posted on the council's Corporate social media channels. For the most part these comments reflected some of the views already expressed by respondents to the survey. The key comments or concerns from organisations with an interest in the land, tourism and the network were as follows:

Powys Ramblers

Powys Ramblers provided a detailed response which set out a number of points for the council to consider alongside some suggestions on missing actions.

Overall there was support for the majority of the statement of actions within the draft plan with the exception of the higher tier approach. However, a view was given that all needed to be more detailed and thus refined for the final plan.

The organisation was in support of and felt the following were priorities:

- Provide and improve appropriate way marking and signage on public rights of way, access land and public green space
- To continually open and have a well signed public rights of way network
- Effectively manage, monitor and maintain opened paths in a satisfactory condition

The was also a view that the council should:
- Undertake a programme to install fingerposts at junctions between rights of way and metalled roads where there currently isn't one or its needs replacement – this is, of course, a statutory duty
- Proactively deal with obstructions on paths identified as important by local communities
- Clarify and be more specific around the actions – some are quite vague
- Allow local communities to determine priorities in their area rather than introduce than prioritising higher status paths.

Elan Valley Trust

The Trust was particularly concerned about Monks Trod and felt that improvements to allow access to motorised vehicles did not fit with their aspirations for the peaceful enjoyment of the countryside.

They were also keen that the council didn't just focus on enforcement around land ownership and obstructions, but that there was a stronger emphasis on enforcement for those who were using the network in an irresponsible manner.

National Farmers Union

The NFU expressed concerns over the users of the network too – in particular with regard to some irresponsible dog owners.

They wanted the council to ensure there was:

- Clear signage on the network
- A complaints procedure for inappropriate use of the network
- No increased liabilities on farmers' re- access
- Improved publicity via a digital type hub

The Open Spaces Society

The key areas that the society raised were as follows:

- Signposting was key to ensure an accessible and open network
- Volunteers were an important resource and should be well utilised
- The higher tier approach was felt to ignore long standing reports or complaints about paths that were not deemed to be higher tier.
- Barbed wire fences were perceived to be a key health and safety issue that we should tackle.
- Enforcement was important to reduce obstructions on the network.

Natural Resources Wales

The organisation suggested integrating and cross referencing the actions listed in the final plan with both the Area Statement and the Green Infrastructure Assessments.

They were complimentary about the process undertaken via the surveys conducted to gather evidence and insights for the plan prior to drafting it and then for the first draft. They felt this has been comprehensive. They also welcomed the fact that the plan included reference to managed land.

They also felt that the following points were important:

- Budgets should be linked to actions
- Utilising the Local Access Forum was key

Social Media

Alongside press releases being issued during the 12-week consultation period, details were posted on the council's Facebook and Twitter account on two or three occasions during the timeframe.   All posts received comments, some were liked and all were shared. The comments made related to a number of issues. Some were from residents stating that they felt the council should be focused on other matters like repairing potholes and our roads and not the countryside.

 Another respondent queried how much was being spent on running the consultation exercise whilst another was unhappy about their personal predicament whereby they felt their homes were now undervalued due to being on a right of way. The purpose of the post was to signpost people to the draft plan and the survey and the fact that the post was shared hopefully led to some of the responses to the final survey.

Above: The post on Facebook on 12 December 2018.

Emails

The consultation email address was used by two respondents both of whom were supportive of the plan and had complimented the council on its work to protect the network. A handful of organisation also copied in their views to the address but these were primarily addressed to Countryside Services and have been considered within this report.

A note about market research and consultations conducted by Powys County Council.

When conducting consultation exercise Powys County Council works to the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales.

http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/national-principles

Market Research versus Public Consultations – what's the difference?

When conducting market research, the companies involved use a margin of error and confidence level to ensure that their results are robust and representative of the population they are seeking views from. (i.e. the population of interest).

A public consultation however isn't market research as people choose to respond having normally seen publicity around the topic/survey. They are not contacted directly using a sampling methodology. People self-select so sometimes when conducting a consultation, the organisation seeking views will most likely hear ONLY from people who are either strongly in favour/strongly object to a proposal/service change or from those who may have a specific interest in the topic being consulted upon.

Although it's open to all to respond, the silent majority may not give a view either way because either the topic doesn't interest them or they have no strong feelings either way and thus don't wish or have time to take part.

When we analyse any consultation results we do consider how robust they are in terms of the population of interest and if we have heard from the key stakeholders involved.

For this consultation overall, which has been staggered over a period of just over a year with views sought prior to writing a new ROWIP and again at its current draft stage, it is our opinion that we have clearly heard the views of both individual residents and visitors to Powys alongside views of land owners, some of our town and community councils, access groups and our own Local Access Forum plus the organisations who also have a clear stake in the future of the network and the countryside in Powys.

Conclusion:

The results from this survey will help the service consider fully what actions should be included in the final iteration of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the next ten years based on the feedback given.

Discussions with the Local Access Forum and responses from other organisations with a clear stake in ensuring the rights of way network is well-maintained, protected and enjoyed by residents and visitors alike, will also be fully considered.

All views will be given due regard and taken into account prior to a final Rights of Way Improvement Plan being approved and published. Once this has been agreed the next step is the production of a delivery plan with clear objectives and timescales set out for the next three years. This will then be reviewed on a yearly basis.