

Joint Rights of Way Improvement Plan

2019-2026



JOINT RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN: 2019-2026

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan will guide the three councils of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire in developing and improving the Public Rights of Way network. This network is important in many different ways. It provides access to the countryside, traffic-free urban routes, has health benefits from walking, cycling and riding and supports the local economy - everything from local shops and pubs to riding stables.

As a living document the Rights of Way Improvement Plan will be refreshed as things change. Stakeholders' continued input will be appreciated and it is hoped they will find the Rights of Way Improvement Plan useful.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why a Rights of Way Improvement Plan?

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) requires every highway authority to prepare a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' (ROWIP). ROWIPs have to assess how well footpaths, bridleways, byways and cycle tracks meet current and future needs, provide recreational opportunities, and are accessible to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.

The three councils of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire ("the Authorities") came together to put forward a joint ROWIP which was initially adopted in 2007 and a refreshed version which was adopted in 2012; this has now been further updated.

The ROWIP area has a population of approximately 919,600 - living in cities, towns, villages and isolated rural properties. Much of the area's countryside is in the Mendip Hills and Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; the remainder is in the Forest of Avon Community Forest.

In preparing the ROWIP the three authorities have looked at user needs, the existing Rights of Way Network, national, regional and local policies, and undertook public consultation.

The vision is to increase the use of rights of way by developing a network of safe and attractive routes which:

- Improves opportunities for sustainable access to essential services and facilities; and
- Meets the present and future recreational needs of all members of the community, including those with visual impairment or mobility difficulties.

User Needs

The Authorities have looked at the needs of different users including those with limited mobility, taking account of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Walkers and cyclists need safe, convenient and well maintained rights of way for everyday trips; for example, getting to school, work and local shops. For recreational trips their needs vary from routes for short family strolls to more challenging routes for mountain bikers. Horse riders have their own individual needs, as do people with two or four wheel motorised vehicles. There can be conflicts between the needs of different users and the Authorities aim to manage these, learning from best practice. The Authorities are also conscious that rights of way go across private land and that it is essential to work positively with landowners.

The Public Rights of Way network is a significant and cost-effective tool for addressing public health issues such as obesity, heart disease and stroke. Additionally, a shift to these more sustainable modes of transport helps us to tackle both climate change and air pollution.

Existing Rights of Way

The ROWIP area's rights of way network totals 2,319 km with around 90% being footpaths. Footpaths range from locally important links to well promoted routes like the Cotswold Way, the planned England Coast Path National Trail, and routes along rivers and canals. For historical and geographical reasons the distribution of public rights of way is variable. Public rights of way are recorded on 'definitive maps and statements'. From 2007 until 2018 the Authorities have processed 158 legal orders to modify these maps or to create, divert or extinguish rights of way.

The cities of Bath and Bristol have relatively limited recorded rights of way networks but these are supplemented by a diverse pattern of other paths and routes. Most bridleways and restricted byways (those open to non-motorised users only) are in South Gloucestershire. Most byways open to all traffic (BOATs) are in Bath and North East Somerset. As well as the network of public rights of way, the area has a wide range of other means of getting access to local facilities and the wider countryside. There is for example the Bristol & Bath Railway Path and other key routes that form part of the National Cycle Network. There is also access land including commons, public parks and permissive paths provided by landowners like the National Trust and Bristol Water. Other vital links are provided by footways and housing estate paths.

The Authorities, in their capacity as highway authorities, have a duty to ensure that rights of way are adequately signposted, maintained, free from obstruction and fit for purpose. Signing problems that were identified through surveys and feedback from the public have been the subject of improvement across the ROWIP area. Each authority has maintenance contracts for vegetation clearance and there are also agreements with some Parish Councils. As well as general maintenance in line with the Authorities' statutory duties, there are improvement programmes such as replacing stiles with gates or kissing gates, surfacing and improved drainage. The contribution of volunteer groups from the Ramblers and the Cotswold Wardens plays an increasingly important role in maintaining and improving the PROW network.

Rights of way are promoted in a variety of downloadable booklets and leaflets on the Authorities' websites and on OutdoorsWest.org.uk. Many other organisations are equally active in promotion such as the Cotswold Wardens, Walking for Health, and Ramblers groups all have regular walks programme across the area. Town and Parish Councils also produce promotional walks material such as calendars.

Review of Other Documents and Information

In assessing rights of way, the Authorities have drawn upon many other documents and information, guidance notes and other publications from government and national agencies, community and corporate strategies and changing legislation. There is a close relationship between the ROWIP and the Joint Local Transport Plan. National Planning Framework, Local Plans and local development frameworks set the land use context. The management plans of the Mendip Hills and Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are also important.

Involving the Public

In the 2006 survey ('the survey'), the Authorities found that walking, running and cycling were the most popular activities; over half walked paths at least once a week. Three quarters of people used rights of way to enjoy the environment. Personal safety was a key concern and maintenance was also considered a priority.

Results of Assessment

Four priority themes emerged as priorities and are still applicable:

- Theme 1, improving maintenance and safety;
- Theme 2, signing routes;
- Theme 3, providing information; and
- Theme 4, improving access for local travel.

Statement of Action

In light of the assessment, the Authorities have drawn up a Statement of Action focusing on the four priority themes and building on the progress made since the first ROWIP.

Theme 1 - Improving maintenance and safety; using survey information and public feedback to prioritise maintenance of the network.

Theme 2 – Signing Routes; review, replace and upgrade signs.

Theme 3 – Providing better information through greater use of the internet; work with partners to promote health and recreation, give guidance to landowners and promote access by public transport.

Theme 4 - Improve access for local travel; enhance access to schools and other local facilities, improve access for those with mobility difficulties, seek road safety improvements, and promote rights of way through travel planning and the planning process.

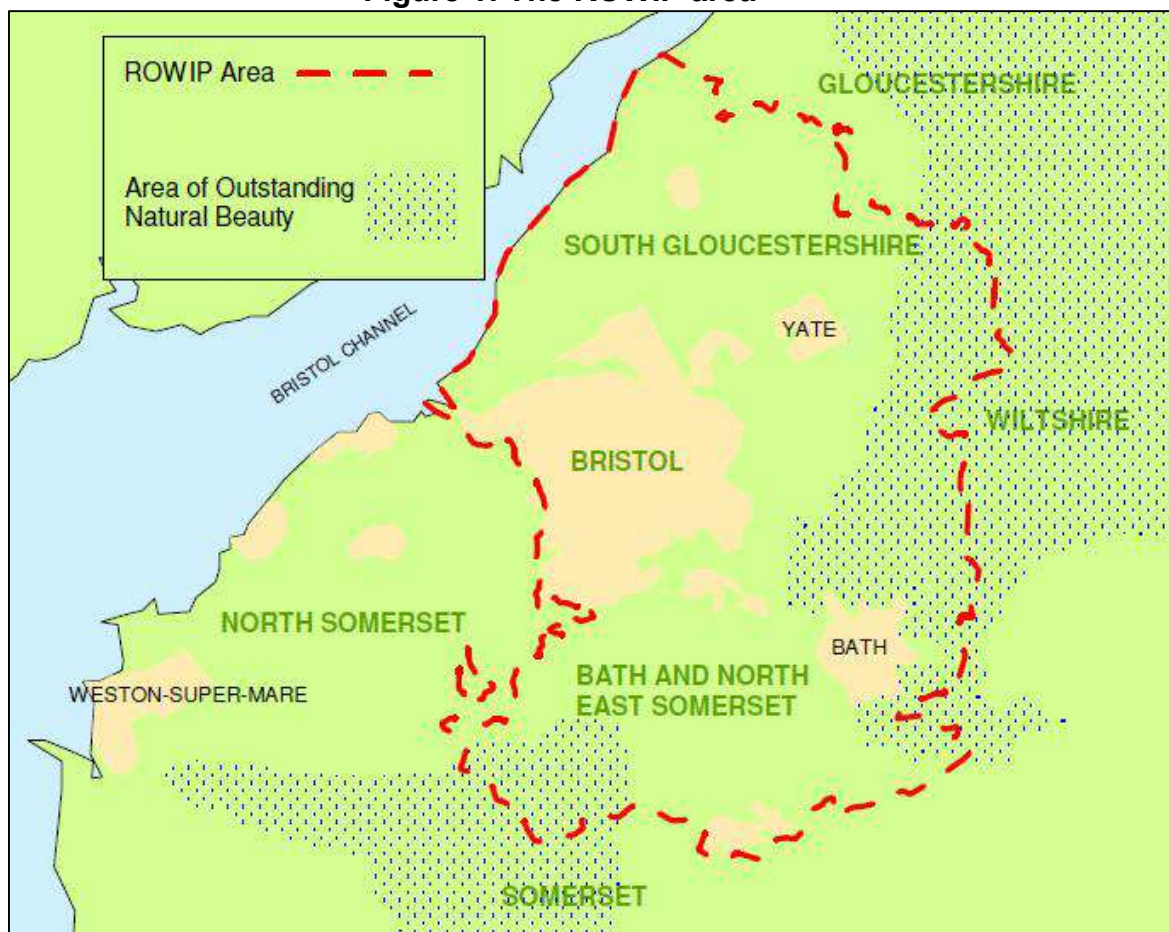
Actions will be implemented by the Authorities as resources permit. Key partners and stakeholders will play important roles including the AONB areas and the Authorities look forward to working closely with landowners.

INTRODUCTION

The ROWIP Area

- 1.1. This Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) covers the council areas of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire, totalling almost 100,000 ha. The population is approximately 919,600 with 617,280 of these living in Bristol and the adjoining urban area within South Gloucestershire. Other significant settlements are Bath (population 89,000) and the five towns of Chipping Sodbury, Yate, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Thornbury (combined population 78,000). About 100,000 people live in rural areas in a variety of large and small villages, hamlets and in isolated properties in the open countryside.
- 1.2. Drained levels adjacent to the Severn estuary rise towards the limestone Cotswolds escarpment bordering the east of the area and the Mendip Hills plateau to the south. Between is a rolling landscape of ridges and river valleys. The rural areas are characterised by a range of villages and hamlets, mixed farming and mostly small woodlands. An extensive part is within the Mendip Hills and Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the remainder is in the area of the Forest of Avon Community Forest: see Figure 1.

Figure 1: The ROWIP area



- 1.3. The Authorities have taken into account statutory guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to include an assessment of:
- The extent to which local rights of way meet the current and likely future needs of the public;
 - The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of their area
 - The accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems
- 1.4. As defined in the CROW Act, local rights of way focus on footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways; these form the Public Rights Of Way (PROW) network as recorded on the definitive maps and statements. The CROW Act also includes cycle tracks, routes that have been upgraded from public footpaths using the Cycle Tracks Act 1984. There are very few of these in the area and for the purposes of this ROWIP these are included as part of the PROW network. The PROW network does not generally include footways, i.e. pavements or other paths that form part of a road mainly used by vehicles.
- 1.5. This ROWIP builds upon the highway authority duties: see Box 1A.

BOX 1A Highway Authority Duties

As highway authorities, the Authorities have a duty:

- to keep and maintain the legal record of public rights of way;
- to ensure that routes are adequately signposted, maintained, free from obstruction and fit for purpose;
- to assert and protect the rights of the public.

Government guidance suggests that ROWIPs *'should build upon this work and not conflict with these existing duties or reduce the effectiveness with which they are carried out'*.

The assessment also looked at other means of 'outdoors access' in reference to Part 1 of the CROW Act. This includes paths in parks and woodland, permissive routes and access land..

Joint Local Access Forum

- 1.6. The Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF) is a statutory body established by the Authorities to provide advice on the *'improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area'*. The JLAF currently meets three times a year and has 21 members comprising one Councillor from each authority and 18 voluntary members representing a variety of interests, including those of land managers and users.

Approach

- 1.7. Working together to prepare a joint ROWIP has several advantages:
- It builds on existing joint working through the JLAF, the Joint Local Transport Plans (JLTP), the West of England Partnership, and the newly formed West of England Combined Authority;
 - It recognises the strong recreational and transport links between and within urban areas and countryside in the area;
 - It has allowed people across the whole area to have a say in the improvement of access where they live and where they might visit;
 - It recognises that the PROW network, and the public perception of it, is continuous across boundaries;
 - It identifies the potential for increasing partnership working and co-ordination and for pooling expertise for cross boundary projects;
 - It increases the potential of the Authorities and partners to gain funding for improvements.

Policy Context

- 1.8. The ROWIP has been prepared in the context of a range of policies and strategies and these are expanded upon in Chapter 4: see Figure 2. The Authorities have taken into account the national policies of DEFRA, Department for Transport (DfT), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCLG), Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and other Government Departments as well as the aims and initiatives of Natural England (NE), the Environment Agency (EA), Forestry Commission (FC), the Canal and River Trust and others.
- 1.9. PROWs feature in the Authorities' sustainable community strategies and these have informed preparation of corporate strategies. The Authorities' JLTP recognises the integral role of the PROW network in developing an integrated and sustainable transport network in urban and rural areas, and contributing to a range of other objectives.
- 1.10. The Core Strategies, Development Plans and saved Local Plans (LP) set the local land use framework and seek to protect and improve the PROW network through development. Bath & North East Somerset Council's Local Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Bristol City Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan set out areas which will be prioritised for larger capital expenditure. Influential on the PROW network are the management plans of the Mendip Hills and Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as well as the Avon Biodiversity Partnership's Action Plan. In and around Bath, account has been taken of the World Heritage Management Plan. Across the area 'green space/green infrastructure strategies' have a bearing on the ROWIP and work has been carried out with Parks and Leisure staff to build a corporate approach to both PROWs and open spaces. Outside Bristol, Parish Plans are locally important and provide further building blocks for the ROWIP. Last but by no means least, are the policies and plans of bodies like the National Trust, Woodland Trust, and those of major estate landowners as well as individual farmers.

Figure 2: Policy Context

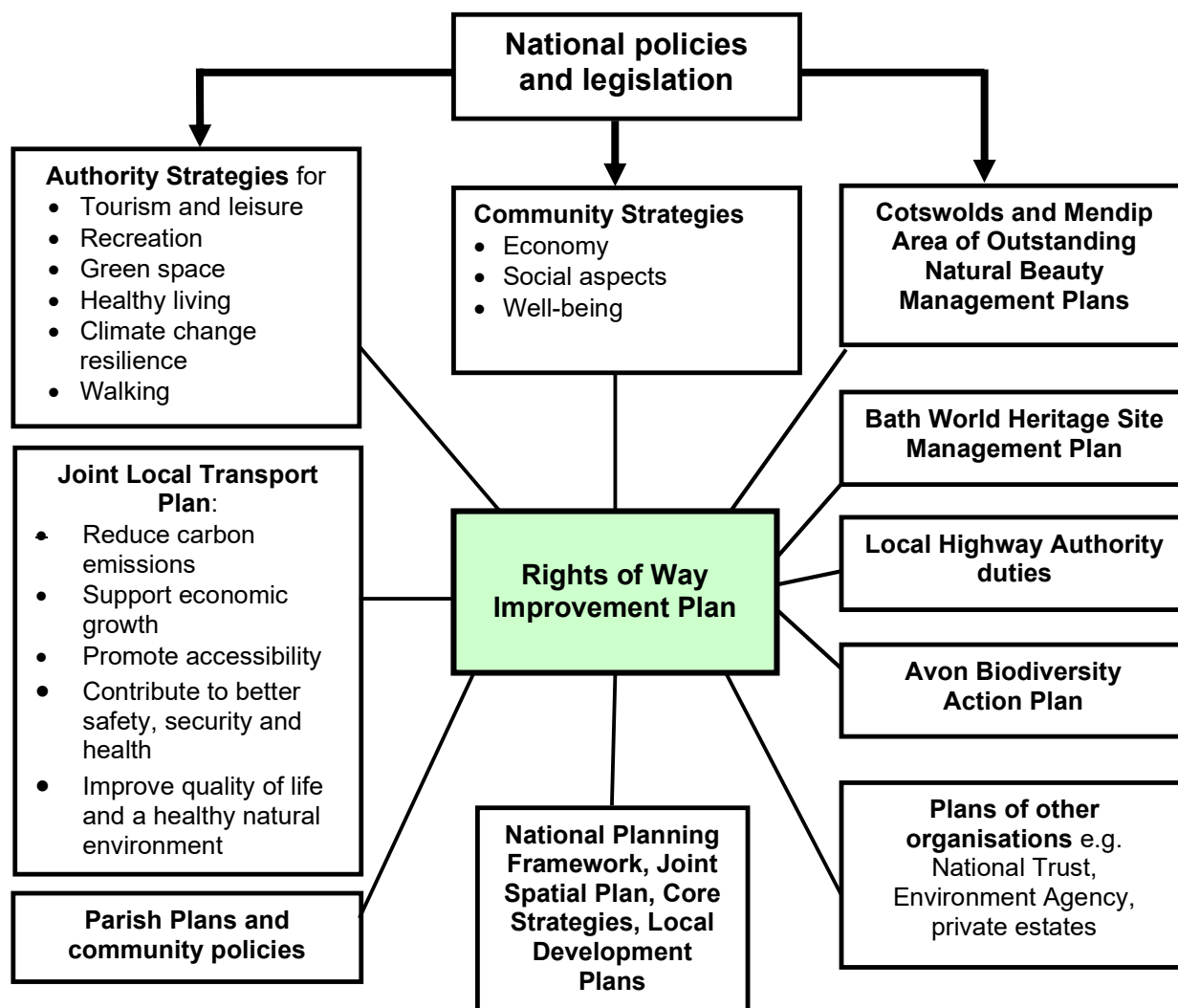
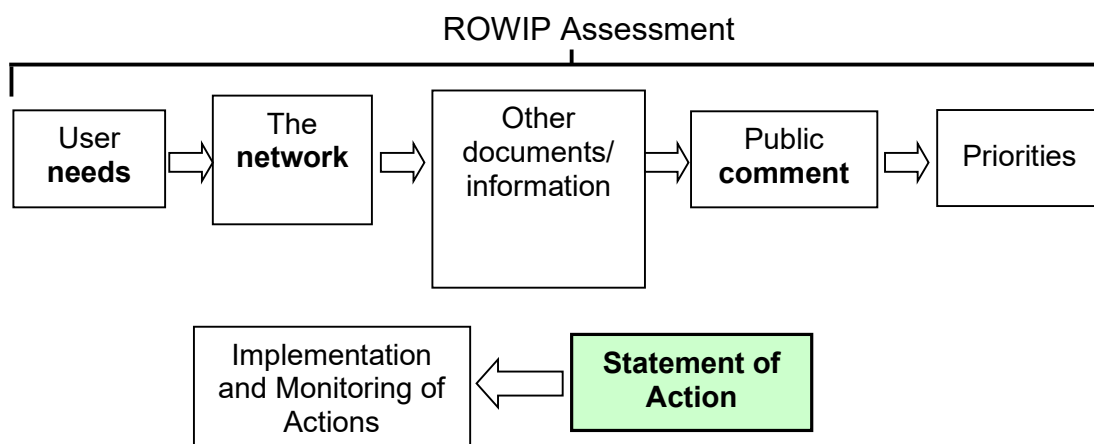


Figure 3: Assessment Leading to Action



ROWIP Changes

- 1.11. Since preparing the original ROWIP, the Authorities have been influenced by the JLTP, the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 and its impact on PROW, the changes arising from the Deregulation Act 2015, the demand on continued development throughout the area, and other guidance that has been updated throughout the time period from the original ROWIP. The CROW Act requires ROWIPs to be reviewed at least every 10 years.

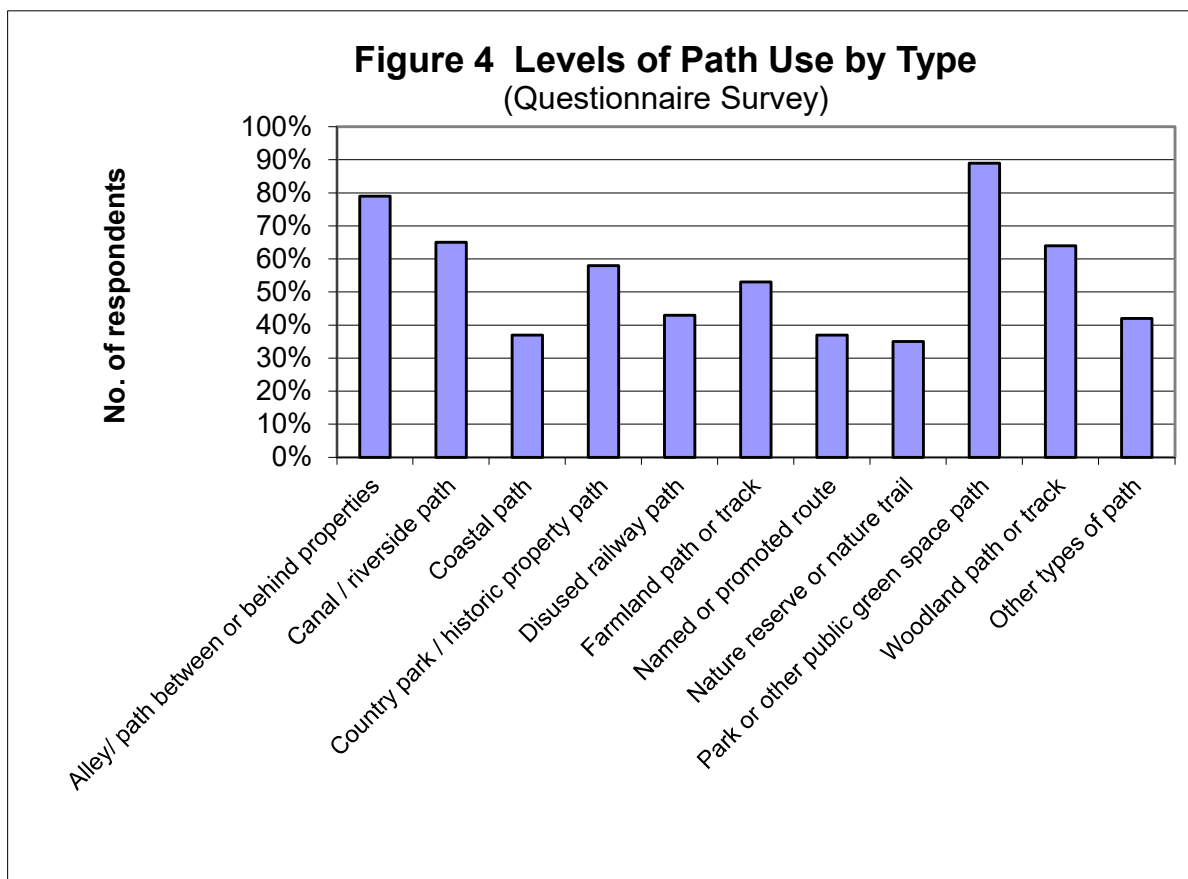
2. USER NEEDS

Introduction

- 2.1. DEFRA advise that authorities should consider the '*needs and circumstances of people with a range of expectations, interests and levels of ability*'. In assessing need, the Authorities have benefited from the views of the key PROW stakeholders, the comments of the public and users during public consultation, the input of the public and stakeholders into the JLTP, and the many documents that were scrutinised in preparing this ROWIP.
- 2.2. With AONBs, the World Heritage City of Bath, the Cotswold Way National Trail and a range of other attractions including the Cycle Network, the Authorities are conscious of the need to take into account not only the needs of the urban and rural residents, but also those of visitors and tourists. This section outlines the needs of different users. Chapter 5 assesses how far users' needs are met by the PROW and wider access network based on the local area assessments and questionnaire survey. This leads to the Statement for Actions proposed in Chapter 6.

Current Patterns of Use

- 2.3. The survey gave an insight into usage of PROW and wider access network. This has been supplemented by counts carried out at various times to give us an up-to-date picture of usage.

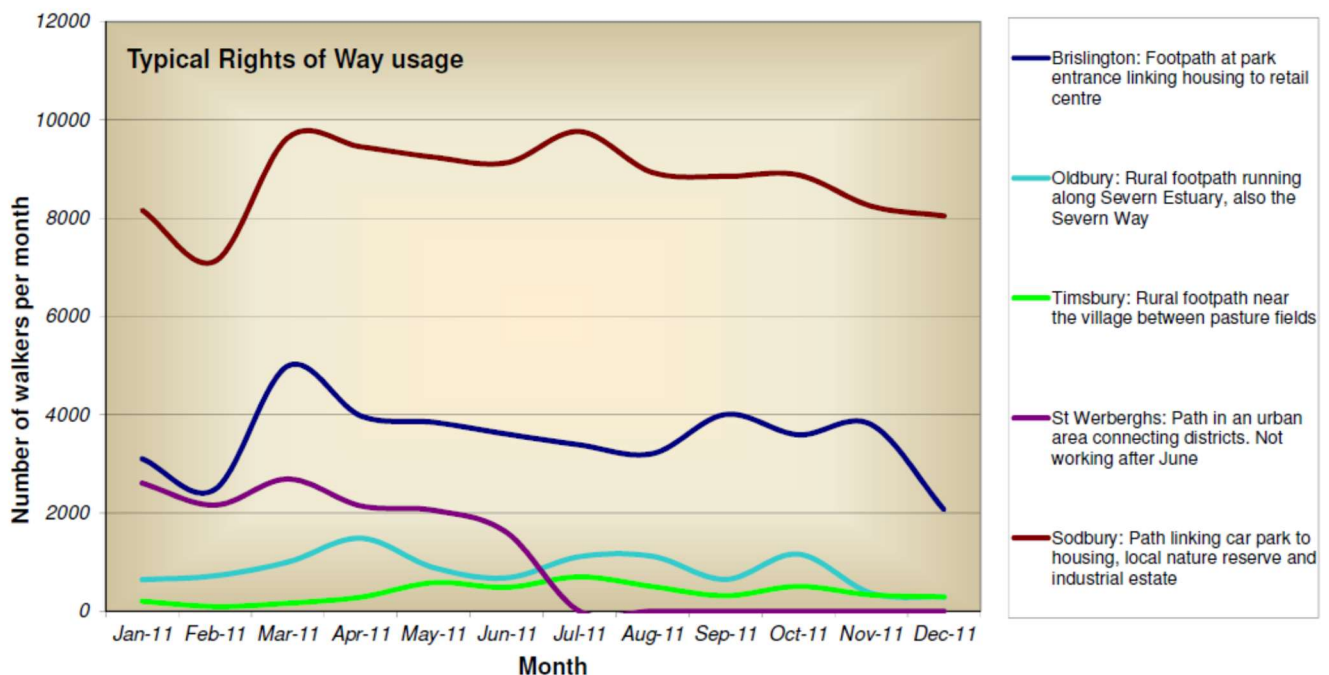


- 2.4. The survey asked people what types of path they had used in the past year. Most frequent use (Figure 4) was of paths through a park or open space (89% of respondents) followed by 'alleys' or paths between or behind properties (79%). Roughly half had used paths along canals and riversides, through woodland, or at country parks/historic properties. Farmland paths had been used by about 50% of residents in Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire, but rather less by people living in Bristol. About 43% had used a former railway path. Named or promoted routes, coastal paths and nature trails had been used the least.
- 2.5. When asked how they used paths and how frequently, the survey showed that walking, running and cycling were the most popular. 55% of people went walking on paths at least once a week, 13% ran and 10% cycled.
- 2.6. In answer to questions about why people used rights of way, three out of four respondents said that it was to enjoy the environment. The other main reasons were for the health benefits (59%) or for convenience and gaining access to places and services (52 and 49%). Reasons for not using rights of way focused on concerns about personal safety (42%); lack of maintenance (35%); and poor state of cleanliness (33%). About a quarter said *'I tend to drive to most places'* and a similar proportion said *'I don't know where many paths are'*.
- 2.7. Counting methods across a range of sites have been used to find out more about how well the PROW network is used. Pressure slabs, gate switches, sensor posts, body heat sensors and magnetometers have all been used to detect walkers, cyclists, horses and their riders. The results are shown in Figure 5.

Walkers

- 2.8. The JLTP highlights the importance of walking as part of an integrated transport system - particularly for short trips and at the beginning and end of longer journeys - and as a healthy, low carbon mode of travel. The significance of walking for recreation, health and other social reasons is also recognised in the range of plans and strategies touched upon in Chapter 1 and the documents that have been studied in Chapter 4. National surveys suggest that about half of households have at least one member who regularly walks in the countryside, and that walking as a leisure activity makes a significant contribution to the rural economy. There are different motivations for walking but it is useful to distinguish two broad groups; people undertaking what might be called 'everyday' trips, for example to shops, school or work, and those enjoying recreational trips.

Figure 5 Typical Rights of Way Usage



Everyday trips

2.9. For everyday walkers the consultation and experience from elsewhere suggests that their needs focus on:

- Effective links with local facilities such as shops and key destinations, including shorter routes to schools;
- Well drained and level surfaces with regularly cut vegetation;
- Paths clear of litter and dog mess;
- Safe routes that avoid road hazards and provide personal security;
- Lack of obstructions;
- Ability to use pushchairs and mobility scooters;
- Clear and visible signs.

Recreational trips

2.10. Recreational walkers range from those wanting a stroll or short walk (e.g. families with young children) to those looking for a day walk or long distance route. The following principal needs have been identified:

- Natural surface and environment;
- Variety of scenic, circular and linear routes;
- Drainage that avoids excessive mud;
- Adequate signage and waymarks;
- Safe routes that avoid road hazards;
- Lack of obstructions, including vegetation, ploughing;
- Information about routes;
- Routes close to home for short walks;
- Availability of public transport or car parking;
- Accessible routes.

2.11. The survey found that 21% of respondents used paths for dog walking. People who walk their dogs have particular needs for:

- Dog latches on stiles or provision of gates;
- Provision of dog bins and regular emptying;
- Opportunities for their dogs to run off the lead, subject to legal restrictions.

2.12. Runners need:

- Maintained paths clear of litter and dog mess;
- Safe road crossings;
- Variety of surfaces;
- Continuity of routes;
- Personal security;
- Access year round.

2.13. If the improvements for walkers and runners were made, the surveys suggest that use of paths and particularly parks, public green spaces, coastal, riverside and woodland paths would increase.

Cyclists

2.14. Cyclists vary in their needs, ranging from people who use their bicycle to travel to work, school or meetings to those wanting to cycle purely for pleasure or exercise. National surveys suggest that about a quarter of households have at least one member who regularly cycles in the countryside. Locally the development of the National Cycle Network and other paths and routes, many as part of the Greater Bristol Cycling City project and more recently Cycling Ambition Funds, have stimulated demand. As with walkers, the Authorities have distinguished between everyday trips and recreational trips but it is recognised that there is interplay between both types. There are also differences in the needs of mountain bikers looking for challenging rides, and family groups wanting a more relaxed and safe experience. In relation to the off-road rights of way network, cyclists' principal needs are assessed as:

Everyday trips

- Effective links with local facilities and key destinations;
- Well drained surfaces free of potholes and with regularly cut vegetation;
- Paths clean and well maintained;
- Safe routes that avoid road hazards and provide personal security;
- Lack of obstructions.

Recreational trips

- Variety of scenic, circular and linear routes of differing length;
- Well drained surfaces free of potholes (but challenging routes for mountain bikers);
- Routes wide enough to share with other users;
- Well-designed signage and waymarks;
- Safe routes with adequate crossing points where they meet the road network and convenient links where necessary on-road;
- Lack of obstructions, including vegetation;
- Ability to use child cycles/ trailers.
- Information about routes;
- Availability of car parking;
- Appropriate surfacing.

2.15. If investment is made across the areas listed above, the survey suggests regular cyclists would make more use of cycle paths, disused railways, canal and riverside paths, and promoted routes.

Equestrians

2.16. There are at least 30 commercial horse riding stables in the ROWIP area (with concentrations on the urban fringe of Bristol and at Winterbourne/ Frampton Cotterell) as well as a variety of individual stables. The British Horse Society estimates that there are over 8,500 horses in South Gloucestershire and approximately 4.2 million riders and carriage drivers in the UK, about 6% of the population. From the Authorities' work with equestrian users their major needs have been identified as being:

- Variety of scenic, off-road and connected routes of adequate length;
- Creation of new routes and missing links;
- Level surfaces, free of potholes;
- Routes wide enough to share with walkers and cyclists;
- Adequate signage including 'caution horses' signs and waymarks;
- Safe routes with adequate crossing points where they meet the road network and convenient links where necessary on-road;
- Lack of obstructions, including vegetation;
- Gates that can be opened easily from horseback;
- Information about routes and their promotion;
- Parking for horseboxes where safe and connected routes are not available.

2.17. DEFRA also draws attention to the needs of carriage drivers. In addition to the general needs of riders and carriage drivers look for adequate parking for manoeuvring carriages and horses, areas for harnessing up and putting to, and routes with sufficiently wide gates.

Motorised Users

2.18. Only a limited extent of the PROW network is classified as Byways Open to All Traffic and therefore legally open for use by motorised two-wheeled and four-wheeled vehicles. The demand for what the DEFRA guidance calls 'recreational motoring' is partially met by off-road facilities on private land. However, there are a number of established motor trials and events in the ROWIP area using the PROW network. Such events may be authorised by the relevant authority under section 33 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and appropriate stewarding is essential. The motorised user group suggests that needs focus on:

- Increase in opportunities, including potential use of disused quarries;
- Unsurfaced routes to create most interest;
- Routes of reasonable length without dead ends;
- Routes deeper in countryside preferred to urban fringe;
- Information and signage on user entitlement for all users;
- Routes clear of obstructions, including overhanging vegetation and burnt out cars.

People with Mobility Problems

2.19. About 8% of residents have some form of physical or learning disability. Mobility can be restricted not only by disability but also by having to push a child's buggy, stiffened joints or short term health conditions. Nationally, less than 5% of disabled people are in wheelchairs and 360,000 are registered blind or partially sighted. Therefore, the accessibility of the PROW network can be improved through various means, not just by making paths wheelchair accessible. The PROW network needs to be managed and promoted to provide reasonable access to all users, taking account of the Equality Act 2010. One inaccessible section can prevent use of the whole route. A disabled user group has provided guidance in the preparation of this ROWIP, fostering a detailed understanding of needs and the most significant issues. Trip types are divided into everyday and recreational trips to highlight where needs are different:

Everyday trips

- Maintenance of the network;
- Surfaces firm, level and non-slip;
- Paths clear of dog mess
- Space for manoeuvring wheelchairs/mobility scooters/buggies and passing;
- Handrails at appropriate height;
- Even steps;
- Minimising number of structures;
- Easy to use catches and gates;
- Design of signs: distinctive pictorial signs needed;
- Accessible seats/perching places;
- Spaces and facilities for horse riders to mount and dismount;

- Needs of blind and partially sighted users; clear edges to paths, clear marking of steps and structures, warning of hazards, paths clear of obstructions at head height.

Recreational trips

Needs as above plus the following:

- Views unimpeded for wheelchair users;
- Equal spread of accessible walks throughout the ROWIP area;
- Better publicity of accessible walks, graded for ease of use with information on gradients, access barriers and facilities;
- Better information for the deaf, blind and partially sighted using a variety of media, in plain English and with careful use of colour;
- Paths and publicity must account for different mobility vehicles where more rugged paths can be accessed by all terrain 'Tramper' type mobility vehicles;
- Improved public transport links to walks;
- Special 'blue badge type' car parking needs.

2.20. The Authorities' management of their PROW networks is guided by DEFRA's '*By All Reasonable Means*', '*Authorising structures (gaps, gates & stiles) on rights of way*' and '*Outdoors For All?*'

Health and Well-Being

2.21 Policy 5 of the West of England Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) relates to future 'place shaping'. The JSP highlights the importance of the provision of active travel options, such as walking and cycling to raise levels of physical activity. It is well documented that increased physical activity can help to reduce levels of obesity and also contributes towards the improvement of mental health and wellbeing. The JSP aims to maximise opportunities to travel by sustainable, non-car modes including walking and cycling on PROWs. PROWs also play a role in the social aspects of 'place shaping'. It is recognised that the basic human interactions, formed when people recognise each other and start to interact through being out in their neighbourhoods, are the building blocks for social support networks. Such networks are critical in supporting the elderly or less able members of society. Well maintained, legible and distinctive 'places', including PROWs, encourage the widest range of users.

2.23 The Authorities' Air Quality Annual Status Reports also extensively reference walking, cycling and horseriding as a means of reducing private car use and therefore also reducing air pollution emissions. These non-motorised alternatives also have public health co-benefits in increasing physical activity.

2.24 A number of the key themes and priorities within each of the Authorities' Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies can be impacted by the PROW network, including;

- Promoting and enabling positive mental health and wellbeing through the life-course. Physical activity is known to have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.

- Promoting and enabling good nutrition, physical activity and a healthy weight throughout the life-course. Increased physical activity contributes to lowering obesity levels.
- Maximising the potential of our built and natural environment to enable healthy lifestyles and prevent disease. PROWs are a key part of the built and natural environment.

Low Participation Groups

2.25. Data suggests that ethnic minorities are less likely to respond to questionnaire surveys, this group was over-sampled in the survey to increase their share of the sample to 16%. Despite this, only 8% of people who filled in the questionnaire were from the non-white British group. This low response shows that more work must be done to encourage ethnic minorities to get more involved. It is also recognised that relatively few young people have responded directly to the ROWIP consultations and efforts should be made to get them to participate more in countryside access.

Minimising User Conflicts

2.26. The advice from DEFRA¹ is that proposals for improving rights of way should not unduly benefit one class of user at the expense of another. Shared use of bridleways is a particular case in point where conflicts may be perceived between walkers, cyclists and horse riders. On byways the interests of these users may in turn conflict with motorised users and horse drawn vehicles. There can be conflict caused by dogs accompanying walkers, or between users and farm animals. Such conflict might involve real or perceived dangers. The Authorities see the importance of learning from best practice in management of these potential conflicts, and working closely with the AONB and other partners to reach mutually beneficial conclusions.

Other Interests

2.27. Rights of way improvements are aimed at benefiting the public but it is important to not lose sight of the fact that landowners have a special interest. Public rights of way usually go across private land and can cause problems for farmers, golf course owners and others. The Countryside Code provides valuable advice for land managers as well as users on rights, responsibilities and liabilities. This makes it easier for visitors to act responsibly and for landowners to identify threats to visitor safety.

2.28. Positive working with farmers and land managers is essential. In the ROWIP area these interests range from individual farmers to large estates including the Duchy of Cornwall and the National Trust. The AONB management plans highlight this co-operative working. The FC,

¹'Rights of Way Improvement Plans: Statutory Guidance to Local Highway Authorities in England', DEFRA November 2002

Woodland Trust and private woodland owners are also interested parties.

- 2.29. Apart from private land, people also look to local authority parks and open spaces to provide recreational access, as well as land held by other public bodies. It is important that relevant estate managers are fully involved with implementation of the ROWIP.
- 2.30. Whilst concentrating on rights of way, the Authorities also have to be mindful of heritage and nature conservation interests. These are spelled out in the policy documents listed in Chapter 4. They also include features of local interest such as stone stiles and distinctive types of gate and surface treatment. The presence of ancient monuments and other archaeological features and diversity of wildlife and habitats add to the attraction of the rights of way. The use of the network must not conflict unduly with wider objectives, both in areas with formal designations and across the PROW network. Improvements should consider the value of features that are distinctive to a locality or period of time.

3. RIGHTS OF WAY IN THE ROWIP AREA

3.1. As surveying authorities, the Authorities are responsible for the definitive map and statement, the legal record of public rights of way. In line with the DEFRA guidance, these maps and statements, together with other information, have been used to make an assessment of:

- the extent to which routes and networks are available to meet the user needs identified in Chapter 2;
- areas which are deficient in PROWs for some or all user groups;
- inconsistencies or anomalies in individual PROWs;
- other opportunities to improve the network.

Definitive maps and statements

3.2. The definitive maps and statements record various classes of routes depending on the type of use available to the public:

Public Footpaths – can be used by pedestrians;




Public Bridleways – can be used by pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists (though cyclists must give way to other users);

Restricted Byways – for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and non-motorised vehicles (e.g. horse drawn vehicles);

Byways Open to All Traffic (“BOATs”) – can be used by all traffic, but are predominantly used by pedestrians and equestrians.

3.3. There are 2,319km (1,441 miles) of public rights of way recorded on the definitive maps and statements, split as shown in Table 1. Almost 89% of the network consists of public footpaths. In all there is an average of just over 23m of rights of way per hectare.

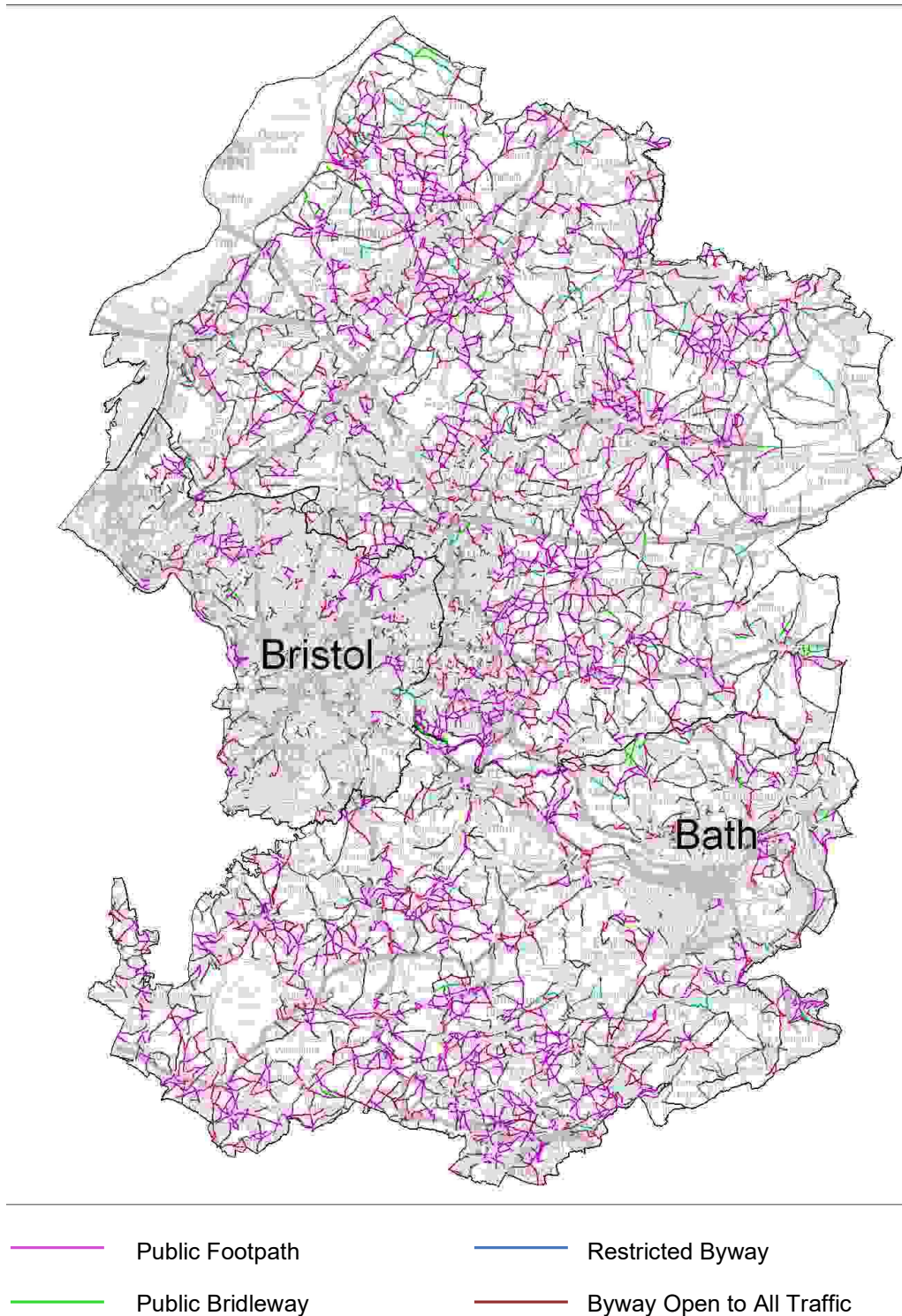
Table 1 Extent of Public Rights of Way (Km)

	Entitled Users	Bath & North East Somerset	Bristol City	South Gloucestershire	ROWIP area
Public footpaths (km)		776	171	1115	2062
Public bridleways (km)		44	7	123	174
Restricted byways (km)		4	1	25	30
BOATs (km)	All	52	0	<1	53
TOTAL		876	179	1265	2319
Estimated population (2019)		187,800	454,200	277,600	919,600
Area (ha.)		35,000	11,200	53,500	99,750
Average density of rights of way (m/ha)		25.0	15.9	23.6	23.2

Extent of the Public Rights of Way Network

- 3.4. PROWs recorded on the definitive map are not evenly distributed and there are areas where there is limited density and a lack of convenient links. The PROW network is shown in Figure 6. Bristol, like other large urban areas, has a relatively small network recorded on the definitive map and statement but this is supplemented by a diversity of other paths and routes.

Figure 6: Public Rights of Way Network

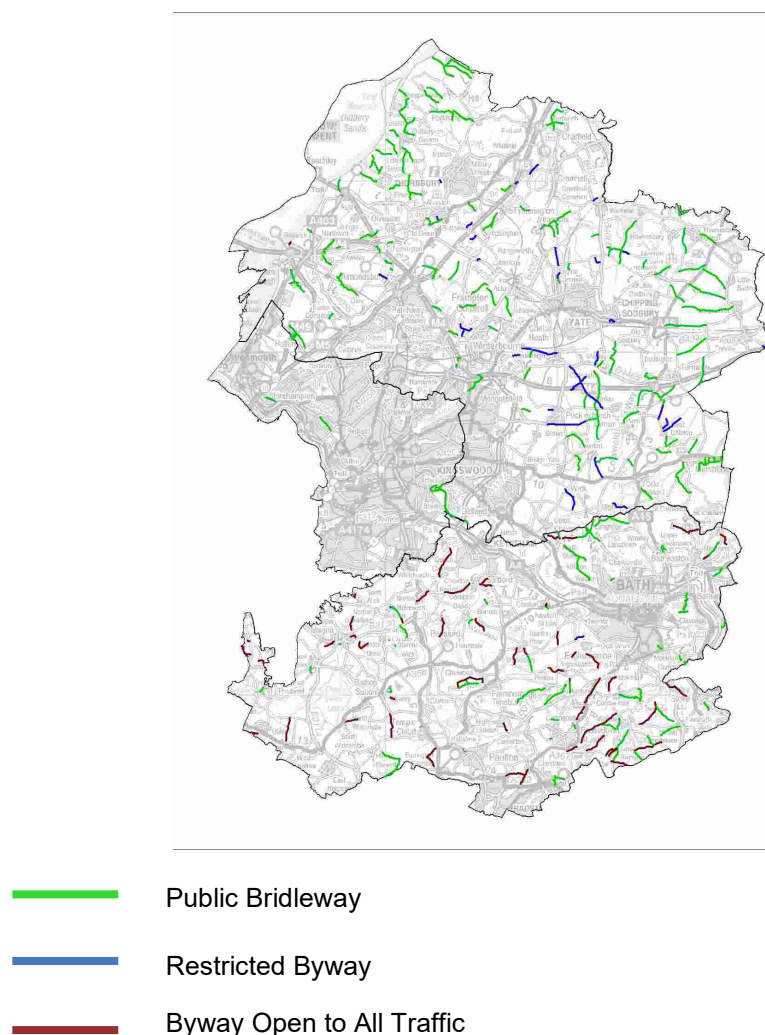


- 3.6. The distribution of rights of way in both urban and rural areas is a factor of landscape, past use and development. For example, on the levels around Oldbury-on-Severn, the network of footpaths, bridleways and byways follows a similar pattern of historic settlement links as the carriageway network. It joins villages and farms and is largely linear, following the pattern of drainage rhynes. In the south of the ROWIP area, typified by Timsbury, there is a network of footpaths linking settlements, which is likely to be the result of movement between local mining settlements within a pattern of small fields in an undulating landscape. Historically, in many areas routes have been upgraded to roads and increased use of these routes by motorised vehicles has created an increasingly fragmented network of vehicle free or quiet routes.

Bridleways and Byways

- 3.7. Bridleway provision across the area is lower than the national average and is fragmented (Figure 8). The majority of public bridleways and restricted byways are in South Gloucestershire. Bath & North East Somerset has a relatively limited bridleway network but 48km of BOATs.

Figure 8: Bridleway and Byway Network

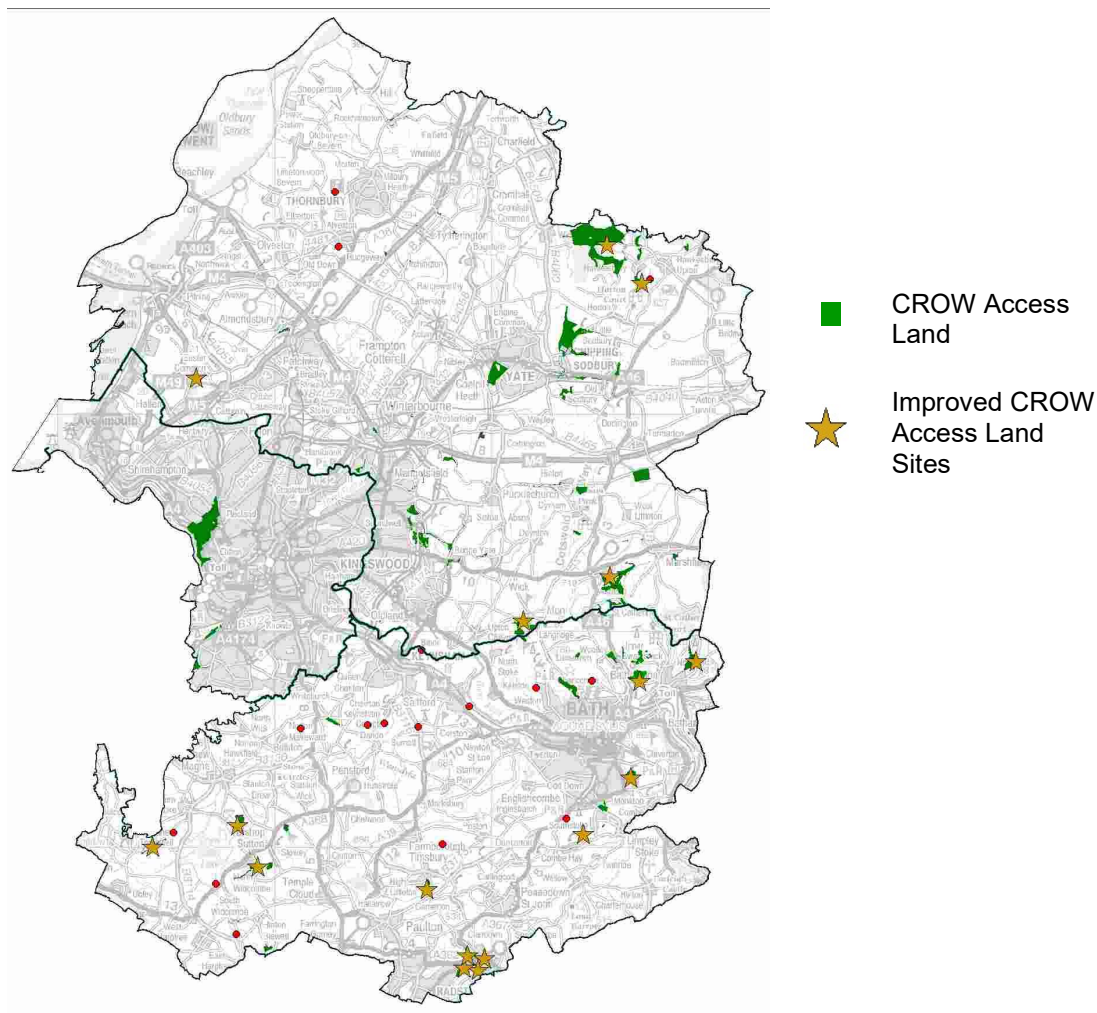


- 3.9. It is recognised that many bridleways and byways are fragmented and do not provide safe and convenient connections. Equestrian user groups have emphasised that a lack of connections can deter use. They also pointed out that lack of parking for horse boxes can also be an issue as well as more local problems such as poor gates. Whilst many routes link with other bridleways or byways or with minor roads, others connect only with an 'A' or 'B' road. Some are cul-de-sacs, offering very limited opportunities for horse riders.
- 3.10. For carriage drivers the choice of rights of way focuses on a small number of restricted byways and BOATs with varying 'connectivity'. Having to rely on BOATs only, motorised users have a more limited range of opportunities although most of these routes are connected to minor or 'B' roads.

The Wider Access Network

- 3.9 As well as the PROW network, people look to a range of other means of getting access to local facilities and the wider countryside. A prime example is the Bristol & Bath Railway Path, a 13 mile, very well used off-road route for walkers and cyclists along the former railway between the two cities. Other examples are the Yate Spur and the Two Tunnels Green Way, which comprise approximately 30km of former railway and have been successfully transformed into recreational routes. All three routes are key parts of the National Cycle Network (<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network>). Disabled user groups have stated that these routes have had the additional benefit of opening up new access opportunities for people with mobility problems.
- 3.10. There are over 100 parcels of land defined under the CROW Act as 'Access Land', either open country or commons, which the public can lawfully use (Figure 9). Prominent is the concentration of extensive commons around Yate and Chipping Sodbury, and on the edge of Kingswood. Clifton and Durdham Downs within Bristol provide access opportunities for urban residents. Similar open spaces give access to the countryside for people in the Bath area. South of Bristol there is a scattering of smaller commons.
- 3.11. Other land accessible to the public includes a variety of town and village greens, parks and recreation grounds. Permissive paths have also been provided by estate owners such as the National Trust, Bristol Water and the Avon Wildlife Trust.
- 3.12. Another important part of the wider access network is the range of pedestrian paths in built up areas that provide links, for example within housing estates. It is also recognised that vital links to and between PROWs are often provided by highway footways.

Figure 9: Access Land and ESS land with Improved Access

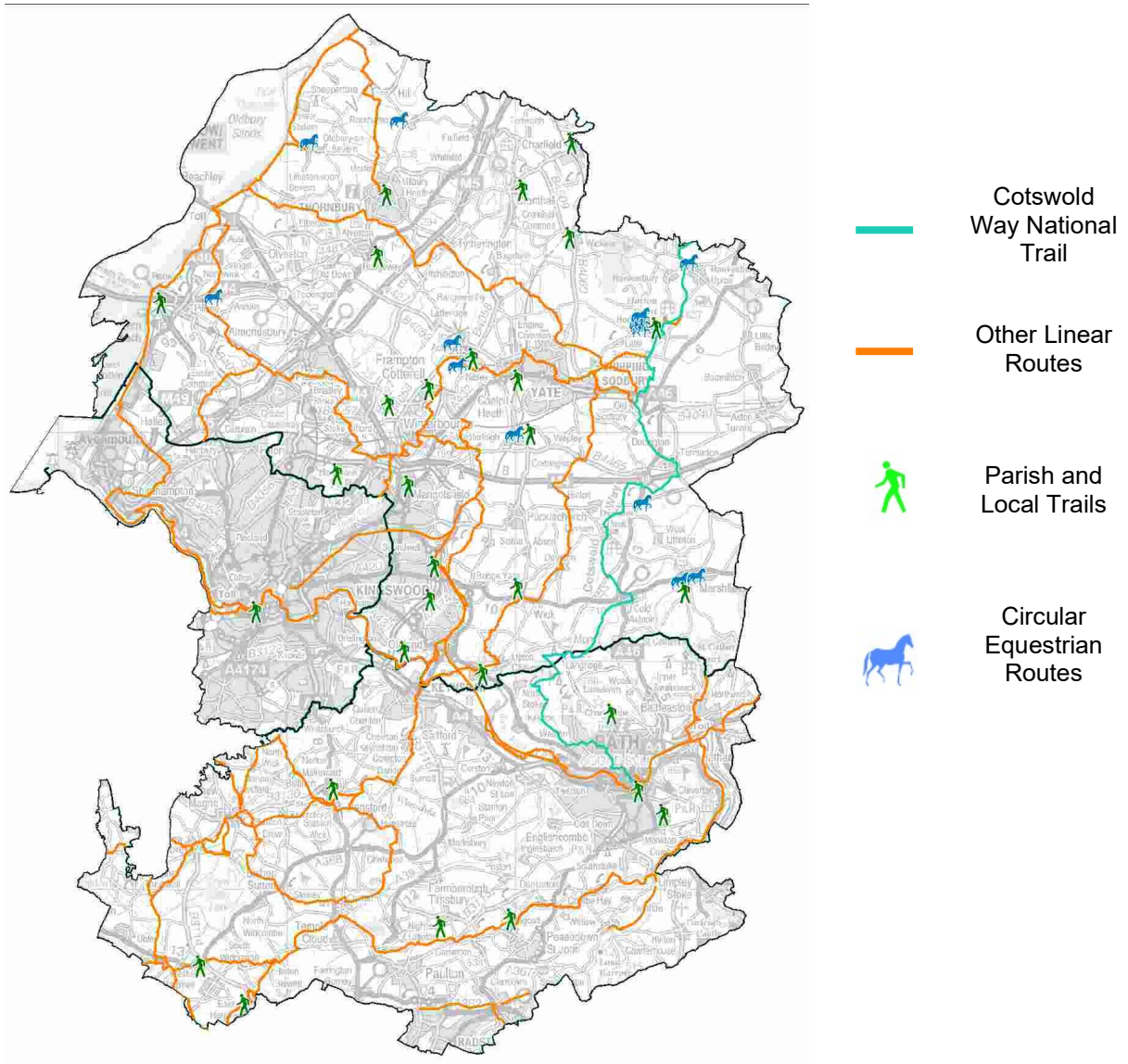


Promotion

3.13. All three Authorities actively promote their PROW networks. A wide range of colourful, informative and easy to use leaflets and booklets are online. Some examples are:

- West of England cycle maps
- Bristol to Bath Railway Path
- Cotswold Way National Trail
- Sea Mills Circular Walk
- Malago Greenway
- The Colliers Way
- River Avon Trail
- Easy Access Booklets and Trails
- Exploring the Countryside Walks
- Frome Valley Walkway
- Gordano Round Walks
- Monarch's Way
- The Severn Way
- Triangular City Walk
- Three Peaks Circular Walk
- Community Forest Path
- Walking to Health Project
- Leigh Woods & the Avon Gorge
- Two Rivers Walk
- The Dramway

Figure 10: Promoted Routes



3.14 Whilst it is not a statutory obligation to promote PROWs, all three Authorities are committed to doing so and recognise the benefits in encouraging greater use and understanding of the network.

3.15. Emerging from the user groups meetings (see Chapter 2) are:

- Ideas for promoting equestrian routes and parking for horse boxes;
- Motorised users wanted to see promotion of usable routes and signs that show their entitlement to use byways;
- For disabled users, more information on wheelchair accessibility, gradient, camber and surface of paths, gates and locations of accessible toilets are all important;
- The need for 'pictorial' signing was also seen as important for many people.

Modification and Public Path Orders

- 3.16. There are constant demands to change the PROW network and any changes are made or reflected through legal orders. Table 2A summarises the number of modification orders made between 2012 and 2018. The number of orders is expected to grow in future. Through an improved strategy for managing the definitive map and legal order work the Authorities will monitor the volume of orders. The city of Bath is not covered by a complete definitive map but Bath & North East Somerset Council has a rolling programme of Definitive Map Modification Orders to produce one (see Box 2B).

BOX 2A Modification Orders

All routes recorded on the definitive map and statement are public rights of way in law. However, definitive maps are not complete. Other public rights of way are in existence that are not recorded and routes can be added to the record through Definitive Map Modification Orders. These orders add public rights of way to the definitive map and statement if it is demonstrated that a public right to use the route has developed in the past, or that the landowner has dedicated the route for public use. The legal tests considered in preparing and making these orders and the need to consider objections through independent inquiry make them lengthy procedures.

Table 2: Number of modification orders made 2012 to 2018

	Bath & North East Somerset	Bristol City	South Gloucestershire	ROWIP area
2012	5	1	3	9
2013	6	0	1	7
2014	3	0	0	3
2015	4	0	0	4
2016	3	0	1	4
2017	6	0	2	8
2018	3	0	0	2
TOTAL	30	1	7	38

BOX 2B Bath City Definitive Map Modification Order Project

Like many urban areas, the City of Bath was not required to produce a definitive map and statement in the 1950s. This legal position was changed in 1983. Bath and North East Somerset Council recognised the value of having an up-to-date and accurate definitive map and statement to safeguard PROWs and to manage the network more effectively and efficiently. The project to complete a definitive map and statement for Bath commenced in 2003.

By 2018 over 381 paths (about 53.1 km) had been recorded. Often cited as an example of best practice the project is expected to be completed by 2022. Further information on it can be found at www.bathnes.gov.uk under Public Rights of Way.

- 3.17. The CROW Act states that any public rights of way that existed in 1949, and not recorded on the definitive map and statement by 2026 will then be extinguished and the public rights lost; however, this provision has not yet been enacted. A national programme to research and propose orders for such routes, called 'Discovering Lost Ways', was trialled by Natural England in pilot counties but has since been abandoned. The Deregulation Act 2015 detailed changes in existing law and procedures to improve the efficiency of the process; this legislation has not yet been enacted.
- 3.18. Apart from modification orders, the trends in public path orders give some indication of pressures on and changes to the public rights of way system (see Box 2C). Table 3 summarise the public path orders that have been made between 2012 and 2018.

Box 2C Public Path Orders

Public rights of way can be created, diverted or extinguished by means of Public Path Orders. There are various grounds for making a Public Path Order, for instance to enable development or in the interests of the landowners or of the public. In a similar manner to definitive map modification orders, these orders consider legal tests and objections and may lead to independent inquiry. Changes in legislation have broadened the grounds for public path orders, which can now be promoted for reasons including crime prevention and security; health and safety on school premises; and nature conservation. The power to make public path orders has previously been at the discretion of the Authorities.

Table 3: Number of Public Path Orders made 2012 to 2018

	Bath & North East Somerset	Bristol City	South Gloucestershire	ROWIP area
2012	3	8	8	19
2013	4	1	6	11
2014	10	2	11	23
2015	4	0	4	8
2016	7	1	9	17
2017	6	2	8	16
2018	11	4	11	26
TOTAL	45	18	57	120

- 3.19. The CROW Act also allows for orders to close or divert rights of way for crime prevention purposes in designated high crime areas. When the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 came into force it created Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) which provide another option for controlling public use of alleyways to combat crime and anti-social behaviour. The legislation also allows a conditional restriction of an alley so that it can be closed only at certain times of the day, or on certain days, such as at night or weekends. Although a PSPO restricts public use, the highway status is retained so that it can be returned to public use at a later date. The need for PSPOs will be kept under review, with demand likely to be greatest in urban areas.

Maintenance

- 3.20. The Authorities have a statutory duty, as highway authorities, to ensure that routes are adequately maintained, free from obstruction and fit for purpose. The consultations have shown the importance that individuals and user groups attach to maintenance. In the ROWIP area the Authorities carry out regular path surveys, this information is fed into maintenance programmes, and this helps to gauge how the maintenance programmes are progressing.
- 3.21. When appropriate, PROWs are generally cleared, strimmed and/or sprayed up to any boundary or physical constraint. Where there is no boundary, land is sometimes treated up to 1m either side of paths. Overhanging vegetation is dealt with within reason, although adjoining landowners are usually responsible for its clearance. In the ROWIP area approximately 180km of PROWs are covered by scheduled maintenance contracts. In addition to this a number of Parish Councils carry out vegetation and light maintenance to paths within their boundaries. Both the equestrian and motorised user groups highlighted the problems caused by burnt out cars.
- 3.22. Signing is a legal duty where a PROW leaves a metalled road. Its importance is underlined by the consultations. All the Authorities collect data on missing signs through surveys, staff inspections and reports from the public. Replacement and repair works are carried out periodically by contractors and volunteers.
- 3.23. Well trained volunteers particularly from the Ramblers and the Cotswold Wardens are playing an increasingly important role in ensuring that the public rights of way network is in a fit condition for use by the public. Work parties regularly carry out accessibility improvements, condition surveys and a range of maintenance tasks.

- 3.25. Enforcement policy is virtually identical in all three Authorities' areas. Initially the Authorities try to negotiate with landowners wherever possible to maintain healthy relationships and not incur lengthy legal procedures at public expense. Although enforcement is generally a last resort it can be seen to be a deterrent in extreme cases. The main enforcement issues arise from obstructions, encroachments, ploughing, cropping and new development. Direct action, whether by notice or under common law powers, is preferred to expensive prosecution procedures to ensure the network remains unobstructed.
- 3.26. In the ROWIP area, the Authorities have recorded a large number of outstanding obstructions to the network. These are resolved through negotiation in the first instance, followed by enforcement notice where required. The equestrians also pointed to the obstruction posed to them by gates and cars parked across routes. These can also be a problem for disabled users and parents with child buggies.
- 3.27. In the ROWIP area, the Authorities have carried out numerous improvement schemes. Examples of improvements include the replacement of stiles with kissing gates, surfacing, and drainage. Substantial lengths of BOATs, bridleways and footpaths have had surfacing and drainage improvements to enable use by all. Works on the PROW network have been completed by Authority officers, contractors and a number of volunteer groups such as the Avon Ramblers' Volunteer Wardens and the Cotswold Wardens.

4. REVIEW OF OTHER DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

- 4.1 In line with DEFRA advice the Authorities have also looked in detail as part of the assessment at a range of plans, documents and other information. Looking at these has helped the Authorities determine potential PROW use and demand. This, within the context of other plans and initiatives, has informed conclusions about problems and future opportunities. The documents that have been especially influential are summarised below.

National Picture

- 4.2 As well as the documents and information published by DEFRA, DfT and DCMS, the Authorities have been guided by the HCLG National Planning Policy Framework and by the publications and initiatives of Natural England and its predecessor organisations. These include:
- A Green Future – DEFRA's 25 year plan to improve the environment;
 - By All Reasonable Means – inclusive access to the outdoors for disabled people;
 - Diversity Review – tackling the needs and perceptions of under-represented groups;
 - Capturing Richness – countryside visits by black and ethnic minority communities;
 - Walking for Health – initiative to get more people walking in their own communities;
 - National Trails – the Cotswold Way which starts in Bath and passes through South Gloucestershire towards Chipping Camden and the new England Coast Path that is being prepared in this area. The start and finish point of the Coast Path National Trail being at Aust;
 - Greenway Management Handbook – guidance on planning and creating traffic-free, off-road routes to meet the needs of walkers, cyclists and/ or horse riders;
 - Changes to the law including the Equality Act 2010 and the Deregulation Act 2015.
- 4.3 NHS advice is that adults should aim to be active daily and should do at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity each week and strength exercises at least 2 or more days a week. Young people are advised to take one hour's exercise each day². The importance of such activity in decreasing the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes – and associated factors such as hypertension and obesity – is highlighted in the 2010 Health White Paper³. Walking and cycling are seen as accessible forms of physical activity with clear implications for ROWIPs.

² NHS Choices Website <https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults.aspx>

³ 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our Strategy for public health in England', DoH November 2010

Community and Corporate Strategies and the JLTP

- 4.4 The Authorities' three sustainable community strategies include objectives for promoting recreation, leisure and healthy living. These in turn have influenced the Authorities corporate strategies and the JLTP. The JLTP has a series of strategies aimed at contributing to 5 overall goals; those of particular importance to the ROWIP assessment are summarised in Box 3A.

Box 3A JLTP strategies linking with ROWIP

Reducing Carbon Emissions

- Promotion of lower carbon travel choices, providing alternatives to the car, influencing travel behaviour and managing demand.
- Adapting to climate change by increasing the transport network's resilience to extreme weather events and seasonal changes.

Supporting Economic Growth

- Provide for increased public transport, walking, cycling.
- Influence travel behaviour.
- Manage demand through highway improvement, management and maintenance.
- Ensure access to employment growth areas.
- Support delivery of houses and jobs through the emerging Core Strategies.
- Maintain, manage and ensure best use of transport assets.

Promoting Accessibility

- Improve accessibility for all residents to health services, employment and other local services.
- Assist neighbourhood renewal and the regeneration of deprived areas.
- Improve access to services for rural residents.
- Provide a transport network that complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Contributing to better safety, health and security

- Significantly reduce the number of road casualties.
- Achieve improvements in road safety for the most vulnerable users and sections of the community.
- Improve air quality in the Air Quality Management Areas.
- Encourage and facilitate more physically active travel.
- Improve personal security on the transport network.

Quality of Life and the Natural Environment

- Enhance the public realm, public spaces and the urban environment.
- Minimise the impact of transport on the natural and historic environment.
- Promote better access to leisure activities and the countryside and neighbourhood links.
- Promote and facilitate active health.

- 4.5 Access to the countryside is seen as an important asset in the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership. A well-managed PROW network can help to attract tourists to an area to enjoy the countryside. The 'Walkers are Welcome' scheme has proven to be an effective driver for local economic growth.
- 4.6 The Planning Policy Framework sets the local land use framework from the national document to the Authorities' Core Strategies and emerging policies as well as the saved local plans. New developments offer opportunities for the PROW network as well as challenges. There is significant growth across the ROWIP area which should provide opportunities to improve the access network as well as posing challenges to the existing network. The following policies have been identified as of special interest to the ROWIP:
- Section 4 of the National Planning Framework published March 2012 covers promoting sustainable transport. It introduces transport assessment statements for larger developments that generate significant amounts of movement and states that plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for people (and goods). Developments should be located and designed where practical to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians. In section 8 it further seeks planning policies to protect and enhance PROWs and access, seeking opportunities to provide better facilities for users; for example, adding links to PROW networks including National Trails. It continues that local planning authorities should plan positively for the creation, protection enhancement and management of networks of green infrastructure and improve access to and enjoyment of the coast.
 - Government guidance seeks protection of PROWs within developments, recommending that they do not run along estate roads but should be designed through landscaped areas where possible. Furthermore, Chapter 1 of DEFRA's 'A Green Future' policy document embeds the principal of 'environmental net gain' for development, including housing and infrastructure.
 - The Local Plans safeguard and seek improvement to the existing and aspirational access network across the ROWIP area; specifically, Policy SR.9 of the Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan (adopted October 2007), Policy BCS9 Bristol Development Framework (adopted 2011) and Policy PSP 10 in the newly published South Gloucestershire Policies, Site and Places Plan, which describes these as active travel routes.
 - PROWs are legally protected highways so no encroachment or changes should be made to PROWs without authorisation. Where development is likely to place significant pressure on routes outside the development boundary, developers will be expected to make contributions to improve those routes by way of S106 or CIL payments.

- Proposals for new development will be expected to incorporate existing rights of way for the most part along their existing routes and/or reflect pedestrian desire lines. Where this is not proposed developer must engage with PROW officers at an early stage.
 - New routes should be of an appropriate gradient for wheelchair use, preferably using areas of landscaping and amenity open space, and avoiding the use of estate roads.
 - No additional barriers, gates, wildlife fencing (temporary or permanent) can be placed across the right of way. No additional gradients, steps, or change in levels are to be introduced on existing or proposed rights of way.
 - Routes should be signed and should be overlooked by development to deter vandalism and improve the security of users.
 - No development should take place over the route of the path prior to the confirmation of a TCPA (Town and Country Planning Act) path diversion order.
- 4.7 The importance and provision of green infrastructure, open space, outdoors recreation and access are issues addressed in the Authorities' respective core strategies and other local development documents.

AONB Management Plans

- 4.8 The Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan provides a wealth of information and sets out a range of policies to protect the AONB's unique assets. Objective R1 seeks to maintain, improve and promote public access and quiet recreational activities with measures to ensure access for all in accordance with the purposes of AONB designation.
- 4.9 Policy EE4 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan identifies the improved *co-ordinated approach to the management of public access and quiet recreational activities compatible with the conservation of the landscape*'. EE1 states that residents, visitors and particularly hard-to-reach groups are encouraged to access and enjoy the Cotswold countryside. The management plan contains a wide range of policies, actions and tasks of relevance to ROWIPs and access.

Other Documents and Information

- 4.10 Other documents that have guided the Authorities in this assessment include:
- Local Biodiversity Action Plans;
 - Bath World Heritage Management Plan;
 - Walking Strategy for Bristol: Our Vision for 2011–2021;
 - Bath & North East Somerset Green Infrastructure Strategy;
 - South Gloucestershire Green Infrastructure;
 - Open Space Audit 2010;

- Bristol Green Spaces Strategy;
- West of England Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework
- Parish Plans;
- Register of Historic Battlefields/ English Heritage information on historic landscapes/ DCMS information on ancient monuments;
- South Gloucestershire Council Adaption and Climate Change Resilience Plan.

5 INVOLVING THE PUBLIC AND ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Introduction

- 5.1 Chapter 2 examines the existing PROW network and in Chapter 3 the needs of different users. The crucial question is how far the network currently meets users' needs. In assessing this, the Authorities have been guided by the many reports and policy statements that have already been published and which are drawn together in Chapter 4. This Chapter looks at the question from the point of view of the public.
- 5.2 Public involvement focus groups, surveys and events were carried out across the area in 2006 and 2007. Comments focused on specific areas and routes, and have been used to guide the detailed implementation of the ROWIP.
- 5.3 Some of the issues raised through the public involvement include:
- Keeping paths clear of litter and dogs mess and regular maintenance;
 - Better lighting or improving surfacing;
 - More signage and information made more easily available;
 - Removal of stiles and obstacles;
 - Signs should show the type of transport allowed and the route destination, route names and distances;
 - Continuity of routes is important, including use of roads where necessary;
 - Safety and personal security;
 - Deficiency of routes for cyclists and horse riders;
 - Better publicity on path changes;
 - An increasing elderly population increasing demand for accessible routes;
 - Health benefits should be promoted.

Themes

- 5.4 The Authorities identified four themes which are:

Theme 1: Improving Maintenance and Safety

- Personal safety
- Keeping paths open and useable
- Dogs and livestock.

Theme 2: Signing Routes

- Easy to follow routes
- Clear and legible routes
- Detailed informative routes.

Theme 3: Providing Information

- Promotion and increasing use of the network for leisure, tourism and health benefits
- Website development
- Responsible use.

Theme 4: Improving Access for Local Travel

- Social exclusion
- Schools.

Input into 2019 ROWIP Review

- 5.5 Since carrying out the research and consultation which informed the previous ROWIPs, the Authorities have continued to engage with the JLAF and PROW Liaison Groups. Additionally, the Authorities have engaged with members of the public and other interested parties as part of the production of the JLTP. Having reviewed this information, the Authorities are confident that the engagement carried out before this review remains relevant and that there is no need for extensive new consultation prior to the adoption of the 2019-2026 ROWIP.

6 STATEMENT OF ACTION

Progress since 2007

- 6.1 Previous ROWIPs included Statements of Action which the Authorities committed to progressing within the resources available. Table 4 below identifies those Actions which have been progressed.

Table 4: Progress on Statement of Action

Recommended Action		Progress
1.2	Undertake full infrastructure and network condition survey.	Full survey carried out in summer 2009.
1.4	Develop joint diversion policy .	PPO policies adopted by the Authorities in 2009.
2.2	Ensure that 90% of path junctions with metalled roads are signed outside urban areas.	Over 90% of paths surveyed have been signed.
2.3	Ensure that signposts carry additional information for users where appropriate.	Pictorial signs designed and used on restricted byways, signs reviewed for bridleways.
3.1	Creation of a common website to promote PROW and give a single point of contact.	OutdoorsWest Website created. Interactive websites now available.
3.2	Develop online mapping as an interactive tool available on the joint website.	Mapping included in OutdoorsWest website and the Authorities' websites where available. B&NES mapping now hosted on own website.
3.3	Develop targeted promotional material.	Review and revamp of Round South Gloucestershire Rides undertaken; links to other targeted information e.g. BHS reviewed on website.
3.4	Provide information, guidance and support for landowners.	Assistance given to landowners through interactions with officers and a review of information available on websites including FAQs and ploughing and cropping leaflets.
3.7	Promote improvement works and provide feedback on completed maintenance through press and newsletters.	Increased press & improved information to town/parish councils.
3.8	Promote PROW that can be accessed by public transport.	Cotswold Way and circular routes off the Cotswold Way promoted material contain links to public





		transport information.
4.1	Identify improvements to enable travel for all by foot/on bike to employment, health services, education, leisure and transport.	Missing cycle link identified along Whitchurch Railway Path, the route of the Mangotsfield to Yate cycle/multi-user spur is being constructed.
4.6	Identify gaps in the wider recreational network that will improve accessibility and connectivity.	Missing bridleway links identified at Withies Lane and Frampton Cotterell bridleways provided.
4.9	Carry out improvements to fill in the gaps identified in 4.1, 4.6 and 4.8, subject to funding.	Creation orders and dedication agreements made for routes identified.
1.3	Develop an improved strategy for managing the definitive maps and statements and legal order work.	SG & B&NES Councils have reviewed and refined the DMMO and legal order processes.





Statement of Action













- 6.2 The Statement of Action is set out in Table 5 listed under the four themes. In drawing up this statement there was a need to match the actions with the resources that are likely to be available. Progress on many of the actions is dependent on securing the additional resources required either internally or externally. Pressures on budgets mean that the Authorities have to give priority to some improvements over others. In looking at improvements to the PROW network, the Authorities have put emphasis on routes that will benefit the greatest number of people.

Table 5 Statement of Action

Theme 1 – Improving Maintenance and Safety									
Recommended Action		Link to Themes	Link To JLTP	Resources 🧑 x1= minor x2= medium x3= major	Estimated Costs £ = <£5k ££ = £5-20k £££ = >£20k	Timescale (Years)			Key Partners Stakeholders/ Funders
						1-2	3-4	5+	
1.1	Develop consistent guidelines for Rights of Way inspections and maintenance	2,3,4	Network Manage. – Chapter 5 Asset Manage. – Chapter 9	🧑 🧑	£ £	✓	✓		The Authorities, JLAF, Cotswold Way Team, AONB services
1.2	Prioritise routes according to their character, use and significance	2,3,4	Network Manage. – Chapter 5 Asset Manage. – Chapter 9	🧑 🧑	£		✓	✓	The Authorities, JLAF, Liaison Groups, town and parish councils
1.3	Deliver improvement schemes to improve network accessibility	1,2	Network Manage. – Chapter 5 Asset Manage. – Chapter 9	🧑	££	✓			The Authorities, volunteers, Liaison Groups, town and parish councils
1.4	Promote and facilitate greater engagement with volunteers to maintain and enhance the network	1, 3	Network Manage. – Chapter 5 Asset Manage. – Chapter 9	🧑	£	✓			The Authorities, JLAF, Liaison Groups, town and parish councils

Theme 2 – Signing routes									
Recommended Action		Link to Themes	Link To JLTP	Resources  x1= minor x2= medium x3= major	Estimated Costs £ = <£5k ££= £5-20k £££ = >£20k	Timescale (Years)			Key Partners and Stakeholders/ Funders
						1-2	3-4	5+	
2.1	Complete a full review of signage in the area and produce signage guidelines	3,4	Smarter Choices – Chapter 5 Accessibility – Chapter 6		£	✓			The Authorities, JLAF, user groups, town and parish councils, AONB
2.2	Ensure that signposts carry additional information for users where appropriate	3,4	Smarter Choices – Chapter 5 Accessibility – Chapter 6	 	£ £ £			✓	The Authorities

Theme 3 – Providing Information									
Recommended Action		Link to Themes	Link To JLTP	Resources  x1= minor x2= medium x3= major	Estimated Costs £ = <£5k ££ = £5-20k £££ = >£20k	Timescale (Years)			Key Partners and Stakeholders/ Funders
3.1	Explore opportunities for increasing participation of minority groups in countryside access	2,4	Accessibility - Chapter 6		£ £	✓			The Authorities, representative groups, JLAF
3.2	Improve feedback on completed works through websites, email and groups.	1,4	Smarter Choices – Chapter 5		£ £	✓	✓	✓	The Authorities
3.3	Promote use of the English Coast Path	3	Accessibility – Chapter 6		£	✓			The Authorities, parish councils, JLAF

Theme 4 – Improving access for local travel									
Recommended Action		Link to Themes	Link To JLTP	Resources  x1= minor x2= medium x3= major	Estimated Costs £ x1= <£5k x2= £5-20k x3= >£20k	Timescale (Years)			Key Partners and Stakeholders/ Funders
						1-2	3-4	5+	
4.1	Identify improvements to enable travel for all by foot/on bike to employment, health services, education, leisure & transport nodes	3	Congestion – Chapter 5 Accessibility – Chapter 6	 	£ £	✓			The Authorities, user groups, landowners, employers, health services, education, leisure, transport operators, town/parish councils
4.2	Identify and carry out improvements for people with mobility difficulties and visual impairments.	2,3	Accessibility – Chapter 6	  	£ £ £		✓	✓	The Authorities, user groups, AONB
4.3	Identify low maintenance gaps in the wider recreational network that will improve accessibility and connectivity	3,4	Accessibility – Chapter 6	  	£ £ £		✓	✓	The Authorities, user groups, JLAF, town and parish councils, AFP, AONB services
4.4	Seek improvements of the network associated with development and funded by third parties	3	Smarter Choices – Chapter 5	  	£ £ £	✓	✓	✓	The Authorities, developers

Implementation, Funding and Partnership Working

- 6.3 Most of the actions will fall to the Authorities to implement in their roles as local highway authorities, but in the last column of Table 5 key partners and stakeholders who would also need to be involved are identified. The most effective way to achieve the set out objectives would be to draw upon the resources of developers, user and voluntary groups. For some specific actions, delivery will need to have input from the tourism industry and outdoor access providers. Others will depend on partnership working. South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset Councils have worked with the Avon Ramblers group to set up regular volunteer work parties across their areas to carry out path improvements with assistance and guidance from officers.
- 6.4 The implementation of specific actions will depend on the availability of sufficient funding. Additionally, the Authorities will take account of the future maintenance and replacement costs of assets when considering whether to accept responsibility for their maintenance.
- 6.5 The Statement of Action puts forward estimates of the scale of resources needed and capital and revenue costs. Also shown is the timescale for each action, subject to funding.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Authorities believe the ROWIP will help to build upon the work which has already been undertaken to develop a network of safe, accessible and attractive routes that meet the present and future needs of all members of the community.
- 7.2 The assessment of user needs and the current network revealed the scale of the task required to produce a ROWIP. The Authorities also had to consider how the ROWIP fitted in with other documents, policies and partners; from Parish Plans to the AONB management plans.
- 7.3 Extensive public consultation helped us to identify priorities and from these the four key themes of:
- Improving maintenance and safety;
 - Signing routes;
 - Providing information;
 - Improving access for local travel.
- 7.4 The Statement of Action takes these four themes and sets out what the Authorities propose to do subject to adequate funding, in addition to the work which was carried out under the previous ROWIP.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AONB – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AFP – Avon Frome Partnership

BOAT – Byway Open to All Traffic

CNE – Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

CROW – Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

DCMS – Department for Culture, Media and Sport

FC – Forestry Commission

HCLG – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

DfT – Department for Transport

DoH – Department of Health

EA – Environment Agency

JLAF – Joint Local Access Forum

JLTP – Joint Local Transport Plans

LP – Local Plan

NE – Natural England

PROW – Public Rights of Way

ROWIP – Rights of Way Improvement Plan

TCPA – Town and Country Planning Act 1990