

Supplemental Items for Executive

Thursday 6 November 2025 at 6.00 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

Part I

Page No.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 8. | Rights of Way Improvement Plan (EX4700)
Purpose: to request that members adopt the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. | 3 - 288 |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|

Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke

Executive Director - Resources

For further information about this item, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) on 01635 519052, e-mail: sadie.owen1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk

West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

This page is intentionally left blank



West Berkshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025 – 2035

Evidence Report 1
Network and Needs Analysis
FINAL July 2023



Contents

Introduction.....	1
West Berkshire's Access Resource.....	2
West Berkshire's Public Rights of Way Network.....	2
Publicly Accessible Greenspace.....	11
Access to Woodland.....	12
Welfare Value of Public Rights of Way.....	12
Cross Boundary Links.....	17
Promoted Routes and where to find Information.....	19
Network Condition and Maintenance.....	27
Supporting the Communities of West Berkshire.....	30
Demographic Profile.....	30
Health and Wellbeing Needs.....	35
West Berkshire – Wider Context.....	43
The Environment and Climate Change.....	43
West Berkshire's Economy and Growth.....	47
Transport and Active Travel.....	49

Needs of Users.....	52
Walkers.....	52
Cyclists.....	54
Equestrians.....	58
Motorised Vehicle Users.....	64
People Living with Visual, Physical or other Disabilities.....	65
Minority Ethnic Groups.....	67
Policy Context.....	69
Local Policy.....	69
Shared Objectives.....	73
Bibliography.....	75

Produced for and in partnership with West Berkshire Council by Sharon Bayne BSc MSc LLM CEnv MCIEEM
Blackwood Bayne Ltd <https://blackwoodbayne.co.uk>



Introduction

Every local highway authority must, by law, produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. It sets out the council's strategic goals and priorities for public rights of way.

This Rights of Way Improvement Plans must carry out a full assessment of the needs of the public in using public rights of way, now and in the future. This report contains evidence to underpin the assessment of needs. It should be read in conjunction with the second evidence report - Evidence Report 2 – Surveys and Stakeholders Report.



West Berkshire's Access Resource

West Berkshire's Public Rights of Way Network

There are four types of public right of way:

- **Public footpaths** – a public right of way only for pedestrians (including dog walkers, users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters and people with buggies);
- **Public bridleways** – As per public footpaths, and in addition can be used horse riders and cyclists;
- **Restricted byways** – As per public footpaths and bridleways, and in addition can be used by horse-drawn carriage drivers;
- **Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs)** – a public right of way for all users, including motor vehicles.

West Berkshire's public rights of way network is shown in Plan 1.

The total length of the network is 740 miles (1192 km). Most of the network (61%) is comprised of public footpaths, with 18% of the network comprised of bridleways, 8% of restricted byways and 14% of byways open to all traffic (BOATs).

The density of public rights of way varies across West Berkshire. The average is 1.69 km per square km. The highest density of public rights of way, calculated by ward, is in Bucklebury Ward. The average length of public right of way per person is 7.52 m. Downlands Ward has the

greatest length of public right of way per person and Hungerford and Kintbury Ward has the greatest total length of public rights of way.

Table 1: West Berkshire's Public Rights of Way Network

	Km	Miles	%	% - National Network
Length all PROW (km)	1192	740	100%	
Footpath	725	451	61%	78%
BOAT	167	104	14%	3%
Bridleway	209	130	18%	17%
Restricted Byway	91	56	7%	2%
All 'higher status' (bridleways, restricted byways and BOATs)	467	290	39%	22%
Average density – km per square km	1.69 km			
Average metres of PROW per person	7.52 m			

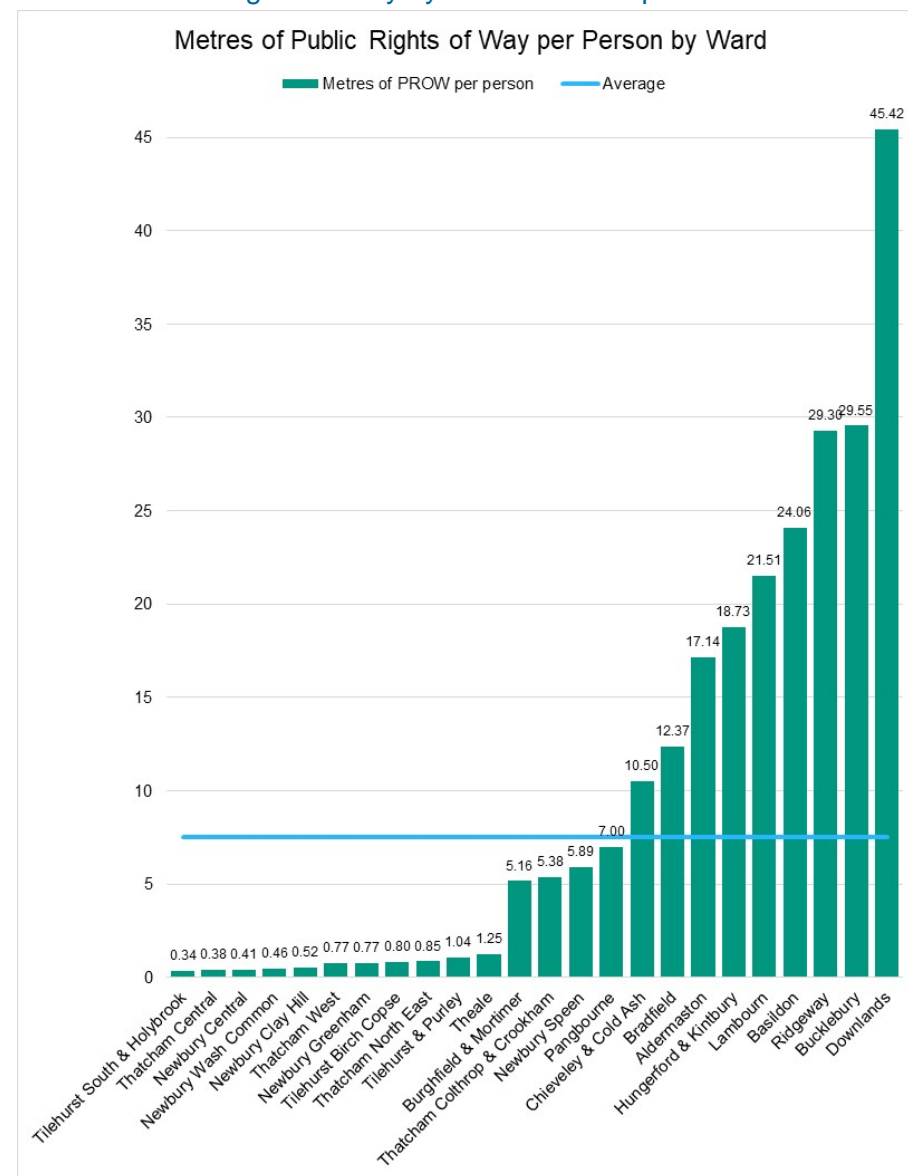
The lowest amount of public rights of way per person are, as would be expected, in the main areas of concentrated population – Newbury and the Kennet Valley, through to the outskirts of Reading. This network will be the most intensely used, serving a high resident population.

Table 2 shows calculations by ward, with wards scoring above average in green and the highest value in dark green and the lowest in red. See also Plans 2 and 3.

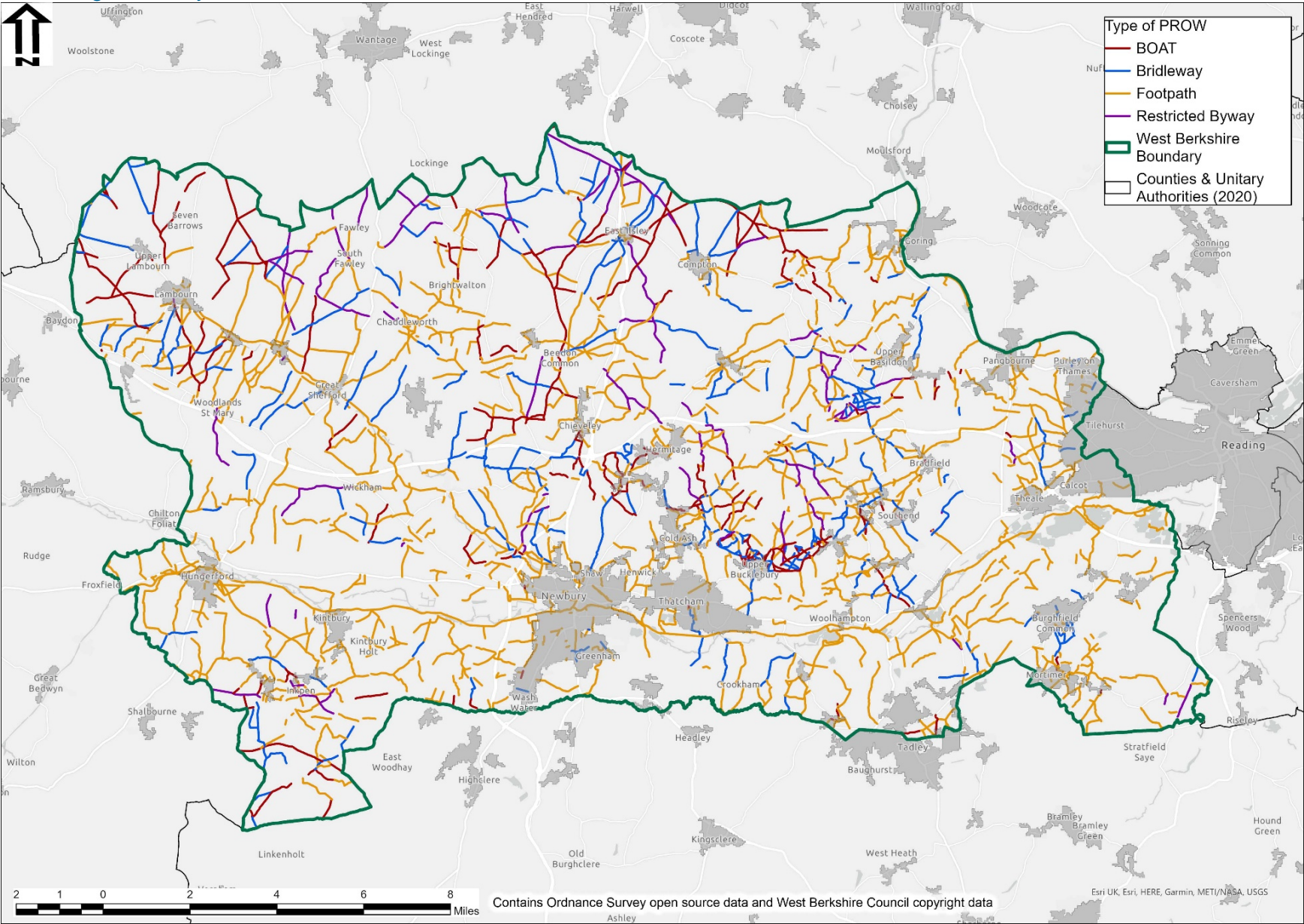
Table 2: Distribution of Public Rights of Way by Ward

Ward	Population (mid-term estimate 2020)	Metres of PROW per person	Density (km / sq. km)	Length of PROW (km)
Bucklebury	3606	29.55	3.00	106.56
Thatcham Central	7959	0.38	2.34	3.01
Newbury Central	7803	0.41	2.08	3.24
Chieveley & Cold Ash	8188	10.50	1.99	85.93
Pangbourne	3801	7.00	1.93	26.61
Tilehurst Birch Copse	7654	0.80	1.84	6.14
Basildon	3539	24.06	1.83	85.15
Ridgeway	4191	29.30	1.80	122.80
Newbury Clay Hill	7323	0.52	1.80	3.80
Newbury Speen	7266	5.89	1.76	42.76
Tilehurst & Purley	10336	1.04	1.72	10.76
Downlands	3647	45.42	1.72	165.65
Thatcham West	7209	0.77	1.71	5.52
Aldermaston	3828	17.14	1.70	65.62
Hungerford & Kintbury	11361	18.73	1.53	212.80
Lambourn	4237	21.51	1.51	91.15
Bradfield	4408	12.37	1.38	54.51
Burghfield & Mortimer	10429	5.16	1.31	53.78
Thatcham North East	7898	0.85	1.29	6.69
Thatcham Colthrop & Crookham	2747	5.38	1.21	14.77
Theale	2946	1.25	1.01	3.69
Newbury Greenham	12213	0.77	0.86	9.43
Tilehurst South & Holybrook	7027	0.34	0.83	2.40
Newbury Wash Common	8849	0.46	0.80	4.11

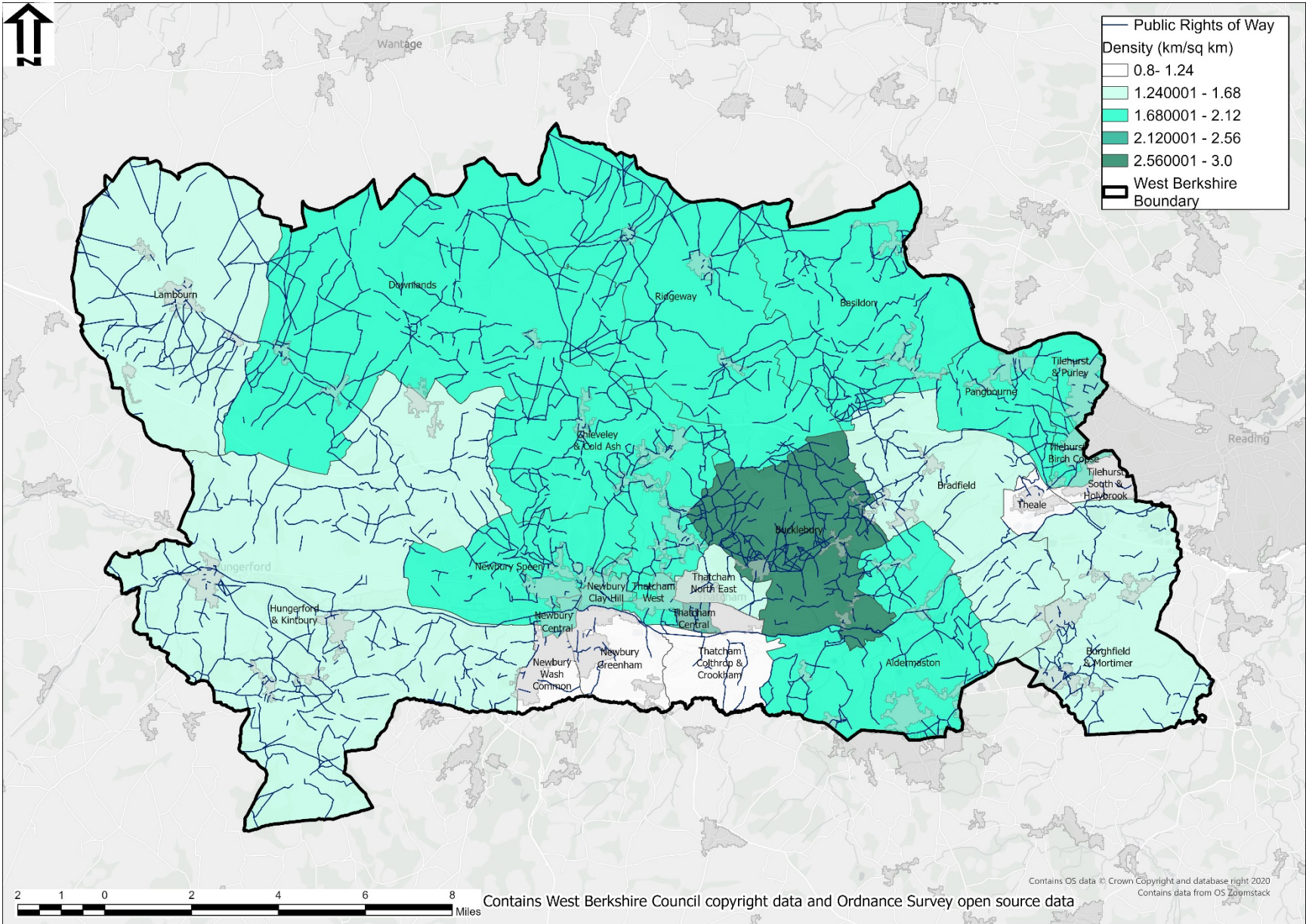
Chart 1: Public Rights of Way by Ward - Metres per Person



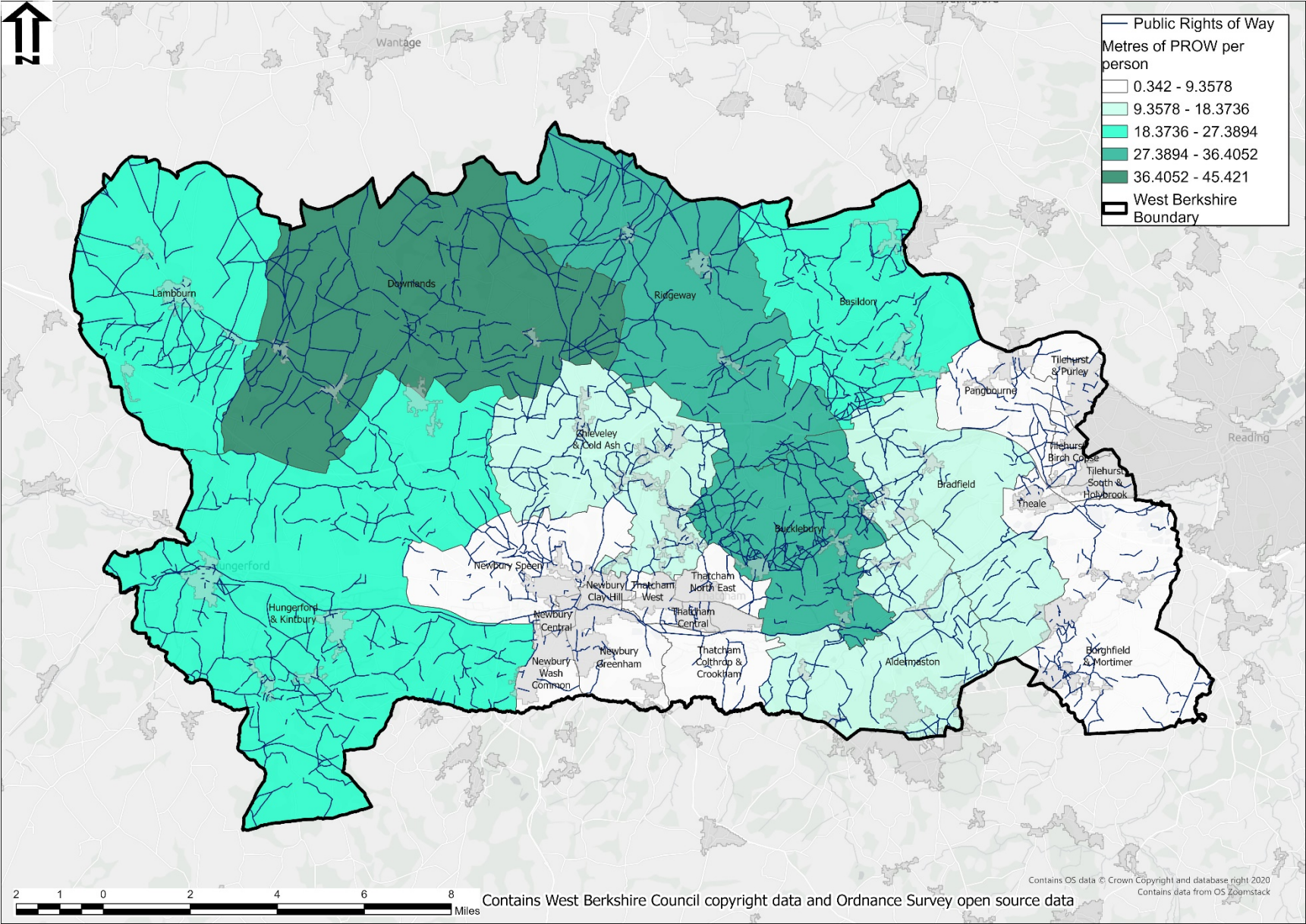
Plan 1: Public Rights of Way Network



Plan 2: Public Rights of Way by Ward - Density km / square km



Plan 3: Public Rights of Way by Ward - Metres of PROW per Person



'Higher Status' Routes

Only bridleways, BOATs and restricted byways can be used by equestrians and cyclists. In West Berkshire these form 39% of the network. Carriage drivers can only use restricted byways and BOATs (22% of the network) and motorised vehicles can only use BOATs (14%). This level of provision is higher than in other areas. In Oxfordshire they form 35% of the network, in Buckinghamshire 22% and in Hampshire 28%.

Table 3: BOATs, Restricted Byways and Bridleways

	West Berkshire % of the network	Hampshire ¹	Oxfordshire ²	Buckinghamshire ³	% - National Network ⁴
Footpath	61%	72%	66%	81%	78%
BOAT	14%	6%	2%	1%	3%
Bridleway	18%	17%	24%	18%	17%
Restricted Byway	8%	5%	8%	1%	2%
All 'higher status'	39%	28%	35%	22%	22%

These public rights of way are not spread evenly across West Berkshire. There are more in the northern rural area and fewer in the Kennet Valley and urban areas. Plan 4 shows the length by ward and the percentage of the network by ward is shown in Plan 5 and Table 4. Ridgeway Ward has the greatest length and Lambourn Ward the highest percentage of the network. Newbury Central, Newbury Clay Hill, Thatcham West, Theale and Tilehurst South and Holybrook wards do not have any 'high status' public rights of way.

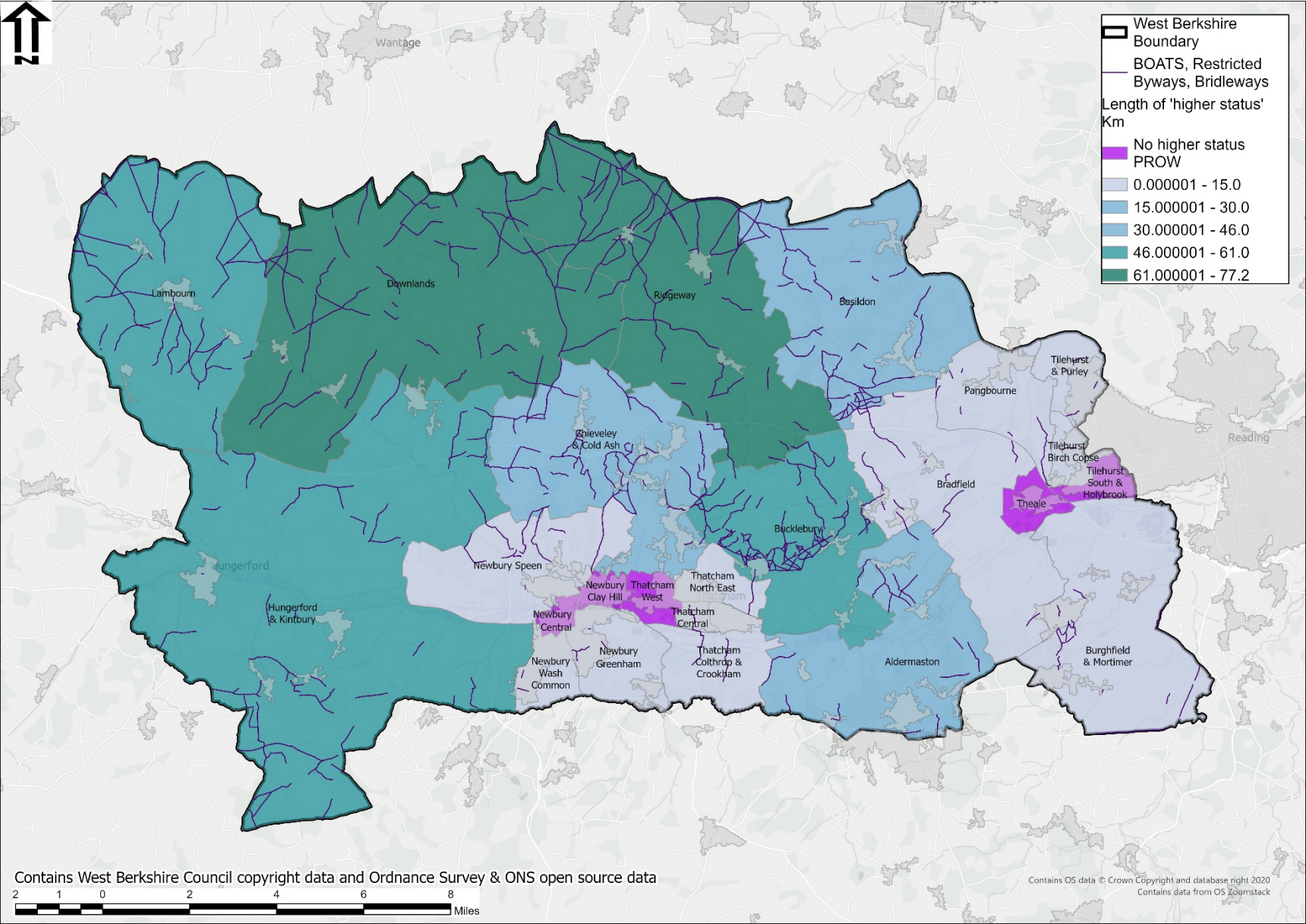
Plan 6 shows the road network major roads. Connections across some roads, e.g. the M4 and A34, are in place in several locations.

However, there are other busy major roads, e.g. the A4, which did not benefit from the installation of bridges or underpasses at the time of construction. Increasing traffic can be an issue, especially for equestrians. Minor roads should carry less traffic; however, some of these routes are likely to be busier and used as 'rat-runs'

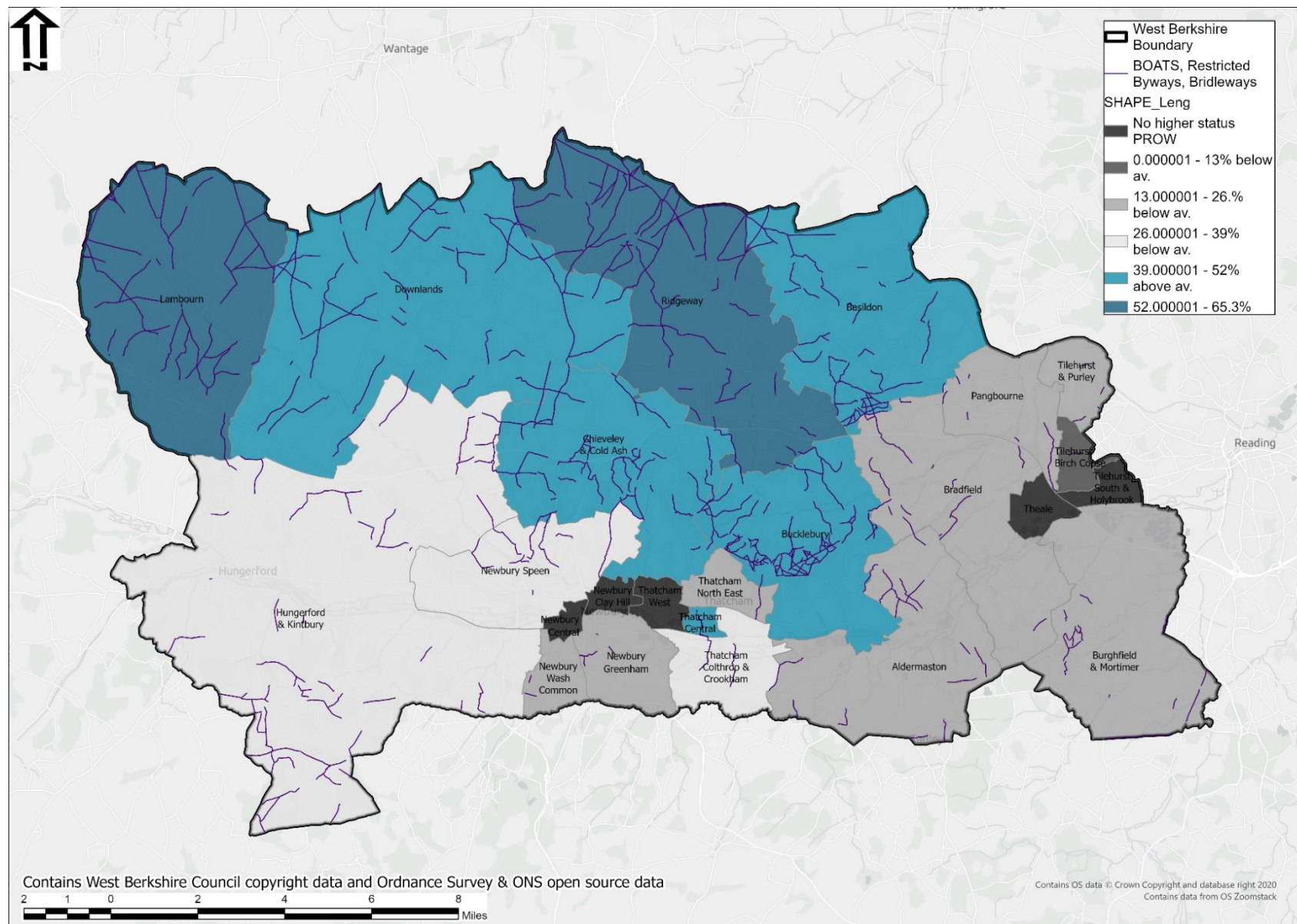
Table 4: Summary of 'Higher Status' Public Rights of Way by Ward

Ward	Higher status (km)	% of network
Aldermaston	15.13	23.1
Basildon	39.51	46.4
Bradfield	12.88	23.6
Bucklebury	52.31	49.1
Burghfield & Mortimer	9.12	17.0
Chieveley & Cold Ash	41.86	48.7
Downlands	72.62	43.8
Hungerford & Kintbury	56.28	26.4
Lambourn	59.48	65.3
Newbury Central	0.00	0.0
Newbury Clay Hill	0.00	0.0
Newbury Greenham	1.57	16.7
Newbury Speen	12.16	28.4
Newbury Wash Common	0.72	17.4
Pangbourne	4.68	17.6
Ridgeway	77.18	62.9
Thatcham Central	1.34	44.7
Thatcham Colthrop & Crookham	3.93	26.6
Thatcham North East	1.30	19.4
Thatcham West	0.00	0.0
Theale	0.00	0.0
Tilehurst & Purley	1.45	13.5
Tilehurst Birch Copse	0.56	9.2
Tilehurst South & Holybrook	0.00	0.0

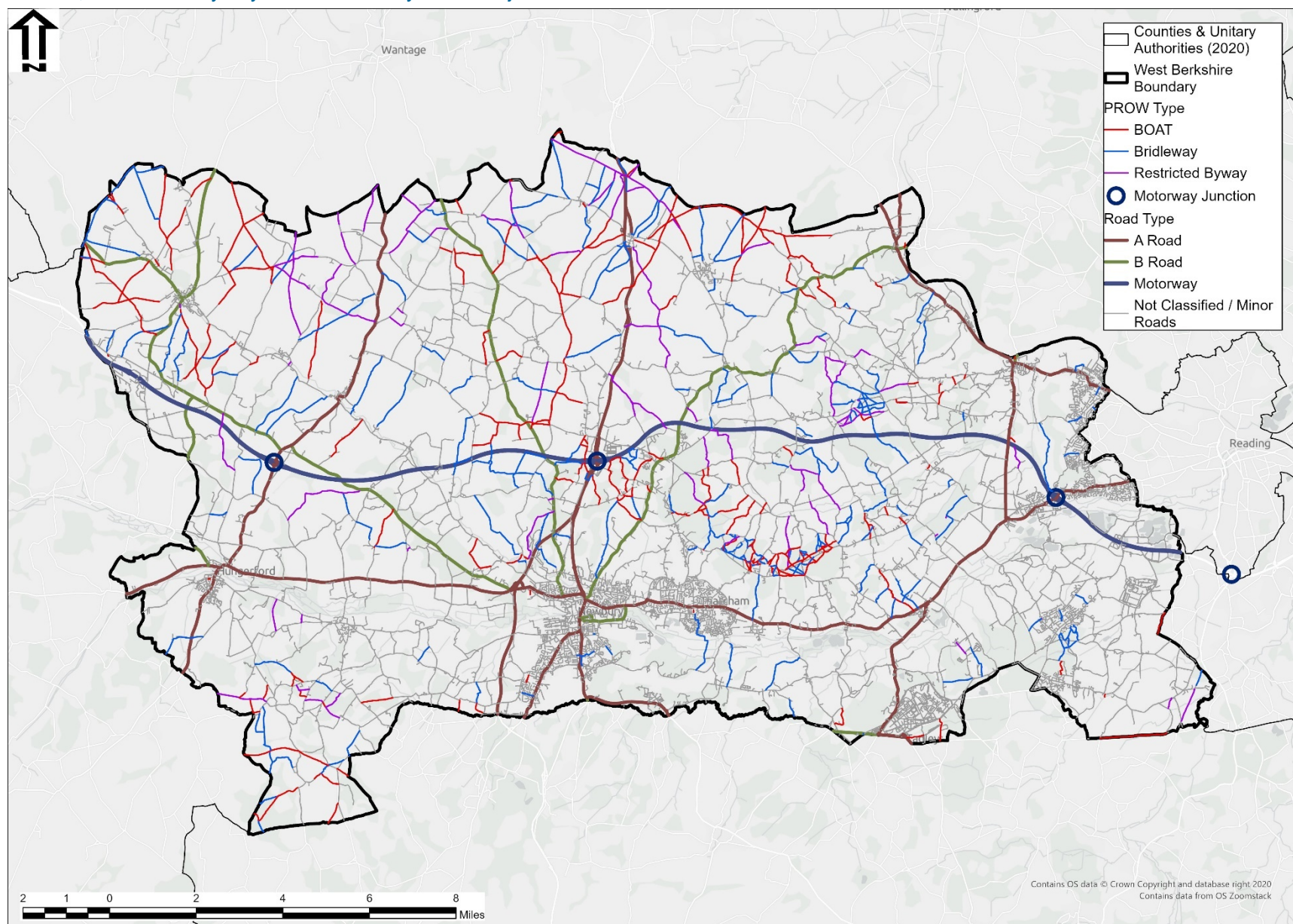
Plan 4: Length of BOATs, Restricted Byways and Bridleways by Ward



Plan 5: Percentage of PROW Network Comprised of BOATs, Restricted Byways and Bridleways by Ward



Plan 6: BOATs, Restricted Byways and Bridleways and Major and Minor Roads



Publicly Accessible Greenspace

When assessing whether people have good access to the countryside it is important to also consider the other open spaces that people can visit. The public rights of way network is part of this wider provision. Information on other areas of publicly accessible greenspace is included here to provide a broader context of the countryside access resource of West Berkshire. These spaces do not fall within the scope of the ROWIP. Assessment of this provision will be included in West Berkshire's forthcoming Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

The public have a right of access on foot to land that is recorded as Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (subject to some restrictions), mapped as 'Access Land'. In West Berkshire, this includes most of the Registered Commons. Some landowners also permit access on their land, generally only on paths.

Plan 7 shows greenspace. This has been compiled West Berkshire Green Infrastructure dataset mapping, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) open access land⁵ and National Trust land which is always open. This mapping includes areas which are accessible to the public and spaces which have some limits on their accessibility.

Some notable accessible spaces are:

- Snelsmore Common Country Park⁶ – this site to the north of Newbury is designated as a country park, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Snelsmore Common contains a range of habitats including heathland, wet mires and woodland making it home to nationally rare bird species including nightjar, woodlark

and tree pipit. There are several waymarked routes for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians as well as public rights of way.

- Greenham and Crookham Commons⁷ – This is an extensive area of heathland and woodland and includes the site of the former Greenham Common Air Base. It is now rich in wildlife and much of the area is a SSSI. The southern parts of the commons are CROW Act Land and are therefore accessible. The plateau and the areas of the former runways are flat and very accessible for those with mobility impairments. There are several walking guides.
- Kennet and Avon Canal⁸ – The Kennet and Avon Canal runs from east to west across the whole of West Berkshire. Entering West Berkshire on from the outskirts of Reading, it passes through Newbury, Kintbury and Hungerford before continuing west to Bristol. All of the route is a public footpath and is available for pedestrians. Cyclists can also use large sections of the route.
- Bucklebury Common⁹ – Around Bucklebury are extensive areas of common land, privately owned by Bucklebury Estate but which is also accessible as CROW Act access land. There is also the highest density of public rights of way in this area. Some of these are Local Wildlife Sites and are managed for their nature conservation interest of heathlands, ancient woodland and greens.
- Wokefield Common¹⁰ - Wokefield Common is a tranquil site with a good network of paths that lead through tall pine and broadleaf woodland, past ponds, heather and rich wet gullies.
- Padworth Common¹¹ - Padworth Common nature reserve is a tranquil haven for wildlife with heathland, woodland, ponds and

alder-lined gullies. It has areas of heathland and supports rare species.

- Discovery Centre Thatcham¹² – The Nature Discovery Centre, situated next to lakes formed by gravel extraction, now offers the chance to see a range of wildfowl and other wildlife. It is a family destination with a café, playground, picnic facilities and toilets, with a wildlife trail and events throughout the year.
- Hungerford Common and Hungerford Marsh¹³ - Hungerford Common, or Common Port Down, is 220 acres (89 hectares) of ancient common land, pasture, mature trees and canal, to the east of Hungerford. The common is also CRoW Act access land. To the west of Hungerford town is Hungerford Marsh Nature Reserve. This site has pasture, marshland and a chalk stream river and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its importance for wildlife.
- Paices Wood Country Park¹⁴ - This privately owned country park on a former gravel extraction near Aldermaston has a mixture of lakes and woodlands for visitors to enjoy, and fishing by permit.
- Hosehill Lake¹⁵ - A beautiful lake surrounded by meadows, ponds and sheltered reedbeds
- Lardon Chase, the Holies and Lough Down¹⁶ – these sites near Streatley, overlooking the Goring Gap, are owned by the National Trust. Parts of these sites are also CRoW Act access land.
- Holybrook and Southcote Linear Parks are important greenspaces close to Reading, within the Kennet Valley.

There are other extensive former gravel extraction sites along the Kennet valley. Many of these are now accessible for recreation, some through paid entry; for sailing, fishing and enjoying wildlife.

Access to Woodland

Woodland is important in the landscape of West Berkshire. There are concentrations and large blocks of woodland in the areas north of Thatcham, particularly around Bucklebury, and in the area from Bucklebury to the north east to Pangbourne, Upper Basildon and Goring. There are also many woodlands, and some larger blocks, in the Kennet Valley. Woodland is an important landscape feature across the northern rural downland where there are many smaller woodlands, many of which are ancient. There are large areas of plantation woodlands in the south east of the district around Aldermaston, Padworth and Burghfield Common. Public rights of way cross these and several have permissive or access by permits.

In all areas, public rights of way are an important way to access woodlands and some of these are accessible as CRoW Act land, see Plan 8.

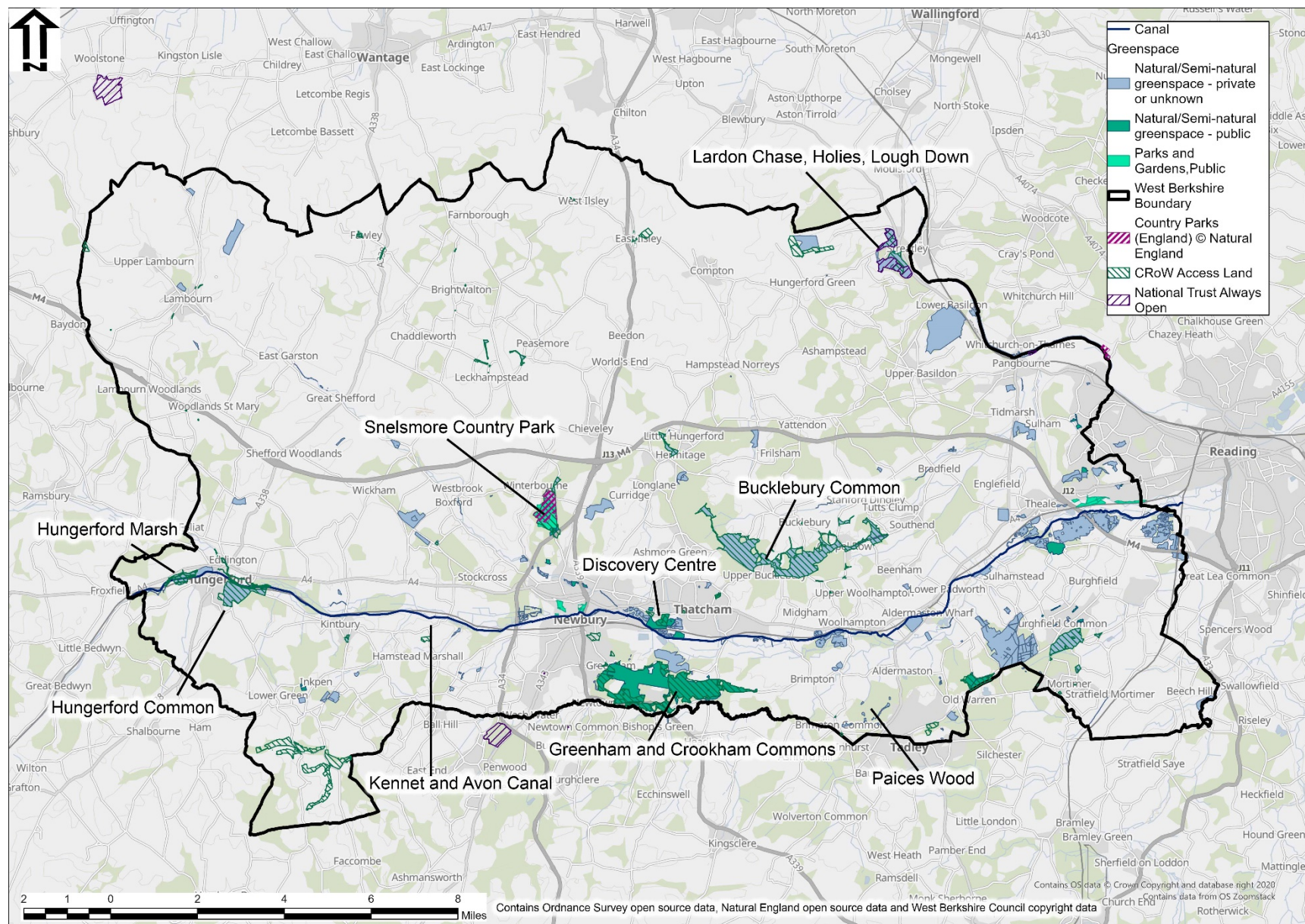
Welfare Value of Public Rights of Way

The ORVal Tool's¹⁷ primary purpose is to provide information that might be useful to government, businesses and communities in understanding the benefits that are derived from accessible greenspace in England and Wales. As well as including greenspace sites, ORVal includes part of the public rights of way network.

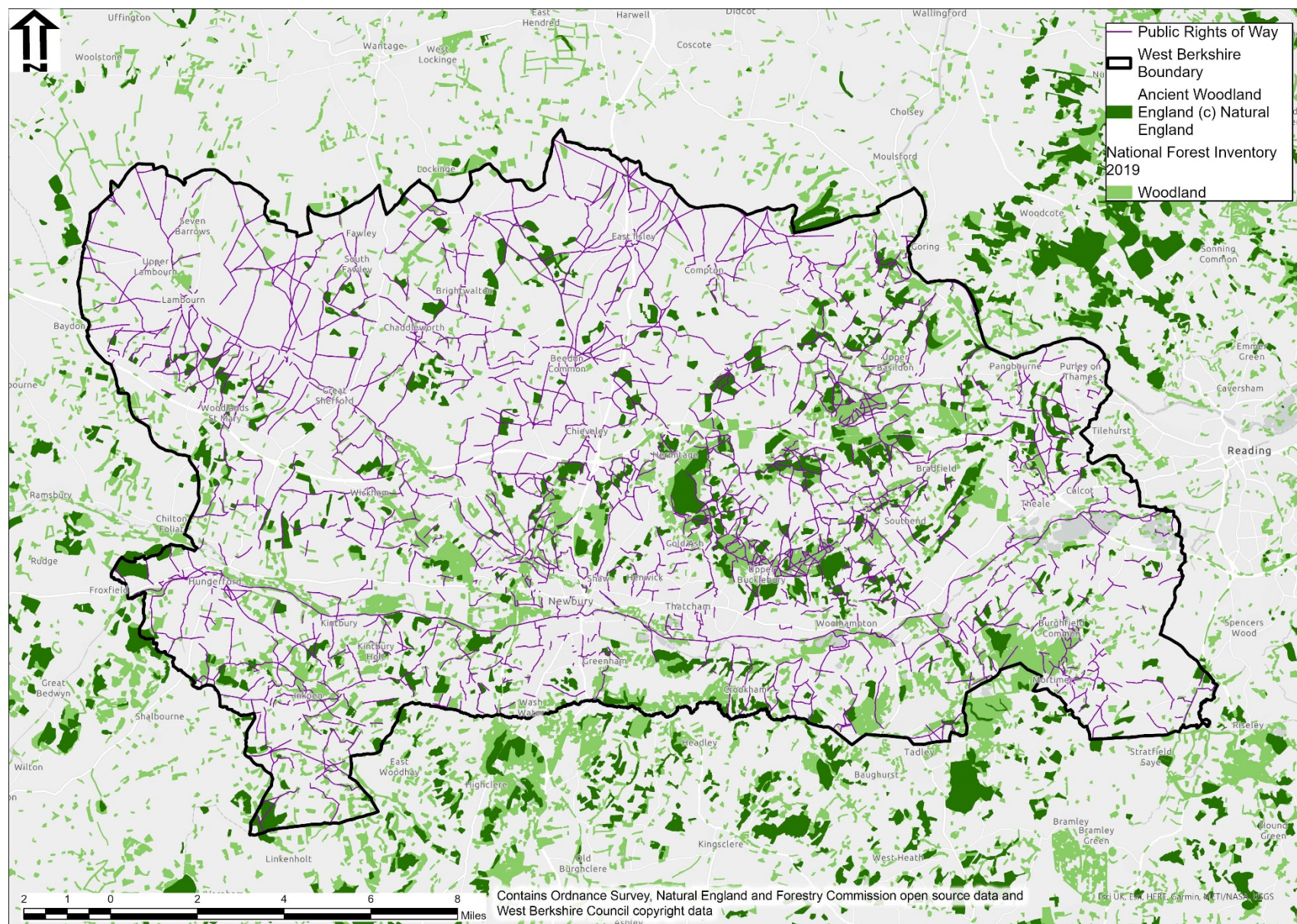
The ORVal Tool uses a statistical model to predict the number of visits made by adults to greenspaces (including paths). The model adjust its predictions according to a range of factors, most particularly the socioeconomic characteristic of residents and qualities of alternative greenspaces. The tool calculates a 'welfare' value for each greenspace, defined by the tool developers as the sense of well-being or utility that the individual feels from their experience. This 'welfare value' describes the monetary equivalent of the welfare enjoyed by individuals as a result of having access to a greenspace. In economics this welfare value is often alternatively called an 'economic value' or a 'willingness to pay'. Welfare values for an existing site are estimated by calculating how much each individual's welfare would fall if they were no longer able to access that site and then converting that welfare quantity into an equivalent monetary amount. Welfare values are useful for decision-makers in applying cost-benefit analysis to appraise projects that impact on greenspace.

The total welfare value of all greenspaces (including paths) in West Berkshire is calculated at £27,133,736 per annum, with an estimated 8,502,350 visits per year. However, this is an underestimate, as much of the public rights of way network was not included in the mapping used by the model, see Plan 9.

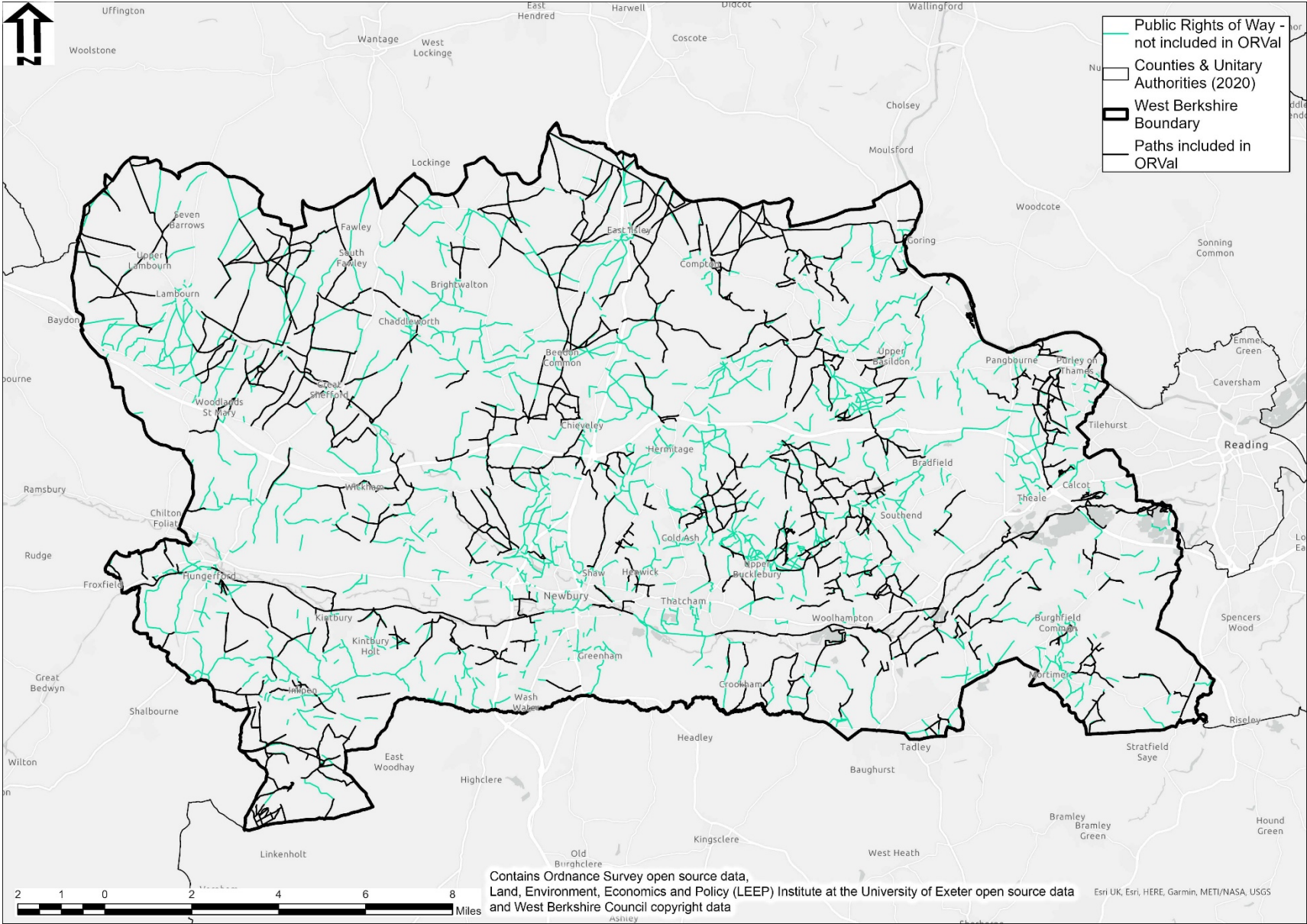
Page 18



Plan 8: Woodland and Public Rights of Way



Plan 9: ORVAL Tool Output



Cross Boundary Links

West Berkshire is adjacent to five highways authorities:

- Oxfordshire
- Hampshire County Council
- Reading
- Wokingham
- Wiltshire
- Swindon is in close proximity

Public rights of way connections across the boundaries with these local authorities are generally good.

There are some settlements close to or crossing the boundary with West Berkshire.

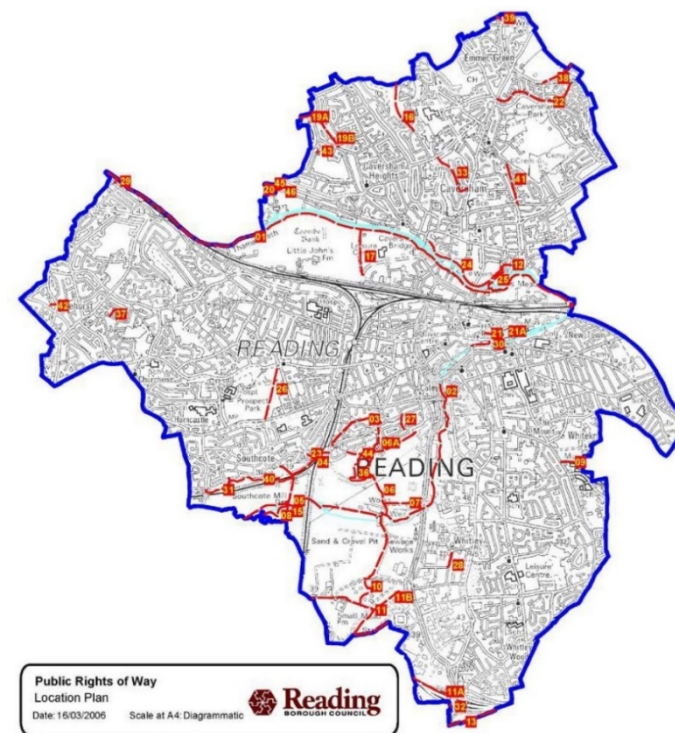
Goring-on-Thames (Oxfordshire) and Streatley (West Berkshire) are two settlements divided by the River Thames, as are Pangbourne (West Berkshire) and Whitchurch-on-Thames (Oxfordshire). The smaller settlement of Tadley lies on the boundary with West Berkshire but is located in Hampshire. In all of these places, the public rights of

way network in West Berkshire provides a resource for residents outside of West Berkshire.

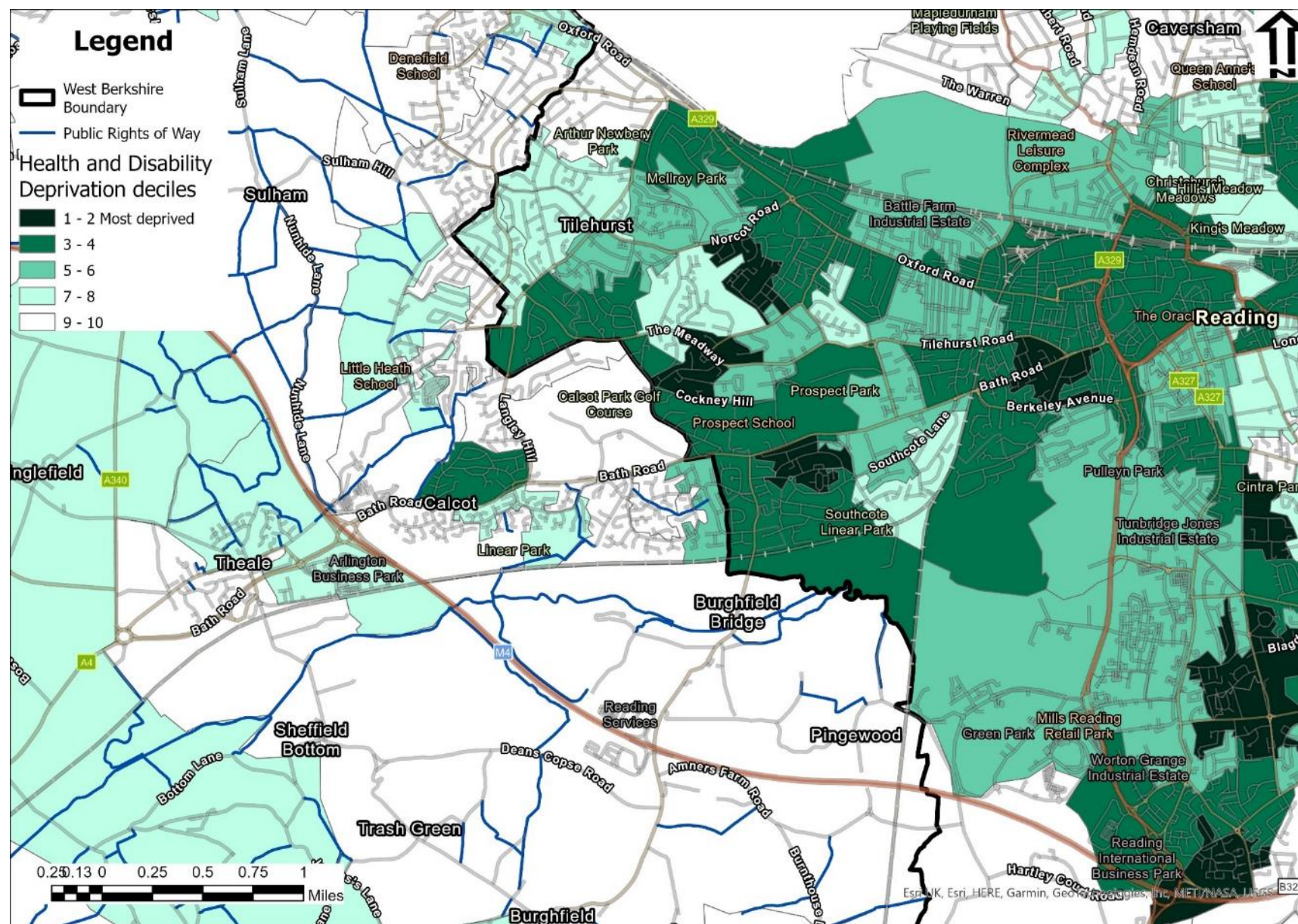
The most significant area of cross-boundary settlement is with Reading. Some areas geographically now form part of the western side of Reading (the 'Eastern Urban Area' of Western Berkshire) and are contiguous with the town, even though they fall within West Berkshire. Kentwood, Tilehurst, Churchend and Southcote all lie adjacent to West Berkshire. These areas have some areas of higher deprivation, see Plan 11. There is also a low level of public rights of way in this area, see Plan 10.

The valley of the River Kennet links West Berkshire and Reading and is an important recreational area. Holybrook and Southcote Linear Parks are important greenspaces and the Kennet and Avon Canal passes through this area. Former gravel extraction areas also provide recreational facilities. To the north, the countryside to the west of Calcot and Purley on Thames, around Sulham, is a resource for residents from Reading.

[Plan 10: Public Rights of Way Reading¹⁸](#)



Plan 11: Cross-boundary Area - West Reading / West Berkshire Eastern Urban Area



Promoted Routes and where to find Information

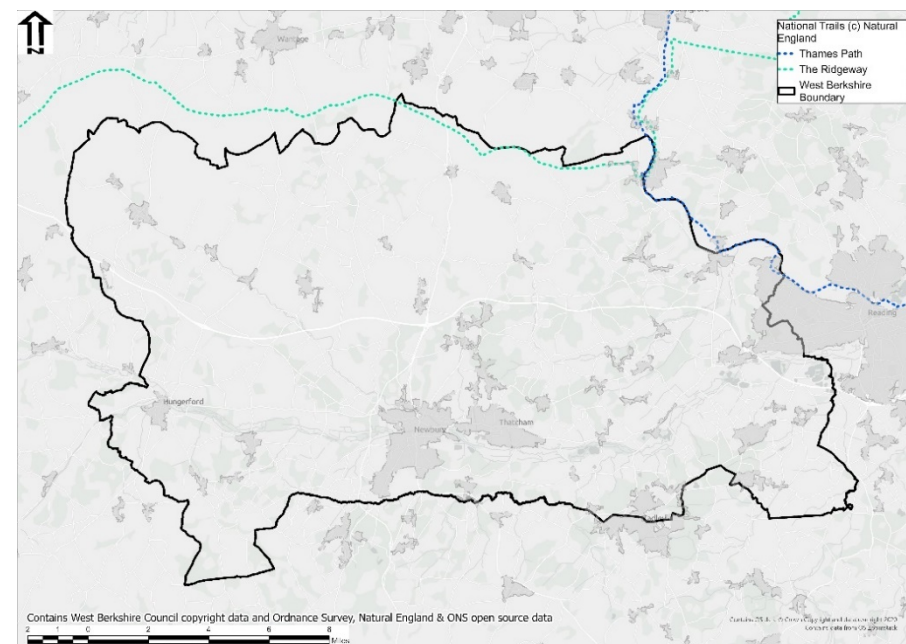
National Trails

Parts of the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails pass through West Berkshire, see Plan 12. These have been incorporated into the King Alfred's Way long distance cycle route.

A survey of national trail users was carried out in 2014¹⁹ which reveals more information about users of the two trails:

- Walking, either with or without a dog, was the most popular activity (91% for the Ridgeway and 81% for the Thames Path);
- There were more cyclists using the Thames Path than the average for all trails – 17% vs. 8% - making the Thames Path National Trail with the second highest cycling use, after the Pennine Way;
- Both trails had higher usage by local visitors than the average for all trails – 54% of Thames Path and 74% of Ridgeway visitors originated from within 10 miles, compared with 46% for all trails;
- 40% of Thames Path users and 27% of Ridgeway users visited the trail once a week or more frequently compared to 24% for all trails;
- Average spend per head was lower than the average for all trails (£6.64), at £3.09 for the Ridgeway and £5.13 for the Thames Path, with the largest item spending on accommodation, followed by food and drink.

Plan 12: Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails



Recreational Routes

The Lambourn Valley Way recreational route goes from Uffington Castle in Oxfordshire to Newbury. The Wayfarers Walk crosses the southern part of the District, and the Test Valley Way starts from Combe Gibbet.

The Ordnance Survey Explorer 1:25,000 maps show nine Berkshire Circular Routes. West Berkshire Council has in the past produced printed leaflets for these walks. However, these leaflets are no longer available, and the pdf versions are very difficult to find online and not suitable for printing at home.

Routes Promoted by West Berkshire Council

West Berkshire Council Public Rights of Way Service promotes a range of routes on its website. These are listed under the public rights of way pages at <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/countrysideroutes>. There are 22 promoted routes listed. Some of these promoted routes are quite old and West Berkshire Council itself has not produced any new promotional material for several years.

Some of these are 'Walking in West Berkshire' leaflets produced by West Berkshire Council, along with a range of other leaflets and a route for equestrians.

- Bradfield - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Compton - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Downland Villages - Route for Walking, Riding and Cycling
- East and West Ilsley - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Ilsley Downs - Riding Route
- Inkpen - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Lambourn Valley Way - A Walk from the Whitehorse Hill to Newbury
- Mortimer - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Speen Moors - Walking
- Stanford Dingley - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Sulham Valley - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Wash Common - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet

There are also a series of parish walk leaflets which show all public rights of way in the parish.

- Ashampstead - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways
- Basildon - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways
- Bucklebury - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways
- Chieveley - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways
- Frilsham - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways
- Hampstead Norries (Haw Farm) - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways
- Hermitage - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways
- Inkpen - Two Circular Walks
- Streatley - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways
- Yattendon - Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways

All public rights of way can be viewed on West Berkshire Council's online map.²⁰ This also shows 'recreational routes', mainly the Walking in West Berkshire leaflets, along with the two National Trails, see Plan 13.

Some of the leaflets available for download are not on the online map:

- Bradfield - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Compton - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- Ilsley Downs - Riding Route
- Speen Moors - Walking
- Stanford Dingley - Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet
- None of the parish walk leaflets have been digitised as these promote the entire public rights of way network in the parish rather than discrete routes.

Plan 13: Recreational Routes on West Berkshire Council Online Map

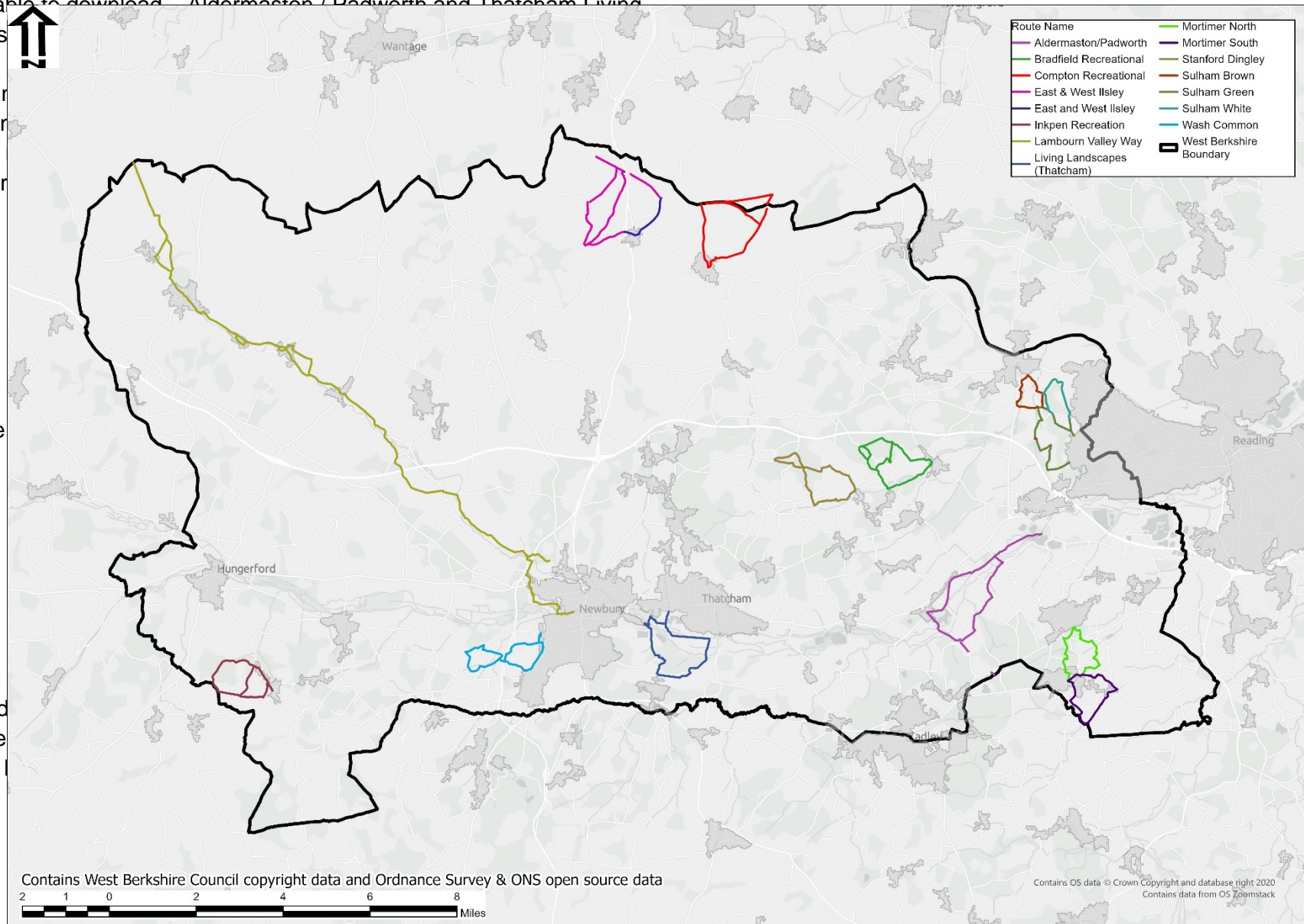
There are two routes shown on the online map for which no leaflet is available to download. Aldermaston / Padworth and Thatcham Living

Lands

Walking
settler
show
colour

There

In add
Route
West



Information on Walking

There is a wide range of information and web sources to support people wanting to walk. Only a selection can be included here.

A Google search of “circular walks West Berkshire”²³ returned the following top five results:

- 1 West Berkshire Ramblers;²⁴
- 2 Berkshire Muddy Stiletos;²⁵
- 3 West Berks Villagers.com;²⁶
- 4 West Berkshire Council – walking and cycling routes (transport pages not Public Rights of Way Service pages);²⁷
- 5 Alltrails.com Frilsham Village and Woodlands Circular Walk.²⁸

The transport pages of West Berkshire Council's website were ranked fourth. These pages provide downloadable cycling routes in the form of leaflets and .gpx files. Walking maps for Newbury, Thatcham, Theale and Calcot, Tilehurst and Purley-on-Thames and Bradfield are also downloadable. The page links through the Public Rights of Way Service pages.

West Berkshire Council's Public Rights of Way Service did not feature in the search results.²⁹ This lack of online visibility was reflected in the public survey results, with only 25% of respondents aware of this material. A large majority of people, 73%, had not used any of the circular walk leaflets on the website. The most used route, the Lambourn Valley Way, had only been used by 11% of respondents.

Several local and national websites carry information on routes, but there is not one single source to which users can go. A selection is provided here but this is not the full list of sources.

- West Berkshire Ramblers (ranked first in Google search)
<https://www.wberksramblers.org.uk/information/local-walking.html>
Links to West Berkshire Council's Public Rights of Way Service leaflet download pages and other sources of information, e.g., West Berkshire Countryside Society, National Trust, the Kennet and Avon Canal and National Trails, as well as sources of information outside of West Berkshire.
- West Berkshire Countryside Society
https://www.westberkscountryside.org.uk/walk_leafllets.html
There are 21 walks produced by the West Berkshire Countryside Society listed on their website, available to download.



- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
<https://www.bbowt.org.uk/>
<https://www.bbowt.org.uk/wildlife/living-landscapes/west-berkshire-living-landscape>

The wildlife trust carries details of walks at Greenham Common and Thatcham as part of the Living Landscapes project as well as visitor information for the sites they manage.

- National Trust
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/countryside-around-berkshire>
 The National Trust has details of walks in West Berkshire and neighbouring areas.

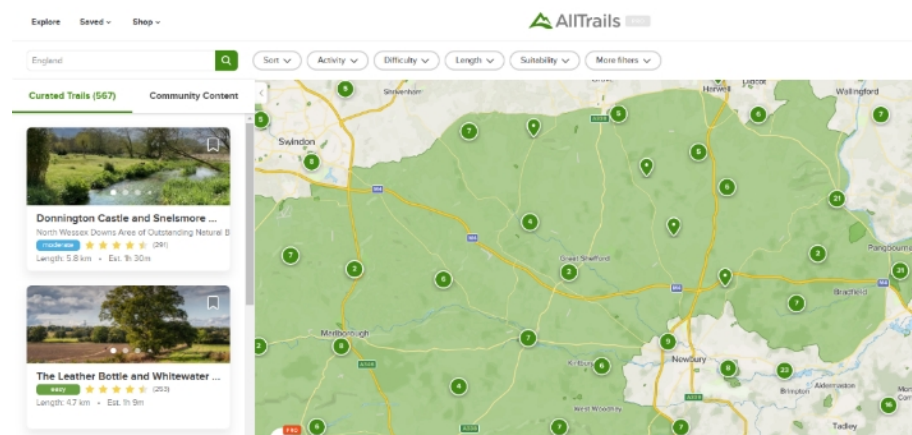
- Kennet and Avon Canal
<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-network/kennet-and-avon-canal>
 Promoted walks are listed on the Canal & River Trust website.

- Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA)
<https://ldwa.org.uk/>
 Has an online map of a range of walking routes of varying distance

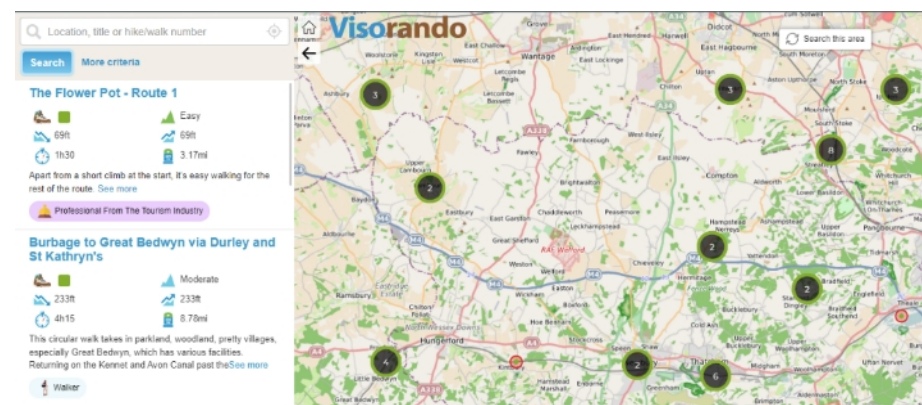
- GPS routes
<http://www.gps-routes.co.uk/>
 This website allows users to download .gpx files to follow walking and cycling routes. It lists several routes in West Berkshire.

- walkinginengland.co.uk
<https://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/berks/walks.php>
 This website lists many walks in and around West Berkshire. The site provides a description and basic map.

- Alltrails
<https://www.alltrails.com/england/berkshire>
 Alltrails carries several hundred trails in Berkshire with maps and directions.



- Visorando
<https://www.visorando.co.uk/>
 User-created and verified walks and routes, with downloadable .gpx files. Several routes in West Berkshire.



- [fancyfreewalks](https://fancyfreewalks.org/Berkshire.html)
<https://fancyfreewalks.org/Berkshire.html>
This site has a selection in southern England, including in Berkshire, with .gpx file downloads.
- [Muddy Stilettos](https://berkshire.muddystilettos.co.uk/things-to-do/20-of-the-best-spring-walks-near-you/)
<https://berkshire.muddystilettos.co.uk/things-to-do/20-of-the-best-spring-walks-near-you/>
This site collates 20 walks from various sources, including Alltrails and the National Trust. Several of these are not in West Berkshire (although this source was ranked second in the Google search).

There are several active Facebook groups promoting routes and ideas for visiting the countryside:

- West Berkshire Local Walks - 1.4k members
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/201497961508265>
- Family Walks in Berkshire - 2.6k members
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1194642000911341>
- Berkshire Countryside Walks - 7.5k members
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/554041271662667>

Information on Cycling

There is a wide range of information and web sources to support people wanting to cycle. Only a selection can be included here.

Many of the routes which are listed use the road network rather than public rights of way.

Members of West Berkshire Spokes have developed several recreational routes,³⁰ which are available in digital GPX format from West Berkshire Council's website.³¹ West Berkshire Spokes also has information on other routes on their website.

Newbury Velo list some routes with off-road sections.³²

Sustrans provides information on the National Cycling Network, including routes in West Berkshire, some of which use the public rights of way network.³³

Cycling UK (the Cyclist Touring Club) provides a source of information on clubs and some routes.³⁴

There are many other websites which have suggestions for routes, for example:

- Komoot³⁵
- Alltrails³⁶
- Outdoor Active³⁷

Information on Equestrianism

A Google search of various terms to try to find information on where to ride or drive carriages in West Berkshire did not produce many results directing people to public rights of way. However, a Google search of "bridleways in West Berkshire" returned West Berkshire Council public rights of way website as the top result and the Google search "horse riding routes West Berkshire" returned the promoted route page on West Berkshire Council's website as the top result.³⁸

The Ilsley Downs Riding Route is listed on West Berkshire Council's website.³⁹ There are several publications on the promoted routes page which show all of the public rights of way, including those suitable for equestrians.

The Three Downs Link and Loop is a multi-user route which connects the South Downs Way and The Ridgeway National Trail.

The British Horse Society provides information on rides nationally, including some in West Berkshire.⁴⁰ There are two close to Newbury with the remainder across the central and western downland area:

- Snelsmore Bagnor Ride: An 8km (5 mile) ride from Snelsmore Common to the pretty village of Bagnor (home of the Watermill Theatre) and onto Winterbourne.
- Chieveley Circuit: A 18 km (10 mile) ride using minor roads, bridleways and byways.
- Ilsley Down
- Downland Villages
- Berkshire Downs Rides
- Two Rides on the Berkshire Downs 8km and 25km
- East Ilsley Carriage Driving Route.
- Compton Carriage Driving Route.
- Compton Rides: A series of rides using bridleways, restricted byways and byways, all starting from Churn Rd, Compton.
- East and West Ilsley (8km)
- West Ilsley Circular Carriage Driving Riding Route
- PLAP 13 West Ilsley
- Three Downs Loop
- Letcombe Bassett Circular Carriage Driving Route
- Eastbury Ride

Information on Motorised Vehicles, 4x4 and Trail Bikes

The Trail Riders Fellowship is developing a Green Road Map, which is available for members, with a reduced content version for non-members.⁴¹

The Green Lane Association (GLASS) has information on the types of highways which can be legally used with motorised vehicles.⁴²

Network Condition and Maintenance

There are 740 miles of public rights of way in West Berkshire. On this network there are thousands of structures, including bridges, stiles, steps, gates and many others, as well as the hundreds of miles of surface, see Chart 2.

Maintenance responsibilities are split between the council and landowners, with whom West Berkshire works in partnership.

Condition Survey

A condition survey of the entire public rights of way network was carried out in 2022. The previous survey was carried out in 2009. However, the criteria for assessment were not identical and therefore full comparisons cannot be made between the two surveys to determine how the network has changed over time. The 2022 survey was more detailed and comprehensive than the 2009 survey and therefore the results between the two surveys are not directly comparable.

A summary of the main types of furniture and structures on the public rights of way network is shown in Table 5, along with its condition, as recorded in the 2022 survey.

Chart 2: Furniture and Structures - 2022 Survey

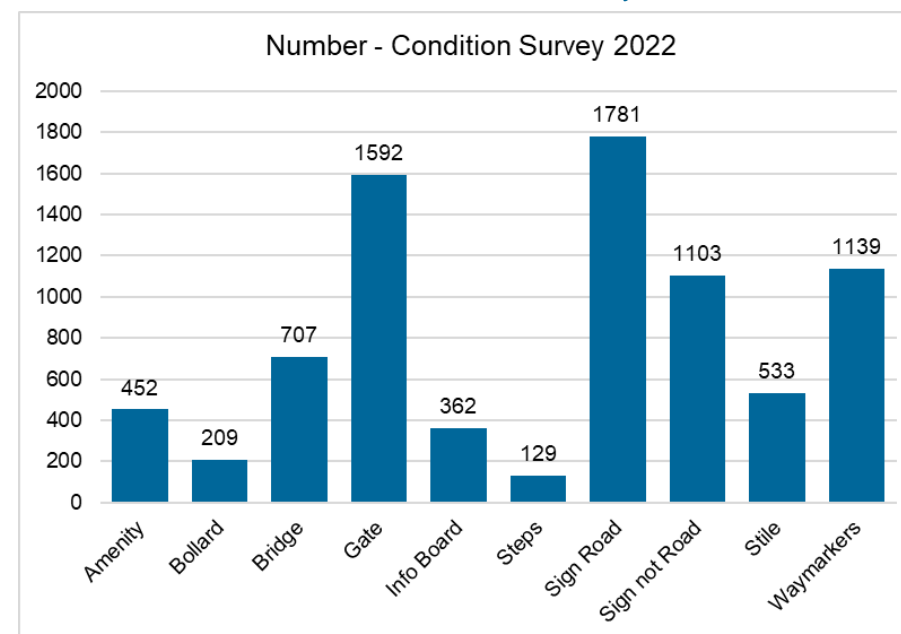
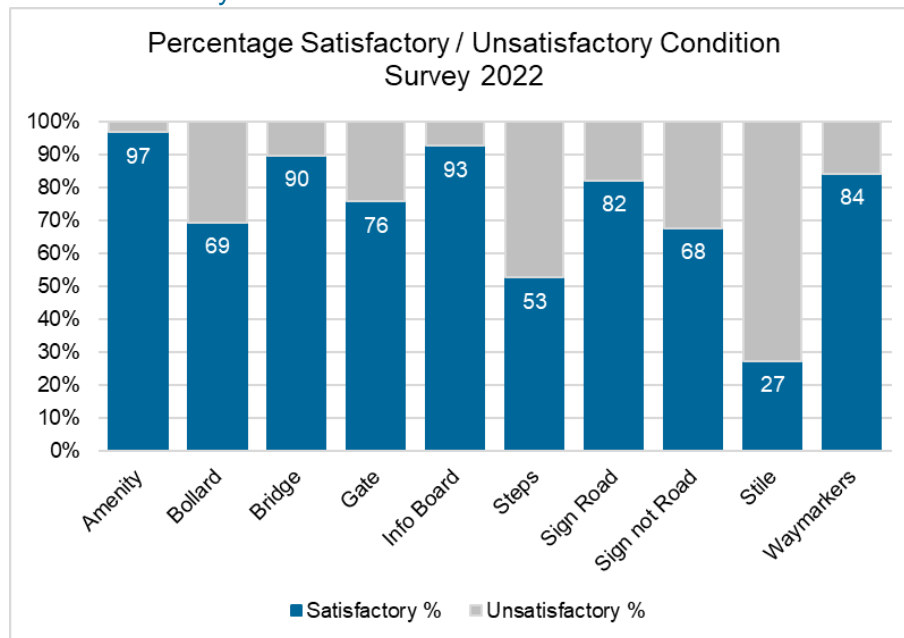


Table 5: Summary of Infrastructure and Condition - 2022 Survey

	Satisfactory	%	Unsatisfactory	%	Total
Amenity	437	97	15	3	452
Bollard	145	69	64	31	209
Bridge	633	90	74	10	707
Gate	1204	76	388	24	1592
Info Board	335	93	27	7	362
Steps	68	53	61	47	129
Sign Road	1463	82	318	18	1781
Sign not Road	746	68	357	32	1103
Stile	146	27	387	73	533
Waymarkers	959	84	180	16	1139

Chart 3: Furniture and Structures – Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory Condition Survey 2022



Overall, there has been a reduction of stiles on the public rights of way network between 2009 and 2022. The volunteer maintenance group has replaced at least 200 stiles with gates since the 2009 survey. This category of furniture had the lowest percentage in satisfactory condition and therefore is a priority for action.

Of the 197 bridleway gates, 53% were in satisfactory condition and a further 22% were satisfactory but inconvenient. Only 7% were unsatisfactory.

The 2022 condition survey showed that, of the public rights of way which these users were permitted to use, 68% of public right of way links were suitable for carriage drivers.

People with Reduced Mobility

The condition survey completed in 2022 has enabled further analysis to be carried out to determine where accessibility is reduced for those with reduced mobility.

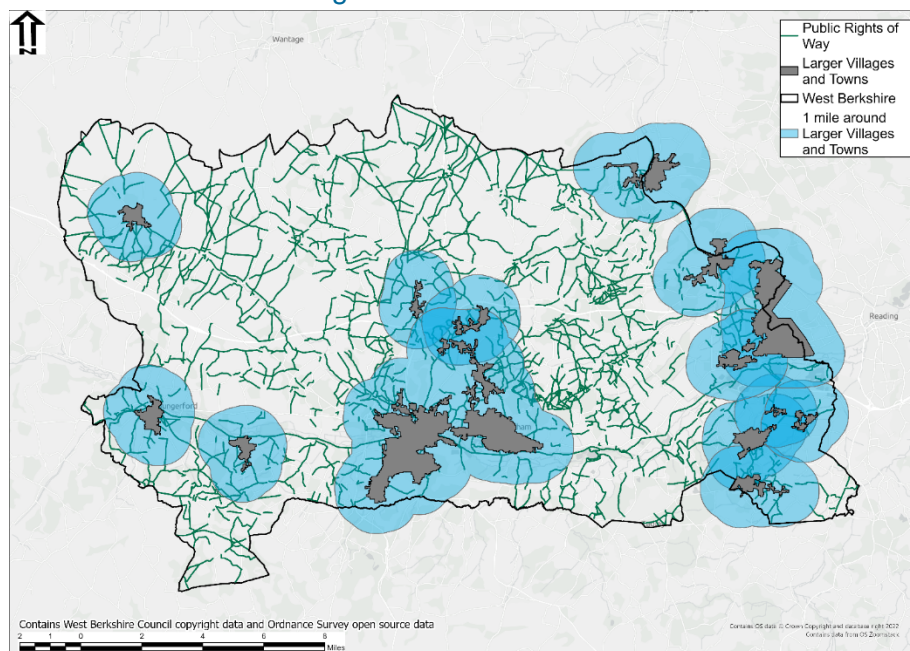
Further analysis was carried out for public rights of way in and within one mile of the main towns and larger villages.

The towns and villages included were:

- Lambourn
- Hungerford
- Kintbury
- Newbury, Thatcham and areas north of Newbury including Chieveley and Hermitage
- Streatley
- Pangbourne
- Reading outskirts and Theale
- Burghfield, Burghfield Common and Mortimer

This analysis provides detailed information on furniture or other issues which may reduce access for those with reduced mobility. It also shows the number of issues on each public right of way. This analysis will enable targeted improvements to be made in areas of higher demand close to where people live. The broader results of the condition survey also show issues across the wider network.

Plan 14: Areas of Further Analysis - Issues Reducing Accessibility Close to Towns and Villages

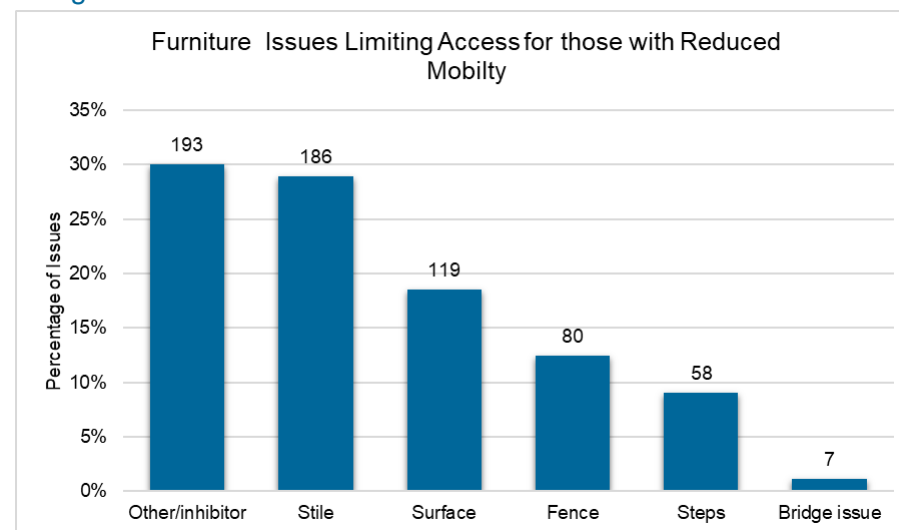


Most of the issues relating to public rights of way structures highlighted in the analysis were in satisfactory condition (55%). They are highlighted because they will cause difficulties for those with reduced mobility, not because the structure itself is in an unsatisfactory condition. Most of the issues should not present an access issue to more mobile users. There are supplementary reports and mapping which will enable improvements to be prioritised. The category 'other/inhibitor' covers a wide range of issues which

Chart 4: Issues Restricting Mobility in areas Close to Towns and Villages

Type of Issue	Number	%
Other/inhibitor	193	30%
Stile	186	29%
Surface	119	19%
Fence	80	12%
Steps	58	9%
Bridge issue	7	1%
Total	643	

Chart 5: Issues Restricting Mobility in areas Close to Towns and Villages



Supporting the Communities of West Berkshire

Demographic Profile

Population

According to the Office of National Statistics mid-year estimates 2020, West Berkshire has a resident population of approximately 158,465.

21% are aged 16 and under, 61% are of working age (16-64), and 20% are aged 65 and over. This age profile is roughly in line with the South East and England.

Most people (64% - around 101,111) live in settlements along the Kennet Valley, and in the suburban areas just to the west of Reading borough. The largest urban areas in the district are Newbury and Thatcham, where around 69,667 (44%) of West Berkshire residents live. A fifth of residents (20% - 31,444) residents live in the suburban area adjoining Reading borough. The remaining 36% (around 57,354) of people live in rural settlements. West Berkshire has one of the most dispersed populations in the South East with 225 people per hectare.

Ethnicity

The latest ethnicity statistics are from the Census 2011. At this time, 94.8% of West Berkshire residents were recorded as of white ethnicity, higher than both the South East and England, see Table 6. Asian / Asian British is the second largest ethnic group in West

Berkshire, but in most areas the percentage is less than the South East average. The exceptions are central Newbury and Tilehurst on the outskirts of Reading, which itself has a higher than the South East population average of Asian / Asian British people, see Plan 15.

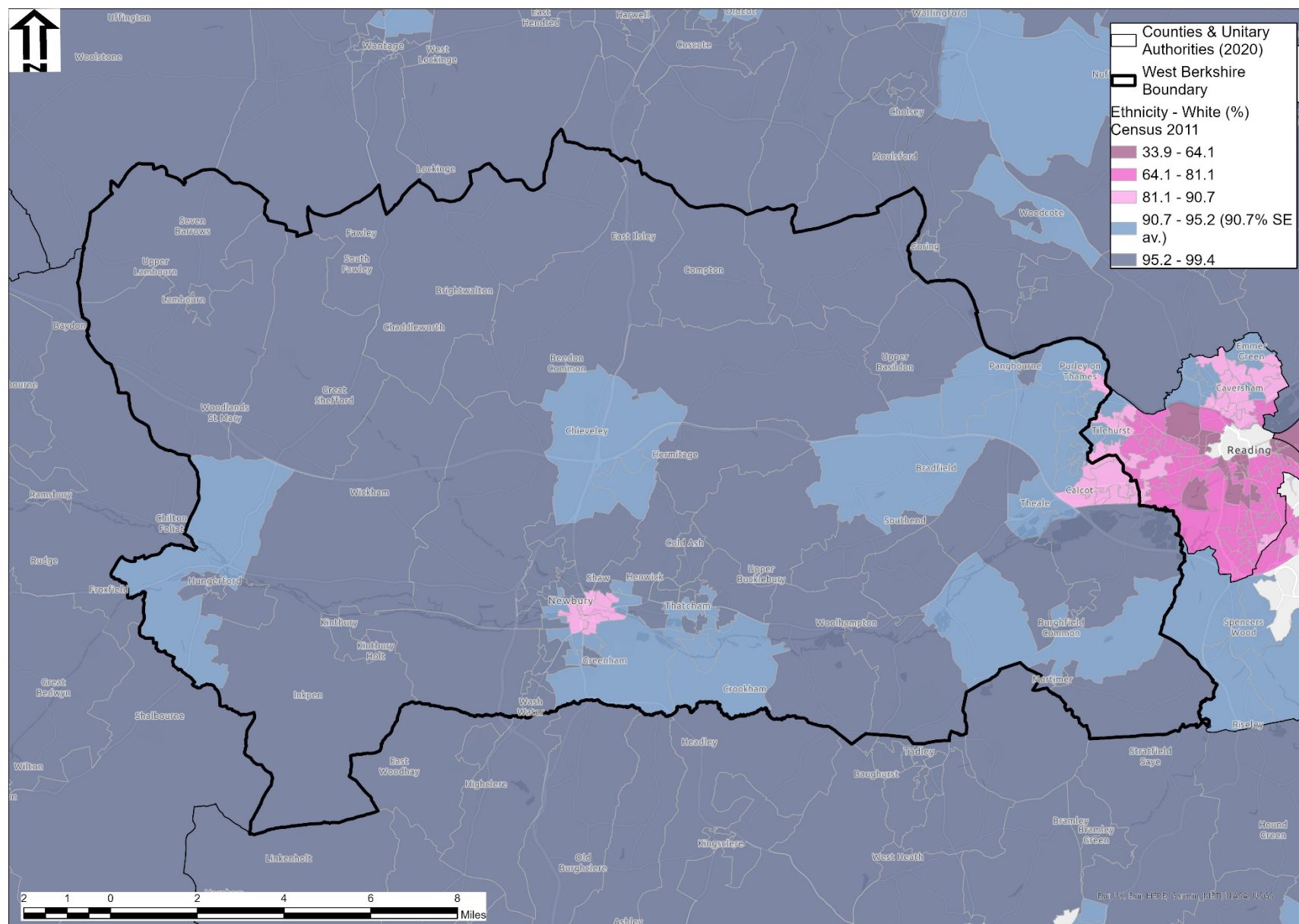
Table 6: Ethnicity - Census 2011

Name	West Berkshire		South East		England	
Ethnic Group	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Asian / Asian British	3,808	2.5	452,042	5.2	4,143,403	7.8
Black / African / Caribbean / black British	1,376	0.9	136,013	1.6	1,846,614	3.5
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	2,420	1.6	167,764	1.9	1,192,879	2.3
Other ethnic group	364	0.2	51,111	0.6	548,418	1
White	145,854	94.8	7,827,820	90.7	45,281,142	85.4

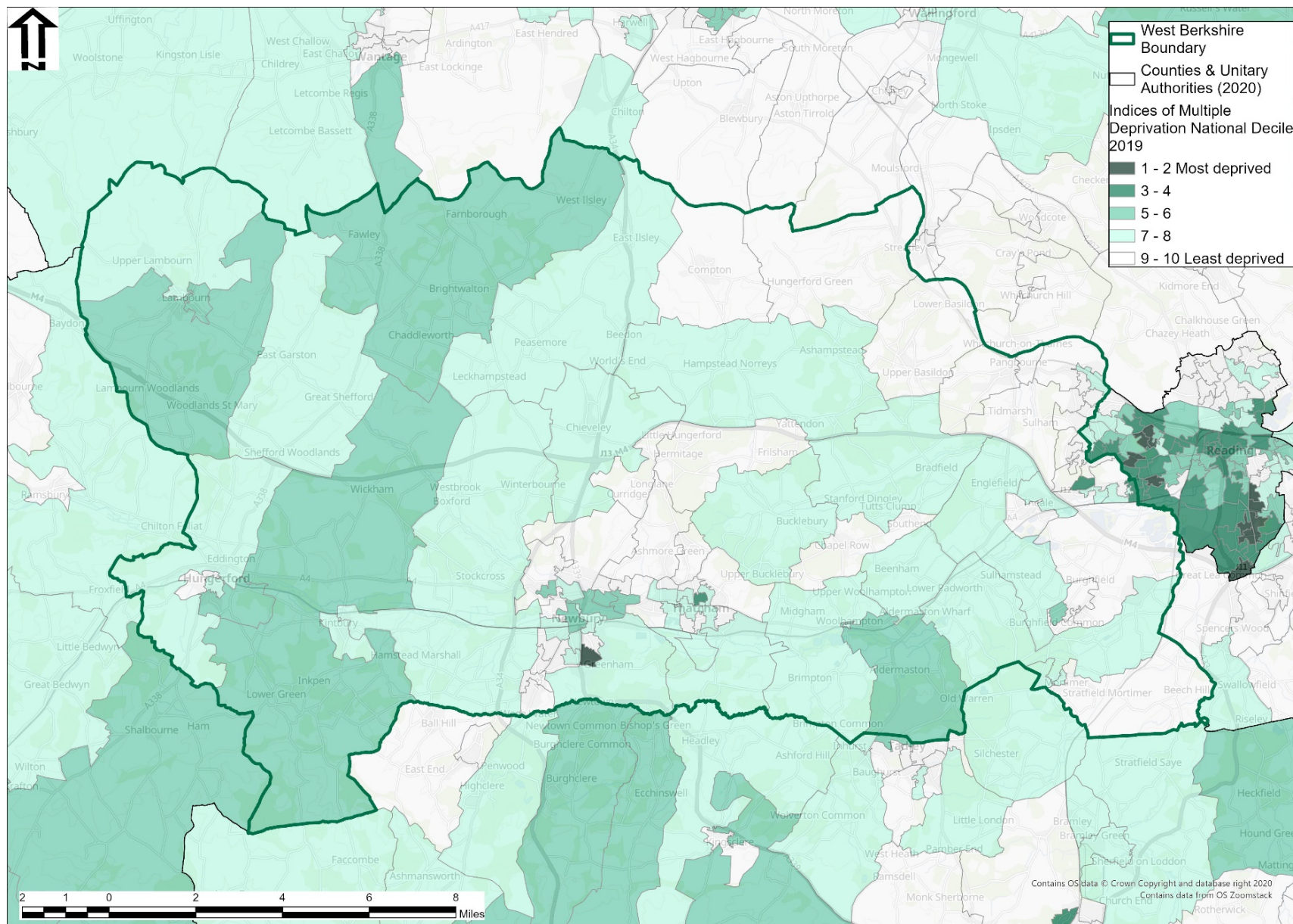
Deprivation

Overall, West Berkshire has low levels of deprivation. The 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranks West Berkshire as the 28th least deprived local authority in England, out of 317 local authorities and the 6th least deprived county, out of 151 counties / upper tier local authorities. Deprivation is shown in Plan 16. Most of West Berkshire is not deprived, although there are some small pockets of higher deprivation in Newbury, Theale, Thatcham and the outskirts of Reading.

Plan 15: Ethnicity – White – Census 2011



Plan 16: Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 – Overall



Socio-Economic Classification

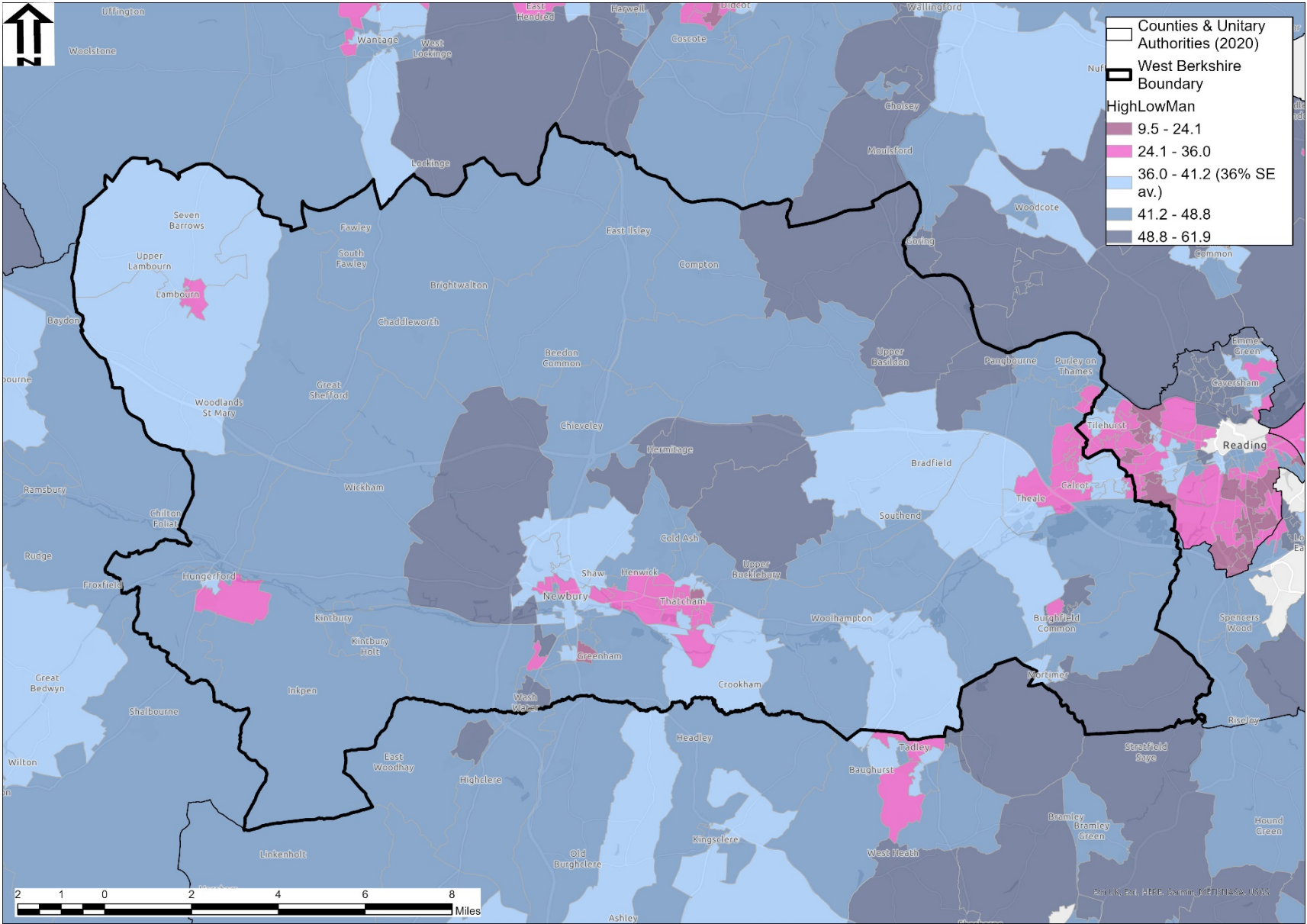
National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) (Census 2011) has been constructed to measure the employment relations and conditions of occupations to show the structure of socio-economic positions and to help to explain variations in social behaviour and other social phenomena.

The NS-SEC has eight analytic classes:

- 1 Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations
 - 2 Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations
 - 3 Intermediate occupations
 - 4 Small employers and own account workers
 - 5 Lower supervisory and technical occupations
 - 6 Semi-routine occupations
 - 7 Routine occupations
 - 8 Never worked and long-term unemployed
-

The average percentage of the population within classes 1 and 2 (higher and lower managerial) in the South East is 36%. In most areas of West Berkshire the percentage of people in this class is at or higher than the South East average, see Plan 17. The number of people who have never worked or are long-term unemployed is less than the South East average for most areas of West Berkshire.

Plan 17: NS-SEC Higher and Lower Managerial Class % of Population



Health and Wellbeing Needs

Health and Access to the Natural Environment

Poor health, as well as being detrimental to the individuals themselves, incurs a cost to society; through the direct costs of health care provision and reduced economic output from lower employee productivity, higher absence rates and early mortality.

Being physically active is strongly linked to better health and wellbeing. There is an established causal link between physical activity and at least 20 different chronic health conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems.⁴³ The natural environment supports increased physical activity, with level of activity influenced by:

- Distance to a green space;
- Ease of access;
- Size of the green space in terms of levels of population use;
- Connectivity to residential and commercial areas;
- Attractiveness, including biodiverse habitats and absence of graffiti and litter;
- Range of amenity - the wider the range of facilities the more likely the space is to be used by different kinds of people.⁴⁴

The Marmot Review⁴⁵ highlighted that the fair distribution of health, wellbeing and sustainability is influenced by a wide range of factors. These include community resilience, the built environment and the local economy as well as the wider environment. Sustainable places and communities are one of the Marmot Review's policy objectives, recognising the importance of good quality open and greenspace in tackling health inequality. However, availability and quality of access

to greenspace is not evenly distributed, with those in deprived urban areas often having less access to health-supporting greenspace.⁴⁶

Health and wellbeing has historically been poorly integrated with spatial planning leading to the creation of places which do not support people in regular activity or which contribute to poor health through high levels of road pollution.⁴⁷

Physical activity in the natural environment also has a greater impact on improved mental health than physical activity alone.⁴⁸

Improvements in self-esteem,⁴⁹ positive and negative mood, anxiety levels and feelings of calmness and comfort, with exercise in all types of green environment showing these benefits.⁵⁰ Often the activity takes place with family, friends or in a group, increasing the mental health benefits gained through social interaction.

The rights of way network can have a significant role in delivering this and improving health and wellbeing for example through:

- Providing access resources in areas of high health inequality – particularly where other green space provision is lacking;
- Increasing sustainable and 'active travel' through providing safe walking and cycling routes for short journeys and, through this, improving health and reducing pollution;
- Enabling access beyond the urban areas (where there are generally the highest levels of health deprivation) to natural habitats and attractive landscapes;
- Providing the asset for community-based activities, such as walking for health, thereby not only improving health, but also fostering social cohesion;
- Providing free-at-the-point-of-use resource facilities for exercise, removing barriers for economically disadvantaged communities.

COVID-19 Pandemic

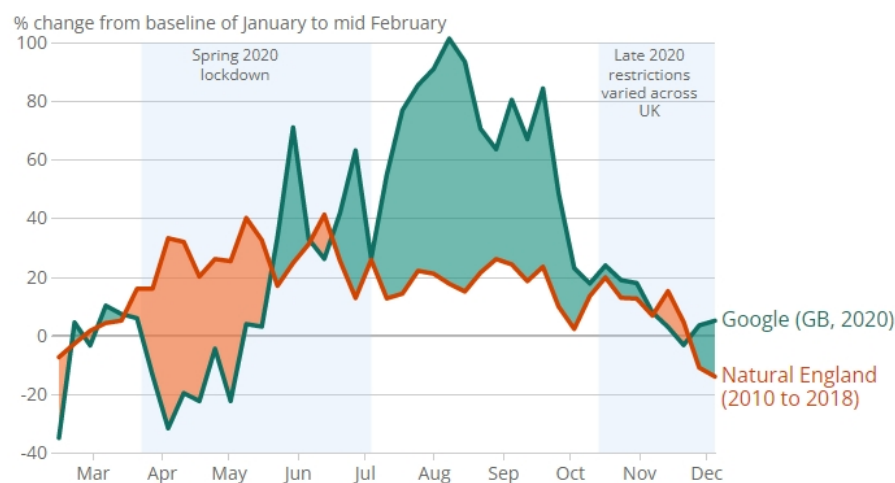
The COVID-19 pandemic, beginning around February 2020, and the associated restrictions placed on society, resulted in many more people visiting greenspaces and the outdoors, see below.⁵¹

Figure 1: Use of Parks During 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic

Use of parks and public green spaces were up on previous years during summer 2020

Change in mobility to parks and public green spaces compared with a baseline period (3 January to 6 February 2020), Google mobility (UK, 2020) compared with Natural England (England, 2009 to 2018)

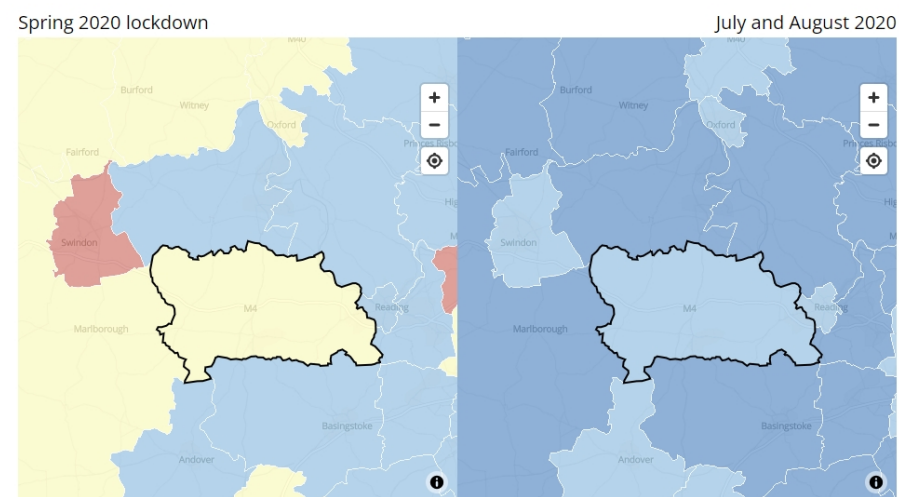
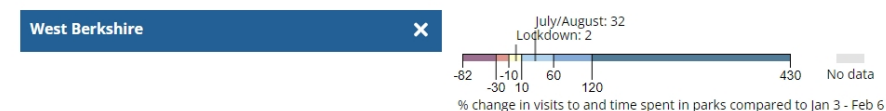
More or **less** visits to and time spent in parks **in 2020** compared with **a normal year**.



During the spring lockdown in 2020 the Office for National Statistics reported that there was a small decrease (2%) in time spent in West Berkshire's parks compared to January to February 2020 (see right). However, when lockdown restrictions eased in July and August 2020,

there was an increase of 32%. This was slightly less than in neighbouring authority areas, but generally in line with the wider trend in the area.

Figure 2: Visiting Open Spaces (West Berkshire) During 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic



During the lockdowns, isolation, along with other factors, contributed to a decline in mental health. However, there is evidence that the natural environment has helped some people to cope with negative feelings such as increased anxiety. Around 9 in 10 people surveyed by Natural England in May 2020 agreed that natural spaces are good for mental health and wellbeing. More than 40% noticed that nature, wildlife, and visiting local green and natural spaces had been more important to their wellbeing since the coronavirus restrictions began.

Green and outdoor spaces also appear to have played an important role in becoming a space which allowed people to see their loved ones during periods of isolation.

However, not everyone had equal access to the greenspace and there is a clear connection between how people have been using the outdoors under coronavirus restrictions and the distance between their home and greenspaces. In lockdown, those living closer to their nearest public greenspace were more likely to visit than those living further away. High-income households increased the time they spent keeping fit during lockdown, while low-income households did not.

Some of the interest in nature recorded in spring and summer 2020 waned during winter 2020 / 2021, although this might be due to colder weather. It is possible that those most likely to maintain increased exercise and visits to greenspaces are those whose circumstances most allow them to, such as those whose workplaces decide to offer homeworking permanently.

The pandemic has underlined the importance of outdoor space for physical exercise and mental health. It has also highlighted that existing inequalities in provision and differences in levels of visiting greenspace in different socio-economic groups persisted through the pandemic. Those groups less likely to visit greenspaces (lower income groups), or those who lived further away, continued to visit these spaces less than other more advantaged groups.

Results from the consultation exercise carried out to gather evidence for this Rights of Way Improvement Plan⁵² showed that use of public rights of way increased and that access to the countryside and greenspace was important for many people during this time.

The research showed that increased during this time and indicated that the level of use is likely to remain higher than prior to the pandemic. An extremely high proportion of the public (98%) and all of the local councils said that public rights of way had been important during the pandemic and associated lockdowns. A majority of the public (60%) reported that they had used public rights of way more. This was echoed in other surveys, with 96% of councils and 80% of landowners reporting that the number of people using public rights of way had increased during the pandemic. Nearly all (96%) of the public who had increased use of public rights of way during the pandemic indicated they intended to continue to use public rights of way more often than prior to the pandemic.

West Berkshire's Health Indicators

The health of West Berkshire is in many cases better than the England average. Overall indicators of life expectancy are higher than both the South East and England average for both males and females and the mortality rates are lower. The percentage of physically active adults is higher and the number of overweight or obese adults is lower, see Table 7.

Table 7: Health Indicators⁵³

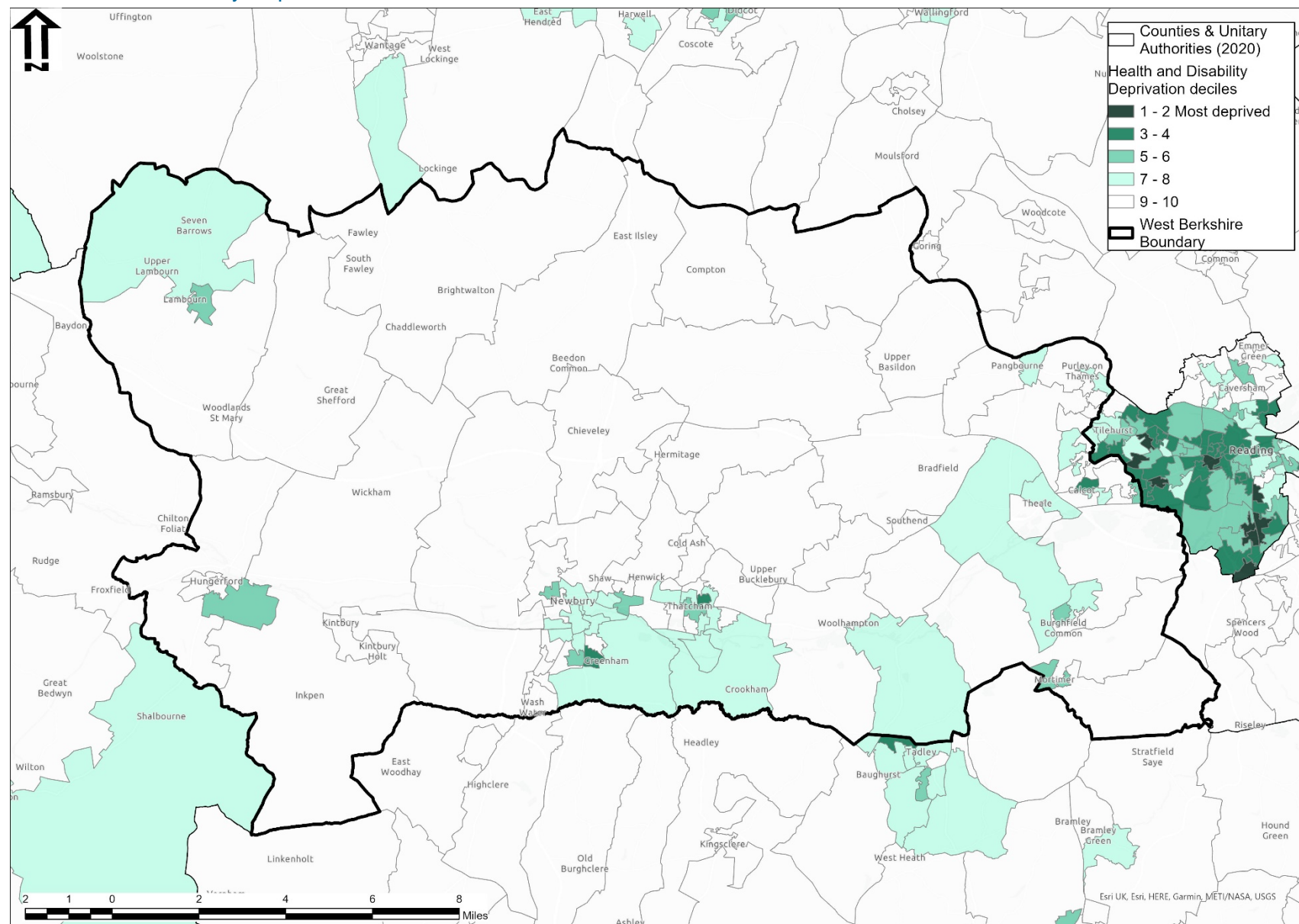
Health Indicator	West Berkshire	South East	England
Life expectancy at birth (male) (2018/20)	81.4 years	80.6 years	79.4 years
Life expectancy at birth (female) (2018/20)	85.2 years	84.1 years	83.1 years
Under 75 mortality rate from all causes (2017/19) per 100,000	264.2	293.9	336.5
Under 75 mortality rate from All cardiovascular diseases per 100,000	47.1	57.1	70.4
Percentage of physically active adults (2019/20)	77.3%	69.5%	66.4%
Percentage of adults (aged 18+) classified as overweight or obese	60.0%	61.5%	62.8%

West Berkshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) sets out findings and actions for a range of health needs:

- Obesity⁵⁴ - measures listed in the JSNA include supporting people in becoming more active, for example providing information about parks and green spaces, supporting Health Walks and increasing walking and cycling. These actions are also pertinent to supporting a reduction in the prevalence of type 2 diabetes.⁵⁵
- Mental health^{56,57} – some groups are at higher risk, including minority ethnic groups, drug and alcohol service users, offenders, migrants, after childbirth and in older age. The JSNA sets out that people with mental health conditions should be supported to lead healthier lifestyles that improve their physical health, including increasing physical activity and losing weight. In older adults depression is the most common mental health issue. The prevalence of dementia increases with age. Social isolation and poverty can also increase the prevalence of mental health issues in older age. The JSNA recommends actions to encourage and support older people to take advantage of and participate in meaningful activity, social activity and physical activity and to ensure health promotion programmes include older people.

In line with overall deprivation in West Berkshire, there are few areas with high levels of health and disability deprivation. However, there are pockets in Newbury, Thatcham and Theale and on the outskirts of Reading.

Plan 18: Health and Disability Deprivation 2019



Activity Levels in West Berkshire

Sport England's Active Lives Survey measures the sport and physical activity levels of adults (aged 16+) across England.⁵⁸ In this survey, West Berkshire recorded levels of activity higher than both England and Berkshire as a whole. In this context 'active' people do physical activity for at least 150 minutes each week; 'fairly active' people for 30-149 minutes and 'inactive' people less than 30 minutes each week.

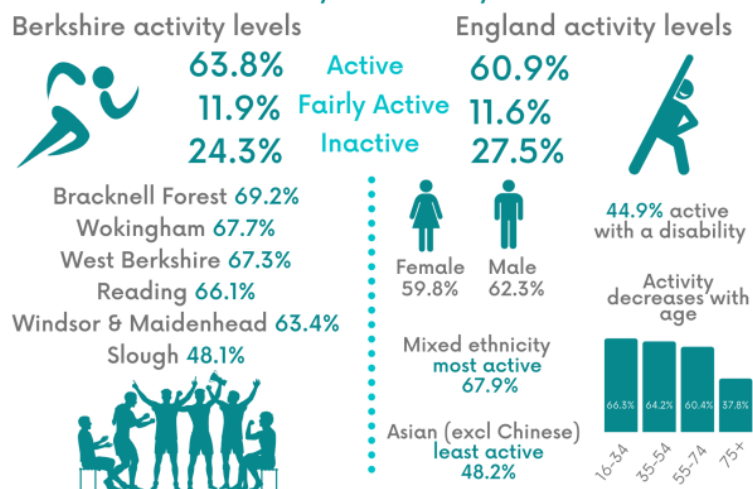
Activity levels in West Berkshire had been increasing between 2018/19 to 2019/20 with a 9.3% increase in activity levels.⁵⁹ However, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the amount and types of physical activities which people participated in..

Figure 3 (below) shows activity levels, with this survey carried out during the pandemic and associated restrictions.

Figure 3: Activity Levels - Berkshire⁶⁰

Sport England Active Lives results October 2021

May 20-21 survey



West Berkshire's Leisure Strategy

West Berkshire Council's Leisure Strategy 2022 focusses on 'active leisure' where the activity involves physical effort that will deliver health and wellbeing benefits to the individual.⁶¹

The vision of the strategy is that *'By 2032 we will have an increased participation in active leisure for all, with a particular focus on those least active, through access to a network of modern and sustainable indoor facilities together with a diverse mix of accessible public outdoor sports facilities and greenspace and bluespace.'*

Public rights of way are included within the Leisure Strategy and are specifically mentioned in Aim 4 of the strategy, and also contribute to Aims 1 and 5:

Aims of Leisure Strategy 2022 – Relevant to Public Rights of Way

1. Increase participation for all, with an emphasis on those less physically active, and maintain improved activity levels throughout lives;
4. Measurably enhance access to, and utilisation of greenspace and bluespace, through improving accessibility to open water, waterways, parks, commons and Public Rights of Way;
5. Further develop partnerships (with town and parish councils, sport governing bodies, health organisations and the voluntary sector), with an emphasis on actively encouraging volunteering.

The objectives for these aims are repeated here as they are very relevant to this ROWIP.

AIM 1. Increase participation for all, with an emphasis on those less physically active, and maintain improved activity levels throughout lives:

- 1.1. Significantly increase the provision of activities targeted at the less physically active, with a strong emphasis on activities for 'people like me';
- 1.2. Increase the provision of targeted activities for individuals with challenges resulting from health issues or disabilities, through active collaboration with health and voluntary sector partners;
- 1.3. Work across the Council to improve use and accessibility of leisure activities, facilities and greenspace;
- 1.4. Develop low/no cost activity options for low-income individuals and families;
- 1.5. Ensure the provision of leisure opportunities responds creatively to evolving demand;
- 1.6. Create a communication strategy to raise awareness of the benefits and local availability of physical activity opportunities.

AIM 4. Measurably enhance access to, and utilisation of greenspace and bluespace, through improving accessibility and awareness of open water, waterways, parks, commons and Public Rights of Way:

- 4.1. Explore new and additional leisure activity options where there is a clear demand;
- 4.2. Work with partners and residents to develop and deliver a programme of work to make our parks 'safe spaces' for all users;
- 4.3. Invest in improving accessibility to greenspace through provision of safe routes and facilities for disabled access;

- 4.4. Improve the provision of facilities for young people in parks and open spaces, considering both physical and social needs;

- 4.5. Ensure the recommendations of the Environment Strategy and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, related to activity, are supported and adopted.

AIM 5. Further develop partnerships (with town and parish councils, sport governing bodies, health organisations and the voluntary sector), with an emphasis on actively encouraging volunteering:


- 5.1. Engage with partners across the voluntary and private sector to improve the level of co-ordinated services delivery;
- 5.2. Engage with health organisations to enhance accessibility to services via social and health prescribing opportunities;
- 5.3. Co-create a 'volunteering network strategy' with voluntary and community groups to increase the level of volunteering in support of physical activity;
- 5.4. Invest in provision of advice and support for voluntary groups, with a focus on access to funding;
- 5.5. Develop a focussed programme to engage with target groups, particularly children and young people, to co-create plans that address their leisure aspirations and needs;
- 5.6. Work with partners to reduce their cost and access issues for Council facilities.

West Berkshire Walking for Health

There is an active programme of health walks in West Berkshire, called Wellbeing Walks.⁶²

There are free, regular, led Wellbeing Walks for people of all abilities in many locations across West Berkshire. The walks provide an opportunity to explore the outdoors, discover new places and meet new people. Trained volunteers lead the walks to provide encouragement and support to pedestrians of all abilities.

Join a walk today
just turn up and join in!


WELLBEING WALKS
West Berkshire





West Berkshire
Walking for Health

Monday		
	10 - 11am	Hungerford Common – (Hungerford Rugby Club car park)
	11am - 12pm	Stroud Green, Newbury (Opp. The Plough Pub)
(1st & 3rd of month)	10.30 - 11.15am	Beansheaf Community Centre Calcot
(4th of month)	10:30am - 12pm	Englefield Estate Walk (Recreation Ground, Englefield Road, Theale)


Tuesday		
	10 - 11.30am	Mortimer (The Community Centre Car Park, The Street)
	10:30 - 11.30am	Mortimer (The Community Centre Car Park, The Street, Mortimer)
(1st, 3rd, 4th & 5th)	10 - 11am	Kintbury (Coronation Hall, Kintbury)
(2nd of the month)	10 - 11am	Inkpen (Crown and Garter Inn)
	11am - 12pm	Northcroft Leisure Centre, Newbury (car park)
	10:30 - 11am	Burdwood Surgery, Thatcham (Car Park)


Wednesday		
	10 - 11am	Hosehill Lake, Theale (Fox & Hounds car park)

Friday		
(1st of month)	10 - 11.30am	Greenham Common (Control Tower car park)
(2nd of month)	10 - 11am	Nature Discovery Centre, Muddy Lane, Lower Way, Thatcham
(3rd of month)	10 - 11am	Snelsmore Common, Newbury (Rangers Office)
(4th of month)	10 - 11am	Northcroft Leisure Centre, Newbury (car park)
(5th of month)	10 - 11am	Nature Discovery Centre, Muddy Lane, Lower Way,

 Suitable for beginners
 Everybody welcome to walk at their own pace.
 No stiles options available
 Brisk walks, for regular walkers

For further information on Wellbeing Walks in West Berkshire please contact Public Health on 01635 503437 walking@westberks.gov.uk or visit info.westberks.gov.uk/wellbeingwalks www.facebook.com/wbcpublichealth





WB2/HP/G022

West Berkshire – Wider Context

The Environment and Climate Change

Biodiversity

West Berkshire has a diverse natural environment and many areas which are important for nature. There are many protected sites and several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), protected as nationally important. Large sections of the River Kennet and River Lambourn are SSSIs and some of these are also Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) which mean they are internationally important. There are also some public rights of way which are within or near these designated sites. It is important that surfacing of paths within these areas is carefully considered, especially in the floodplain, as runoff can affect the SAC.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, which are the priority areas for restoring a network of habitats, cover large areas of West Berkshire. These cover most of the eastern side of the district and much of the Kennet Valley and the Lambourn Valley. At the time of this report Berkshire Local Nature Partnership is developing a Local Nature Recovery Network which may update these priority areas.

The Berkshire Biodiversity Strategy recognises the importance of access to nature for physical and mental wellbeing. The strategy has the following objectives for people - to promote the utilisation of

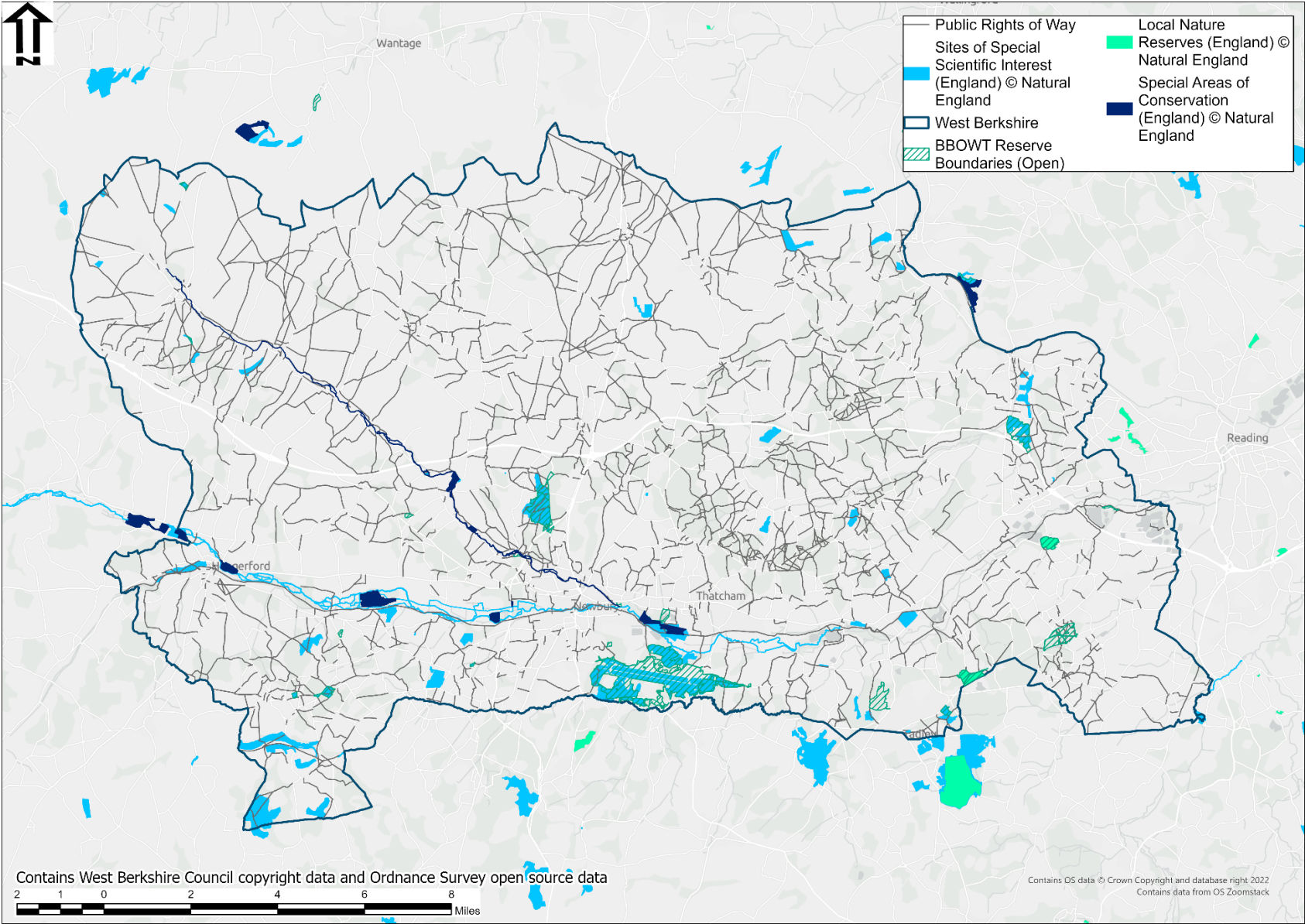
outdoor space for physical activity and to raise awareness of the natural environment and the services it provides us.

Sometimes high levels of access can be in conflict with nature conservation aims. High number of people cause damage to some habitats and species, for example through disturbance of birds and other species, trampling of habitats and flora, litter or antisocial behaviour.

In West Berkshire many of the designated nature conservation sites are located in areas of high population and recreation demand. Snelsmore Country Park and Greenham and Crookham Commons are both very popular sites and are also SSSIs. Management of these sites takes into account their nature conservation interest, but increasing populations in close proximity to these sites could increase the number of people visiting and pressure on habitats and species. The public rights of way network can help to spread the impact of recreation demand through providing other areas for access and to encourage people to use areas away from the 'honey pot' sites. Improving accessibility and promotion can help to disperse visitor pressure.

Some public rights of way also cross sites which are important for nature conservation. This may have an impact on management decisions, which may include consideration of the timing or extent of vegetation cutting or choice of path surfaces.

Plan 19: Biodiversity Sites and Public Rights of Way



Climate Change

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges being faced by society. The impacts of climate change are already evident and will become more severe and widespread as temperatures rise.

West Berkshire Council declared a Climate Emergency on 2nd July 2019 and is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The council's Environment Strategy (2020 - 2030) sets out a vision for West Berkshire's environment. It is linked to the need for a strong local economy supported by responsible growth, and for the local population to be healthy and have a positive sense of wellbeing. Central to the vision is the expectation that all of the district's residents and businesses will contribute towards the aspiration of becoming a carbon neutral district by 2030.

The Strategic Priorities from the Environment Strategy are:

- Carbon Neutral by 2030 - The council itself aims to be carbon neutral in its own operations by 2030;
- Responsible Economic Growth - decoupling economic growth from climate change emissions and influencing business towards carbon neutrality;
- Healthy Communities - highlights the link between active lifestyles, good air quality and access to green and blue spaces and encouraging active travel;
- Resilient to Climate Change - Adaptation to climate change impacts, for example flood management and reducing vulnerabilities;
- Working with our Communities and Partners - working with communities to raise awareness and support everyone to work towards climate neutrality.

Environment newsletters are sent out to residents on the mailing list every month.

The Public Rights of Way Service, alongside other West Berkshire Council services, has a role to play in reducing carbon emissions. This will be both through its operational activities, for example in travel of staff, selection and working practices of contractors and materials. The service can also support active travel and encourage people to use public rights of way which are local to them, rather than travelling across the district to sites or public rights of way using private cars.

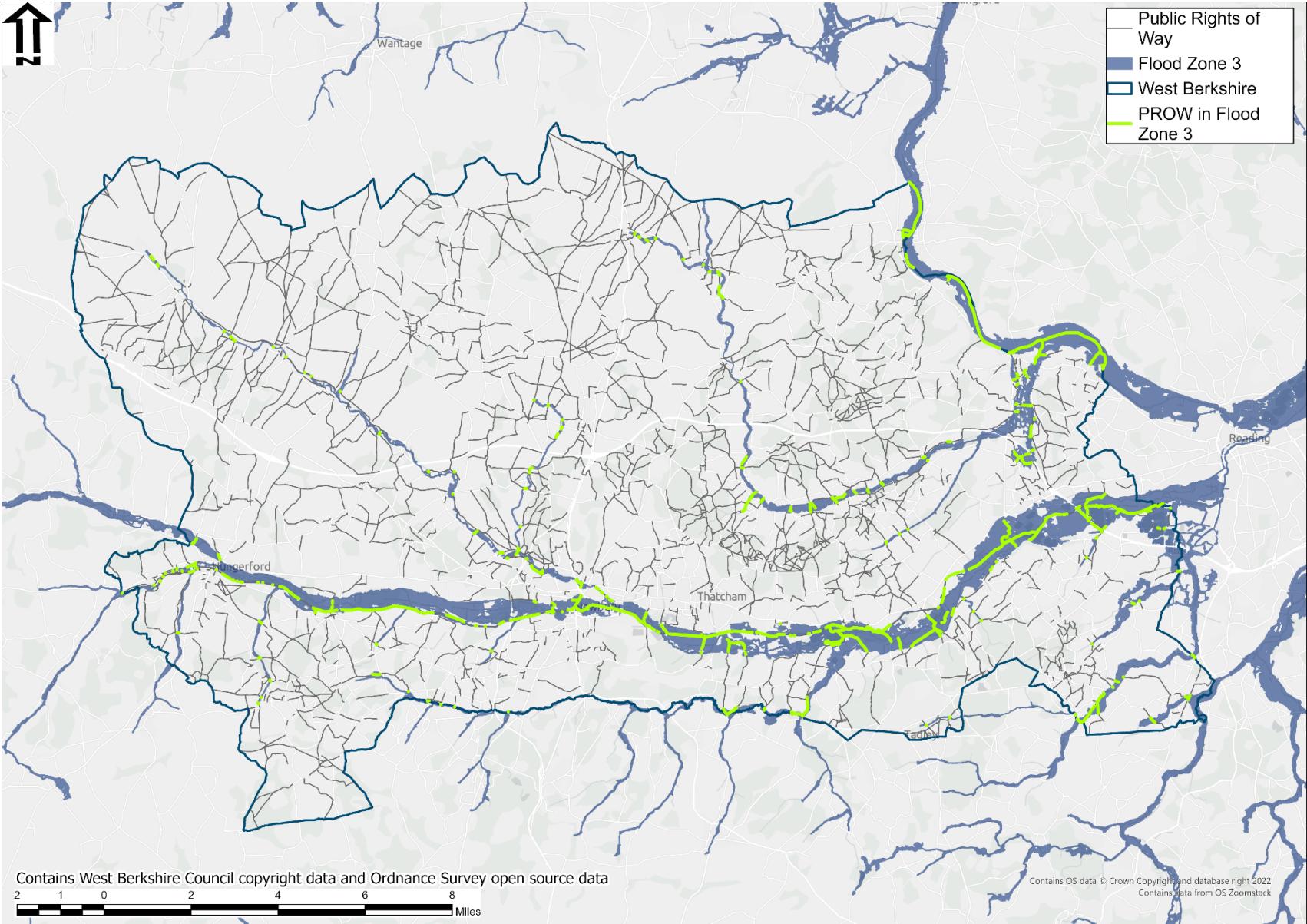
Climate Change Adaptation

Predictions suggest that in South East England there will be hotter and drier summers with more heatwaves and drought. There are also likely to be warmer and wetter winters with heavier rainfall and more flooding.

Flooding in particular could have an impact on public rights of way. This may damage surfaces and structures, including bridges. This increased likelihood of flooding will need to be considered in the design of paths.

The sections of path in Flood Zone 3 is shown in Plan 20. Large sections of the paths alongside the main rivers, including the Kennet and Thames, are within the flood zone. In addition, localised areas will be at risk of more localised flooding from surface water.

Plan 20: Public Rights of Way in Flood Zone 3



West Berkshire's Economy and Growth

West Berkshire's Economy

West Berkshire has a strong economy, with low levels of unemployment and a diverse range of businesses across many industries.

The West Berkshire 2036 Strategy and the West Berkshire Economic Development Strategy 2020 (refresh June 2021) both highlight that the countryside and the diverse nature and landscapes are noted as economic strengths for the district. West Berkshire branding for businesses promotes West Berkshire as a place that offers the best of both worlds – an outstanding natural environment alongside good access to Reading and London.

Public rights of way help to underpin the vibrant economy of West Berkshire, contributing to the unique factors which make the area an attractive place to live, work and do business. The areas in which public rights of way can support the priorities of West Berkshire Economic Development Strategy include:

- Supporting rural businesses – attracting visitors and spend to rural areas;
- Enhance the leisure offering – public rights of way make a significant contribution to the range of facilities for leisure;
- Support delivery of the Environment Strategy's green and blue infrastructure targets – public rights of way are an important green infrastructure asset;
- Enhance sustainable transport infrastructure – promoting and supporting active travel

During the COVID-19 pandemic the number of people working from home increased. Whilst many have returned to the office, hybrid working from home and office has become more normal, giving more people more time in their working day to be more active and use public rights of way.

Visitor Economy

Public rights of way can also support the visitor economy. It is part of the overall visitor economy 'offer' and could be more fully utilised to support the visitor economy, including rural businesses.

The two National Trails – The Ridgeway National Trail and The Thames Path National Trail – attract visitors in their own right, but public rights of way have the potential to play a more important role in supporting the visitor economy, across the whole of West Berkshire.

Day visitors and longer overnight trips can be attracted by the countryside, landscape and the range of attractions that West Berkshire has to offer. There are many high quality tourism attractions in West Berkshire, including historic sites, buildings and country houses, attractive cultural landscapes and nature, market towns and attractive villages. Public rights of way often link to these sites and offer further opportunities to explore the surroundings. They also make West Berkshire an attractive place for a range of recreational activities – including off-road cycling, walking and equestrian activities.

Newbury Business Improvement District (Newbury BID) hosts the Visit Newbury website,⁶³ promoting attractions for visitors. The site includes some information on walking and cycling.

The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan⁶⁴ also recognises the importance of leisure and tourism. The strategy includes a strategic objective to *'Support well-managed and sustainable tourism and recreation businesses to promote the North Wessex Downs as a destination for responsible tourism that respects and promotes the special qualities of the AONB⁶⁵ and its setting.'* In this, it includes policies to provide promoted routes, routes to help recreational users avoid busy roads, promoting the responsible use of public rights of way and protecting sensitive historical and nature sites.

The North Wessex Downs National Landscape has also held a Walking Festival, with some of the events held in West Berkshire.⁶⁶

Development Planning

The West Berkshire adopted Local Plan is a long-term strategic document used by West Berkshire Council to set out its vision and a framework for the future development of the area. It is made up of several documents which together form planning policy for the district.⁶⁷ The strategic housing sites are located in south and east Newbury, with smaller sites elsewhere in the district.

Public rights of way are included in the green infrastructure policy of the Core Strategy (CS18). This set out the need to protect and enhance green and blue infrastructure, address deficiencies and protect against loss.

At the time of this report a review of the Local Plan is being carried out and a new Local Plan is likely to be adopted within the period of this ROWIP. The emerging Local Plan includes proposals for 9,000 new homes in West Berkshire through to 2039. Until the new Local Plan is

adopted, the current plan remains the planning policy which can be applied. The proposed locations of strategic housing allocations are in southern Newbury and north east of Thatcham, with smaller development throughout the district. The Local Plan is likely to be subject to amendment during the process of its development of adoption.

The emerging Local Plan includes a proposed revision to the green and blue infrastructure policy which more explicitly includes access networks and public rights of way. Policy SP10 states that development proposals will be required to take account of existing access networks within and around the site. Opportunities should be sought to protect and enhance the public rights of way network within and adjacent to development proposals in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, having particular regard to ensuring the needs of all users have been provided throughout the year. The addition of new connections and status upgrades to the existing rights of way network will be supported. In addition, proposals for major development will be required to consider the long-term management and maintenance and for some, a Public Rights of Way Strategy will be required.

The Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2022) also contains a policy on public rights of way.

There are also several Village, Town and Parish Design Statements (VDS). Several of these recognise the importance of public rights of way to their area, especially those covering rural settlements and parishes. Those in bold form supplementary planning guidance:

- **Basildon VDS (March 2001)**
- Bucklebury Vision Parish Design Statement (Oct 2019)

- **Chieveley VDS (April 2002)**
- **Cold Ash and Ashmore Green VDS (May 2002)**
- **Speen Village Design Statement (VDS)**
- **Beenham VDS (July 2003)**
- **Hermitage VDS (July 2004)**
- **Inkpen VDS (August 2004)**
- Newbury TDS (refresh July 2018)
- Compton VDS (October 2005)
- Pangbourne VDS (November 2005)
- Brimpton VDS (2007)
- Stratfield Mortimer VDS (November 2007)
- Streatley VDS (March 2009)
- Hamstead Marshall VDS (August 2009)
- Stanford Dingley VDS (January 2010)
- Burghfield VDS (August 2011)

Transport and Active Travel

There is a high level of car ownership in West Berkshire and use of the private car is predicted to increase. Peak time congestion occurs at some junctions and other hotspots, such as the M4, although there is not a more widespread problem. There are also some areas of poorer air quality due to road traffic and there is an Air Quality Management Area around the A339/A343/Greenham Common roundabout.⁶⁸

Active travel, i.e. walking and cycling for journeys, allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives and brings a range of benefits including reducing congestion and air pollution.

Air pollution caused by road traffic has a detrimental effect on health, increasing both mortality and morbidity. Increased walking and cycling for journeys reduces local levels of air pollution and helps to improve health. Walking is the easiest, most accessible, cost effective, and enjoyable way for most people to increase their physical activity.

A well-designed, accessible environment can encourage people to walk or cycle. People cycle more when there is cycle infrastructure and separation from traffic. Conversely, a lack of routes, poor availability of information about routes, concerns over safety and the speed and convenience of motorised transport can all act as barriers to people choosing active travel.⁶⁹ There may also be personal barriers, such as time constraints, confidence or safety fears.

The UK All Party Commission on Physical Activity recommends measures to design physical activity back into our everyday lives, stressing the importance of active travel as regular daily transport and planning development and infrastructure to ensure prioritisation of walking, cycling and physical exercise.

Active Travel can not only help to reduce congestion, in urban areas it may also provide a quicker journey than by motor vehicle. Investment in active travel also makes economic sense, with a high benefit to cost ratio for many schemes.

West Berkshire's Active Travel Strategy 2011-2026 forms part of the suite of documents making up the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The strategy includes walking, cycling and equestrian activities. The Active Travel Strategy is due to be reviewed in 2023-24.

Footway and public rights of way improvements are included in the LTP. The strategy stresses the importance of inclusion of pedestrian facilities and proximity to facilities when planning new development.

For cycling, the strategy notes that due to the unique mix of areas in West Berkshire a 'one size fits all' approach for improving cycling is not appropriate. Priorities for each area need to be different and improvements can take many forms including infrastructure, information provision or signage. In urban areas improvements are needed to provide links to work, education and retail. In rural areas links will be mainly for leisure purposes, with some localised improvements within villages to facilitate access to local services.

The strategy sets out that where cycle tracks are provided they should be made available for equestrian users as well. Other actions for equestrians include improvement of public rights of way, road signage warning of equestrians, provision of box parking and promotional materials.

The targets and policies relating to active travel are show in Table 8.

Table 8: LTP Policies and Active Travel Strategy Targets - Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Activities

LTP Policy	Targets in Active Travel Strategy
Walking	Walking Targets
The Council will work towards increasing the use of walking as a mode of travel for local journeys and as a means of accessing other sustainable travel modes for longer journeys. To	AT1.1 To increase walking to school from 48% (2010) to 55% by 2016.

LTP Policy	Targets in Active Travel Strategy
<p>achieve this, the Council will focus on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Maintaining and, where possible, improving the condition of footways and pedestrian crossings. ii. Facilitating safe and prioritised pedestrian access to key destinations iii. Delivering the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and improving the links between public rights of way and local networks of footways iv. Promoting the benefits of walking for health and wellbeing. 	<p>AT1.2 Complete 5 projects per year that increase the length and / or quality of the ROW network / footways</p> <p>AT1.3 Provisional: To increase the percentage of people walking to work on an annual basis up to 2016 through workplace travel plans</p>
Cycling	Cycling Targets
<p>The Council, in partnership with West Berkshire Cycle Forum, will work towards increasing cycling in West Berkshire. To achieve this, the Council will focus on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Establishing, improving and promoting a network of routes (strategic, local and recreational) for cycling. ii. Ensuring that all new developments make cycling at least as desirable as any other transport mode choice by connecting with the local network where possible and following the West 	<p>1 Cycle Training</p> <p>2 Cycle Parking (particularly at Railway Stations and Local Centres)</p> <p>3 Route extension and Improvement</p> <p>4 Travel Plans</p> <p>5 Publicity and Marketing</p>

LTP Policy	Targets in Active Travel Strategy
<p>Berkshire Council Cycling Guidance.</p> <p>iii. Ensuring that Children, Young People and Adults are equipped with the knowledge, skills and training to cycle more often.</p> <p>iv. Promoting the benefits of cycling for health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>6 Other... (WBC Cycling officer, Reduced speed limits, provision of off-road cycle corridors)</p>
<p>Equestrian Activities</p> <p>Policy LTP K14 Health and Leisure The Council will work towards the promotion of transport as a means of improving health and access to leisure for all. To achieve this, the Council will focus on the following:</p> <p>i. Maintenance, promotion and improvement of the rights of way network and other routes for walking, cycling and horse riding</p> <p>Policy LTP K8 Road Safety The Council, as the responsible local Highway Authority, work towards creating a safer road environment for all. To achieve this, the Council will work in partnership where appropriate and focus on the following:</p> <p>ii. Improving safety for vulnerable road users of all ages, such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, and equestrian users.</p>	<p>Equestrian Targets</p> <p>AT3.1 Complete 2-3 projects per year that increase the length and / or quality of the ROW network available for horse riding</p> <p>AT3.2 Investigate further Quiet Lanes projects to support active travel by 2013 Policy</p>

The LTPs road safety policy (LTP K8) is also relevant to pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians as they are classed as vulnerable users.

West Berkshire's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2021 also sets out a strategic and long-term approach to delivering improvements in walking and cycling. The first LCWIP focuses on routes in Newbury and Thatcham and the Eastern Urban Area working jointly with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council.

The LCWIP has a focus on utility journeys, i.e. those made for commuting, work, healthcare rather than for leisure, but does include some leisure corridors identified through public feedback. These are:

- The Kennet and Avon Canal towpath;
- Links to Bucklebury, Crookham, Greenham, and Snelsmore Commons;
- Links south and west into the quieter lanes of Hampshire and West Berkshire; and
- An indicative link representing the proposal for a cycling and walking route on or close to the former Newbury to Didcot railway line.

Needs of Users

Walkers

Walking is the most popular outdoor recreational activity. Walkers have many areas in which to walk. As well as all types of public rights being available for pedestrians, they can use many other greenspaces, CRoW Act land and other spaces.

People walk for a variety of reasons - to get to work or school, to exercise or for leisure and to enjoy the countryside. Health and exercise is the highest motivator nationally and has increased over time, from 34% of visits in 2009/10 to 50% in 2017/18. Walking the dog is a significant motivator and was the second highest motivator nationally in 2017/18, with 38% of people giving this reason.⁷⁰ Choosing to walk instead of taking the car is also increasing. The proportion of the population choosing to walk through greenspace on a journey and/or actively choosing to walk or cycle instead of driving has increased between 2009 and 2018, both up eight percentage points.⁷¹

The Active Lives Survey carried out by Sport England⁷² measures participation in activities. In West Berkshire, those participation in all forms of walking, including walking for leisure, has increased since 2015, in line with the rest of the South East, see Figure 4.⁷³ The survey indicates that 55% of people in West Berkshire had walked for leisure at least twice in the past 28 days, and 90% in the past year. When considering walking for any purpose, 67% had walked at least twice in the past 28 days and 90% in the past year. Those living in more deprived areas tend to walk less.

Walking has been described as 'the nearest activity to perfect exercise', being the easiest, most accessible, cost effective, and enjoyable way for most people to increase their physical activity.⁷⁴ Walking can be particularly important in increasing exercise in inactive people. Information provision, signage and good quality paths, especially in areas of need, all help to support inactive people in walking more.⁷⁵ In areas of deprivation, where access to greenspace may be limited, increasing walking can be a particularly effective and low-cost way of increasing physical activity. In West Berkshire there is an active programme of health walks in West Berkshire, called Wellbeing Walks, which encourage inactive people to walk as a form of exercise.

There are six groups affiliated to the national Ramblers' Association operating within West Berkshire or walking within the area - the West Berkshire Ramblers', Mid Berkshire Ramblers', the Pang Valley Ramblers', the Loddon Valley Ramblers', the Berkshire Walkers (a Ramblers' Association affiliated group for 20 and 30 year olds) and Berkshire Weekend Walkers. There are also other, unaffiliated, walking groups such as the Frilsham Walking Group and the Reading Outdoor Group.⁷⁶ There are also several active Facebook groups.⁷⁷

Figure 4: Participation in Walking and Cycling - West Berkshire and South East England



Cyclists

Cycling is a popular activity, with participation across a wide range of the population. People cycle for many reasons and in many ways – for leisure, for commuting and utility journeys, for sport, as a family and for holidays.

Cycling is only permitted on part of the public rights of way network – on bridleways, restricted byways and BOATs. In many cases use of the road network is necessary to form links between public rights of way.

There is also a network of cycle routes which are not on public rights of way. Some of these are traffic-free and some share roads with traffic. These are provided to support active travel. Cycling provision for leisure and on public rights of way overlap and compliment cycling for active travel and the routes provided for this. Active travel cycling can use public rights of way, and cyclists making utility trips are also likely to cycle for recreation.

Public rights of way offer predominantly traffic-free routes. Broadly this is termed ‘mountain biking’ – but mountains are not required. There are five broad sports disciplines – cross country, trail riding, enduro, downhill and freeride. The main types of cycling which use public rights of way are cross country and trail riding, which use paths and tracks. Enduro, downhill and freeride are downhill sports, along with cyclo-cross which also takes place off-road, but riders may also use public rights of way to train or enjoyment.

There are also many cyclists who use traffic-free routes and public rights of way who would not term themselves mountain bikers, but just enjoy leisure cycling. A range of studies show that all cyclists prefer

traffic-free routes. Experienced cyclists will cycle on the road, but inexperienced riders, women or those with children and in family groups prefer traffic-free routes. The presence of traffic and a lack of traffic-free routes can be a serious deterrent to these groups and public rights of way are therefore important.

The Active Lives Survey carried out by Sport England⁷⁸ measures participation in cycling for leisure and all cycling. In West Berkshire, those participation in all forms of cycling, including cycling for leisure, has stayed at similar levels since 2015, in line with the rest of the South East, see Figure 4.⁷⁹ The survey indicates that 18% of people in West Berkshire had walked for leisure at least twice in the past 28 days. Most of these had cycled for leisure. 36% had cycled for any purpose in the past year.

Cycling UK offers further insights to cyclists:⁸⁰

- Males tend to cycle more than females
- People in the age range 35 – 54 seem to enjoy cycling for leisure more than other age groups
- 34% of cycling trips are for leisure; however this increased to 55% during the pandemic

In the 2021 survey for this ROWIP, 26% of people said they took part in using public rights of way for cycling on surfaced cycle paths and 25% took part in cycling off-road (e.g. mountain biking).

The use of electric cycles (e-bikes), including E-Mountain Bikes is increasing. This is likely to increase the number of people who are able to cycle off-road, bringing the pastime within the capabilities of more people.

Cycling Provision in West Berkshire

Cyclists can use the same network as equestrians (see next section). There are more, and better connected, public rights of way in the north and eastern downland areas, with a high proportion of the network available for cyclists. There is also a concentrated network available for equestrians around Bucklebury.

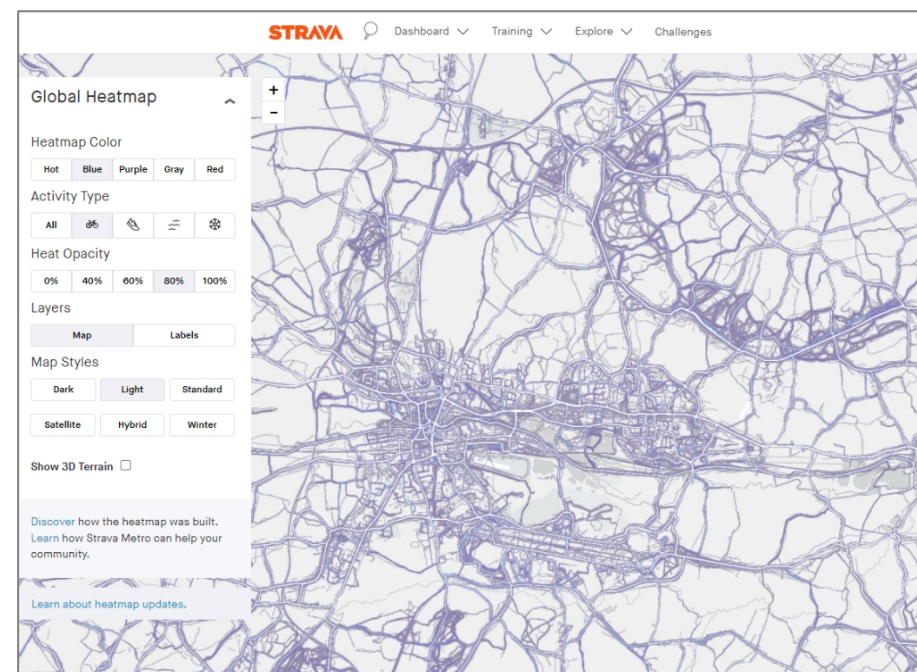
This is contrasted with fewer, disconnected, public rights of way in the south of the district. The Kennet Valley is an area with fewer public rights of way available for cyclists. However, this area is a focus for increasing cycling routes through initiatives and strategies to increase active travel..

Cycle routes and public rights of way available for cyclists are shown in Plan 21. This does not include all of the routes promoted as suitable for cycling in the urban areas. West Berkshire Council's website has a series of leaflets available for download showing these.⁸¹

National Cycle Route 4 passes through West Berkshire following the Kennet Valley. Much of this route is traffic-free and some follows the towpath. The towpath in particular is a popular leisure route. Cycling is also popular at Greenham Common. There are also cycling routes at Snelmore Country Park.

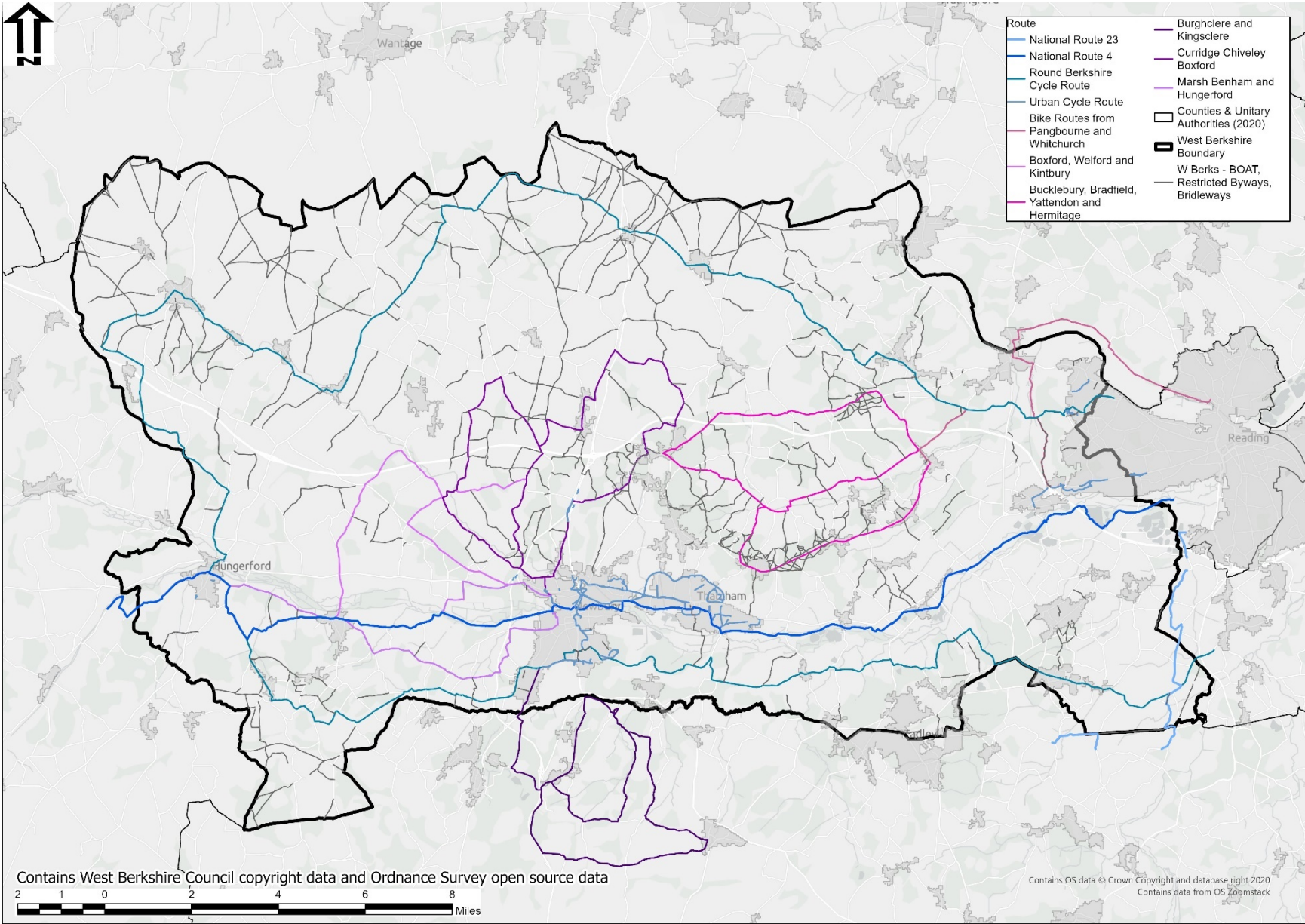
Strava Heatmap⁸² provides some insight into popular cycling routes. This logs aggregated activities, logged by users of Strava, during the past year. Figure 5 shows a snapshot of logged cycling activities in the area around Newbury and reveals a high concentration of off-road activity around Bucklebury through to Hermitage, Snelmore Country Park and Greenham Common

Figure 5: Strava Heatmap - Newbury Area⁸³



Strava metro is available to local authorities and could provide further insight into cycling activity and which public rights of way are used more frequently.

Plan 21: Cycle Routes and Public Rights of Way Available for Cyclists



There are several cycling groups in West Berkshire and in the surrounding area, which use routes within the district.

- Cycling UK Reading⁸⁴
- Newbury Velo⁸⁵
- West Berkshire Spokes⁸⁶
- BOB Mountain Bike Club⁸⁷
- Newbury Road Club⁸⁸
- Reading Cycle Campaign⁸⁹
- Reading Cycle Club⁹⁰
- Buckled Wheel Cycle Club⁹¹

The West Berkshire cycle forum meets four times a year to discuss cycling issues across the district. The forum is made up of council officers, WBC cycling champion and members of local cycle campaign groups and businesses with an interest in promoting cycling.

Some conflicts between users were raised in the public survey carried out for this ROWIP. Pedestrians and equestrians raised concerns over some cyclists travelled at speed and using public footpaths, which they are not entitled to use. Cycling UK offers advice for cyclists on routes shared with horses.⁹²

Equestrians

Introduction

Recreational equestrianism includes several activities including horse riding in the countryside (hacking) and carriage driving which take place on public rights of way, along with a range of equestrian sporting activity. Equestrianism makes a valuable contribution to the fabric of rural society, and offers a wide range of people, including young children, an excellent way of exploring the countryside.

The National Equestrian Survey 2019⁹³ has the following headlines:

- The economic value of the equestrian sector stands at £4.7 billion of consumer spending across a wide range of goods and services each year. This has increased from £4.3 billion in 2015;
- There are 27 million people in Britain with an interest in the equestrian industry;
- There has been an increase in the number of people who have ridden at least once in the past 12 months, to 3 million from 2.7 million in 2015;
- The number of regular riders – those who have ridden at least once a month for the past 12 months – has risen from 1.3 million in 2015 to 1.8 million;
- There are 374,000 horse-owning households in Britain – a drop from the 446,000 in 2015;
- The estimated horse population in Britain stands at 847,000;
- The average frequency of riding – with an average riding time of 52 minutes – is 3.5 times a week.

Horse riding engages a higher proportion than other sports of people with disabilities, women and people over the age of 45. Nearly 40% of those taking part in equestrian activity do not participate in other forms of physical activity.⁹⁴ Riding or driving horses allows people to participate in exercise outdoors and can provide both physical and mental wellbeing benefits.

The equestrian industry contributes to the economy and supports many jobs. The horse industry is the second largest rural employer after the agriculture industry in the UK.⁹⁵ Equestrianism supports a range of supply industries, including vets, feed merchants, training providers, accommodation, tourism and equipment suppliers.

Carriage drivers can use restricted byways and BOATs and horse riders can use also use public bridleways, but these networks are often disconnected. In many cases use of the road network is necessary to form links between public rights of way but traffic levels and speeds are increasing making it less safe and enjoyable to ride on the road network. 44% of those riding once a week or less say they would ride more frequently if they had access to safe off-road riding or bridleways and this is the most cited reason that would make people ride more frequently.⁹⁶

Equestrianism and Provision in West Berkshire

West Berkshire is one of the most densely populated areas in terms of horses in the UK, along with many other parts of south east England.⁹⁷ However, it is difficult to get an accurate overview of the distribution and level of equestrian activity in the district.

Within West Berkshire there are:

- Five Riding Clubs within the district, or based outside but operating in West Berkshire;
- Riding for the Disabled centres in Hungerford, Newbury and Tilehurst;
- Three Pony Clubs;
- Some riding schools, for example Hall Place Equestrian Centre (Tilehurst).

There are also many other active equestrians who are not affiliated to any groups.

There are also livery yards across West Berkshire but the distribution of these is not known. The Berkshire County Riding Club listed 39 livery yards within West Berkshire⁹⁸ in 2005; however this list is likely to be out of date.

The downlands of northern West Berkshire are nationally renowned as the base for horse racing training yards, with a hub of yards around Lambourn in 'The Valley of the Racehorse'. The industry is estimated to make an economic contribution of £22m .

In 2021 there were 8,719 equine passports registered in Defra's Central Equine Database in postcodes RG7, RG8, RG14, RG18, RG19, RG20, RG72, and RG88, although some of these postcodes extend beyond West Berkshire. A minority of these passports may be for racehorses. Assuming a conservative estimate of £5,000 per year to keep a horse, these horses contribute £43m per year to the economy. Spend on horses includes feed, bedding, vets and farriers, saddlery and equipment, livery, training of other professional fees.

It should be noted that passports record the postcode of the home of the owner and, often, horses are not kept at home but are situated on livery yards.

There are active Facebook groups which provide an online community for equestrians, for example:

- Happy Hackers Club West Berkshire
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/196574003710130>
- Ridgeway Horse Riders and Carriage Drivers Access Group
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/269434397066898>
- Berkshire Horse & Pony
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/319446928115416>
- Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Riders
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/296313590407506>

As outlined previously public rights of way which are available for equestrians are not evenly distributed across the district.

There are more, and better connected, public rights of way in the north and eastern downland areas, with a high proportion of the network available for equestrians. The network in the north of the district is better connected although there are some areas where public rights of way do not connect as well. Although there is less traffic in these areas, some of the roads can be busy, as well as being narrow. There is also a high proportion of BOATs which are shared with motorised vehicles. There is also a concentrated network available for equestrians around Bucklebury. While there is a good provision in these areas, this is also away from the main population centres where

many owners live. For many equestrians using this network will require transporting their horse.

This is contrasted with fewer, disconnected, public rights of way in the south of the district. The Kennet Valley is an area with fewer public rights of way available for equestrians along its entire length, see Plan 22. There are no routes at all running east to west along the valley. Although there are scattered routes, and some areas with a small network, for example Beenham and Burghfield Common, most routes are isolated and do not form a network. Therefore roads need to be used to form routes and these can be busy, see Plan X.

In some areas there are suitable public rights of way in north Hampshire, which in places connects to West Berkshire's, but this network is also fragmented, see Plan 22.

There are also some areas of permitted access or toll rides, which provide additional areas for equestrians:

- Greenham Common: Horse riding is allowed by law under the Greenham and Crookham Commons Act 2000. No permit is required. Carriage driving is not allowed and is only by permission;
- Bucklebury, Padworth, Snelsmore and Wokefield Commons: Recreational horse riding is legally allowed on these four commons, which are managed by Schemes of Regulation drawn up under the Commons Act 1899 and Law of Property Act 1925. This is in addition to the bridleways and byways on those commons;
- Englefield Estate: Permits for rides around two areas at Bradfield and Mortimer can be purchased on an annual basis

.99
,

- Wasing Estate: States that walking and riding permits are available.¹⁰⁰

West Berkshire Council's Active Travel Strategy also includes equestrianism, with the following policies and targets.

Equestrian Activities

Policy LTP K14 Health and Leisure
The Council will work towards the promotion of transport as a means of improving health and access to leisure for all. To achieve this, the Council will focus on the following:
i. Maintenance, promotion and improvement of the rights of way network and other routes for walking, cycling and horse riding
Policy LTP K8 Road Safety
The Council, as the responsible local Highway Authority, work towards creating a safer road environment for all. To achieve this, the Council will work in partnership where appropriate and focus on the following:
ii. Improving safety for vulnerable road users of all ages, such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, and equestrian users.

Equestrian Targets

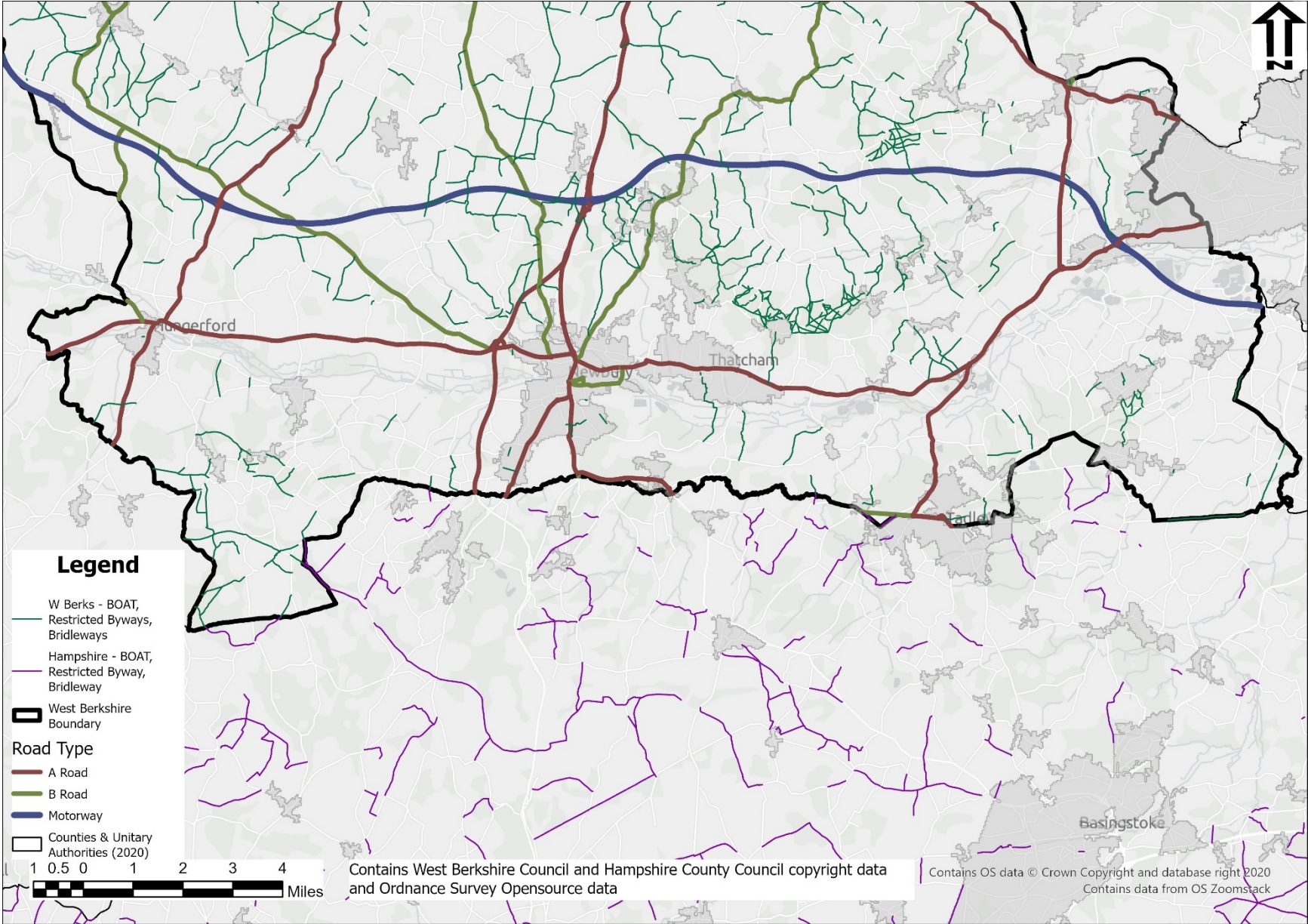
AT3.1 Complete 2-3 projects per year that increase the length and / or quality of the ROW network available for horse riding

AT3.2 Investigate further Quiet Lanes projects to support active travel by 2013 Policy

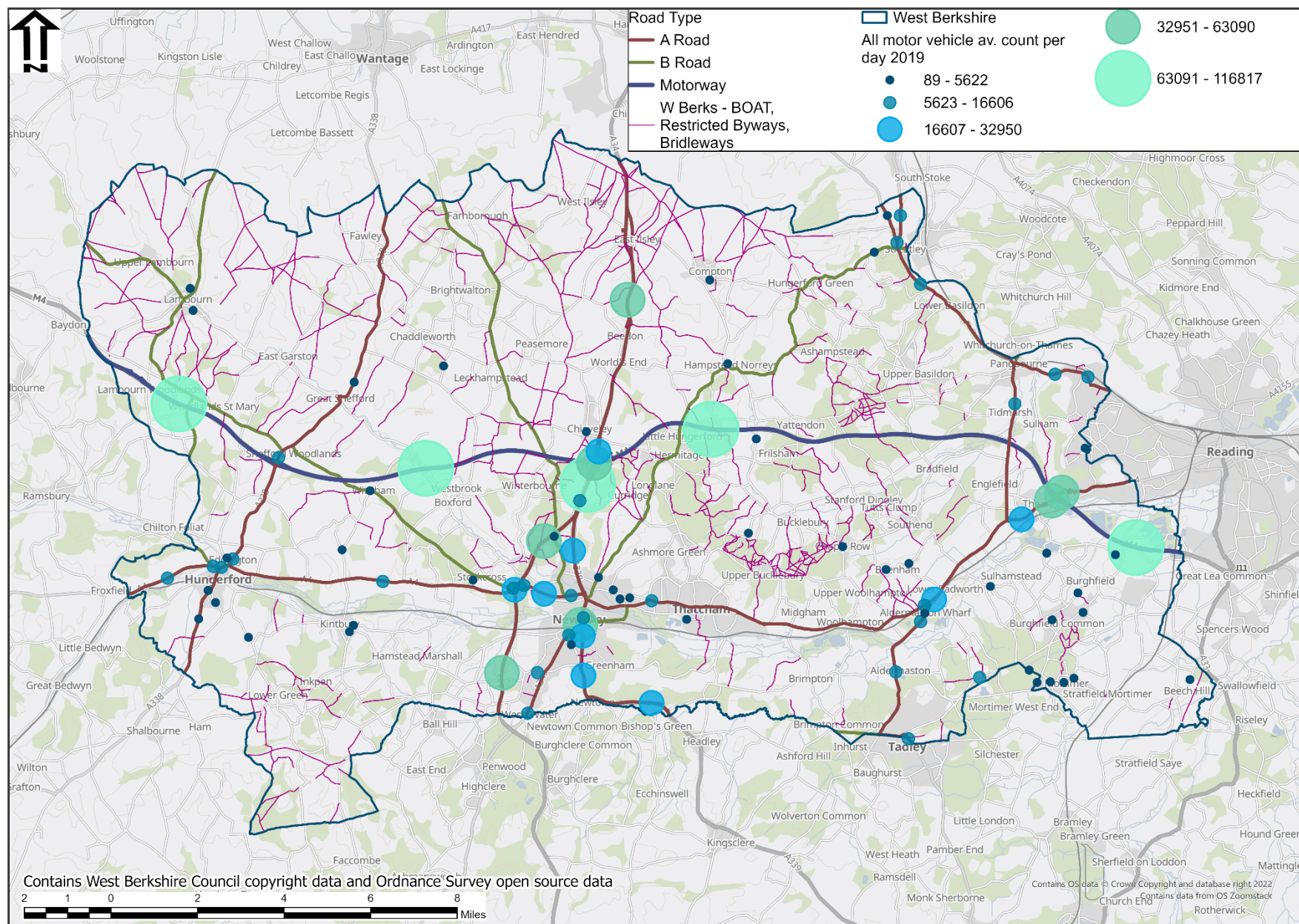
In the public survey carried out in 2021 for this ROWIP equestrians raised the following points regarding and priorities:

- Surfaces which are suitable for equestrian use when re-surfacing bridleways, restricted byways or BOATs (not using rubble or other sharp or potentially damaging materials);
- Issues with other users causing distress to horses, e.g. dogs off lead, motorbikes;
- Increases in road traffic and cars travelling too fast, recounting 'near misses' and describing hacking on some roads as "terrifying";
- More traffic-free routes to link up public rights of way where the network is disconnected;
- Create circular routes for equestrians;
- Promotional material for equestrians;
- Good quality and maintained equestrian gates
- Maintaining those routes which can be used by equestrians in good condition, including appropriate surfacing and clearing vegetation.

Plan 22: Network for Equestrians – Focus on Kennet Valley and North Hampshire



Page 67

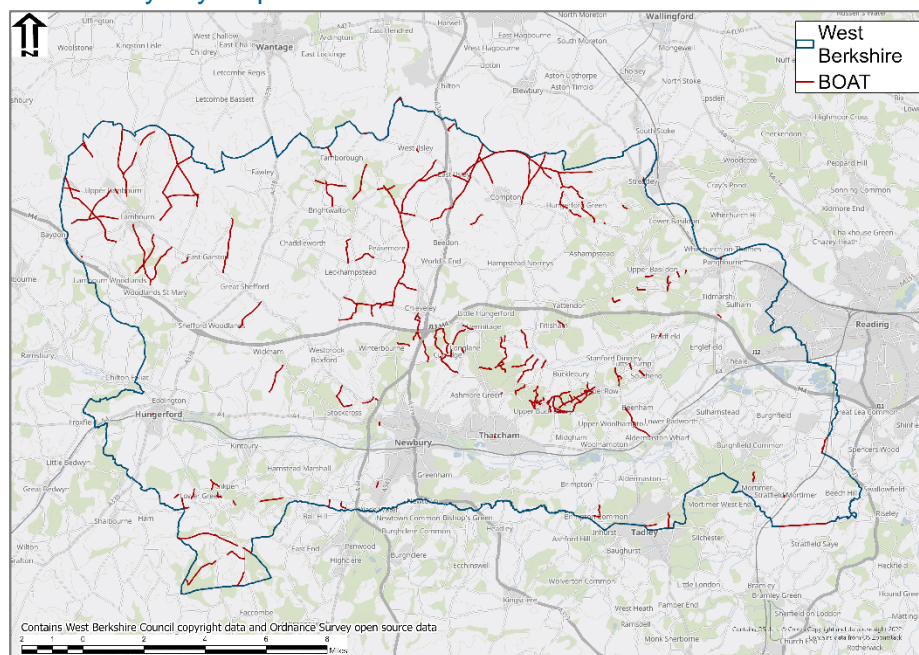


Motorised Vehicle Users

Mechanically propelled vehicle users use a range of vehicles, including 4x4's, trail bikes¹⁰² and quad bikes. These users can only use byways open to all traffic (BOATs).

These public rights of way are concentrated in the northern downland areas of West Berkshire, particularly around Lambourn, the central downland area including Brightwalton, East Ilsley, Hungerford Green and south to Chieveley. There is also a concentration of BOATs from Hermitage through to Bucklebury. There is a smaller network around and south of Inkpen. In other areas there are disconnected and sometimes short lengths of BOATs, see Plan 24.

Plan 24: Byways Open to All Traffic



Driving or riding on BOATs is also known as 'green laning'. Some users are part of one of several groups which support these users, including the Green Lane Association¹⁰³, LARA (Land Access and Recreation Association),¹⁰⁴ the All Wheel Drive Club¹⁰⁵ and the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF).¹⁰⁶ Some of these organisations have local groups in West Berkshire, as well as local organisations such as the Hants and Berks Land Rover Owners Club¹⁰⁷ and the 4x4 Without a Club¹⁰⁸ which operates from a site near Aldermaston. Not all users belong to a club.

The Trail Riders Fellowship also has a Motorcycle Green Road Map which members of the TRF can access. This shows where people can trail ride legally.¹⁰⁹

In the engagement exercise carried out in 2021 for the ROWIP, motorised vehicle users highlighted the physical and mental health wellbeing benefits that they gain from accessing the countryside. As well as benefits gained from social connection, enjoyment, challenge, and getting out into the countryside, motorised vehicle use enables those who have reduced mobility to access the countryside.

The BOAT network in the downland areas of West Berkshire is longer and better connected than in many other areas. The users of this network are not just originating from the local area but are travelling from further afield to use West Berkshire's BOAT network.¹¹⁰

Vehicles on public rights of way – using the routes for farming, agriculture or forestry as well as leisure – can cause damage to surfaces. This includes parallel ruts, which make it difficult for other users and in particular cyclists, carriage drivers and equestrians, or major or deliberate damage of path surfaces. Driving without due care

and attention or damaging the surface of a byway open to all traffic is an offence.

West Berkshire Council Public Rights of Way Service has a policy paper which sets out the approach to managing damage on public rights of way by motorised vehicles.¹¹¹ 'First priority' measures include information provision, codes of conduct, liaison with user groups, monitoring and repair of priority routes. 'Second priority' measures, which could be implemented if the first priority measures are not successful, include seasonal or permanent Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) including on part of The Ridgeway National Trail. At the time of this report there are four permanent TROs in place and other closures over the winter months to protect the public rights of way from seasonal damage.¹¹²

In the public survey carried out in 2021 for this ROWIP concerns were raised over conflicts between motorised and other users. Non-motorised vehicle users raised concerns over deterioration of surfaces and mud, intimidating behaviour and presence on paths that these users are not entitled to use. Conversely, there were comments made from 4 x 4, motorised vehicle / motorbike users about intimidating behaviour towards them from walkers and challenges made over their right to legitimately use BOATs.

LARA,¹¹³ the TRF¹¹⁴ and GLASS¹¹⁵ have produced good practice guides for participants and information and guidance on managing motor vehicle access to BOATs. The Ridgeway National Trail has also produced a leaflet and code of conduct for vehicles on The Ridgeway.¹¹⁶

People Living with Visual, Physical or other Disabilities

There is great diversity amongst people who live with a disability. Disability takes many different forms and has an impact on people's lives in many ways. The term 'disability' covers a wide range of conditions, including mobility difficulties, blind or partial sightedness, learning difficulties, neurological problems and mental health problems. Some disabilities are permanent whilst others only affect people from time to time. While some people have lived with their disability from birth, most people are those who develop impairments in the course of their life or are simply getting older.

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment research has shown that 18% of people with a disability never visit the natural environment, compared with 8% of the non-disabled population. Overwhelmingly the reasons for not visiting the countryside are related to their condition, with 'old age', 'poor health' and 'a physical disability' given by 92% of respondents as the reason for not visiting.¹¹⁷

In the 2021 Census, 5.1% of West Berkshire residents identified as being disabled and their daily life limited a lot. This figure decreased from 6.1% in 2011. In 2021, just under 1 in 10 people (9.6%) were identified as being disabled and their daily life limited a little, compared with 8.7% in 2011. The proportion of West Berkshire residents who were not disabled increased from 85.2% to 85.3%.

The population of over 65's in West Berkshire was 27.5% in 2020.¹¹⁸ This is higher than national and regional averages. While this does not mean that all of these people will be living with a disability, older age does increase the prevalence of limiting conditions. There is also

predicted to be an increase of nearly 20% in the number of those over age 75.

People with an impairment have the same range of interests as the rest of the community – some will be interested in the countryside and some will not. However, there are a range of potential barriers which may deter or prevent disabled people from using countryside sites and visiting the natural environment, many of which could relate to public rights of way:

- Physical barriers, such as steps, steep gradients, stiles and gates;
- Lack of accessible information;
- Lack of accessible toilets;
- Lack of confidence, low expectations, not feeling welcome, fear over safety or of getting lost;
- Too far to walk;
- Lack of convenient and accessible public transport;
- Inaccessible café, shop or visitor centre;
- Lack of seating and opportunities to rest or take shelter;
- Cost of transport, parking fees and refreshments;
- Lack of staff awareness of the needs of disabled visitors;
- A limited range of activities;
- Poorly maintained environment.¹¹⁹

The Sensory Trust¹²⁰ outlines the ‘access chain’ that leads from a person’s decision to visit a site, through the journey, arrival and visit to a countryside site (see Figure 6). Whilst this relates to visits to a countryside site or country park, these stages also apply to countryside visits using public rights of way. If there is a bad experience in one of these stages the visit may not happen or may not

be repeated. It is important, therefore, that attention is paid to each of these links when considering people living with a disability.

Figure 6: Access Chain – Adapted from Sensory Trust

It is clearly not possible to ensure all routes and paths, even in the most visited areas, are fully accessible to all people. However, adopting the principle of ‘least restrictive access’ is important. For example, kissing gates should be installed instead of stiles, the best surfacing possible installed and thought given to gradients, steps etc. Consultation with groups and individuals living with a range of physical, neurological and visual impairments was carried out as part of developing the ROWIP, including Age UK, the Local Access Forum Disabled Access Group, Mobility Issues Group for Goring and Streatley, Berkshire Vision and West Berkshire Council Sensory Needs Service. A full summary is included in Evidence Report 2.

There are no routes currently promoted for those living with a disability and this was one of the main requests made by consultees. Documenting the routes used by Walking for Health could be a good way to begin getting a suite of accessible routes together. Another suggestion was developing ‘Miles without Stiles’ with Snelsmore, Thatcham and Padworth potentially good places to start.

- Accessible infrastructure – it is important to make infrastructure as accessible as possible, for example handrails on steps, bridge and slopes, evenly spaced steps, kissing gates or gaps instead of stiles. This does not necessarily need to be costly but thought needs to be given in the design of structures on paths. Improving the standard to British Standard is needed across the network, over time;

- Maintenance is important – damaged structures, wobbly stiles, present difficulties, especially to visually impaired people. Visually impaired people may worry more about sudden drops, canal edges, slopes or mud than trying to get through a gate or stile – as the other hazards are unknown and unexpected;
- Toilets and seating are important – information on where these are located would be beneficial;
- Visual impaired people often walk with a guide alongside, so wider paths are more suitable;
- Information is needed on levels of accessibility. The provision of more information on the path, surface, infrastructure, gradients, parking and seating can help a person living with a disability to make their own decision on whether the route is suitable for them;
- Bring together representatives from a range of organisations representing people with disabilities to meet with Public Rights of Way team annually.

Minority Ethnic Groups

MENE analysis shows that people from black and minority ethnic population are less likely to spend time in nature than the total population. However, many people do report spending time in nature at least once a month. Members of the ethnic minority population are more likely to visit parks in towns and cities, often with a greater desire to spend time with family and friends and to learn about the outdoors.¹²¹

A report by OPENSpace identifies seven barriers which may prevent ethnic communities from visiting natural spaces:¹²²

- Not seeking or including the views of ethnic minority groups in policy and strategy making;
- Lack of foreign language material and (perhaps inadvertently) excluding ethnic minority groups in promotional material;
- Cultural disposition and behavioural codes may inhibit ethnic communities from using natural spaces. They may not consider the countryside as a place for recreation or it may carry undesirable associations from a person's country of origin. Activities such as walking may be considered a 'necessity' rather than a leisure activity. Other factors include strict dress codes (particularly for females) and a lack of single gender activities;
- Ethnic minority communities are likely to be less aware of opportunities and less responsive to information when it does reach them;
- Lack of confidence and negative perceptions of the environment – fear of woodland, fear for safety, lack of other people of the same ethnicity, fear of encountering animals (including dogs) and fear of racism;
- Negative feelings associated with previous experience of the countryside;
- Financial costs and lack of time.

In the 2021 Census, 3.7% of West Berkshire residents identified their ethnic group within the 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh' category, up from 2.5% in 2011. The 1.2 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area. This is lower than the South East England average, which is 7%

In the public survey in 2021 for the ROWIP, most people answering the survey were white or white British (97.2%). This is higher than the West Berkshire population which the 2021 Census

records at 91.9%. This means that other ethnic groups were less represented in the survey than in the West Berkshire population.

An interview was held with Community United as part of developing the ROWIP and there are opportunities to increase engagement with minority ethnic communities through this and other organisations.

Policy Context

Figure 7: West Berkshire Related Strategies

Local Policy

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan sits within the wider strategic context for West Berkshire Council. It is informed by several strategies and supports the delivery of many of them. Figure 7 shows the Rights of Way Improvement Plan in relation to other West Berkshire strategies.



West Berkshire 2036 – The West Berkshire Vision

The West Berkshire Vision sets out the aspirations of West Berkshire Council and its partners for the future of West Berkshire. It sets out five areas of commitment:

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire where everybody has what they need to fulfil their potential;
- We will have delivered a West Berkshire with a housing mix with something for everyone;
- We will have delivered a West Berkshire that welcomes business, enterprise and industry into a productive, growing and dynamic local economy;
- We will have delivered a West Berkshire where the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages is good;
- We will have delivered a West Berkshire with both beautiful and diverse natural landscapes and a strong cultural offering.

Council Strategy (2019 - 2023)

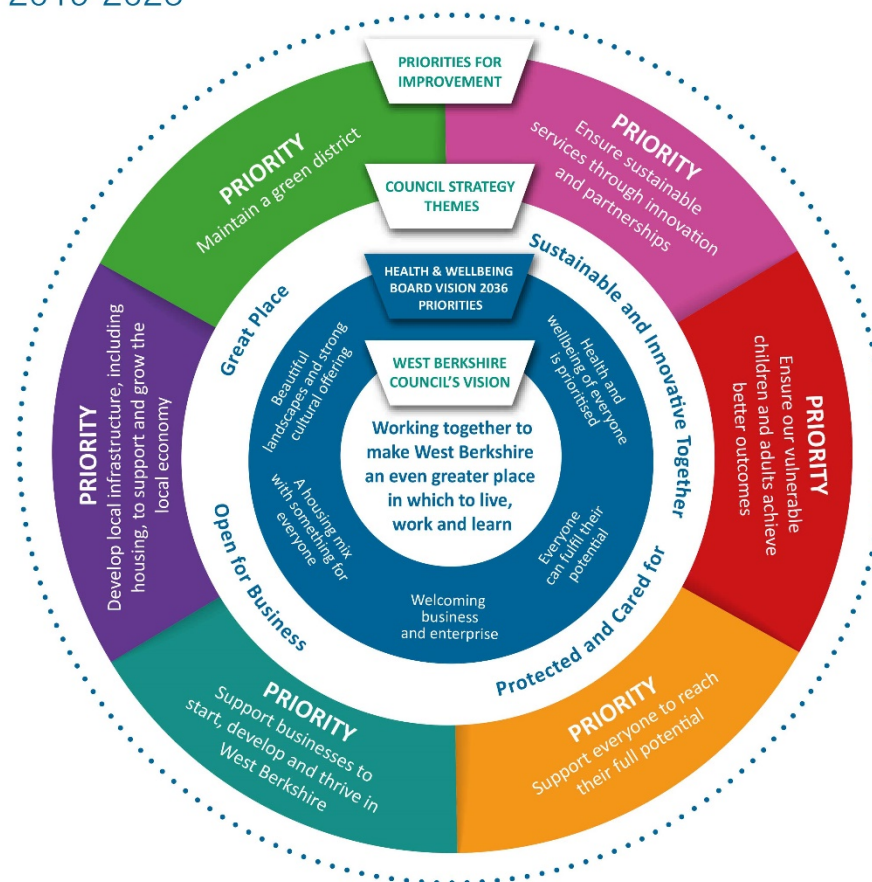
The Council Strategy sets out six priorities for improvement;

- Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships;
- Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes;
- Support everyone to reach their full potential;
- Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire;
- Develop local infrastructure, including housing, to support and grow the local economy;

- Maintain a green district.

A revised Council Strategy is being developed at the time of this report.

West Berkshire Council Strategy 2019-2023



Environment Strategy (2020 - 2030)

West Berkshire's Environment Strategy sets out a vision for West Berkshire's environment. The Strategic Priorities are:

- Carbon Neutral by 2030 - The council itself aims to be carbon neutral in its own operations by 2030;
- Responsible Economic Growth - decoupling economic growth from climate change emissions and influencing business towards carbon neutrality;
- Healthy Communities - highlights the link between active lifestyles, good air quality and access to green and blue spaces and encouraging active travel;
- Resilient to Climate Change - Adaptation to climate change impacts, for example flood management and reducing vulnerabilities;
- Working with our Communities and Partners - working with communities to raise awareness and support everyone to work towards climate neutrality.

West Berkshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017 - 2020

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a long-term strategy for meeting the health and wellbeing needs of the local population.

The Vision for Health and Wellbeing in West Berkshire is to enable communities to live healthy lives and to close the gap between communities that are doing well and those that need help

The overarching principles that drive the strategy are:

- The people of West Berkshire will live longer, healthier lives;
- Fewer people will die prematurely;
- The gap in healthy life expectancy between the most vulnerable and least well off in the district and the rest will be reduced.

Leisure Strategy 2022

West Berkshire Council's Leisure Strategy 2022 focusses on 'active leisure' where the activity involves physical effort that will deliver health and wellbeing benefits to the individual.

The vision of the strategy is that *'By 2032 we will have an increased participation in active leisure for all, with a particular focus on those least active, through access to a network of modern and sustainable indoor facilities together with a diverse mix of accessible public outdoor sports facilities and greenspace and bluespace.'*

Aims of Leisure Strategy 2022 – Relevant to Public Rights of Way:

1. Increase participation for all, with an emphasis on those less physically active, and maintain improved activity levels throughout lives;
4. Measurably enhance access to, and utilisation of greenspace and blue space, through improving accessibility to open water, waterways, parks, commons and Public Rights of Way;
5. Further develop partnerships (with town and parish councils, sport governing bodies, health organisations and the voluntary sector), with an emphasis on actively encouraging volunteering.

Local Transport Plan: Active Travel Strategy 2011 – 2026 and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2021

West Berkshire's Active Travel Strategy 2011-2026 forms part of the suite of documents making up the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The strategy includes walking, cycling and equestrian activities. The Active Travel Strategy is due to be reviewed in 2023-24.

There are many overlaps between public rights of way and active travel, and public rights of way can be used as active travel routes. There are several policies in the Active Travel Strategy which are relevant to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

West Berkshire's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2021 also sets out a strategic and long-term approach to delivering improvements in walking and cycling. The first LCWIP focuses on routes in Newbury and Thatcham and the Eastern Urban Area working jointly with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council.

The LCWIP has a focus on utility journeys, i.e. those made for commuting, work, healthcare rather than for leisure, but does include some leisure corridors.

Core Strategy Development Plan and Local Plan

The West Berkshire adopted Local Plan is a long-term strategic document used by West Berkshire Council to set out its vision and a framework for the future development of the area. It is made up of several documents which together form planning policy for the district. The strategic housing sites are located in south and east Newbury, with smaller sites elsewhere in the district.

Public rights of way are included in the green infrastructure policy of the Core Strategy (CS18). This set out the need to protect and enhance green and blue infrastructure, address deficiencies and protect against loss.

West Berkshire Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Strategy is arranged under three themes:

People

- Empowering everyone to enter the workplace
- Employment support for the newly unemployed and underemployed
- Encourage uptake of apprenticeships
- Support Newbury College's University Centre
- Help to grow digital skills
- Work with partners to improve careers advice

Places

- Delivering sustainable development, reshaping town centres
- Supporting businesses to diversify
- Enhance the leisure offering

Infrastructure

- Support delivery of the Environment Strategy's green and blue infrastructure targets
- Digital infrastructure
- Ensure affordable housing delivery
- Enhance intelligent and sustainable transport infrastructure

Shared Objectives

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan shares objectives with several of the primary West Berkshire strategies, see Table 9 and Figure 8.

Table 9: Shared Objectives

Objectives	West Berkshire Vision	Council Strategy	West Berkshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Leisure Strategy	Local Transport Plan: Active Travel Strategy Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	Core Strategy Development Plan and Local Plan	Environment Strategy	West Berkshire Economic Development Strategy
Supporting health and mental wellbeing, tackling health inequalities and improving health outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Improving quality of life	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increasing levels of physical activity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Increasing active travel	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Climate change mitigation and adaptation	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Improving West Berkshire's environment and green and blue infrastructure	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A strong economy, respecting the environment and improving outcomes for all	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Involving and empowering local people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Effective and efficient delivery of council services		✓	✓	✓			✓	

Figure 8: Shared Objectives – Rights of Way Improvement Plan and
Primary West Berkshire Strategies

Bibliography

Berkshire Local Nature Partnership. 2014. *The Natural Environment in Berkshire - Berkshire Biodiversity Strategy 2014 - 2020*.

Get Active Berkshire. 2021. *Physical Activity Participation Insight 2021 – West Berkshire*.

Hampshire Countryside Access Forum. *Equestrians in Hampshire*. <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/countryside/Equestrians-in-Hampshire.pdf>

LARA. 2022. *Managing Motor Vehicle Use in the Countryside*.

North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2019. *Management Plan 2019 – 2024*.

Office for National Statistics – 2021 Census – Headlines for West Berkshire
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000037/>

Reading Borough Council. 2007. *Rights of Way Improvement Plan*.

SQW. 2019. *Horse Racing in Lambourn Valley: The Industry's Economic and Social Impacts*. Jockey Club Estates and West Berkshire Council.

West Berkshire Council. *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)*. <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/jsna>

- West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. 2014. *Living Well – Obesity (Adults)*.
- West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. 2016. *Ageing Well – Mental Health (Old Age)*.
- West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. 2016. *Living Well – Mental Health in Adults*.

- West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. 2017. *Living Well – Diabetes*.

West Berkshire Council. 2011. *Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026*.

West Berkshire Council. 2011. *Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026: Active Travel Strategy*.

West Berkshire Council. 2011. *Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026: Road Safety Strategy*.

West Berkshire Council. 2012. Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2006 – 2026) West Berkshire Local Plan.

West Berkshire Council. 2017. Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document. West Berkshire Local Plan.

West Berkshire Council. 2020. *Adult Social Care. Market Position Statement 2020 – 2023*.

West Berkshire Council. 2020. *Economic Development Strategy 2020 – 2023*.

West Berkshire Council. 2020. *Environment Strategy 2020 – 2030*.

West Berkshire Council. 2021. *Economic Development Strategy Refresh June 2021*.

West Berkshire Council. 2021. *West Berkshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)*.

West Berkshire Council. 2022. *Leisure Strategy 2022 – 32*.

West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board. 2023. West Berkshire Vision 2036.

West Berkshire Observatory
<https://westberkshire.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/>

References

⁴ Sourced from Kent County Council. (2013). Countryside Access Improvement Plan. Figure in this document is not referenced.

¹ From shapefile of public rights of way network, access from Hampshire County Council website 19 May 2022.

² Oxfordshire County Council. (2006). Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

³ Buckinghamshire County Council. (2019). Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

⁵ The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) normally gives a public right of access to land mapped as 'open country' (mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land. These areas are known as 'open access land'. <https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/use-your-right-to-roam#:~:text=You%20can%20access%20some%20land,around%20the%20England%20Coast%20Path>.

⁶ <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/snelmore-common-country-park>

⁷ <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/greenham-and-crookham-commons>

⁸ <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/walking/walking-routes/kennet-and-avon-canal-walk>

⁹ <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/bucklebury-common> and <http://www.buckleburyestate.com/bucklebury-common/>

¹⁰ <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/wokefield-common>

¹¹ <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/padworth-common>

¹² <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/explore/visitor-centres/nature-discovery-centre>

¹³ <https://townandmanor.co.uk/hungerford-common-port-down> and <https://townandmanor.co.uk/hungerford-marsh-nature-reserve-sssi>

¹⁴ <https://www.paiceswood.net/>

¹⁵ <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/hosehill-lake>

¹⁶ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/basildon-park/trails/the-meadows->

²⁹ Ten pages of results were returned and the West Berkshire Council public rights of way webpage did not feature within these returned results.

³⁰ <http://www.westberkshirespokes.org/>

³¹ <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/39055/Walking-and-Cycling-Maps-and-Routes>

³² <https://www.newburyvelo.cc/cycle/newbury-velo-cycle-routes.php>

³³ <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/>

³⁴ <https://www.cyclinguk.org/cycle/cycling-berkshire>

³⁵ <https://www.komoot.com/guide/68884/mtb-trails-in-berkshire>

³⁶ <https://www.alltrails.com/en-gb/england/berkshire/mountain-biking>

³⁷ <https://www.outdooractive.com/en/mountain-biking-trails/berkshire/mountain-biking-trails-in-berkshire/230383189/>

³⁸ Accessed 17 January 2023.

³⁹ https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/36686/Illesley-Downs-Riding-Route/pdf/Illesley_Downs_-_Riding_Route.pdf?m=637735169464230000

⁴⁰

<https://www.bhsaccess.org.uk/dobbin/Ridingmap.php?map=Ridemaps>
home

⁴¹ <https://beta.greenroadmap.org.uk/>

⁴² <https://glass-uk.org/about/where-can-i-drive.html>

⁴³ Department of Health/Chief Medical Officers. (2011). *Start Active, Stay Active: A Report on Physical Activity from the Four Home Countries*. London: Department of Health.

⁴⁴ Grant, M., Bird, C., & Marno, P. (2012). *Health Inequalities and Determinants in the Physical Urban Environment: Evidence Briefing*. University of the West of England
<http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=118056>.

⁴⁵ Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review) (2010)

⁴⁶ Jarrett, J., Woodcock, J., Griffiths, U., Chalabi, Z., Edwards, P., Roberts, I., & Haines, A. (2012). Effect of increasing active travel in urban England and Wales on costs to the National Health Service.

⁵⁴ West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. (2014). Living Well – Obesity (Adults).

⁵⁵ West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. (2017). Living Well – Diabetes.

⁵⁶ West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. (2016). Living Well – Mental Health in Adults.

⁵⁷ West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. (2016). Ageing Well – Mental Health (Old Age).

⁵⁸ <https://getberkshireactive.org/active-lives-survey>

The most recent survey looked at the period May 2020 - May 2021 and covers 12 months of restrictions in response to the coronavirus pandemic, including three months of full national lockdown, six months of significant restrictions and three months of easing restrictions.

⁵⁹ Get Active Berkshire. (2021). Physical Activity Participation Insight 2021 – West Berkshire.

⁶⁰ <https://getberkshireactive.org/active-lives-survey>

⁶¹ West Berkshire Council. 2022. *Leisure Strategy 2022 – 32*.

⁶² <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/wellbeingwalks>

⁶³ <https://visitnewbury.org.uk/>

⁶⁴ North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 2019. *Management Plan 2019 – 2024*.

<https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/our-work/management-plan/>

⁶⁵ Now National Landscape not Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

⁶⁶ North Wessex Downs AONB Walking Festival 2022 - <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/walking/walking-festival/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/read-current-local-plan>

- Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (adopted July 2012)

⁷⁹ <https://activelives.sportengland.org/Result?queryId=71251>

⁸⁰ <https://www.cyclinguk.org/statistics>

⁸¹ <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/39055/Walking-and-Cycling-Maps-and-Routes>

⁸² <https://www.strava.com/heatmap#7.00/0.52270/51.27036/hot/all>

⁸³ Accessed March 2023. Showing data from previous 12 months from this date.

⁸⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CyclingUKReading/>

⁸⁵ <https://www.newburyvelo.cc/> and <https://www.facebook.com/newburyvelo>

⁸⁶ <http://www.westberkshirespokes.org/>

⁸⁷ <https://bobmtb.com/>

⁸⁸ <https://www.newburyroadclub.co.uk/>

⁸⁹ <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/>

⁹⁰ <https://readingcyclingclub.org/>

⁹¹ <https://buckledwheel.webs.com/>

⁹² <https://www.cyclinguk.org/press-release/be-nice-say-hi-cycling-uk-and-bhs-guidance-cyclists-and-horses>

⁹³ <https://www.beta-uk.org/pages/industry-information/market-information.php>

⁹⁴ British Horse Industry Confederation. (2017). *Equine Sector 2017 Mid-Term Manifesto for the Horse*; British Horse Society. (2019). *Statistics for Equestrian Access*.

⁹⁵ British Horse Industry Confederation. (2017). *Equine Sector 2017 Mid-Term Manifesto for the Horse*.

⁹⁶ British Horse Society. (2019). *Statistics for Equestrian Access*.

⁹⁷ British Horse Industry Confederation. (2017). *Equine Sector 2017 Mid-Term Manifesto for the Horse*.

⁹⁸ <http://www.berkscountyrc.co.uk/bridleway/newburyarea.htm>

⁹⁹ <https://www.englefieldestate.co.uk/the-estate/forestry/riding-routes>

¹¹⁵ <https://glass-uk.org/about/our-code-of-conduct>

¹¹⁶ <https://nationaltrails.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Vehicles-on-Ridgeway-July-2021.pdf>

¹¹⁷ 'old age' 26%, 'poor health' 42% and 'a physical disability' 34%

¹¹⁸ West Berkshire Council. 2020. *Adult Social Care. Market Position Statement 2020 – 2023*.

¹¹⁹ Countryside Agency (2005), *By all reasonable means – Inclusive access to the outdoors for disabled people*.

¹²⁰ <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/>

¹²¹ Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (2018), *Headline report 2018: Analysis of latest results (March 2017 to February 2018 and nine years of the survey from 2009 to 2018)*.

¹²² Nina Morris (2003), *Black and Minority Ethnic Groups and Public Open Space Literature Review*, OPENspace.

See also Phil Ware (2015), *'Black People don't drink tea...' The experience of Rural Black and Minority Ethnic Community Groups in England*, Third Sector Research Centre, Working Paper 130.

Defra (2005), '“WHAT ABOUT US?” Diversity Review evidence', parts one and two.

West Berkshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025 – 2035

Evidence Report 2
Surveys and Stakeholders
FINAL July 2023

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	8
Online Public Survey.....	9
Demographic Profile and Location of Respondents.....	9
Use of Public Rights of Way.....	15
Views on the Importance of Public Rights of Way.....	20
Maintenance and Issues with Public Rights of Way.....	21
Reporting Problems on Public Rights of Way.....	24
Priorities for Public Rights of Way Service Delivery.....	29
Information Provision.....	31
Parish and Town Council Survey.....	37
About the Local Councils.....	37
Satisfaction, Concerns and Problem Reporting.....	39
Views on the Importance of Public Rights of Way.....	44
Promoted Routes.....	45
Public Rights of Way During the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	46
Accommodating Future Needs.....	49
Priorities of the Public Rights of Way Service.....	50
Any Other Comments.....	52
Landowner Survey.....	53
Positive Contribution of Public Rights of Way.....	53
Issues with Public Rights of Way.....	53
Information and Support for Landowners.....	54
Public Rights of Way During the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	55

Priorities for the Public Rights of Way Service.....	56
Reporting Problems on Public Rights of Way.....	57
Any Other Comments.....	58
Stakeholder Interviews and Written Responses.....	59
Supporting Health and Wellbeing and COVID-19 Pandemic.....	59
People Living with Visual Impairment.....	61
People Living with Mobility Impairments and Dementia.....	62
Tourism and Visitor Economy.....	64
Development and Growth.....	65
Active Travel.....	66
A Better Network.....	67
Partnerships, Public Rights of Way Service and Delivery of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.....	69
Local Access Forum.....	72
Area 1 – Maintenance, effective working and reporting problems	72
Area 2 – Accessibility and Improving Communication and Promotion.....	73
Area 3 - Specific User Groups.....	74
Appendix.....	75
List of Stakeholders Contacted.....	75

Produced for and in partnership with West Berkshire
Council by Sharon Bayne BSc MSc LLM CEnv MCIEEM
Blackwood Bayne Ltd <https://blackwoodbayne.co.uk>



Executive Summary

Extensive public and stakeholder consultation was carried out between April 2021 and September 2022 to provide insight for West Berkshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). This was through online public, local council and landowner surveys, invitations to elected councillors to provide comments, engagement with stakeholder organisations and individuals and through the Local Access Forum.

Consultation took place during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which use of greenspaces and the countryside increased, providing insight into the use of public rights of way during this time.

This report forms part of the evidence base for the ROWIP, alongside Evidence Report 1 - Network and Needs Analysis.

The main findings are summarised here.

Value and Use of Public Rights of Way

Public rights of way are highly valued and are an important part of everyday life.

Overwhelmingly people valued public rights of way. All of the local councils, 92% of the public and 88% of landowners agreed that that they were an important asset for West Berkshire.

Public rights of way are an important part of everyday life for those who use them, with 91% of people responding to the surveying using them once a week or more frequently and 40% of people in the survey using them every day.

Public rights of way support a wide range of activities.

The most popular activity on public rights of way was walking, either without a dog (58% of people doing this activity) or with a dog (41% doing this).

A quarter used surfaced cycle paths and the same number used off-road cycling routes. One in ten respondents took part in horse riding, 5% used motorised vehicles and 1% took part in carriage driving.

Public rights of way were also used for commuting to work or school, with 18% of the public using them for this purpose.

Public rights of way are valued and used for improving health and wellbeing and quality of life.

'Quality of life' reasons for using public rights of way featured highly with the public, with 81% of people using them to enjoy the landscape or countryside; the top answer. Using public rights of way for relaxation and peace and quiet (72%) and to enjoy a view (65%) were also important. All of the local councils said that public rights of way are important for enjoying and exploring nature, along with 92% of the public. Just under half of people using public rights of way used them for watching wildlife (48%).

Public rights of way offer opportunities for socialising, or for solitude. Over half (56%) use them to spend time with family and friends and just under a quarter visit with children (24%). Conversely, 44% also explore on their own.

Over 90% of the public, local councils and landowners all agreed that public rights of way are important to support the health and wellbeing of West Berkshire residents. Using public rights of way to improve health was the second highest reason given by members of the public with 75% of people using them for this reason.

Public Rights of Way were important for supporting health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Use increased during this time and the level of use is likely to remain higher than prior to the pandemic. However, the increase in use did present some issues.

An extremely high proportion of the public (98%) and all of the local councils said that public rights of way had been important during the pandemic and associated lockdowns. This was also reflected in the interviews with stakeholders, many of which highlighted how important public rights of way had been during the pandemic.

A majority of the public (60%) reported that they had used public rights of way more. This was echoed in other surveys, with 96% of councils and 80% of landowners reporting that the number of people using public rights of way had increased during the pandemic. Nearly all (96%) of the public who had increased use of public rights of way during the pandemic indicated they intended to continue to use public rights of way more often than prior to the pandemic.

However, both local councils (74%) and landowners (88%) reported that the increase in use had caused some problems. Both landowners and local councils indicated there had been increases in littering and dog fouling. Landowners also reported visitors not keeping to public rights of way and some local councils reported disputes between users, issues with social distancing not being adhered to and the deterioration of surfaces. There were also anecdotal comments in the public survey around lack of social distancing and very busy paths. Increased pressure on popular routes was reporting, for example the Kennet and Avon Canal.

There is a deficit of information and accessible routes available for people living with disabilities.

Organisations representing people living with a range of limiting conditions – including physical disabilities, dementia and visual impairment – took part in interviews, along with discussions with individuals living with these conditions themselves. The discussions were helpful in beginning to gain an understanding of what these users need to help them explore the countryside and natural spaces. This needs to be built on and developed, with better representation of people living with disabilities, and many of those consulted expressed an interest in helping the public rights of way team in the future.

It was clear from these discussions that more needs to be done to consider these users in both the level of accessibility of routes and in the information provided. People enjoyed accessing the countryside and greenspaces but there is no information available which provides sufficient information for them to do this confidently. Whilst it is not possible to make the entire network accessible, actions like removing stiles and ensuring that new infrastructure is as accessible as possible would help these users.

The provision of a route, aiming in time for several routes, which is accessible and for which comprehensive information is provided, was a high priority and was raised by several individuals and organisations.

There are some tensions arising from the use of public rights of way.

The surveys revealed that there were some tensions around the use of public rights of way.

Landowners were asked if they had experienced any problems related to the presence of public rights of way on their land - 90% had experienced issues with trespassing, littering, disturbance or damage to the nature conservation interest of their land and illegal use, e.g. by motorbikes. All of the landowners had experienced an issue with dogs off of leads bothering stock. Conversely, 40% of the public reported issues with livestock in fields, the third highest problem experienced.

It was also clear that some tensions exist between different users. Under additional comments, the most mentioned problem related to 4 x 4 and motorbike users, citing intimidating behaviour, damage to surfaces and presence on paths that these users are not entitled to use. The use of public footpaths by horse riders and cyclists was also an issue raised. Conversely, there were comments made from 4 x 4, motorised vehicle / motorbike users and equestrians about intimidating behaviour towards them from walkers.

Overall, however, 8% of the public reported that they had experienced threatening behaviour by path users and 7% from landowners, both at the lowest end of the list of problems encountered.

Priorities and Ensuring the Quality of the Network

Protecting public rights of way affected by development and maintaining and investing in the current network were viewed as the highest overall priorities for the Public Rights of Way Service.

Making sure public rights of way are protected and new routes created through development and other projects and maintaining and investing in the current network were the two highest priorities for both the public and local councils.

The other priority choices - connecting missing links on the public rights of way network, supporting parish councils and other community organisations to take a more active role in maintaining local public rights of way, improving accessibility so that more people can use public rights of way and providing information and promotional material to encourage more people to use public rights of way – were all also supported.

Developing new partnerships could help to develop and deliver initiatives and to ensure the public rights of way network adapts to meet future needs of all West Berkshire residents.

The consultation process engaged with many organisations including Walking for Health, Age UK, Berkshire Vision, groups representing those with mobility impairments, Canal & River Trust, Community United, North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscape), West Berkshire heritage team and Newbury Business Investment District, amongst several others. Some of these were existing partners of the public rights of way team but

several were new contacts. The stakeholders devoted time to express their views and all viewed the public rights of way network as a resource which was of value to their members or the aims of their organisations. Many of these expressed an interest in developing future partnerships and projects with the rights of way team to expand on the existing benefits.

Some of the suggestions included:

- Working more closely with Walking for Health, to upgrade accessibility of routes used, expand the scheme and help people to walk independently;
- Incorporate heritage and local businesses in promotional material to help to bring economic benefits, working with West Berkshire heritage team, Newbury Museum and Newbury BID;
- Work with several of the organisations which represent people living with a range of disabilities to improve understanding of the needs of these users and to develop projects including accessible routes and improved information;
- Work with other partners to develop joint funding bids for access projects, including the North Wessex Downs AONB (now National Landscape);
- Increase working with volunteers to take forward maintenance, wardening and to develop projects, especially as resources are limited.

Most people had encountered a problem on a public right of way, with overgrown paths and surface issues the most common problems.

Just over half (55%) of the public had experienced a problem with a public right of way.

The problem most frequently encountered by the public was overgrown paths (54% of people experiencing this). This was also the highest issue of concern for local councils.

The second most common problem encountered by the public (51% of people) was surfaces in poor condition. Overall local councils were dissatisfied with surface condition and this was their third highest issue of concern.

The public also reported issues with waymarking and signposting – 37% had encountered a lack of waymarking and 27% a missing fingerpost at the start of the public right of way. Providing and maintaining waymarking were the second highest priorities for landowners and the third highest for local councils.

There appeared to be generally good public awareness that West Berkshire Council is responsible for public rights of way, but less clarity around how problems should be reported. Most councils and landowners responding to the survey had reported a problem, but most members of the public had not.

There seemed to be good awareness amongst the public that West Berkshire Council was responsible for public rights of way as when asked how they would report problems the highest scoring response was to West Berkshire Council (28%), and the second highest

response was to 'the council' (unspecified) (27%) (although this may have been due to the survey being hosted on West Berkshire Council's website). However, 22% said they didn't know or wouldn't report a problem and 77% of the public had not reported a problem. In comparison, 72% of councils and 63% of landowners had reported a problem.

West Berkshire Council's online 'Report a Problem' function was well-used by the public, who were generally satisfied with the service. Local councils and landowners preferred to report problems directly to the public rights of way team but had also used the 'Report a Problem' service.

Most members of the public who had reported problems with public rights of way had used 'Report a Problem' (59%) and 39% had contacted the public rights of way team directly.

Amongst the local councils, 61% had reported a problem direct to the public rights of way team and 56% had used 'Report a Problem'. Most landowners, 80% had reported issues directly to the public rights of way team and 40% had used 'Report a Problem'.

Satisfaction that 'Report a Problem' met the needs of customers was high, with 90% of local councils and 63% of the public reporting that it met their needs.

There were high levels of satisfaction in how West Berkshire Council responded to reported problems.

All aspects of service provision in dealing with reported rights of way problems were rated as 'good'. The highest scoring aspect with both the public and local councils was the council officer's manner when dealing with the problem. Landowners also rated this aspect as good.

All other aspects of response to problems - information on how to report a problem to the council, the overall service received, timeliness of response and resolution of the problem – were scored good overall by both the public and local councils.

However, of these, the lowest scoring aspect was information on the progress of the problem. This was rated as poor by landowners. Some local councils mentioned in additional comments that feedback on progress was needed.

Information on Public Rights of Way

The Kennet and Avon Canal and the Ridgeway long distance routes were popular, but there was low awareness and usage of routes promoted by West Berkshire Council.

The Kennet and Avon Canal had been used by 70% of the public, 63% had used the Ridgeway National Trail and 42% had used the Thames Path National Trail.

Use of the circular routes promoted by West Berkshire Council was very low and 73% of the public had not used any of them. The most used local promoted route was the Lambourn Valley Way which 11% of people had used, followed by the Speen Moor Circular route used by 9% of people.

There is demand for information on public rights of way and where to go. It is less clear how this should be provided and the role of West Berkshire Council in information provision.

Amongst people who don't use public rights of way the top two reasons given for not using them were lack of information (56% of people) and that they didn't know where to go' (44%). Amongst the public, 63% wanted more promotional material for walking routes, 29% wanted more cycling routes and 12% wanted more horse riding routes and promotional material for people living with disabilities.

However, there is already promotional material on West Berkshire Council's website but 75% of the public were not aware of this resource. When the public were asked where they would look for promotional material, West Berkshire Council's website was the fifth most popular answer after local knowledge, ordnance survey maps,

word of mouth, the web, apps and guidebooks, and only 18% of people used this source. This was reflected in the additional comments suggesting how promotional material could be improved, with the highest number of comments around letting people know it already existed. Several suggestions were made around how this could be achieved, including using social media better, local magazines, regular features in the emails and updates direct from West Berkshire Council and printed leaflets in shops, garages and pubs.

Promotional material is available for several parishes and these could be a useful local resource. However, there was very low use of these routes. Most respondents (82%) had not used any of the parish walks on West Berkshire Council's website. Of those which had been used, Bucklebury and Inkpen were the most popular but only around 5% of people had used them. There was a mixed picture on these routes from the local councils. They were asked two questions around whether they were satisfied with promotional material in their parish. In one, they were dissatisfied overall and in another they were satisfied with how promoted routes were publicised and maintained. Councils supported more promotional material and 64% wanted more promoted walking routes, 55% more cycling routes, 46% more routes for those living with disabilities and 27% for horse riders. Some councils who did not have promoted material made requests for these to be developed. However, more promoted routes was 5th out of 6 priorities for the work of the Public Rights of Way Service.

Specific types of users considered they were under-represented in terms of promotional material and wanted more routes and promotion – including equestrians, cyclists and motorised vehicle users.

Promoted material for walkers scored highest in the surveys, but these users were the highest represented amongst the respondents. Amongst the public, 29% wanted more promoted cycling routes and 12% more horse riding routes. Requests for more promotional material for these groups was also made in additional comments. Motorised vehicle users noted that there were no promoted routes for them and that this option had not been provided in the survey.

There was strong desire to improve responsible enjoyment of the countryside, with the provision of information raised as a priority.

Encouraging the responsible enjoyment of the countryside was a theme which recurred throughout the survey responses. All of the landowners wanted improved education of the public around the Countryside Code and their responsibilities while in the countryside, and this was their highest priority. When asked about improvements to promotional material, providing information to encourage responsible use of the countryside was the second highest priority for both the public and the local councils. The issue was also raised in several sections of additional comments throughout the surveys, including around the increase of use during the pandemic lockdowns.

Introduction

This report sets out the results of the public and stakeholder engagement carried out prior to the drafting of the West Berkshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2022 – 2032 (ROWIP). The results of this engagement have informed the priorities and actions in the ROWIP and this report forms part of the evidence base supporting the new ROWIP.

Several activities were carried out to gather evidence on the views and needs of the public stakeholders. The public online survey in particular generated a high level of interest, with c1500 responses. The consultation with stakeholders also made contact with several new stakeholder organisations and individuals. The consultation exercise took place during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which use of greenspaces and the countryside increased, and gave useful insight into usage of public rights of way during this time.

Online Public Survey

A public survey was posted online on West Berkshire Council's website between March and May 2021. The survey was promoted on West Berkshire Council's social media feeds and website. Stakeholder organisations were also encouraged to circulate the survey. The survey received over 1500 usable responses, giving a high degree of statistical significance to the results. For the population of West Berkshire, at a 95% confidence level, this provides a confidence interval of approximately 2.5%. It should be noted that the survey was 'self-selecting' and therefore those responding are more likely than the overall population to have an interest in the countryside and outdoor activities.

Parish and Town Council Survey

All parish and town councils received an emailed letter and were invited to complete a survey, between March and May 2021.

Elected Councillors

All West Berkshire elected Councillors were sent a briefing on the ROWIP and a link to the online public survey.

Landowner Survey

An online survey for landowners was set up. The National Farmers Union and Country Land and Business Association were approached to discuss public rights of way and asked to encourage their members to complete the survey. The Public Rights of Way Team also contacted some landowners direct.

Engagement with Stakeholders

A further 66 stakeholder organisations were contacted to encourage them to comment (see Appendix). These included neighbouring highway authorities, user and interest groups and community organisations. Meetings or telephone calls were held with some of these stakeholders. Stakeholders were also encouraged to share the link to the online survey. Meetings of the Community Conversation and West Berkshire Advisory Group were attended.

Local Access Forum

The Local Access Forum was briefed on progress of the ROWIP revision at all regular meetings during the process. All members within West Berkshire were invited to comment. In addition, an extraordinary meeting of the LAF was held September 2022.

Online Public Survey

Demographic Profile and Location of Respondents

Gender

- 51.2% of respondents were female;
- 46.8% of respondents were male;
- 0.4% of respondents identified as 'other'.

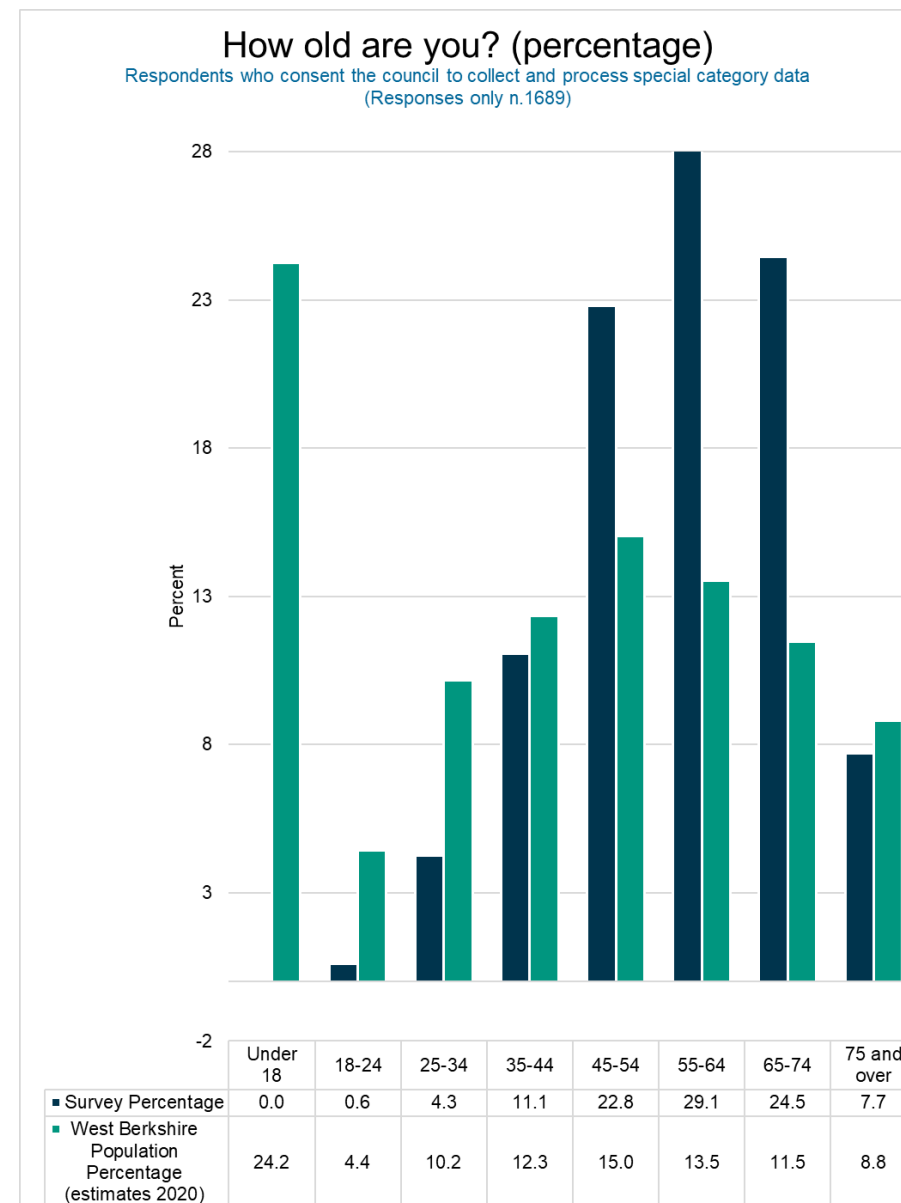
Age

- The highest responses to the survey came from the older age groups. The age group with the highest number of responses were 55-64 year olds (29.1%);
- The age group with the second highest number of responses were 65-74 year olds (24.5%) and third were 45-54 year olds (22.8%);
- Overall, people between the ages of 45 – 74 accounted for 76.4% of responses. This is a higher representation than in the population of West Berkshire,¹ where 40% of people fall into this age range;
- The responses from ages 35-44 and 75 and over were roughly in line with the population of West Berkshire;
- Younger age groups were less well-represented, with only 4.9% of survey respondents in this age range, compared with 14.6% of the West Berkshire population.

¹ West Berkshire Observatory population estimates 2020.

https://westberkshire.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/population/#/view-report/7b359e1a998a4d1189294ef4d2383cda/_iaFirstFeature

Chart 1: Age of Survey Respondents vs. West Berkshire Population 2020



Ethnicity

Most people answering the survey were White or White British (97.2%). This is in line, but slightly higher, than the West Berkshire population, see Table 1. Other ethnic groups were less represented in the survey than in the West Berkshire population.

Table 1: Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Survey Percentage (n.1663)	West Berkshire Population Percentage (estimates 2020)
Asian or Asian British	0.5	2.5
Black or Black British	0.3	0.9
White or White British	97.2	94.8
Mixed or multiple ethnic group	0.3	1.6
Other ethnic group	1.7	0.2

Disability, Long-term Illness or Health Condition

Respondents were asked if they had a disability, long-term illness or health condition.

- 17.1% indicated they did;
- 82.9% indicated they did not.

Location of Respondents

Respondents were asked to provide a partial postcode of their home address. These were then geocoded to a location. 1408 responses were geocoded; 4 could not be geocoded. Some of the partial postcodes, particularly those in rural areas, cover a wide geographic area and some cross local authority boundaries, therefore categorising the responses is not completely accurate. A summary of the local authority areas is shown in Table 2 and a summary with main location shown in Table 3. Plans 1 and 2 show the geographic extent of the responses.

Table 2: Location of Respondents - Summary by Local Authority

County / Unitary Authority	Number	Percentage
West Berkshire	1169	83.0%
Reading	84	6.0%
West Berkshire / Hampshire	45	3.2%
Oxfordshire	41	2.9%
Hampshire	27	1.9%
Wokingham	15	1.1%
West Berkshire / Oxfordshire	9	0.6%
Windsor and Maidenhead	5	0.4%
Wiltshire	4	0.3%
Bracknell Forest	3	0.2%
Surrey	2	0.1%
Buckinghamshire	1	0.1%
Camden	1	0.1%
South Gloucestershire	1	0.1%
Swindon	1	0.1%
Total	1408	100.0%

Table 3: Location of Respondents - Summary by Local Authority and Location

West Berkshire	1169
Aldermaston Wharf	35
Beenham / Lower Padworth and surrounding area	45
Burghfield Common / Mortimer Area	89
Calcot	36
Central Newbury	23
Chapel Row / Bucklebury / Tutts Clump and surrounding area	52
Chieveley	2
Clay Hill, Newbury	38
Compton	19
Curtis's Wood	12
East Garston	36
Hermitage / Little Hungerford / Rural north West Berkshire	105
Hungerford	31
Hungerford Newtown	29
Kintbury	24
Lambourn	64
Newbury	16
Pangbourne	62
Peasemore / Brightwalton and surrounding area	49
Shaw, Newbury	2
South Newbury	44
Speenhamland, Newbury	40
Streatley	5
Thatcham	141
Upper Woolhampton	2

West Newbury	87
Winterbourne / north Newbury	72
Yattendon	9
West Berkshire / Hampshire	45
Ball Hill	22
Headley / Cookham Common	11
Mortimer area	12
West Berkshire / Oxfordshire	9
Lower Basildon	9

Reading	84
Caversham	3
Churchend	5
Prospect Park	5
Reading	1
Tilehurst	67
West Reading	1
Whitley Wood	2

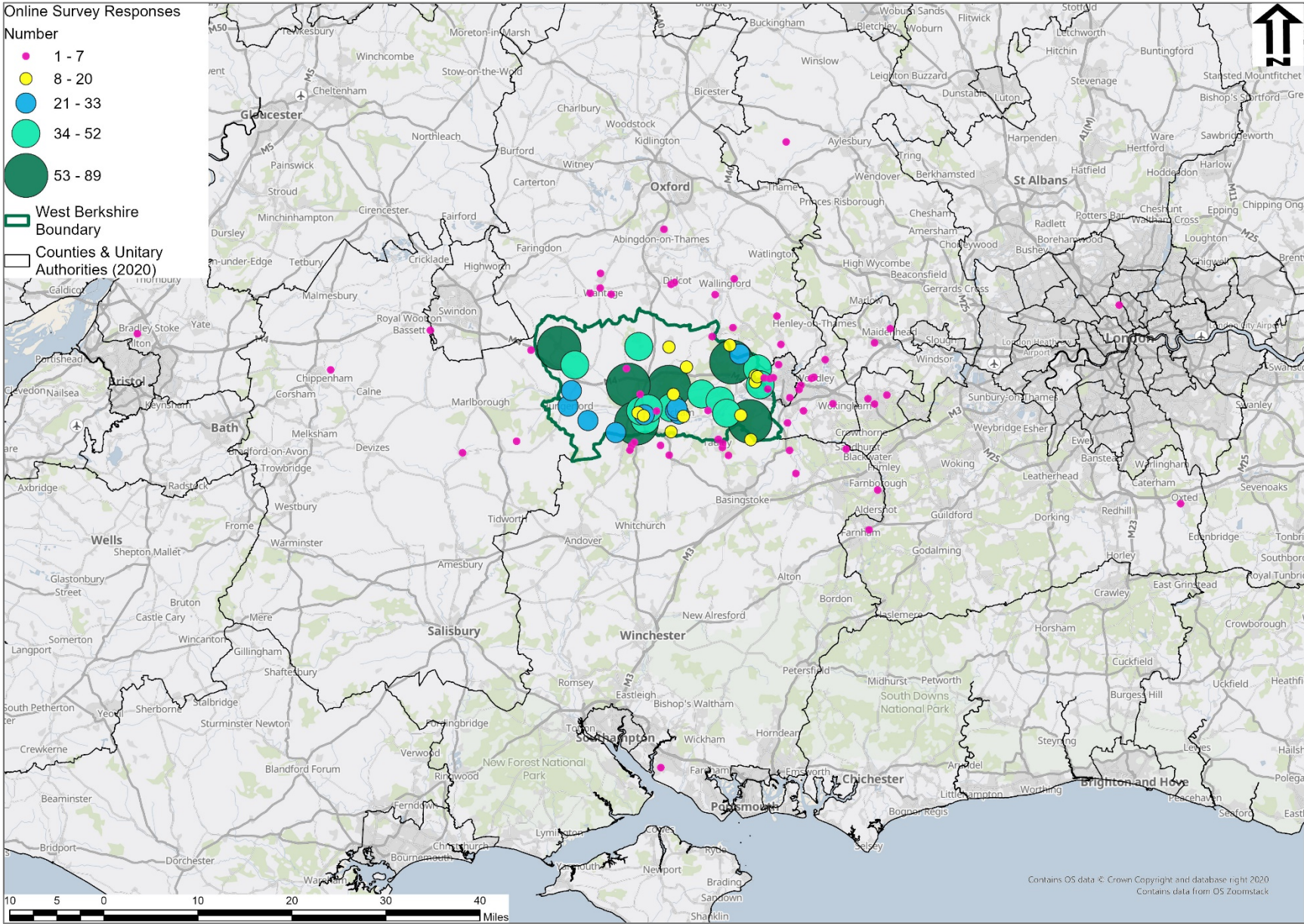
Oxfordshire	41
Abingdon on Thames	1
Cholsey	1
Crowmarsh Gifford	1
Didcot	2
Highmoor Cross	2
Sonning Common	1
Wantage	9
Whitchurch on Thames	21
Woodcote	3

Hampshire	27
Headley	1
Heckfield	1
Highclere / Burghclere	9
Kingsclere	3
Lock's Heath, Southampton	1
Near Hook	2
South Farnborough	1
Tadley	8
Yateley	1

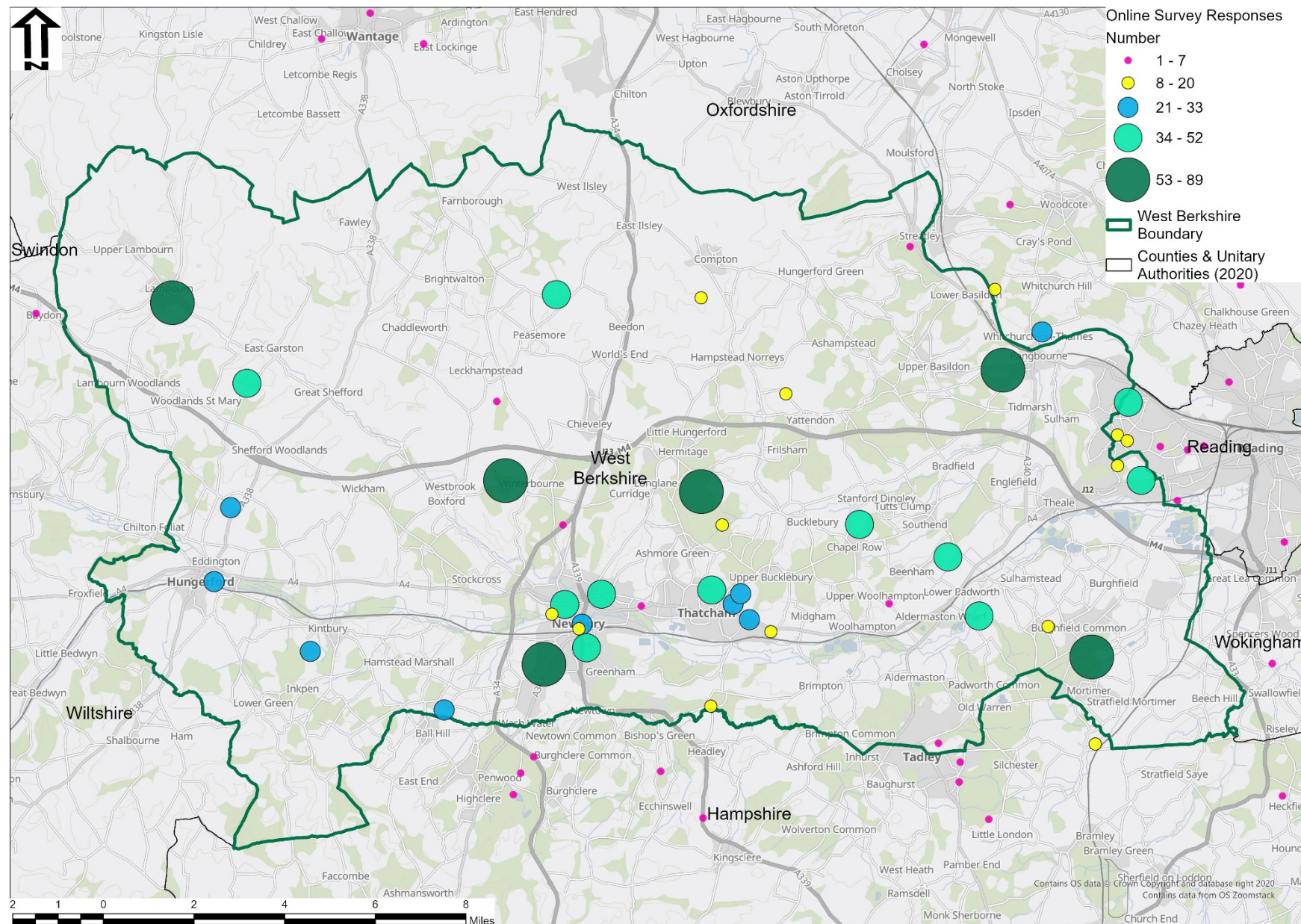
Wokingham	15
Arborfield	1
Earley	1
Spencers Wood	6
Twyford	1
Wokingham	3
Woodley	3

Windsor and Maidenhead	5
Maidenhead	5
Wiltshire	4
Baydon	1
Chippenham	1
East Grafton	1
Pewsey	1
Bracknell Forest	3
Bracknell	3
Surrey	2
Farnham	1
Oxted	1
Buckinghamshire	1
Long Crendon	1
Camden	1
Kentish Town	1
South Gloucestershire	1
Bristol	1
Swindon	1
Swindon	1

Plan 1: Location of Respondents - All Responses



Plan 2: Location of Respondents - West Berkshire Area



Use of Public Rights of Way

Reasons for Using Public Rights of Way

Respondents were asked why they used public rights of way. More than one answer could be chosen. See Table 4 and Chart 2.

- 'Quality of life' reasons featured highly in the responses – 80.9% of respondents gave 'To enjoy the landscape or countryside' as one of their responses (top answer). 'For relaxation and peace and quiet' was third, with 72.1% giving this as an answer, and at fourth 'To enjoy a view' was a reason given by 65.3% of people.
- Health improvement was the second highest reason, given by 74.5% of people;
- The most popular activity was 'Walking without a dog' (58.1% of people and fifth most popular reason for using public rights of way).

A range of other responses were given, see Table 5. The most popular of these was 'running or jogging', given by 45% of people who provided additional comments.

Table 4: Reasons for Using Public Rights of Way

Reasons for using public rights of way (n. 2094)	Number	Percent of all responses	Percent giving this as one of their answers
To enjoy the landscape or countryside	1694	12.0%	80.9%
To improve my health	1561	11.1%	74.5%
For relaxation and peace and quiet	1510	10.7%	72.1%
To enjoy a view	1367	9.7%	65.3%
Walking without a dog	1217	8.6%	58.1%
Spending time with family and friends	1150	8.2%	54.9%
For watching wildlife	1009	7.2%	48.2%
Exploring on my own	917	6.5%	43.8%
Walking with a dog	857	6.1%	40.9%
Cycling on surfaced cycle paths	539	3.8%	25.7%
Cycling off-road, e.g. mountain biking	524	3.7%	25.0%
As an activity with children	493	3.5%	23.5%
As a route to school, to work to the shops or to other facilities, e.g. station	366	2.6%	17.5%
For arts and crafts, e.g. photography, drawing, painting	217	1.5%	10.4%
Horse riding	215	1.5%	10.3%
Other (please specify):	167	1.2%	8.0%
For geocaching	125	0.9%	6.0%
Driving a motorised vehicle, e.g. 4x4, motorbike, quad bike	95	0.7%	4.5%
For fishing and field sports	59	0.4%	2.8%
Carriage driving	22	0.2%	1.1%

Chart 2: Reasons for Using Public Rights of Way

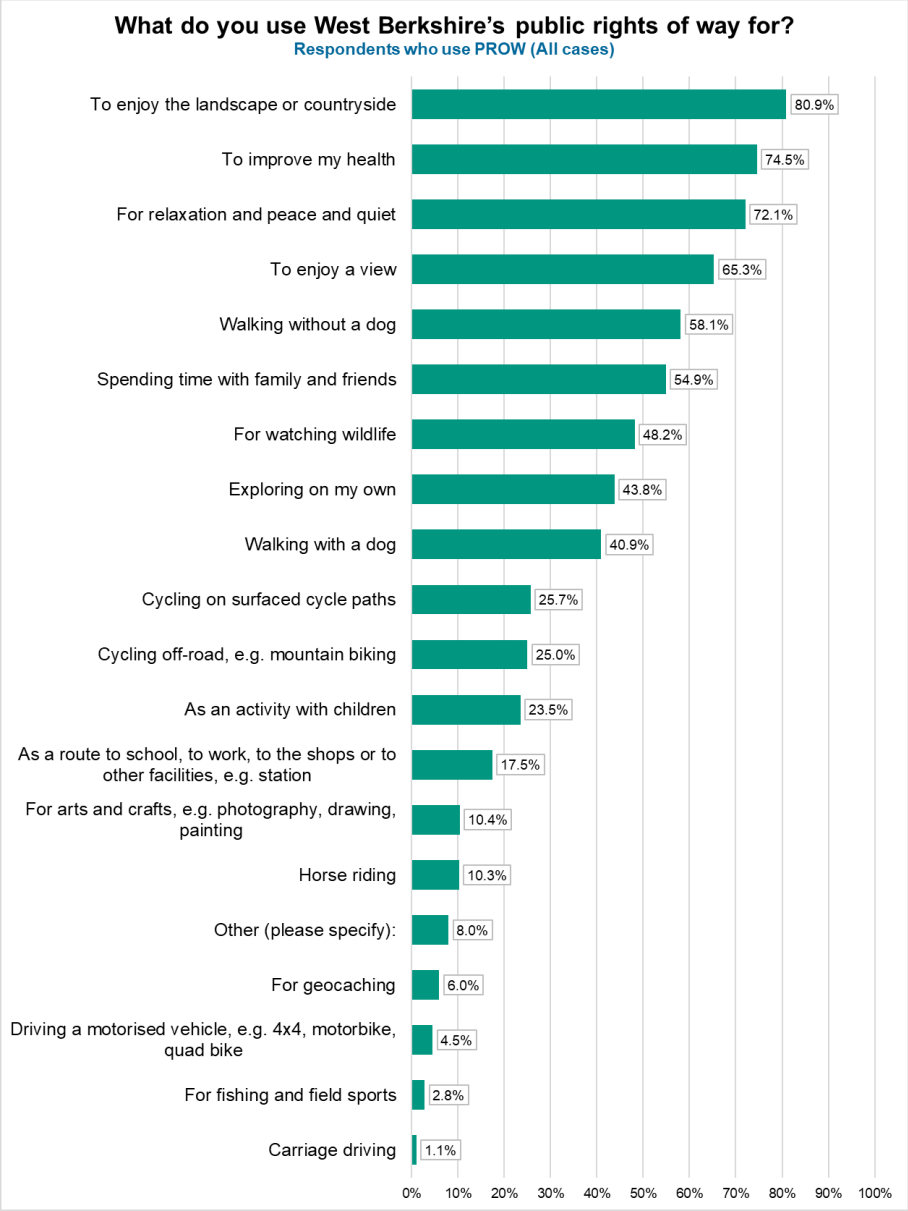


Table 5: Reasons for Using Public Rights of Way - Other Responses

Response (n. 146)	Number	Percentage
Running or jogging	65	45%
Utilitarian (access to home / short cut / for work / to get to place of other activity)	17	12%
Walking group	12	8%
Wildlife recording / appreciating wildlife	10	7%
Mental health / peace and quiet / to get away from people	10	7%
Trail riding	5	3%
Walking with friends and family	4	3%
Exercise	4	3%
D of E / scouting	4	3%
Using electric wheelchair or mobility scooter	3	2%
Visiting heritage sites	3	2%
Foraging	3	2%
Conservation volunteering	2	1%
Nordic walking	2	1%
Canicross	2	1%

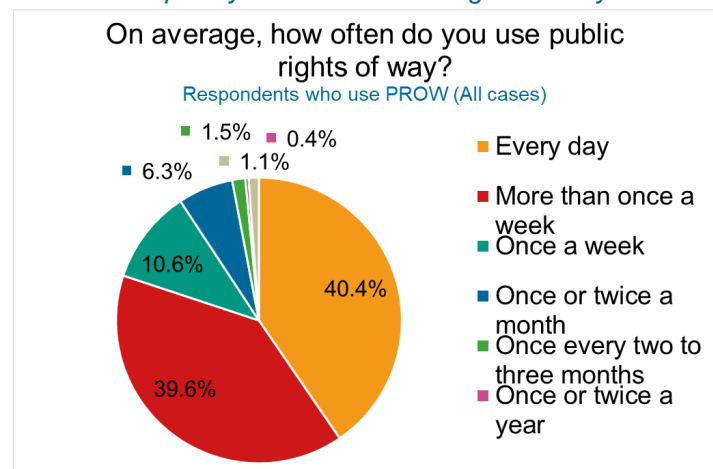
Frequency of Public Rights of Way Use

Respondents were asked, on average, how often they used public rights of way (Table 6 and Chart 3). They could only give one answer. There was a very high level of frequent use of public rights of way - 90.6% used public rights of way once a week or more often.

Table 6: Frequency of Use of Public Rights of Way

Frequency	Frequency	Percent
Every day	847	40.4
More than once a week	830	39.6
Once a week	223	10.6
Once or twice a month	131	6.3
Once every two to three months	31	1.5
Once or twice a year	8	0.4
Other (please specify)	24	1.1
Total	n.2094	100.0

Chart 3: Frequency of Use of Public Rights of Way

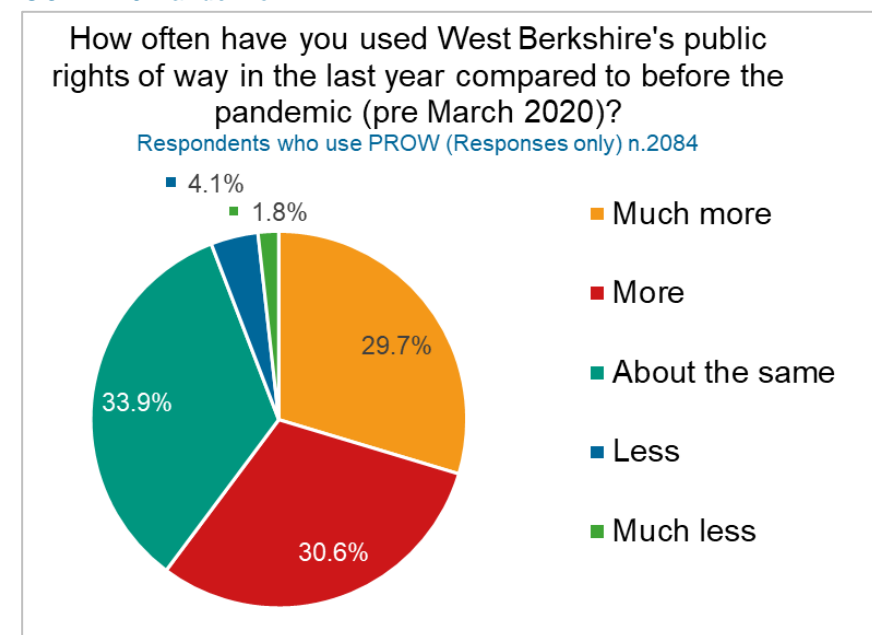


Change in Use of Public Rights of Way During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Respondents were asked whether they had used public rights of way more during the past year (March 2020 to April 2021) compared to the prior to the pandemic (March 2020) (Chart 4).

- 60.3% of people said they had used public rights of way 'more' or 'much more';
- 33.9% said they had used them about the same amount;
- 5.9% said they had used them 'less' or 'much less'.

Chart 4: Frequency of Public Rights of Way Use During vs. Before the COVID-19 Pandemic



Respondents who had used public rights of way more were then asked whether they thought they would continue to use them more often (Table 7).

- 96% of respondents indicated that they intended to use public rights of way more often than they had prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

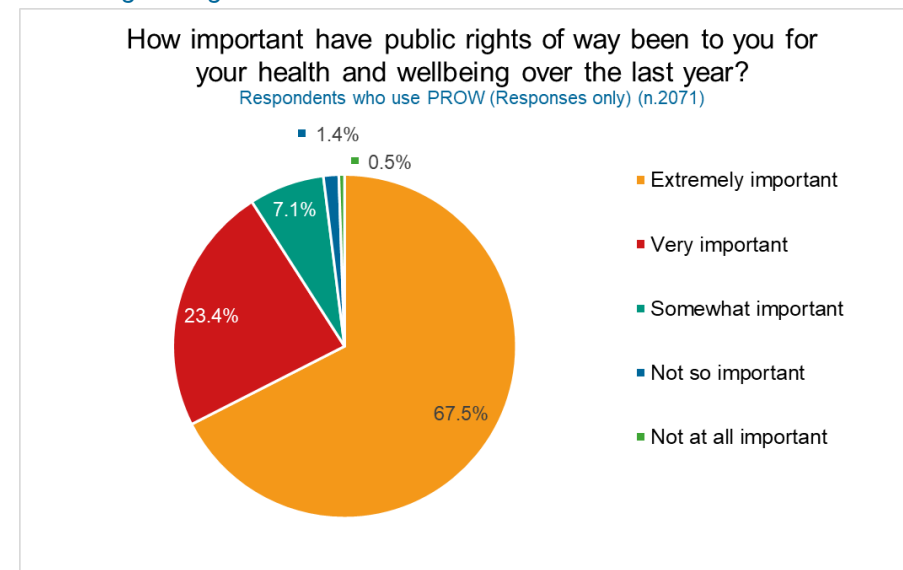
Table 7: Use of Public Rights of Way During vs. Prior to the Pandemic and Intention to Continue to Use Public Rights of Way More

Frequency of Public Rights of Way Use During vs. Before the COVID-19 Pandemic	Number	Percent
Much more	618	29.7
More	637	30.6
About the same	707	33.9
Less	85	4.1
Much less	37	1.8
Total (n.)	2084	100.0
Intention to Continue Using Public Rights of Way More	Number	Percent
Yes	1196	96.0
No	26	2.1
Don't know	24	1.9
Total (n.)	1246	100.0
Not answered	9	

Respondents were also asked how important public rights of way had been to their health and wellbeing during the pandemic year (Chart 5 and Table 8).

98% of people said that public rights of way had been important to them, with 90.9% saying they were 'very important' or 'extremely important'.

Chart 5 and Table 8: Important of Public Rights of Way to Health and Wellbeing During the Pandemic



	Number	Percent
Extremely important	1398	67.5
Very important	485	23.4
Somewhat important	147	7.1
Not so important	30	1.4
Not at all important	11	0.5
Total	n. 2071	100.0

Non-Users - Barriers to Use of Public Rights of Way

A small number of people who do not use public rights of way (n.16) completed the survey. These respondents were asked what prevented them from using public rights of way. They could choose more than one answer.

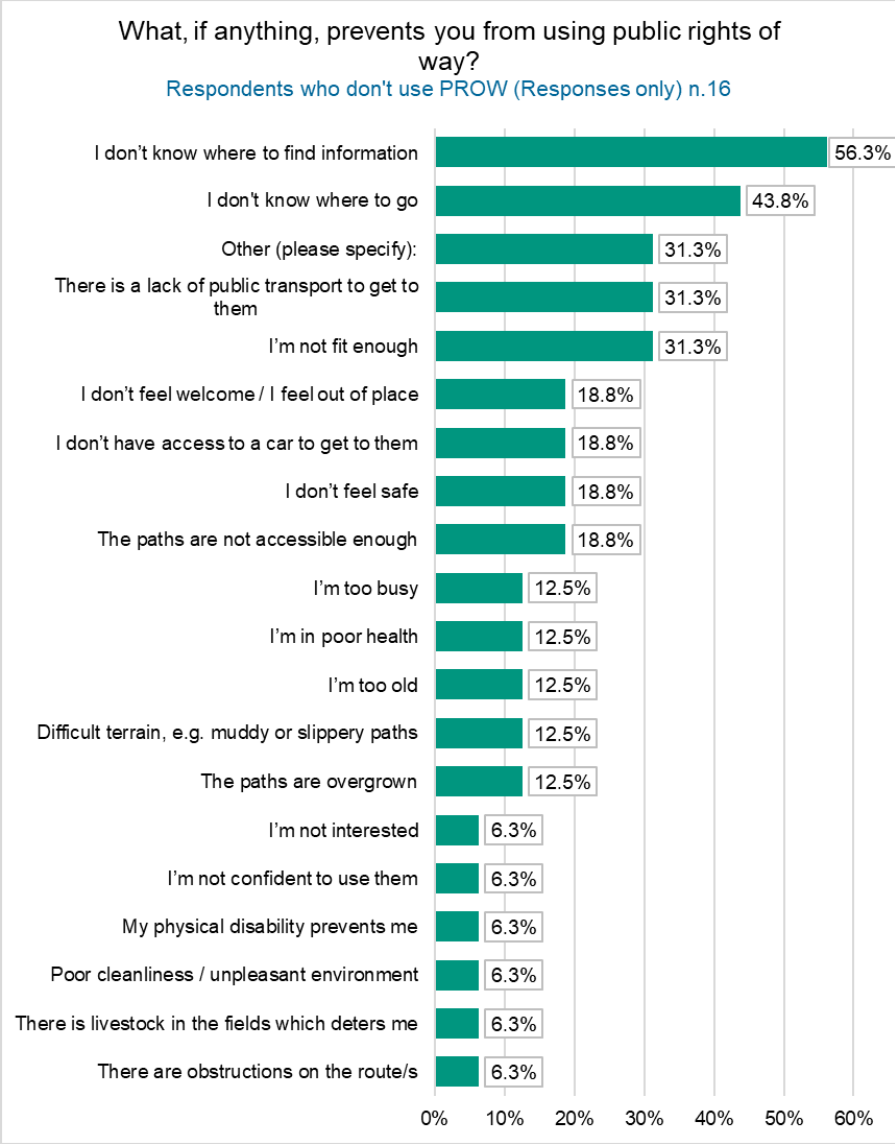
- Lack of information was the highest response, given by 56.3% of people;
- Second highest, given by 43.8% of people was 'I don't know where to go';
- Lack of transport and 'I'm not fit enough' were third equal, given by 31.3% of people;
- Other responses given related to personal circumstances and did not provide further insight.

Respondents were asked what, if anything, would encourage them to use public rights of way. The top four answers related to provision of information, see Table 9.

Table 9: What Would Encourage Non-Users to Use Public Rights of Way

Responses (n.16)	Number	Percent	Percentage giving this as one of their answers
Information on places I could visit using public rights of way	12	20.7%	70.6%
Online guides for walks	11	19.0%	64.7%
Information on public rights of way close to where I live	10	17.2%	58.8%
Printed guides for walks	7	12.1%	41.2%
Public rights of way that are in better condition	6	10.3%	35.3%
Better signposting	3	5.2%	17.6%
Public rights of way that are more accessible, e.g. fewer stiles	3	5.2%	17.6%
Organised walks led by guides	2	3.4%	11.8%
Information on walking groups I could join	2	3.4%	11.8%
Nothing would encourage me to use public rights of way	1	1.7%	5.9%
Other (please specify):	1	1.7%	5.9%

Table 10: Reasons Non-Users do not Use Public Rights of Way

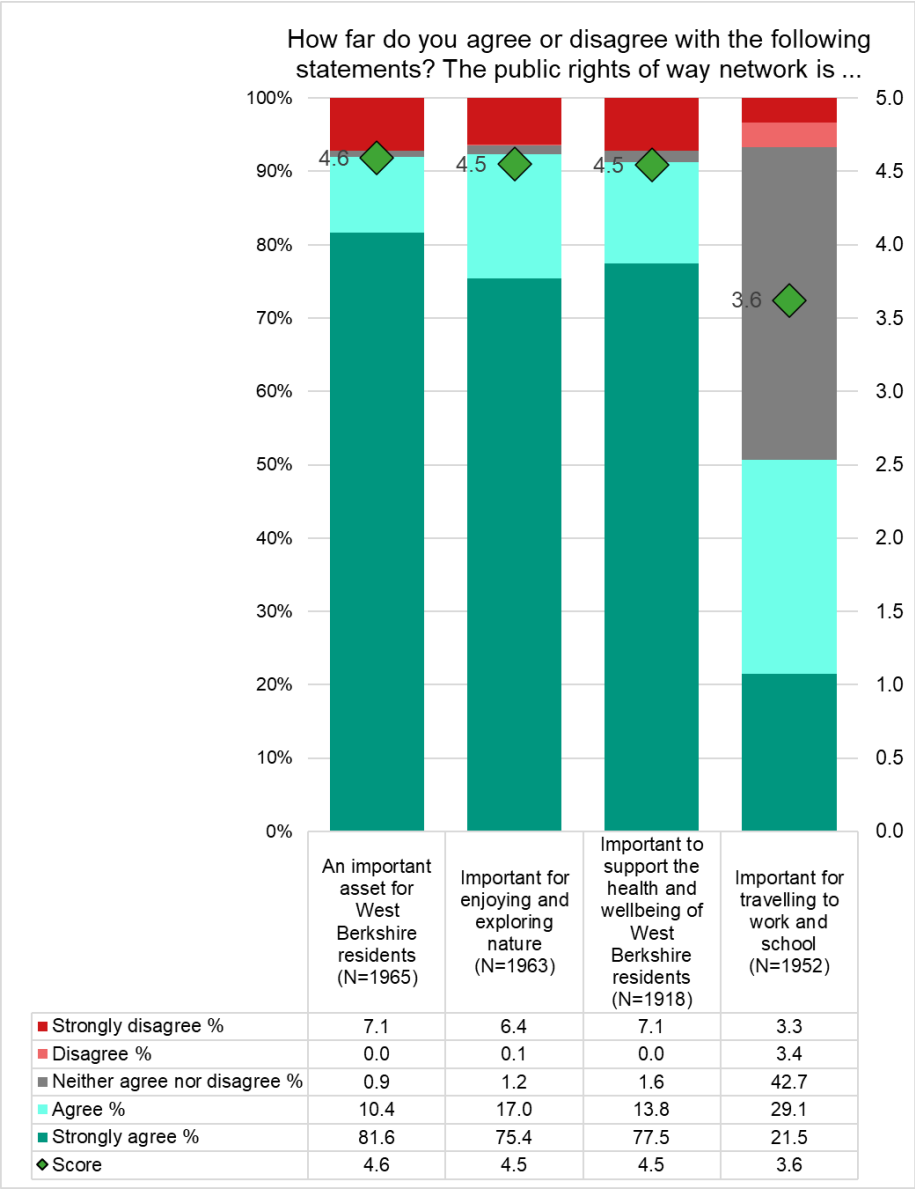


Views on the Importance of Public Rights of Way

Respondents were asked a series of questions around how they viewed the importance of public rights of way, see Chart 6:

- 92% agreed or strongly agreed that public rights of way were an important asset for West Berkshire residents;
- 91.2% agreed or strongly agreed that public rights of way are important to support the health and wellbeing of West Berkshire residents;
- 92.4% agreed or strongly agreed that public rights of way are important for enjoying and exploring nature.
- 50.6% agreed or strongly agreed that public rights of way are important for travelling to work or school.

Chart 6: Views on the Importance of Public Rights of Way



Maintenance and Issues with Public Rights of Way

Problems Encountered on Public Rights of Way

Respondents were asked if they had encountered problems when using West Berkshire’s public rights of way.

- 55.2 % of people had encountered a problem;
- 44.8% of people had not encountered a problem.

People were then asked what problems they had encountered from a list as shown in Table 11 and Chart 7. They could give more than one response.

- The problem most frequently encountered was ‘overgrown paths’, with 54% of people giving this response;
- Second highest, with 50.8% giving this as one of their answers, was ‘surfaces in poor condition’;
- Third was ‘Issues with livestock’ with 39.4% of people;
- There were also issues with waymarking and signposting – 37.1% had encountered a lack of waymarking and 27.4% a missing fingerpost at the start of the public right of way;
- 24% had encountered paths being deliberately blocked.

Some respondents gave responses under ‘other comments’. These are collated in Table 12.

Table 11: Problems Encountered on Public Rights of Way – Answers from Lists Provided

	Number (Total n.1126)	Percent	Percent of people giving this as one of their answers
Overgrown paths	608	13.3%	54.0%
Surfaces in poor condition	572	12.6%	50.8%
Issues with livestock	444	9.7%	39.4%
Other (please specify):	431	9.5%	38.3%
Lack of waymarking along routes (directional signs on the route showing you where to go)	418	9.2%	37.1%
Fallen trees or other obstructions on the route	413	9.1%	36.7%
Stiles in poor condition	345	7.6%	30.6%
Lack of fingerpost signs showing the start of public rights of way from the road	309	6.8%	27.4%
Paths deliberately blocked	270	5.9%	24.0%
Routes blocked by crops	210	4.6%	18.7%
Aggressive dogs	170	3.7%	15.1%
Dog fouling	128	2.8%	11.4%
Threatening behaviour by path users	85	1.9%	7.5%
Bridges in poor condition	79	1.7%	7.0%
Threatening behaviour by landowners	75	1.6%	6.7%

Chart 7: Problems Encountered on Public Rights of Way

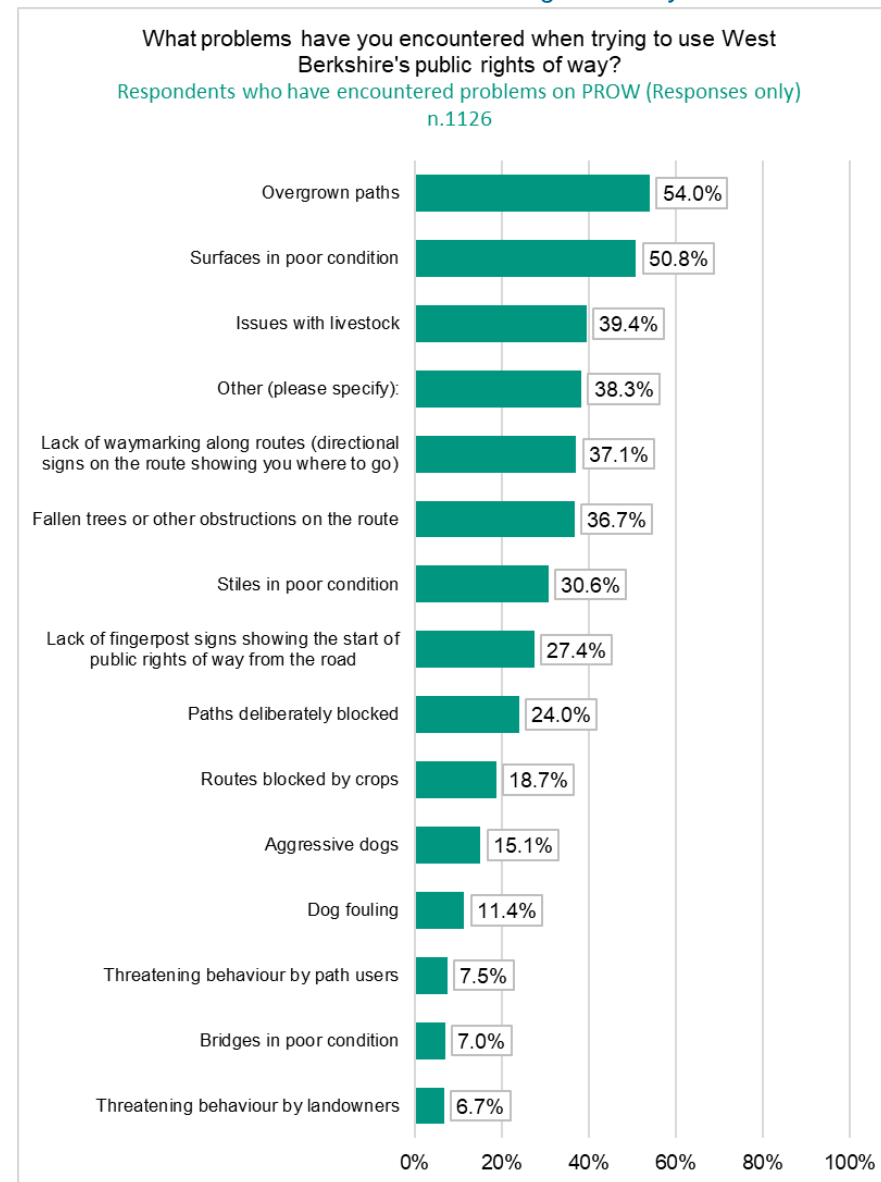


Table 12: Problems on Public Rights of Way - Other Comments

Response	Number (n.487)	Percent
4 x 4 and motorbikes users (intimidating, damage to surface, using paths not entitled to)	71	15%
Fly-tipping / litter	51	10%
Obstructions / hazards	45	9%
Cyclists (on public footpaths or pavements, aggressive, giving no warning, travelling too fast)	42	9%
Other	38	8%
Surface issue / muddy paths	38	8%
Dogs (aggressive, not on leads, dog mess)	37	8%
Accessibility - lack of gates, stiles which are impassable to people with mobility issues or dogs,	33	7%
Disconnected network	22	5%
Lack of signs / misleading signs	20	4%
Maintenance issues	18	4%
Flooding	17	3%
Lack of social distancing / too busy in pandemic	15	3%
Use of footpaths by horse riders	12	2%
Walkers aggressive / intimidating to cyclists, horse riders, 4x4 or motorbike users	11	2%
Ploughed fields	8	2%
Aggressive or intimidating landowner	5	1%
Issues with bridleway gates	4	1%

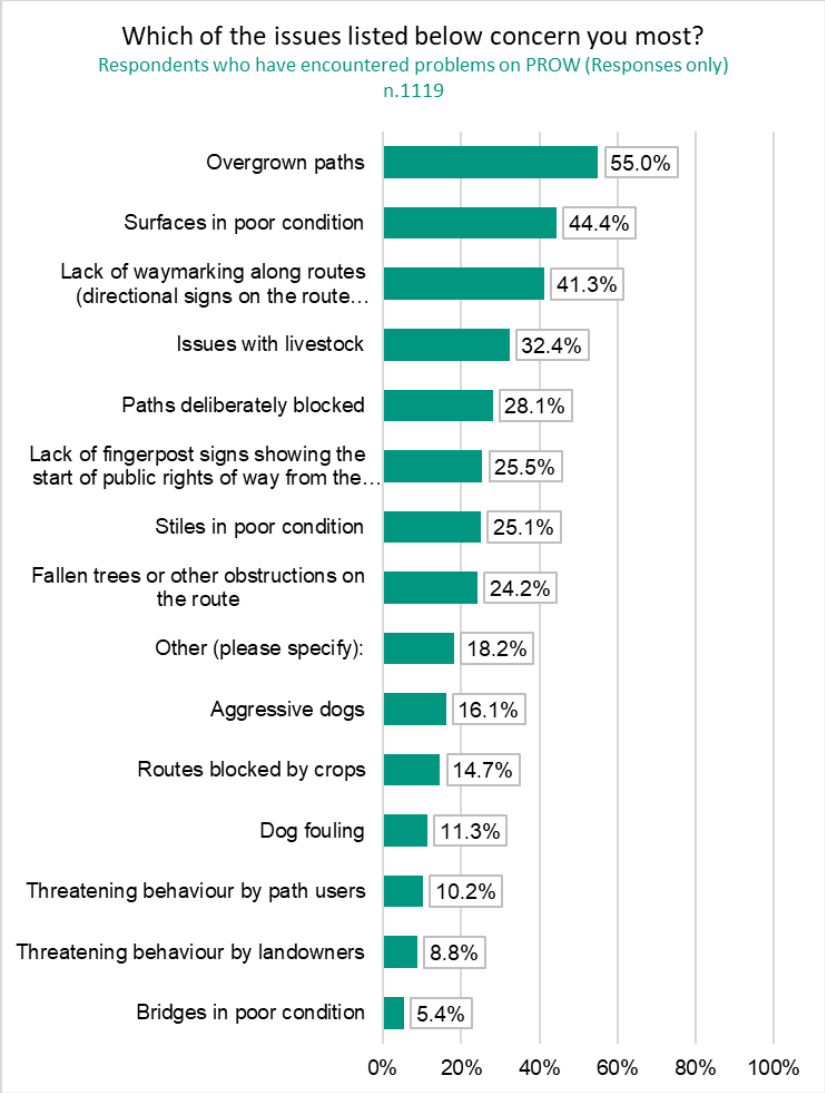
Levels of Concern Over Issues

Respondents were asked which of the problems concerned them the most, see Chart 8 and Table 13. The priorities given to problems was similar to the problems which had been encountered. The largest differences were 'Paths deliberately blocked' which was three ranking places higher in the priority list and 'Fallen trees or other obstructions' which moved down three ranking places in the priority list.

Table 13: Difference in Rank - Problems Encountered vs. Priority of Problem with Users

	Rank – Problem Encountered	Rank - Priority	Difference in Ranking
Overgrown paths	1	1	Same
Surfaces in poor condition	2	2	Same
Issues with livestock	3	4	-1
Lack of waymarking along routes	4	3	1
Fallen trees or other obstructions	5	8	-3
Stiles in poor condition	6	7	-1
Lack of fingerpost signs showing the start of public rights of way from the road	7	6	1
Paths deliberately blocked	8	5	3
Routes blocked by crops	9	10	-1
Aggressive dogs	10	9	1
Dog fouling	11	11	Same
Threatening behaviour by path users	12	12	Same
Bridges in poor condition	13	14	-1
Threatening behaviour by landowners	14	13	1

Chart 8: Level of Concern Around Issues



How People Report Problems

Respondents were asked how they would report a problem on a public right of way. This was a free text answer to gauge the level of awareness of ways to report problems (rather than ‘guessing’ from a list). Respondents sometimes gave more than one answer (see Table 14 and Chart 9).

- There seemed to be good awareness that West Berkshire Council was responsible for public rights of way² as the highest scoring response was to West Berkshire Council – through a range of methods (28%);
- The second highest result was ‘to the council’ – through a range of methods (27%);
- The third highest response was ‘I don’t know / I wouldn’t report a problem’ (22%);
- 6% of people would report a public rights of way issue to their parish or town council;
- 3% of respondents stated they would report an issue to the rights of way officer or Countryside Team;
- 2% stated they would use the ‘Report a Problem’ function on the West Berkshire website. Chart 10 shows how people indicated they would contact West Berkshire Council.

Reporting Problems on Public Rights of Way

² Although the survey was hosted and run by West Berkshire Council so this may have influenced this result.

Table 14: Where Respondents would Report Problems with Public Rights of Way

Response	Number (n.2027)	Percentage of responses
To West Berkshire Council (various methods)	574	28%
To 'the council' (unspecified)	548	27%
Don't know or 'I would not report a problem'	443	22%
Parish or Town Council	116	6%
I would search the internet	86	4%
Rights of Way Officer or Countryside Team	63	3%
Ramblers' Association	32	2%
By email or phone (not stated to whom)	31	2%
Police	28	1%
'Streetcare', 'Fix my Street' or WBC Highways	27	1%
Councillor	25	1%
Other interest group (BHS, TRF, Wildlife Trust, Ridgeway Officer, Canal Trust)	22	1%
Through social media	16	1%
To the landowner	16	1%

Chart 9: Where Respondents would Report Problems with Public Rights of Way

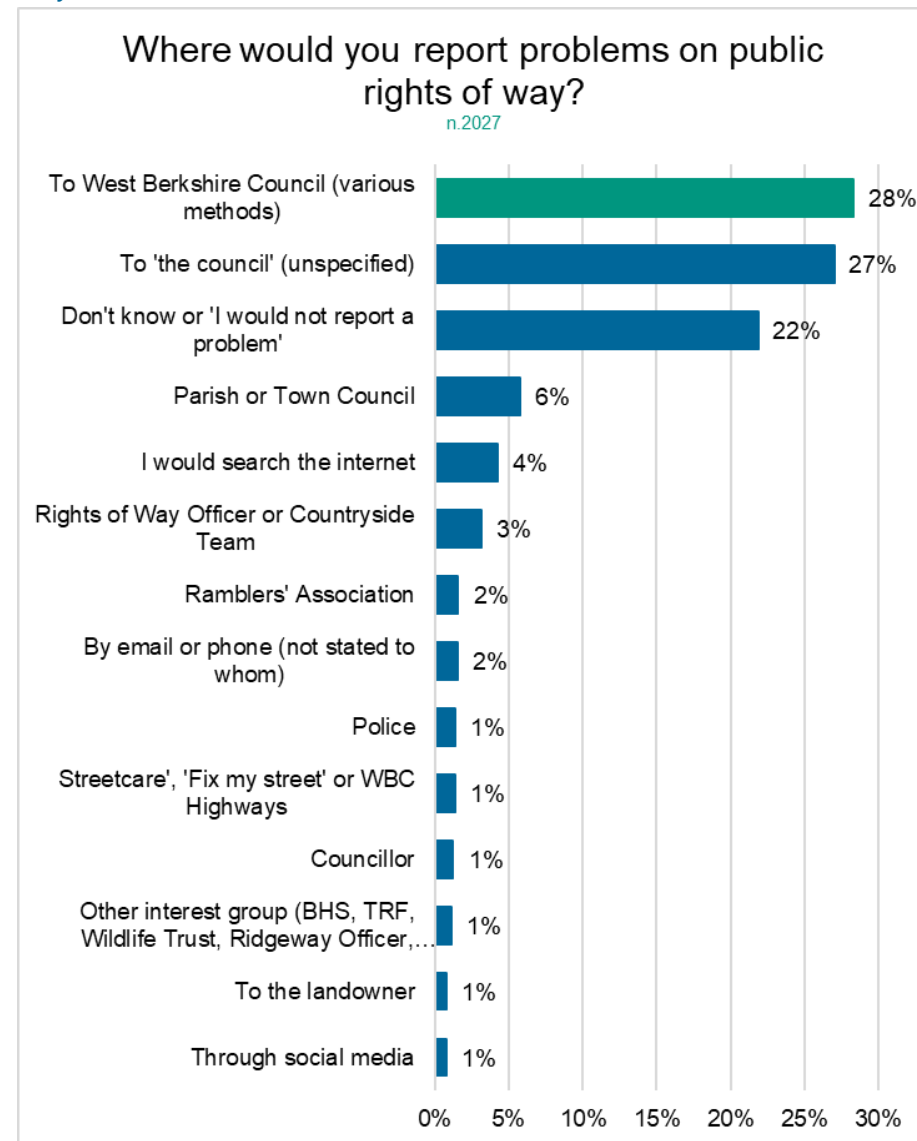
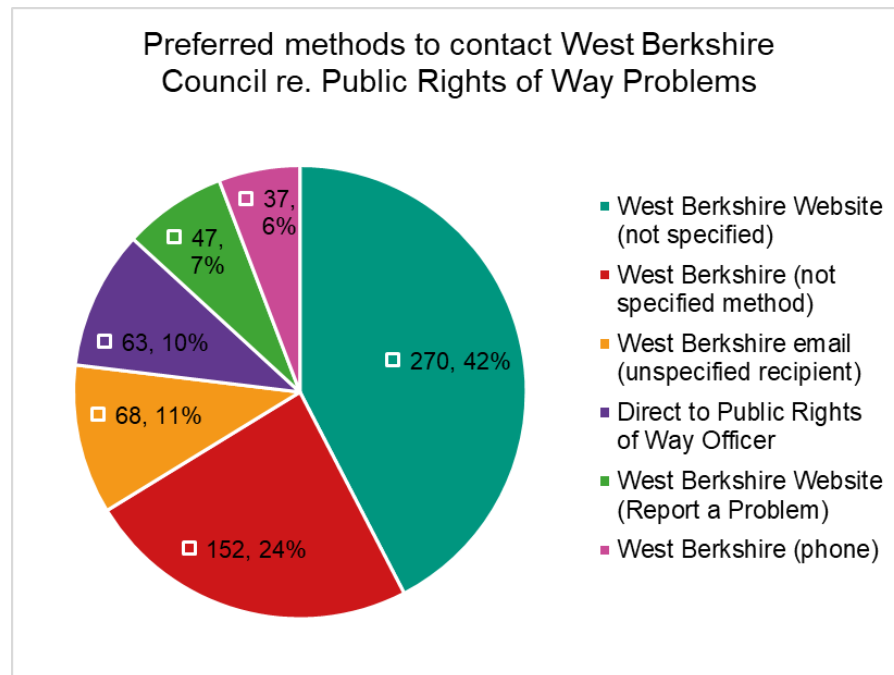


Chart 10: Preferred Methods to contact West Berkshire Council

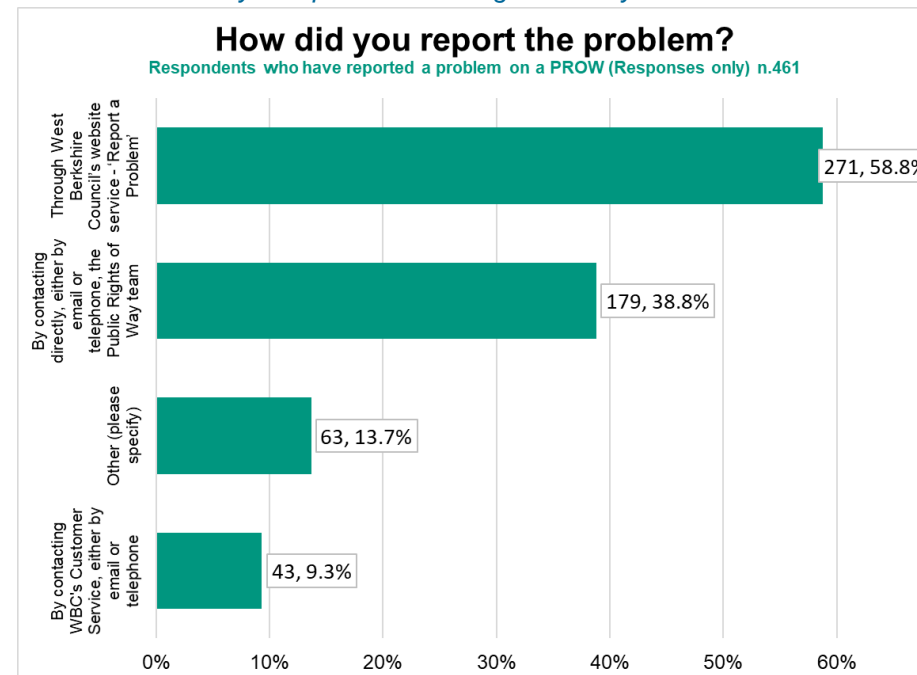


Respondents were then asked if they had ever reported a public rights of way issue to West Berkshire Council:

- 77% (n.1557) of those responding had not reported a problem;
- 23% (n.466) had reported a problem.

Those who had reported a problem were asked how they had reported the problem (more than one method could be given) (see Chart 11). The most popular method was through West Berkshire Council's 'Report a Problem' online service.

Chart 11: How did you report a Public Rights of Way Problem?



63 people gave responses under 'other'. Those answers which were not a repetition of one of the three previous options or were not 'I can't remember' were:

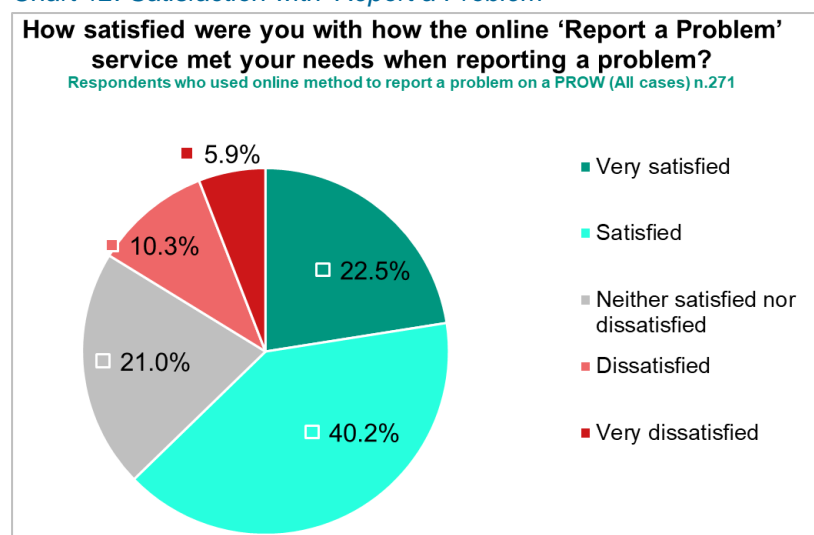
- 12 had reported through the parish council;
- 12 had reported through their local councillor;
- 1 had reported through their Member of Parliament;
- Other responses were 'Fix my Street' (2), letter (2), user representative group interest group (5), Tree Officer (1), Police (3); landowner (1), through an app (unspecified) (1), through social media (1).

Satisfaction with 'Report a Problem' Online Service

Those who used the 'Report a Problem' service were then asked how well it met their needs (Chart 12).

- The majority of people (62.7%) using 'Report a Problem' were satisfied or very satisfied that it met their needs when reporting a problem;
- 16.2% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Chart 12: Satisfaction with 'Report a Problem'



Respondents could add reasons for their response and anything which could be done to improve their experience of 'Report a Problem'. The answers given were:

- Although sometimes with excessive delay to action help is often available (satisfied);
- Satisfied on fly tipping clearance. Not satisfied on damage to signage report (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied);

- Repeated issue in the same area, lack of response or recognition of the issue (very dissatisfied);
- Time taken for situation to be fully rectified (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied);
- Unless required little action by WBC unlikely to get action (very dissatisfied);
- The path was cleared however we still get motorbikes every week using bridleway (satisfied);
- West Berkshire Council are a bit slow but Parish Council are much more proactive. Also takes several times of reporting to West Berkshire Council and always get a generic email reply (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied);
- Generally get a response to the listing and response to the site specific problem (very satisfied);
- I and another person reported the unreasonable amount of litter on the road verges through Ashampstead Common which spreads into the woods. Neither of us have had a response (dissatisfied);
- Inability to understand the "hurt" being suffered when other home owners don't comply with the Highways Act of 1980 and the use of signage at 2.3 metres versus foliage growth (very dissatisfied);
- Solve the flooded path, ensure those responsible maintained their property, ensure landowners don't ride roughshod over the rules (very dissatisfied);
- Have more capability available (very dissatisfied);
- Ensure that all departments respond in accordance with your Code of Conduct. Highways are meticulous but - for example - Waste are not (dissatisfied);

- Listen carefully to the problem and take action to apply the Act of Parliament as it was meant to be applied when the act was introduced (very dissatisfied).

Service of West Berkshire Council Responding to Reported Problems

Respondents who had reported a problem were asked to rate the service of West Berkshire Council in dealing with their problem.

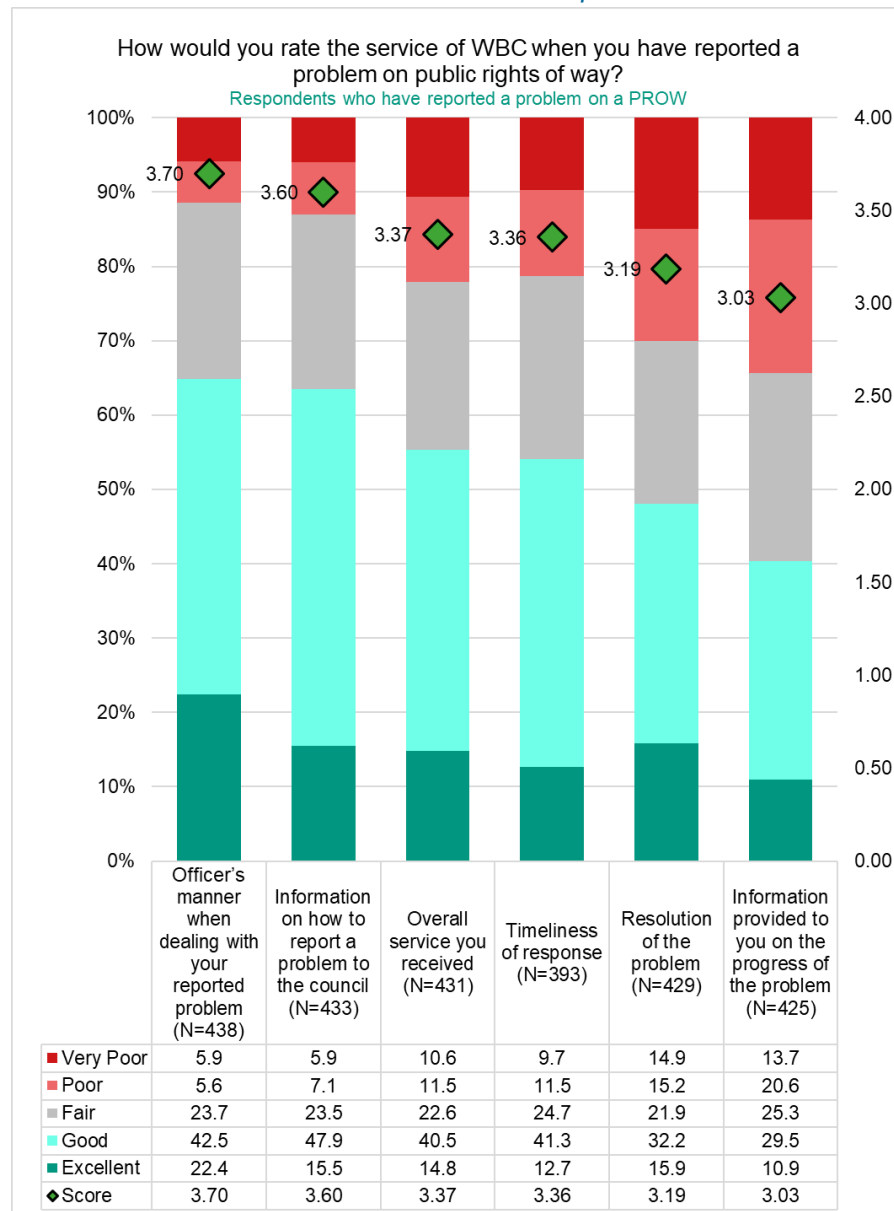
Respondents could choose from very poor, poor, fair, good or excellent. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (very poor – 1, poor – 2, fair – 3, good – 4, excellent – 5). A higher score indicates greater satisfaction.

All aspects of service provision had an average score of 'good'; The ranking of the aspects are shown in Table 15 and Chart 13.

Table 15: Ranking of Satisfaction with Service Provision - Reported Problems

Aspect of Service Delivery	Percentage 'good' and 'excellent'	Average score
Officer's manner when dealing with your reported problem	64.9	3.7
Information on how to report a problem to the council	63.4	3.6
Overall service received	55.3	3.37
Timeliness of response	54.0	3.36
Resolution of the problem	48.1	3.19
Information provided to you on the progress of the problem	40.4	3.03

Chart 13: Satisfaction of Service Provision to Reported Problems



Some respondents made additional comments. It is likely that some of these comments relate to other services rather than public rights of way (for example potholes). The comments were grouped as below:

- 84 comments were poor – no response / poor response / not satisfied with outcome / no resolution;
- 60 comments were good – good response / resolution to problem;
- 38 comments were mixed – some good points but lacking in some areas;
- There were 41 other comments.

Priorities for Public Rights of Way Service Delivery

Respondents were asked to rank five aspects of the Public Rights of Way Service. Respondents could choose from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (strongly disagree – 1, disagree – 2, neither agree nor disagree – 3, agree – 4, strongly agree – 5). A score over 3 indicates that on average respondents agreed with the statement and the closer the value to 5, the higher the level of agreement with the statement (Chart 14 and Table 16).

All aspects of rights of way scored 4 or over, meaning that respondents agreed that all these areas were important aspects of public rights of way delivery.

Chart 14: Priorities for Public Rights of Way Delivery

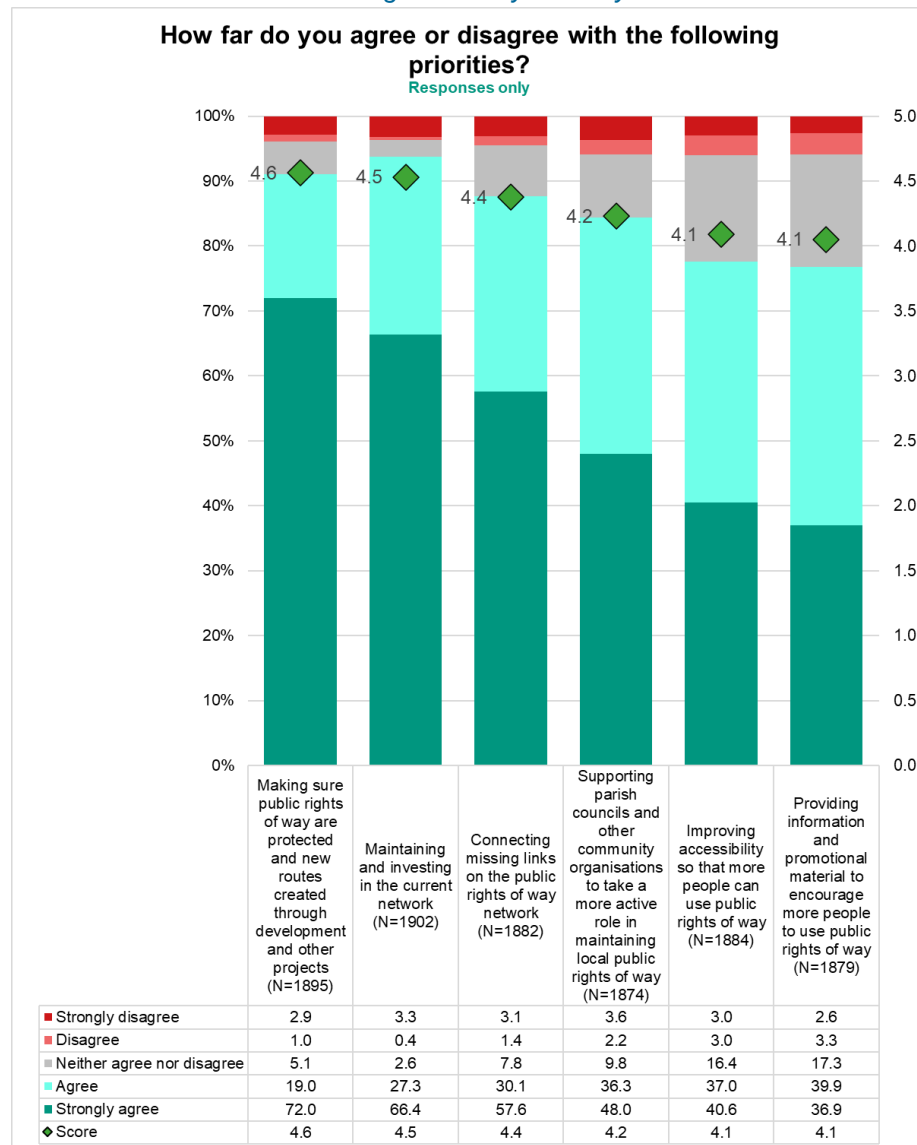


Table 16: Priorities for Public Rights of Way Delivery (Ranked)

Aspect of Service Delivery	Percentage 'agree' and 'strongly agree'	Average score
Making sure public rights of way are protected and new routes created through development and other projects	91.0	4.56
Maintaining and investing in the current network	93.7	4.53
Connecting missing links on the public rights of way network	87.7	4.38
Supporting parish councils and other community organisations to take a more active role in maintaining local public rights of way	84.3	4.23
Improving accessibility so that more people can use public rights of way	77.6	4.09
Providing information and promotional material to encourage more people to use public rights of way	76.8	4.05

Respondents were asked if there were any other priorities which should be considered. 37.3% of people indicated there were additional priorities, see Table 17.

Table 17: Other Priorities

Response	Number (n.215)	Percent
Other	84	39%
Remove / prevent fly tipping, littering, dog mess	25	12%
Stopping unauthorised use (cyclists, horse riders, motorised vehicles where not permitted)	22	10%
Accessibility improvements / information	17	8%
Connecting routes / preventing routes being removed / claiming paths / more public rights of way	14	7%
Education of users / Countryside Code	12	6%
More / better connected / improved bridleways	11	5%
More cycle routes	11	5%
Winter closures of BOATS / downgrades	10	5%
More areas for 4x4 and motorised vehicles / review current closures	9	4%

Information Provision

Finding out About Public Rights of Way

Respondents were asked how they found out about public rights of way in West Berkshire, see Table 18 and Chart 15.

- The most popular responses were 'local knowledge' with 67.8% giving this as one of their answers and Ordnance Survey maps, with 67.2% giving this as one of their answers;
- Third was 'word of mouth' with 42.8% giving this as one of their answers;
- West Berkshire Council's website was the fifth most popular answer, but only 18.2% of people used this source.

Respondents also gave a number of other sources from which they found out about where to go, see Table 19.

Table 18: How Users find out About Public Rights of Way

Responses	Number (n.1997)	Percent	Percent giving this as one of their answers
Local knowledge	1353	20.4%	67.8%
Ordnance Survey maps	1342	20.2%	67.2%
Word of mouth	854	12.9%	42.8%
GPS maps/website maps via mobile phone	707	10.7%	35.4%
Guide books	459	6.9%	23.0%
West Berkshire Council's website	363	5.5%	18.2%
Leaflets	346	5.2%	17.3%
Other (please specify):	334	5.0%	16.7%
The Ridgeway National Trail website	206	3.1%	10.3%
Through a club or society (please specify in 'Other')	163	2.5%	8.2%
The Thames Path National Trail website	160	2.4%	8.0%
North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscape)	133	2.0%	6.7%
Visit Newbury website	83	1.3%	4.2%
I don't know how to find out information	68	1.0%	3.4%
Walking Britain website	63	0.9%	3.2%

Chart 15: How Users find out About Public Rights of Way

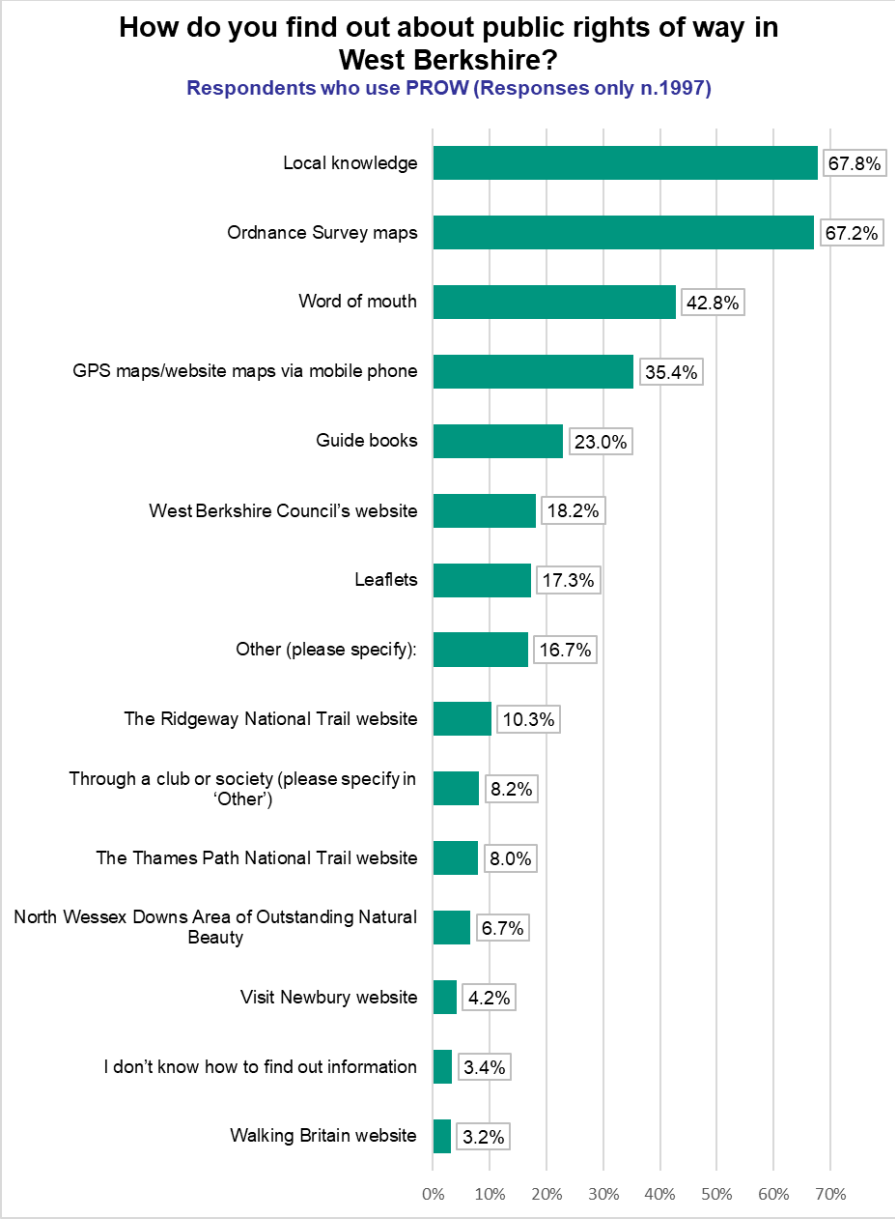


Table 19: Other Sources of Information about Public Rights of Way

Responses	Number (n.354)	Percent
Just explore / look for signs / know the area	47	13%
Other groups	43	12%
Ramblers' Association	39	11%
Other	33	9%
Other website	31	9%
Trail Riders Fellowship / GLASS	30	8%
Internet search / Google	25	7%
Facebook	19	5%
All Trails App	18	5%
Other App	18	5%
Guide books / leaflets	15	4%
Health Walks	14	4%
Parish Council	12	3%
Geocaching	10	3%

Awareness of Promotional Material on West Berkshire Council's Website

Respondents were asked if they were aware that there were downloadable resources for routes available on West Berkshire Council's website.

- 25.5% of respondents were aware of this material;
- 74.5% of respondents were not aware.

Use of Promotional Material on West Berkshire Council's Website

Respondents were then asked whether they had used the leaflets which are available on the website. These were categorised into circular walks, longer distance walks and walks produced for some of the parishes.

Circular Routes

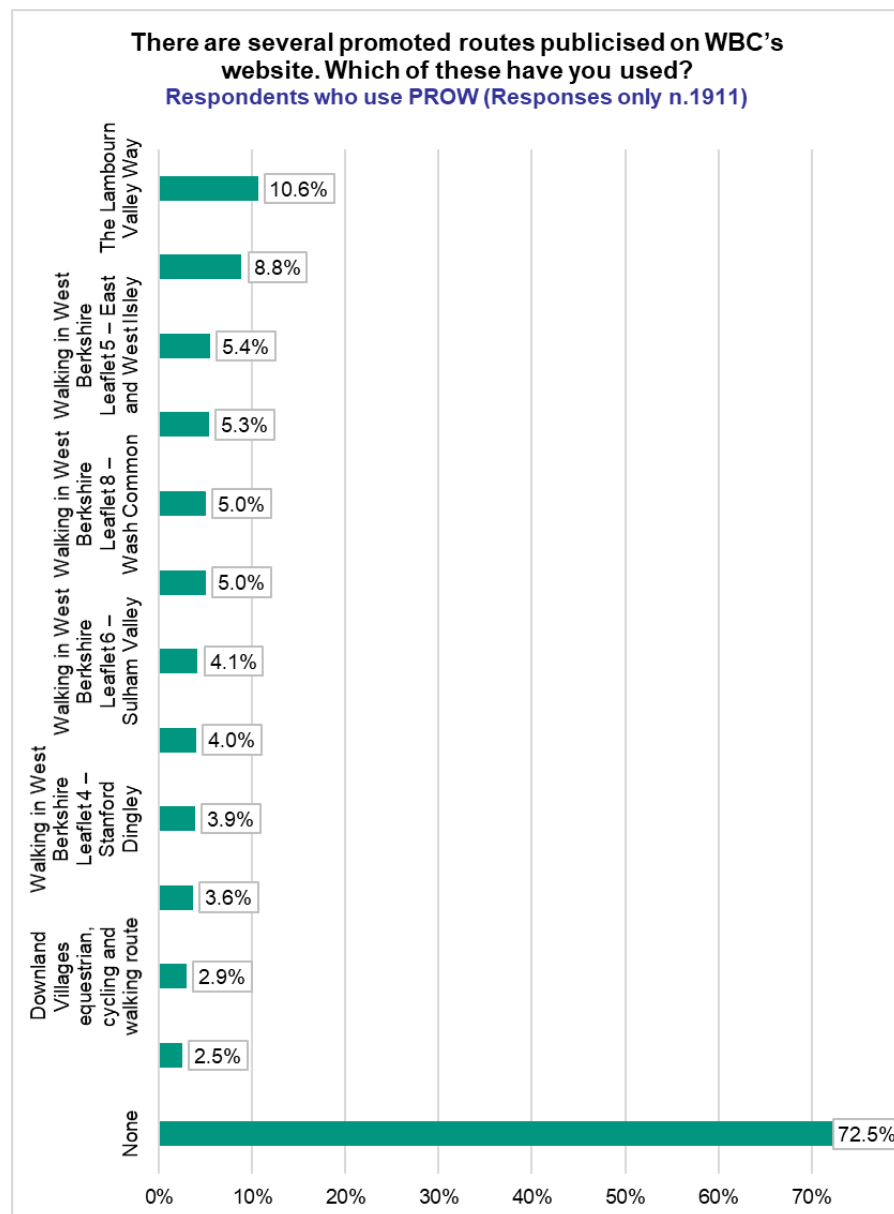
Respondents were asked about their use of 12 circular routes, see Table 20 and Chart 16.

- Most people (72.5%) of people who answered this question had not used any of the circular routes;
- The most popular route was the Lambourn Valley Way, with 10.6% of people having used this route.

Table 20: Use of Circular Routes on West Berkshire Council Website

Responses	Number (n.1911)	Percent	Percentage giving this as one of their answers
None	1385	54.2%	72.5%
The Lambourn Valley Way	203	7.9%	10.6%
Speen Moor Circular Route	169	6.6%	8.8%
Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet 5 – East and West Ilsley	104	4.1%	5.4%
Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet 7 – Inkpen	102	4.0%	5.3%
Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet 1 - Compton	95	3.7%	5.0%
Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet 8 – Wash Common	95	3.7%	5.0%
Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet 6 – Sulham Valley	79	3.1%	4.1%
Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet 2 – Bradfield	76	3.0%	4.0%
Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet 4 – Stanford Dingley	74	2.9%	3.9%
Walking in West Berkshire Leaflet 3 – Mortimer	69	2.7%	3.6%
Downland Villages equestrian, cycling and walking route	56	2.2%	2.9%
Ilsley Downs Riding Route	47	1.8%	2.5%

Chart 16: Use of Circular Routes on West Berkshire Council Website



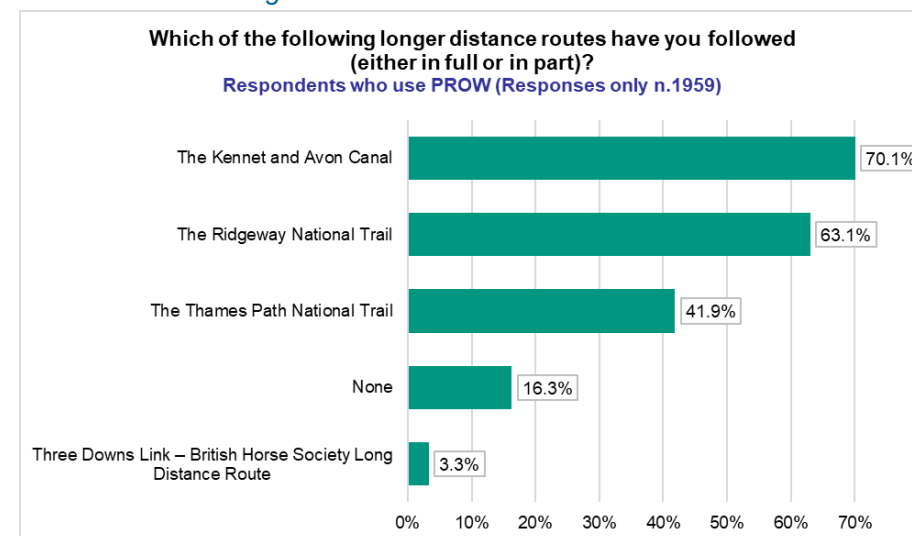
Use of Longer Distance Routes

Use of the longer distance routes was higher than the circular routes. 16.3% of people had not followed one of these routes (in full or in part) (Table 21 and Chart 17).

Table 21: Use of Longer Distance Routes

Responses	Number (n.1959)	Percent	Percent of people giving this as one of their answers
The Kennet and Avon Canal	1374	36.0%	70.1%
The Ridgeway National Trail	1236	32.4%	63.1%
The Thames Path National Trail	820	21.5%	41.9%
None	319	8.4%	16.3%
Three Downs Link – British Horse Society Long Distance Route	65	1.7%	3.3%

Chart 17: Use of Longer Distance Routes



Use of Parish Walks

Most respondents (82.2%) had not used any of the parish walks. Of those which had been used, Bucklebury and Inkpen were the most popular, see Table 22.

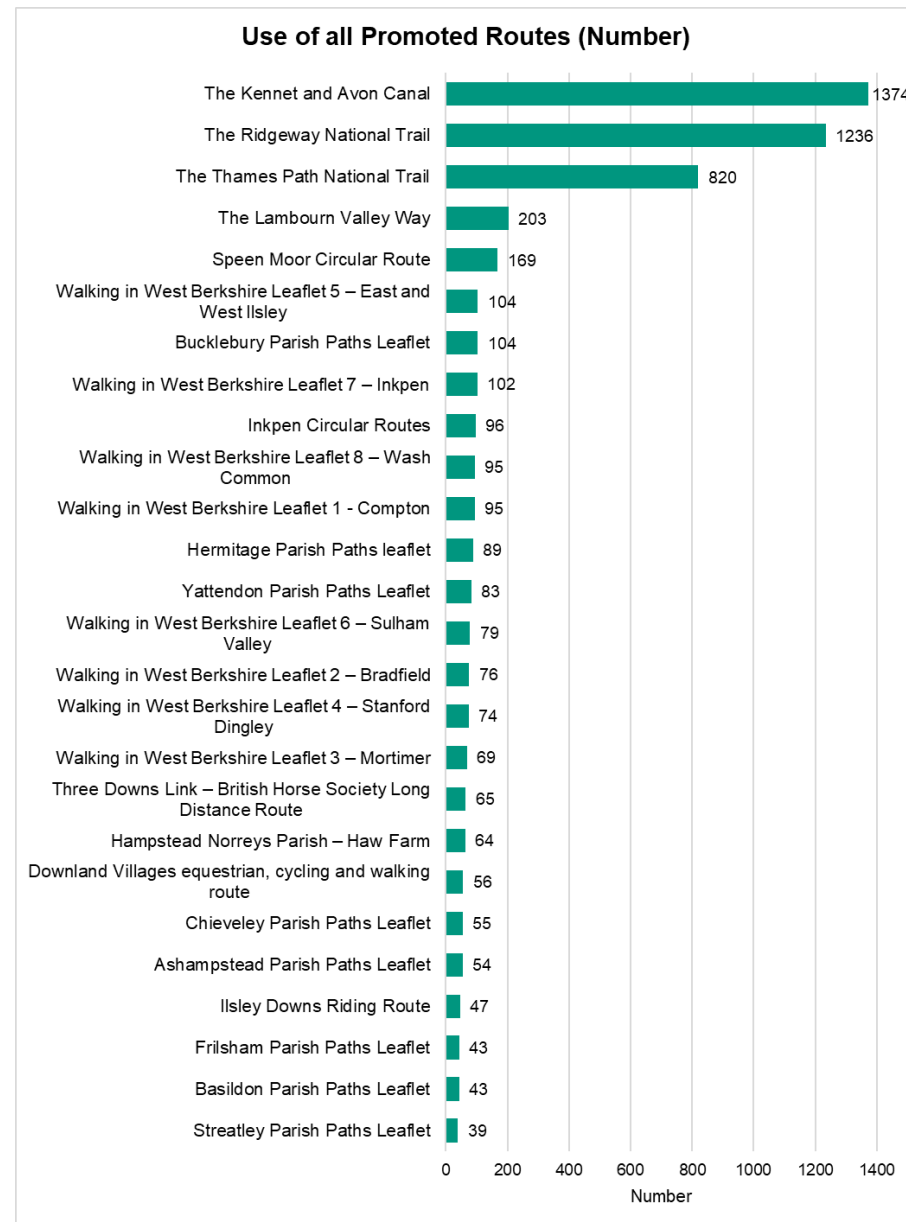
Table 22: Use of Parish Walks

Responses	Number (n. 1915)	Percent	Percent of people giving this as one of their answers
None	1574	70.1%	82.2%
Bucklebury Parish Paths Leaflet	104	4.6%	5.4%
Inkpen Circular Routes	96	4.3%	5.0%
Hermitage Parish Paths leaflet	89	4.0%	4.6%
Yattendon Parish Paths Leaflet	83	3.7%	4.3%
Hampstead Norreys Parish – Haw Farm	64	2.9%	3.3%
Chieveley Parish Paths Leaflet	55	2.5%	2.9%
Ashampstead Parish Paths Leaflet	54	2.4%	2.8%
Basildon Parish Paths Leaflet	43	1.9%	2.2%
Frilsham Parish Paths Leaflet	43	1.9%	2.2%
Streatley Parish Paths Leaflet	39	1.7%	2.0%

Use of Promoted Material – Combined

Chart 18 shows the number of responses for all of the promoted routes. The longer distance routes are the most popular routes, by some margin, with the Kennet and Avon Canal the most popular route.

Chart 18: Use of Promoted Routes – Combined



Improving Promotional Material

Respondents were asked if there was anything which could improve the promotional material provided by West Berkshire Council.

- 33.2% said there were improvements which could be made;
- 8.7% said no improvements were needed;
- 58.1% did not know.

Respondents were asked how promotional material could be improved from a list of options, see Table 23.

- The highest response was 'more promotional material for walking routes' (62.9% giving this as one of their answers);
- After 'other', the second highest was 'information to encourage responsible use of the countryside' (46.7% giving this as one of their answers).

Table 23: Improving Promotional Material

Responses	Number (n.645)	Percent	% people giving this as one of their responses
More promotional material for walking routes	406	25.4%	62.9%
Other (please specify):	337	21.0%	52.2%
More information to encourage responsible use of the countryside	301	18.8%	46.7%
Promotional material which links to local businesses, e.g. pubs	214	13.4%	33.2%
More promotional material for cycling routes	187	11.7%	29.0%
More promotional material for horse riding routes	79	4.9%	12.2%

More promotional material for people living with disabilities	77	4.8%	11.9%
---------------------------------------------------------------	----	------	-------

Respondents could also suggest other ways in which promotional material could be improved.

The top response was to make people more aware, without specifying how this could be done. Other responses are shown in Table 24.

Table 24: Suggestions on Improving Promotional Material

Responses	Number (n.363)	Percent
Promote the material / let people know it exists (no method suggested)	98	27%
Better promotion online on WBC's site / residents emails	47	13%
Other	38	10%
Printed leaflets in the local area (pubs, libraries, shops, garages)	37	10%
Use social media to promote	26	7%
Advertise in parish / local magazines / newspapers / community websites	25	7%
Better maps / improved clarity / better format to print at home / ensure up to date	20	6%
Promote through an app / produce GPX of routes to be used on smartphone	17	5%
Produce promotional material for a specified place	16	4%
Provide information for 4x4, motorcycle and motorised vehicle users	8	2%
More information on responsible use of the countryside	8	2%
On site signs / information boards	7	2%
Work with other organisations	5	1%
QR Codes	3	1%
Produce as printed materials not just online	3	1%

Include information on heritage and archaeological interest	3	1%
More promotional material (no location specified)	2	1%

Parish and Town Council Survey

About the Local Councils

26 of the 62 parish and town councils in West Berkshire completed the survey (41.9%):

- Ashampstead Parish Council
- Beech Hill Parish Council
- Beenham Parish Council
- Boxford Parish Council
- Brightwalton Parish Council
- Burghfield
- Chaddleworth
- Chieveley Parish Council
- Cold Ash
- East Garston Parish Council
- East Ilsley
- Enborne Parish Council
- Hampstead Norreys Parish Council
- Holybrook Parish Council
- Midgham Parish council
- Newbury Town Council
- Padworth Parish Council
- Peasemore Parish Council

- Purley on Thames
- Streatley Parish Council
- Sulhamstead Parish Council
- Thatcham Town Council
- Theale
- Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council
- Welford Parish Council
- Yattendon

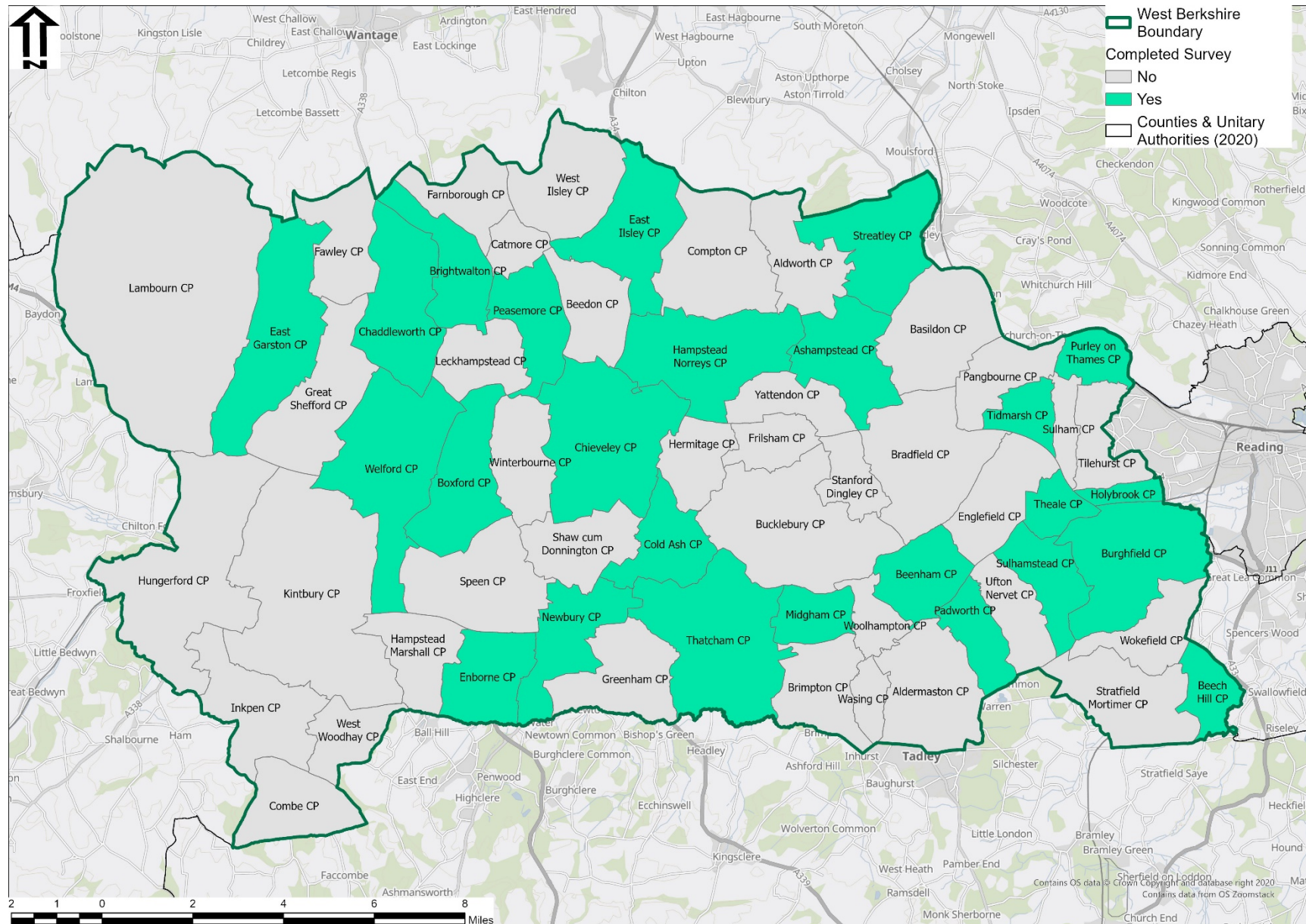
The local councils which responded are shown in Plan 3. There was a good geographic spread across the local authority.

Public Rights of Way or Footpath Warden

The local councils were asked if they had a rights of way officer, footpath warden or other representative with responsibility for public rights of way in the local council area.

- 29.6% had a representative;
- 55.6% did not have a representative;
- 14.8% did not know.

Page 125



Satisfaction, Concerns and Problem Reporting

Satisfaction

The local councils were asked how satisfied they were with nine aspects of public rights of way in their area.

Respondents could choose from very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, satisfied or very satisfied. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (very dissatisfied – 1, dissatisfied – 2, satisfied nor dissatisfied – 3, satisfied – 4, very satisfied – 5). A score over 3 indicates that on average respondents were satisfied and the closer the value to 5, the higher the level of satisfaction (Chart 19 and Table 25).

On average, councils were satisfied with:

- Fingerposts at ends of public rights of way;
- The condition of bridges;
- Waymarking;
- Reinstatement and clearance of paths through crops;
- Vegetation clearance / paths not overgrown;
- The condition of stiles and gates.

Councils were not satisfied with:

- Promotional material / circular walks;
- Surface condition;
- Accessibility for less mobile users.

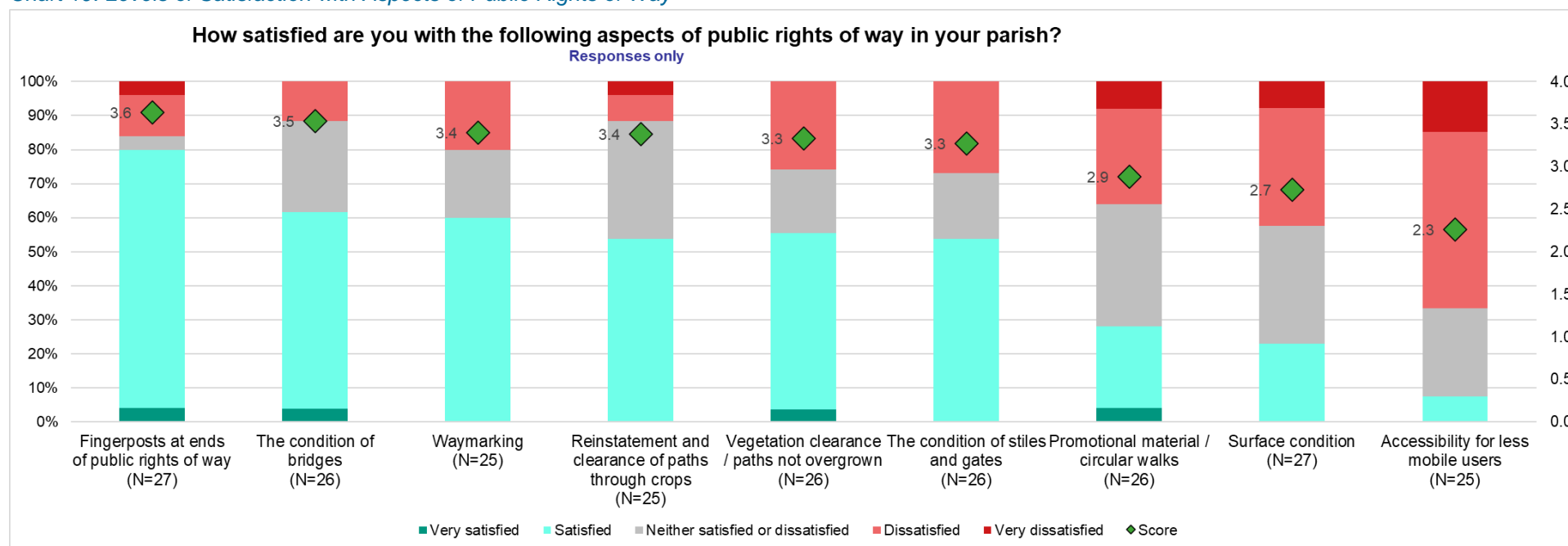
The councils made the following additional comments:

- There are areas where markers are missing or one is lying on the ground;
- Footpaths that are partly absorbed into streets are not always marked along the street sections. Although just outside the parish, footpath COLD/4/3 is extensively used by residents of Thatcham. We are disappointed that the accessibility of this footpath has been impaired by the Tull Way Flood Prevention Scheme (a WBC project). There are now steps over the bund and the gates do not comply with BS5709. Both of these prevent access by mobility scooters and even buggies;
- Some paths are overgrown in the summer and muddy in the winter. No bridges. Uneven state of some paths and numerous hills can make it difficult for less mobile users;
- Byways in the village are suffering from vehicle use making them in accessible for riders and walkers;
- Paths that have been resurfaced have not been resurfaced with the correct material. i.e. Byway 49 for example. Signage needs to be cleared of Vegetation;
- There is a desire to create a flat circular walk in Streatley;
- Overall, the surface of the majority of footpaths are in good order. However, there are a few that become difficult to use during wet weather and securing funding for their improvement can prove difficult;
- Some public footpaths are not well maintained and vegetation such as nettles are not kept in check in others they are mown to oblivion and probably over maintained. I am unclear of how this is monitored;
- Reinstatement of paths can be a problem after ploughing;
- I have walked all the Parish footpaths as I am the Parish representative most apart from being muddy in wet times are in good condition and have been heavily used during the shut down.

Table 25: Levels of Satisfaction with Aspects of Public Rights of Way

Aspects of Public Rights of Way	Very dissatisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied %	Satisfied %	Very satisfied %	Score
Fingerposts at ends of public rights of way	4.0	12.0	4.0	76.0	4.0	3.6
The condition of bridges	0.0	11.5	26.9	57.7	3.8	3.5
Waymarking	0.0	20.0	20.0	60.0	0.0	3.4
Reinstatement and clearance of paths through crops	3.8	7.7	34.6	53.8	0.0	3.4
Vegetation clearance / paths not overgrown	0.0	25.9	18.5	51.9	3.7	3.3
The condition of stiles and gates	0.0	26.9	19.2	53.8	0.0	3.3
Promotional material / circular walks	8.0	28.0	36.0	24.0	4.0	2.9
Surface condition	7.7	34.6	34.6	23.1	0.0	2.7
Accessibility for less mobile users	14.8	51.9	25.9	7.4	0.0	2.3

Chart 19: Levels of Satisfaction with Aspects of Public Rights of Way



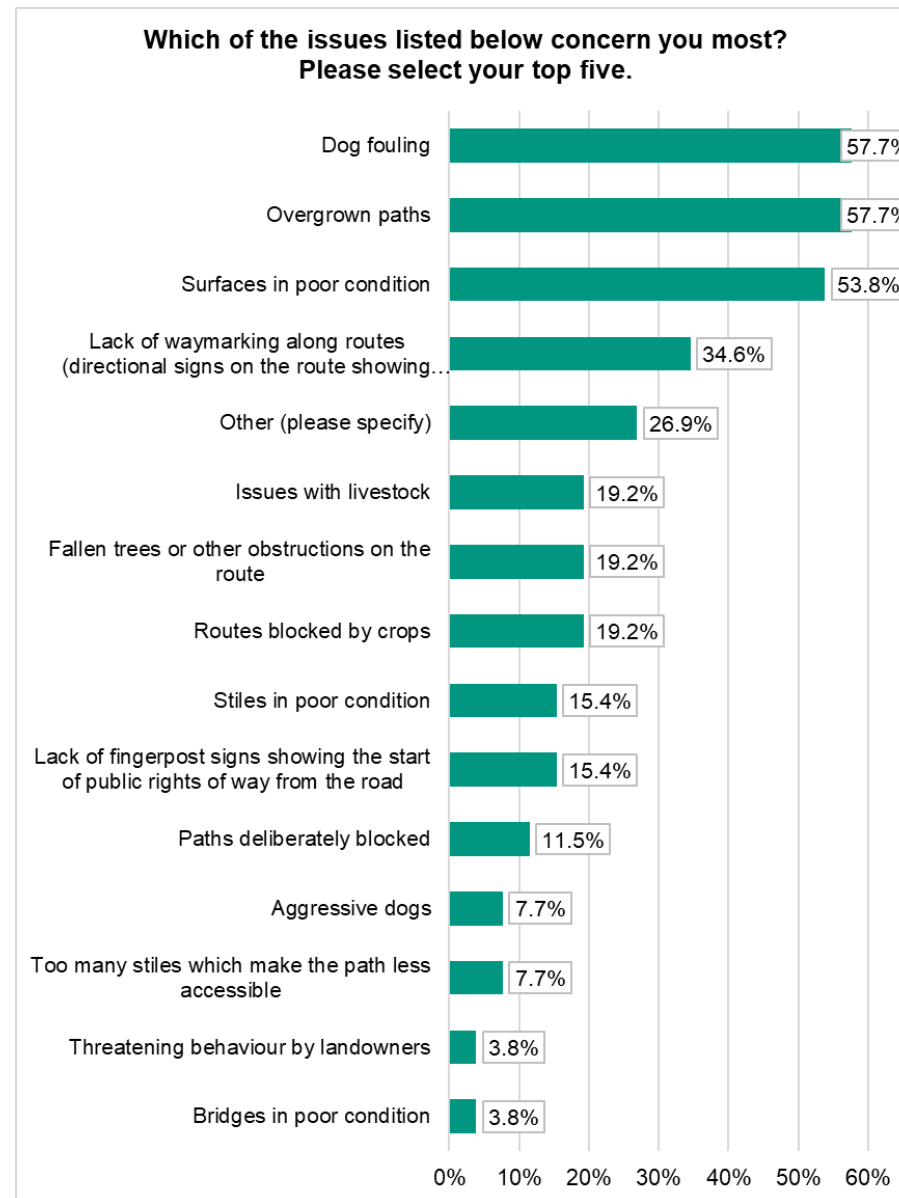
Issues of Concern

Local councils were asked to pick their top five issues which concerned them most, from a list presented to them, see Table 26 and Chart 20. Overgrown paths, dog fouling and surfaces in poor condition were the areas of greatest concern.

Table 26: Issues of Concern

Issue of Concern	Number	Percent	Percent of councils giving this as one of their answers
Overgrown paths	15	16.3%	57.7%
Dog fouling	15	16.3%	57.7%
Surfaces in poor condition	14	15.2%	53.8%
Lack of waymarking along routes (directional signs on the route showing you where to go)	9	9.8%	34.6%
Other (please specify)	7	7.6%	26.9%
Routes blocked by crops	5	5.4%	19.2%
Fallen trees or other obstructions on the route	5	5.4%	19.2%
Issues with livestock	5	5.4%	19.2%
Lack of fingerpost signs showing the start of public rights of way from the road	4	4.3%	15.4%
Stiles in poor condition	4	4.3%	15.4%
Paths deliberately blocked	3	3.3%	11.5%
Too many stiles which make the path less accessible	2	2.2%	7.7%
Aggressive dogs	2	2.2%	7.7%
Bridges in poor condition	1	1.1%	3.8%
Threatening behaviour by landowners	1	1.1%	3.8%

Chart 20: Issues of Concern



Some additional comments were made:

- Accessibility;
- Landowners repeatedly trying to block up a right of way;
- Cyclists/motor cyclists using footpaths and not giving way to walkers on byways;
- Appropriate maintenance. In some areas we could do less e.g. not spray pesticide on footpaths when not necessary;
- Overgrown brambles and stinging nettles;
- Ground often waterlogged and very difficult to get through.

Reporting Problems on Public Rights of Way

- 72% of councils said they had reported problems;
- 28% of councils had not reported problems.
- 83.3% of councils (15) had reported a maintenance issue, e.g. overgrown paths, surfacing issues;
- 27.8% (5 councils) had reported an enforcement issue;
- 22.2% (4 councils) had reported an emergency issue;

Comments under 'other' were:

- Lots of fly tipping reported;
- Cyclists using footpaths;
- Access issue;
- Lack of supply of waymark signs.

Most local councils either reported problems through WBC's 'Report a Problem' (55.6% of council's had used this service) or through contacting the Public Rights of Way Service by phone or email (61.1% of councils had used this method). Two councils had used West Berkshire Council's customer services. Two indicated they had

reported via a local councillor (not specified whether this was a parish or West Berkshire Council councillor).

Of those who used the 'Report a Problem' Service, 90% were satisfied with the service. One council was dissatisfied. There were two additional comments:

- It would be good to receive feedback when problem is solved or when it will be resolved. The Clerk does sometimes, but not always receive feedback [*were satisfied with service*];
- I have often been told that the issue has been passed to relevant person/company, but it seems to be up to me to check if it has been done. There is a major fault with the IT system. When you send a report you get an email with a reference number, but with no details of what you have sent to WBC (i.e. location, problem etc). Later you will get an email saying that the matter is now closed: again with just a reference number and no details. I send quite a few reports, and I have no idea which is which (unless I make a separate note). Surely the system could be amended so that the details as submitted are included in all future emails. [*were dissatisfied with service*].

Councils who had reported a problem were asked to rate the service of West Berkshire Council in dealing with their problem.

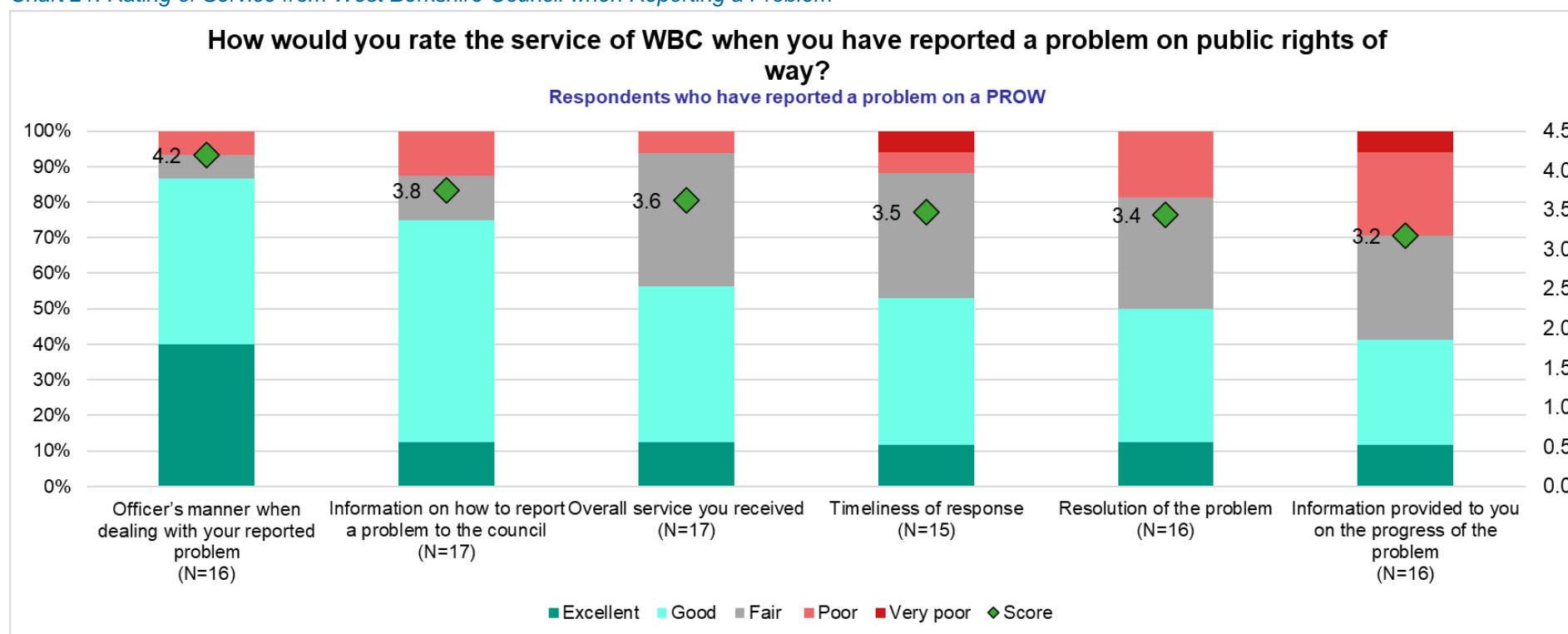
Respondents could choose from very poor, poor, fair, good or excellent. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (very poor – 1, poor – 2, fair – 3, good – 4, excellent – 5). A higher score indicates greater satisfaction.

Officer's manner dealing with the problem was rated the highest, between 'good' and 'excellent'. All other aspects were rated 'good'. No aspects were rated below good, see Table 27 and Chart 21.

Table 27: Rating of Service from West Berkshire Council when Reporting a Problem

Aspect of Service Provision	Excellent %	Good %	Fair %	Poor %	Very poor %	Score
Officer's manner when dealing with your reported problem	40.0	46.7	6.7	6.7	0.0	4.2
Information on how to report a problem to the council	12.5	62.5	12.5	12.5	0.0	3.8
Overall service you received	12.5	43.8	37.5	6.3	0.0	3.6
Timeliness of response	11.8	41.2	35.3	5.9	5.9	3.5
Resolution of the problem	12.5	37.5	31.3	18.8	0.0	3.4
Information provided to you on the progress of the problem	11.8	29.4	29.4	23.5	5.9	3.2

Chart 21: Rating of Service from West Berkshire Council when Reporting a Problem



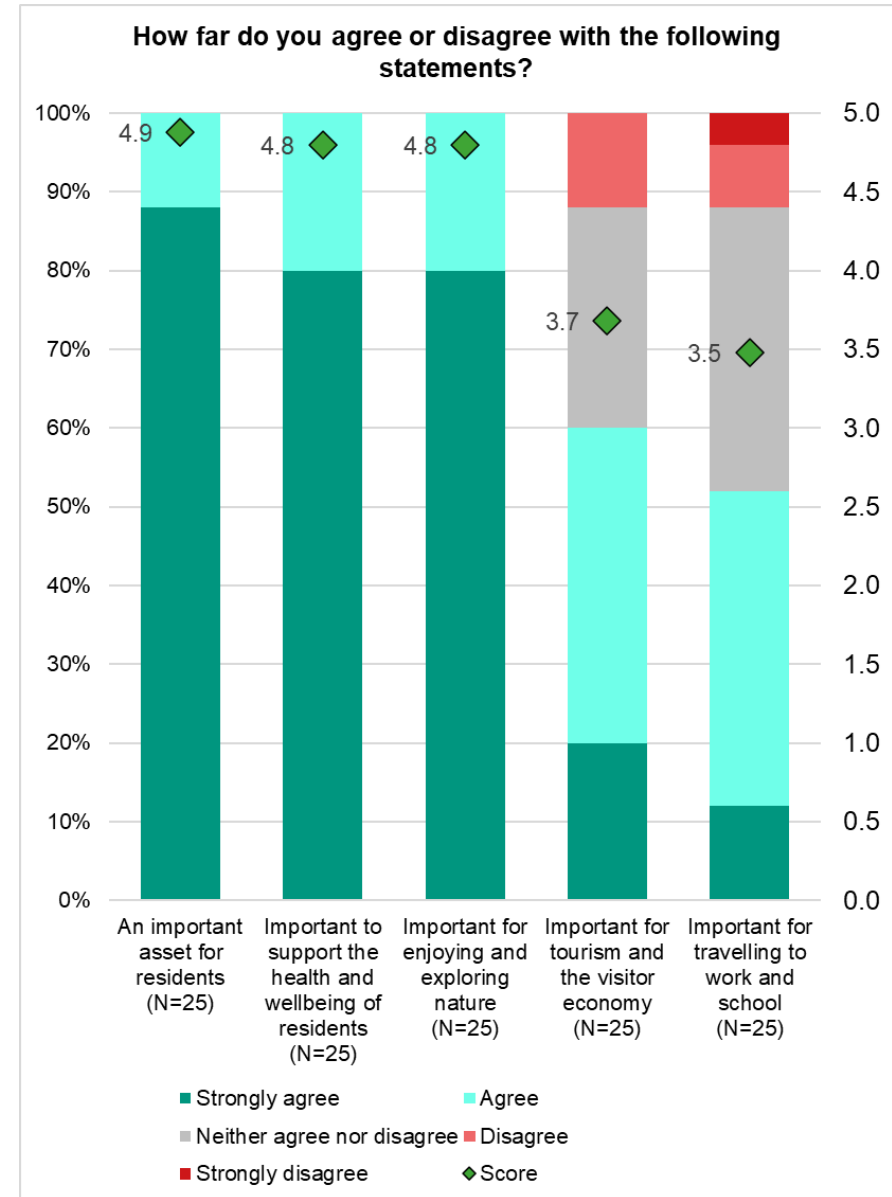
Views on the Importance of Public Rights of Way

Councils were asked a series of questions around how they viewed the importance of public rights of way. They found that all aspects of public rights of way which were listed were of importance. Importance for tourism and the visitor economy and importance for travelling to work or school were considered as slightly less important.

Table 28: Importance of Public Rights of Way

Aspect of Importance	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Score
An important asset for residents	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	88.0	4.9
Important to support the health and wellbeing of residents	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0	4.8
Important for enjoying and exploring nature	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0	4.8
Important for tourism and the visitor economy	0.0	12.0	28.0	40.0	20.0	3.7
Important for travelling to work and school	4.0	8.0	36.0	40.0	12.0	3.5

Chart 22: Importance of Public Rights of Way



Promoted Routes

- 52% of councils indicated they had promoted routes in their area;
- 48% of councils indicated they did not have promoted routes.

Those councils which indicated they had promoted routes in their parish answered the following questions.

Most councils were satisfied with how the promoted routes were publicised and maintained, see Table 29.

Additional comments were made:

- The map needs to be updated - it still includes a shop and post office which we no longer have;
- It is disappointing that National Cycle Routes NC4 and NC422, both of which pass through Thatcham, are not promoted;
- The Sulham Valley route highlights a car park managed by the Forestry Commission which is not big enough for parishioners to use let alone those visiting from other areas;
- Only applies to Thames Path in our Parish. Signposting is an issue because the route diverges a long way from the Thames;
- The old railway line stretch of the Lambourn Valley way in Weston can often become quite overgrown and this results in a very narrow walking area.

Councils were asked whether promoted material could be improved and then chose from potential improvements (Table 30):

- 45.8% thought there were ways to improve the material
- 20.8% thought there were not;

- 33.3% did not know.

Table 29: Satisfaction with Promoted Routes

Level of Satisfaction	Satisfaction with how routes are publicised %	Satisfaction with how routes are maintained %
Very satisfied	0.0	0.0
Satisfied	61.5	91.7
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.4	0.0
Dissatisfied	23.1	8.3
Very dissatisfied	0.0	0.0

Table 30: Improvements to Promoted Routes

Responses	Number	Percent	Percentage of councils giving this as one of their answers
Other (please specify)	9	21.4%	81.8%
More promotional material for walking routes	7	16.7%	63.6%
More information to encourage responsible use of the countryside	6	14.3%	54.5%
More promotional material for cycling routes	6	14.3%	54.5%
Promotional material which links to local businesses, e.g. pubs	6	14.3%	54.5%
More promotional material for people living with disabilities	5	11.9%	45.5%
More promotional material for horse riding routes	3	7.1%	27.3%

Councils provided additional comments:

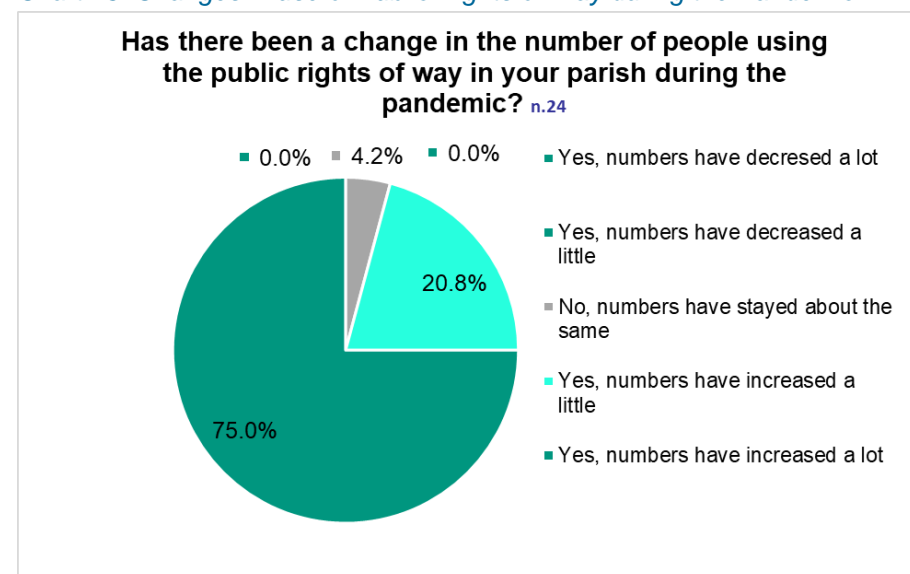
- Promotional material for walks starting and ending in Thatcham; Promotional material for walks suitable for mobility aids;
- Make material available online, not just as printed documents or PDF copies of the printed documents on websites (which are formatted for professional printing and folding);
- References to Buildings of Historical Interest;
- Keeping the material up to date especially with regard to safety concerns;
- Could our parish (Theale) have a walk maybe combined with Englefield parish referencing local business etc;
- There are three leaflets for Beenham, produced with West Berks Countryside Society in 2013. Why are they not listed? It would be good if printed leaflets were available;
- There is no specific promotional material for this Parish [*Purley on Thames*] apart from the Thames Path. This would provide walking routes linking us with adjacent Parishes to provide circular walks;
- Needs to be much more widely available;
- The routes with just maps are really unclear. The routes with words of what direction to go are better. These could also be enhanced with quizzes for children or wildlife to stop along the route;
- Cold Ash Parish is not on your list of publicised walks. However, we, the Parish Council, have a leaflet that is posted on our website. You could add a link from your website, as a short-term measure.

Public Rights of Way During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Councils were asked how important they thought public rights of way had to the health and wellbeing of residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. All councils thought public rights of way had been important (87.5% extremely important; 12.5% very important).

Most councils (95.8%) reported that the number of people using public rights of way had increased during the pandemic and associated lockdowns. No councils said that use had decreased. See Chart 23.

Chart 23: Changes in use of Public Rights of Way during the Pandemic



Additional comments were:

- Anecdotal evidence of very significant increase in use;
- We did see more walkers last year but less so now people have returned to work and school;
- A lot of non-local people have been using the footpaths as well as locals that would not normally be out and about;
- We have also relied very heavily on permitted rights of way in Englefield Estate lands without which we would have been seriously restricted in where we could go as a Parish, especially in the winter. With the considerable planned increase to our housing this will only get worse of course.
- Only thing that has kept people sane around here;
- Never before have the footpaths been more used;
- The increased use of PROWs during the pandemic has been a major contribution to increased physical and mental wellbeing. Getting people to undertake voluntary work on them could add to the benefits, for both parties;
- I have seen a great increase in walkers during the pandemic.

Councils were asked whether the increase in use had caused any problems.

- 73.9% said it had caused some problems;
- 17.4% said it had not caused problems;
- 8.7% did not know.

A range of problems were noted. Many of these related to increases in litter and dog fouling, and deterioration of surfaces. Some councils

reported disputes between users and issues with social distancing not being adhered to.

The problems noted (in full) were:

- People not clearing up after their dogs and at the same time overflowing dog bins;
- There is only a small car park in the village and this has quite often been full and as a result people have struggled to find somewhere to park. Also as a result of more people visiting the village with dogs there have been several occasions where the dog bins have been overflowing;
- Deterioration of muddy surfaces over winter. Significant issues between pedestrians and cyclists on towpath;
- Caused arguments between landowners and users. Increase complaints on dog fouling. Complaints on how farmers manage footpaths;
- Dog fouling complaints;
- Surface wear - we would like to see the laying of woodchip on paths that are frequently muddy as the surrounding vegetation gets damaged when this happens;
- Disputes between walkers and other users;
- Increase in dog waste being bagged and the bags left behind. It would be better to promote the message of either bag it and take it OR flick it off the paths;
- Serious safety issues with dangerous parking at the entrance to Sulham Woods. WBDC Officers did act quickly to get enforcements in place but the Forestry Commission who manage the car park need to be pressured to expand the car park;
- Increased dog fouling, overflowing dog waste bins. More litter, overflowing litter bins with an increase of fly tipping. Increased motorised vehicles damaging byways;

- During the first lockdown people would picnic or sit close to the footpaths. People congregate around gates and stiles. Not allowing social distancing on narrow paths especially children;
- Increase in dog fouling and litter;
- Litter, dog fouling, maintaining social distancing;
- Litter near footpaths Increased wear to surface and gates etc.; cycling along footpaths Trespassing over adjacent fields
- More damage to surfaces and to stiles etc.;
- Huge increase in waste, which has led to an increase in costs due to the purchase of additional bins;
- Wet weather. Muddy patches make the footpaths wider as walkers try to avoid them. Inevitable;
- Increased litter and dog foul and more complaints about inconsiderate usage of the footpaths;
- As a Parish Councillor, we receive complaints from users which are mainly based around landowner action and/or the surface of the PROW. The actions can take the form of:
 - Blocking the PROW
 - Obscuring the PROW (i.e. planting over a path)
 - Use of barbed wire/electric fences adjacent to the PROW
 - Aggressive unofficial signage
 - Verbal abuse from landowners.
 Surface issues can be a result of owner action or user behaviour.

The councils were then asked what actions the Public Rights of Way Service could take to support the new audience which had been introduced to public rights of way during the pandemic.

The most frequently comments could be summarised as better signposting or provision of waymarked routes, providing information on responsible use of the countryside and good maintenance.

The comments received are shown below in full:

- Ensure that footpaths are clearly signed and well maintained. At the end of last year we installed 4 maps throughout the parish showing the public footpaths highlighting what is available in the parish;
- Ensure there is clear signage and that footpaths are well maintained;
- Well maintained paths and stiles with easy access. Good signage so paths can be followed;
- Well-marked circular routes. Identify and promote walking and cycling routes north of Thatcham;
- Better education to respect other users, landowners and the routes that are offered. Not sure how to communicate this;
- Keep the paths clear;
- Education - not sure how;
- Promotion of the countryside code and considerate use;
- To clear signage of vegetation, so people can read the signs and know not to trespass on private property;
- Update the code/guidelines of what is and is not acceptable;
- Increased litter picking and collection. Increased promotional material encouraging people to pick their poo up/take it home. Increased maintenance to ensure people stick to the paths;
- More dog bin, litter bins, signs to promote the countryside code, more information on local walks some enforcement on dog fouling etc- some prosecutions perhaps? Some interpretation boards to promote the area and its wildlife maybe too;
- Get rid of mud. Prepare a long term schedule of planned improvements to ROW. Have Open Evenings for councillors and other interested people;

- Education on proper use of footpaths, open farmland and livestock. Ensure that walkers keep to footpath and not walk all over fields;
- Keep them in good condition;
- Increased waste collections and provision of receptacles. More support from the dog warden to prevent dog fouling;
- As more people work from home, I hope paths will continue to be used. The choice is an individual one. Self-motivation is the prime factor;
- Ensure they understand the rules of the countryside;
- More sign posting, more promotion of maps available - through social media etc. More circular routes so people less tempted to walk across areas/fields that they shouldn't;
- Publish a countryside guide that recognises that users and landowners need to work in harmony and respect the environment.

Accommodating Future Needs

The councils were asked “*What improvements do you think need to be made to the public rights of way network to accommodate future needs, e.g. increased population in West Berkshire?*”. The following suggestions were made:

- Need to be well sign posted, well maintained, so that everyone can enjoy them - consider adding a few more;
- Any development should maintain the character of Rights of Way, either through or adjacent to the development. Resurfacing of popular paths. Measures to improve road safety where paths meet, or cross, roads, i.e. warning signs for drivers etc. Footpaths where pedestrians walk along short

sections of road to improve connectivity of offset paths. Pedestrian refuges. Provide a safer alternative for footpath THAT/15/2 at rail-track crossing;

- We have a wide range of paths in Ashampstead and the surrounding area. Whilst it would be good to have all paths cleared regularly it would be difficult to justify the cost. Volunteers do keep some paths clear. We would not need more paths in our area;
- More joining of paths to create routes;
- Restrictions on vehicle usage on byways during wet periods;
- Promoted routes need more infrastructure to accommodate people arriving in vehicles. The service needs more funding to support Officers to carry out existing projects and to ensure the network is maintained;
- Increase in parking at popular spots to prevent cars blocking roads Maintenance of flat routes for disabled;
- A continued maintenance programme that ensures easy and open access to the footpaths and bridleways;
- Greater access to the countryside if possible and continue to look for opportunities to improve cycling, walking and horse riding. Can we look to grow the network with landowner support?;
- I took over footpaths for Beenham PC several years ago. I tried to meet with WBC to find out what I could do to improve things (i.e. who owns what, what funds are available etc). But I never managed to get a meeting. Maybe an occasional zoom meeting to discuss ROW issues would be a good idea;
- Complete the Thames Path route from the end of Skerritt Way under the Railway and through the Marina along the River Thames. Footpath connecting Sulham Woods and Goosecroft Parish Council Site. Footpath connecting Westbury Lane to the

Thames Path Convert the permitted path along the north side of the railway into a Bridleway to link Purley and Pangbourne;

- Several permitted paths need to be converted to proper rights of way;
- Improve accessibility;
- Continue good maintenance and ensure that the way marking is clear;
- Better access for all users would be ideal and good links to business and town centres to encourage more sustainable travel. People also need to be encouraged to be more considerate of each other. We have a lot of complaints from walkers regarding runners and from runners regarding cyclists;
- More connections between villages to connect communities;
- More circular routes that mean you don't have to end up on busy roads;
- Change your model to a public/voluntary arrangement, where WBC works in harmony with local organisations (Parish Councils and any other organisations that are happy to get involved). There are devolved powers, under which Parish Councils can operate, but these are not widely taken up. This needs to be encouraged through support and guidance. Setting up local Footpath Marshall's with local organisations (we're looking to set one up in our parish and, I'm aware, that the South Oxford Ramblers have set up a similar scheme in their area). This could cover monitoring and light maintenance, to ensure continued access. Support local voluntary groups with funding for materials, to improve PROW (i.e. a delivery option that would significantly reduce costs, by leveraging free labour). Invest appropriately in the WBC team;
- Accessibility for the very young and the disabled.

Priorities of the Public Rights of Way Service

Councils were asked for their level of agreement with a list of priorities. Councils could choose from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (strongly disagree – 1, disagree – 2, neither agree nor disagree – 3, agree – 4, strongly agree – 5). A score over 3 indicates that on average respondents agreed with the statement and the closer the value to 5, the higher the level of agreement with the statement. The results are shown in Table 31 and Chart 24.

The highest priorities for councils (equal by overall score) were to protect and create sites through development and other projects and to maintain and invest in the current network. Lowest was supporting parish councils and community organisations in taking a more active role in public rights of way, although the overall score indicated that the councils were in agreement with the statement.

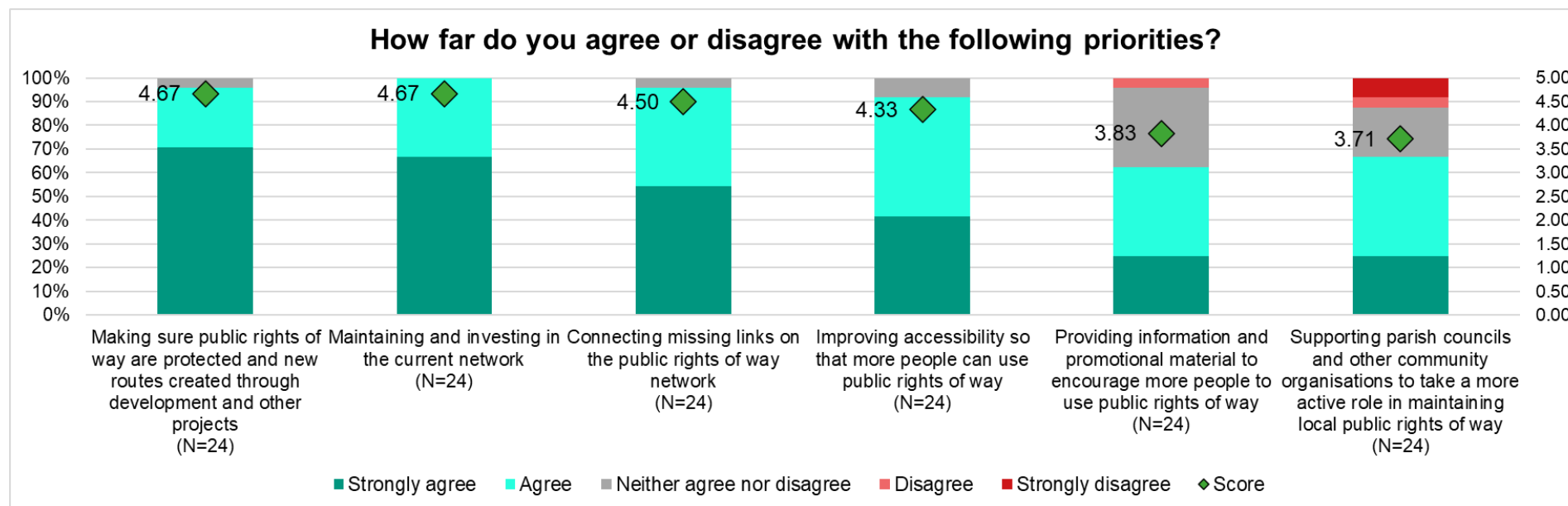
Some councils provide additional comments:

- We would like to work with WBC to look at creation of a new route;
- The majority of Parish Councils in West Berkshire do not have the staff and financial resources to become more active;
- Parish councils could perhaps help advise on local improvement areas or issues etc but could not take over responsibility for maintenance- they are volunteers and also have financial restrictions etc.;
- Every parish should have at least one walk that is accessible to everyone - even in winter;
- Pretty obvious questions, who is going to disagree with those.

Table 31: Potential Priorities for the Public Rights of Way Service

Potential Priorities	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Score
Making sure public rights of way are protected and new routes created through development and other projects	0.0	0.0	4.2	25.0	70.8	4.67
Maintaining and investing in the current network	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3	66.7	4.67
Connecting missing links on the public rights of way network	0.0	0.0	4.2	41.7	54.2	4.50
Improving accessibility so that more people can use public rights of way	0.0	0.0	8.3	50.0	41.7	4.33
Providing information and promotional material to encourage more people to use public rights of way	0.0	4.2	33.3	37.5	25.0	3.83
Supporting parish councils and other community organisations to take a more active role in maintaining local public rights of way	8.3	4.2	20.8	41.7	25.0	3.71

Chart 24: Potential Priorities for the Public Rights of Way Service



Some councils suggested additional priorities:

- We receive complaints about stiles not being accessible - either for users and for walkers with large dogs! Difficult one to solve as fields often contain livestock;
- There is an increase in motorised vehicles that are using byways. (4 x 4's, motorbikes). They are damaging the paths and making some routes unpassable. CPC ask that Byway 49 and 36 is changed to a restricted byway. The safety of small children and animals are also at risk from the speed of these vehicles;
- Dog and litter bins at prominent points to help keep the countryside clean;
- Litter;
- The environment. Do we do too much hedge flailing, and mowing or spraying and at the wrong times and wrong frequency? There must be some cost savings to be had there that would also benefit the environment;
- To differentiate between field environmental headlands and legal footpaths . Footpaths that cross arable fields could be rerouted around the edges and headlands.

Any Other Comments

Councils could provide any other final comments:

- Provide each Parish Council with an easy to read document of where the footpaths and rights of way are within their parish;
- A community panel of volunteers across WB who could meet regularly throughout the year to communicate any issues on PROW;
- It would be helpful to prepare a schedule of ROW for each parish, with details of who owns it and/or who is responsible for maintenance;
- A few strategically placed nature related information signs would help inform the walking population.

Landowner Survey

A survey was distributed to landowners through the Country Land and Business Association and the National Farmers Union. Unfortunately, uptake was low with only 10 landowners responding. Nonetheless, this gave useful insight.

Positive Contribution of Public Rights of Way

Landowners were asked if they thought the public rights of way on their land made a positive contribution to their local community. All landowners (100% n.10) thought they did.

Landowners were then asked in what way they thought public rights of way made a positive contribution from a list supplied, see Table 32.

- 90% of landowners recognised the positive contribution to health and wellbeing;
- 60% thought they had a positive contribution to increasing knowledge of the countryside;
- Only one landowner thought they directly benefitted their business.

One other response was given:

- We have seen a large increase in footfall due to COVID-19, what we lack is the education of the general public regarding the countryside code, picking up dog mess, leaving litter along with throwing it out of cars as they are driving, and disposable barbecues.

Table 32: Potential Benefits of Public Rights of Way - Landowner Responses

Potential Benefits	Number	Percent	Percent of landowners giving this as one of their answers
They support health and wellbeing	9	40.9%	90.0%
They increase users awareness and knowledge of the countryside	6	27.3%	60.0%
They benefit the local economy, e.g. through supporting pubs or tourism	5	22.7%	50.0%
They benefit my business, e.g. campsite, farm shop, B&B	1	4.5%	10.0%
Other (please specify)	1	4.5%	10.0%
People report problems on my land, e.g. in regard to animals	0	0.0%	0.0%

Issues with Public Rights of Way

Landowners were asked if they had experienced any problems related to the presence of public rights of way on their land. 90% of landowners had experienced problems, see Table 33.

- All of the landowners had experienced an issue with dogs off of leads bothering stock;
- 88.9% of landowners had experienced issues with trespassing, littering, disturbance or damage to the nature conservation interest of their land and illegal use, e.g. by motorbikes.

There were two additional comments:

- Cyclist riding on CROW land along with the use of drones as well as irresponsible drivers driving over the common and chasing cattle. Purposefully breaking drink bottles to cause harm to livestock;

- We always have a number of walkers and horse riders who refuse to stick to the footpaths/bridleways as they feel they should be allowed to make their own routes. However, in lockdown this has become a more significant problem. We find it very difficult to know how best to deal with those off the paths without causing offense / upset in the local villages. If people aren't on public rights of way it makes it much more difficult for us to keep them safe, should we be shooting, spraying or carrying out forestry operations.

Table 33: Problems Encountered by Landowners

Problem	Number	Percent	Percent of landowners choosing this answer
Dogs not on the lead and bothering stock	9	13.4%	100.0%
Trespassing	8	11.9%	88.9%
Littering	8	11.9%	88.9%
Disturbance or damage to the nature conservation interest of your land	8	11.9%	88.9%
Illegal use, e.g. by motorbikes	8	11.9%	88.9%
People not closing gates behind them	7	10.4%	77.8%
People getting lost	6	9.0%	66.7%
Damage to path surfaces from overuse/misuse	6	9.0%	66.7%
Crime and security issues	5	7.5%	55.6%
Other (please specify)	2	3.0%	22.2%

Information and Support for Landowners

Landowners were asked if West Berkshire Council should provide more information on landowner responsibilities for public rights of way:

- 66.7% did not want further information;
- 33.3% did want further information.

One comment was made on the type of information which would be useful:

- Info on permissive paths, the right of closure (temporary). What represents a normal path condition.

Landowners were also asked how West Berkshire Council could help them to manage public rights of way on their land:

- See answers in 7 above [*repairing surfaces and motor vehicle damage*];
- To have a discussion with the relevant person on site to ascertain and to explain the layout of our land to improve communications and understanding;
- I don't know. It feels like a lost cause educating sections of the public about responsible behaviour in the countryside. Start with the schools? More notices?;
- Assist in policing illegal activity;
- Signposting to include distinguishing footpaths from bridleways and byways would be good;
- More awareness to public about wildlife and livestock. Spraying pesticides in fields;
- Give us more notice on intended works i.e. Gigaclear;
- There needs to be more of a debate about how they are used and maintained.

Public Rights of Way During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Landowners were asked if there had been a change in the number of people using public rights of way during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 80% of landowners reported that numbers had increased a little or a lot;
- 20% of landowners reported that numbers had decreased a lot.

Those landowners who had reported an increase were then asked if this had caused any problems.

- 87.5% reported that it had caused a problem (n.8)

Landowners were asked to provide more details. Many of these comments related to increases in littering, dog mess and visitors not keeping to public rights of way:

- Increased littering. Uncontrolled dogs. Large quantities of dog poo bags left in my front garden deliberately;
- Littering, damage to PROW, Trespass;
- More people off the public rights of way. Considerable trespassing from those up to no good at night in 4 x 4's etc.;
- People finding there is too many walkers on paths. They then decide to make their own route across private property (fields) and across our environmental margins. More people have purchased dogs which they cannot control. This has led to several dog attacks on livestock. Several walkers having picnics near dry fields and not taking rubbish with them. Poo bags hung on fences and hedges and not taken away;

- People wandering all over the land and not sticking to PROW's;
- People wandering everywhere, not sticking to footpaths, which not only can be hazardous in woodland but causes to wildlife especially at springtime.

Landowners were asked for suggestions around how the Public Rights of Way Service could help to ensure any continued increase in users was not detrimental to the countryside and rural businesses:

- Ensure that unsurfaced footpaths and bridleways are not used and abused by recreational motor vehicles;
- Countryside Code notices on paths and byways. Heavier fines and prosecution for fly tipping;
- Signage and education;
- We love to have people in the countryside and are currently preparing some boards with QR codes so that people walking on the Estate can access information about what they are seeing as they walk - the wildlife, woodlands, animals, crops etc. We would love to be able to make a difference to people's experience so that they understand what we are trying to do;
- Increased signage encouraging public to keep to paths. Official parking Areas which don't block field and farm entrances. Keep dogs on leads signage to reduce farms financial loss from attacks. Would be nice for dogs to be kept on leads during bird nesting season. (March-June);
- Remind people that all PROW's are privately owned with the public's right to pass over. Also the combination of council and landowner responsibilities generally are taken very seriously for the benefit of walkers;
- Use more signage. Add fines for littering and countryside code.

Priorities for the Public Rights of Way Service

Landowners were asked what areas of public rights of way work they thought were the most important from a list, see Chart 25 and Table 34.

- All landowners thought that education the public around the Countryside Code and responsibilities in the countryside was important;
- 66.7% thought providing and maintaining waymarking and signage were important (second highest).

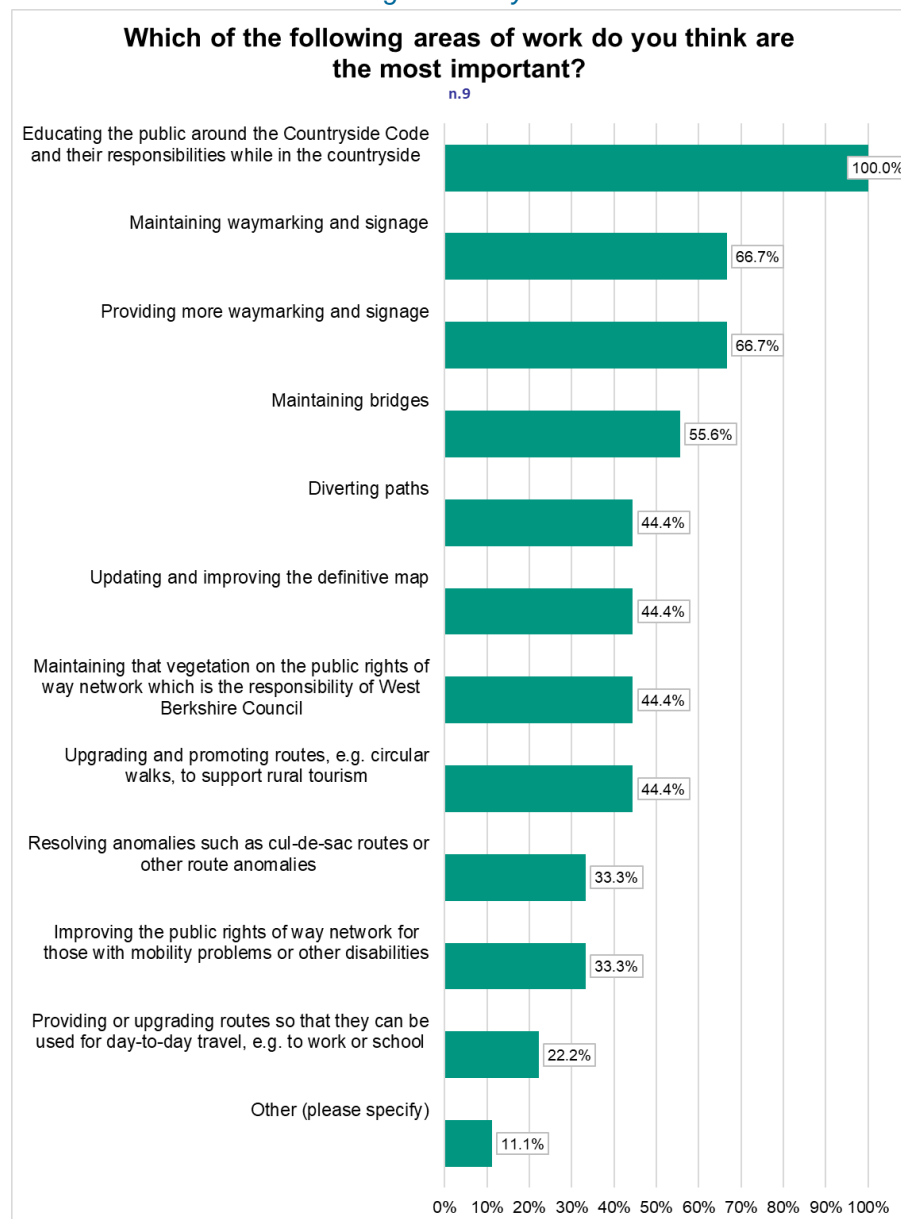
One additional comment was made:

- Repairing damage done by motor vehicles, and stop it being repeated. Improve drainage of rights of way. Prevent and remove fly tipping on rights of way.

Table 34: Priorities for Public Rights of Way Service

Priorities	Number	Percent	Percent of landowners giving this as one of their answers
Educating the public around the Countryside Code and their responsibilities while in the countryside	9	17.6%	100.0%
Providing more waymarking and signage	6	11.8%	66.7%
Maintaining waymarking and signage	6	11.8%	66.7%
Maintaining bridges	5	9.8%	55.6%
Upgrading and promoting routes, e.g. circular walks, to support rural tourism	4	7.8%	44.4%
Maintaining that vegetation on the public rights of way network which is the responsibility of West Berkshire Council	4	7.8%	44.4%
Updating and improving the definitive map	4	7.8%	44.4%
Diverting paths	4	7.8%	44.4%
Improving the public rights of way network for those with mobility problems or other disabilities	3	5.9%	33.3%
Resolving anomalies such as cul-de-sac routes or other route anomalies	3	5.9%	33.3%
Providing or upgrading routes so that they can be used for day-to-day travel, e.g. to work or school	2	3.9%	22.2%
Other (please specify)	1	2.0%	11.1%

Chart 25: Priorities for Public Rights of Way Service



Reporting Problems on Public Rights of Way

Landowners were asked if they had reported a public rights of way issue to West Berkshire Council in the previous two years and the method they had used:

- 62.5% had reported a problem;
- 37.5% had not reported a problem.
- 80% had reported the problem directly to the public rights of way team by email or telephone;
- 40% had reported using West Berkshire Council's 'Report a Problem' service;
- No other methods had been used.

Landowners who had reported a problem were asked to rate the service of West Berkshire Council in dealing with their problem. Only 5 landowners answered this section and therefore the sample size is very low.

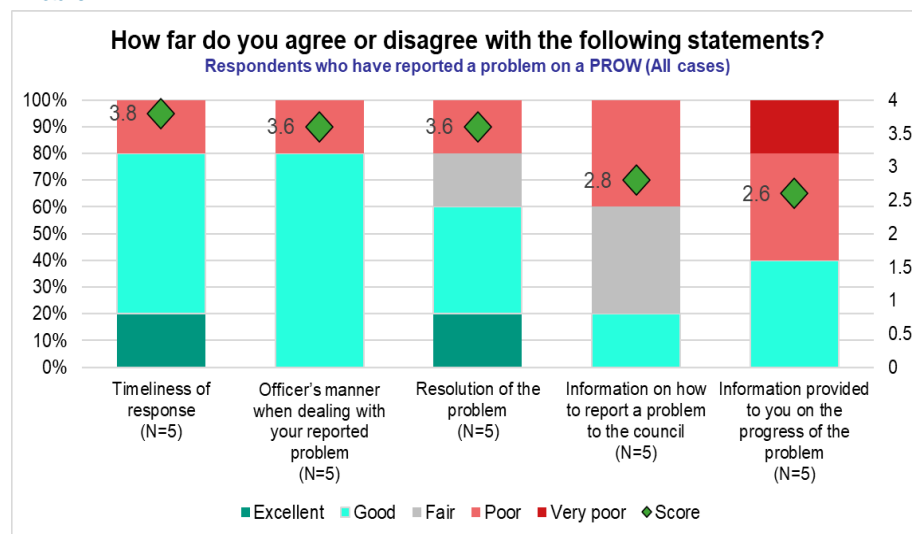
Landowners could choose from very poor, poor, fair, good or excellent. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (very poor – 1, poor – 2, fair – 3, good – 4, excellent – 5). A higher score indicates greater satisfaction, see Table 35 and Chart 26.

- Landowners thought timeliness of response, officer's manner in dealing with the problem and resolution of the problem were 'good';
- Information on how to report a problem to the council and information provided on the progress of the problem were rated as 'poor'.

Table 35: Rating of Service from West Berkshire Council when Reporting a Problem

Aspects of Service Provision	Excellent %	Good %	Fair %	Poor %	Very poor %	Score %
Timeliness of response	20.0	60.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	3.8
Officer's manner when dealing with your reported problem	0.0	80.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	3.6
Resolution of the problem	20.0	40.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	3.6
Information on how to report a problem to the council	0.0	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	2.8
Information provided to you on the progress of the problem	0.0	40.0	0.0	40.0	20.0	2.6

Chart 26: Rating of Service from West Berkshire Council when Reporting a Problem



Any Other Comments

Landowners could provide any further comments:

- Keep motor vehicles off unsurfaced rights of way;
- Can't think of anything obvious. Just keep stressing that with "Rights" come "Responsibilities";
- Make sure everybody knows the difference between public rights of way, private land and open access land (Crow Act);
- A new cycle/walking/riding way has been proposed alongside the B4494 past Rose Cottage and Pillar Box cottage. This is one of the most dangerous roads in West Berks and is madness! If this scheme is still going to go ahead, the local community will oppose it in every way possible.

Stakeholder Interviews and Written Responses

Supporting Health and Wellbeing and COVID-19 Pandemic

This section includes comments from:

- Age UK
 - Canal & River Trust Trust
 - Cold Ash Parish Council
 - Mid Berks Ramblers
 - Mobility Issues Group for Goring and Streatley (MIGGS)
 - Pang Valley Rambler Group
 - Trail Riders Fellowship
 - West Berkshire Countryside Society
 - West Berkshire Walking for Health
 - West Berkshire Ramblers
 - Wokingham Greenways
- There are 10-12 regular health walks in West Berkshire, all of which are run by trained volunteer leaders. Most of them are weekly; some operate a couple of times each month. None of them have stiles and all are very accessible. The scheme is hoping to expand to more rural areas and to increase use of public rights of way. There are options to develop social prescribing;

- Lack of seating across locations for older people. Lockdown has led to deconditioning in many older people due to lack of exercise so they are unable to walk the distances that they previously could. A lack of seating is therefore prohibitive to them getting out and about;
- The [Canal & River Trust] Trust has experienced a significant level of towpath usage during the last 12 months. Many routes were closed on a temporary basis following Government Guidance, but when allowed to open they have been extensively used for exercise, wellbeing and relaxation, as well as a commuter route for cycling, walking to work away from road traffic. We anticipate this trend may continue as the lockdown comes to an end across England and Wales;
- The increased use of PROWs during the pandemic has been a major contribution to increased physical and mental wellbeing. Getting people to undertake voluntary work on them could add to the benefits, for both parties;
- Since the start of the COVID pandemic, we have seen a significant increase in the number of people using the PROWs around the parish. This has led to much more impact on the walking surfaces, turning some of them into a quagmire, during wet periods. This, in turn, has led to people walking on a wider area than the PROW, which can have adverse impact on the landowners fields and local wildlife. Some landowners have responded, putting up additional fencing and restrictions. All of this has led to a number of complaints being made by PROW users. Whilst we haven't received any complaints from landowners directly, it's clear that many are unhappy with the impact the new and increased number of users are having on their land;

- The current COVID pandemic has highlighted the importance of exercise and encouraged wider use of footpaths and cycleways. It has also shown that access to the countryside is beneficial to public health, and that easy access is also important. So availability and ease of use become more important.
- Cycling and running have increased during the pandemic and is likely to continue at a high level. Cyclists have the advantage over Ramblers because they can travel longer distances without recourse to public or private transport;
- The pandemic has encouraged people to exercise more by walking, cycling and other activities. I have explained above the problems of limited public transport, the resultant increase of private transport and the car parking problems. Added to this is the need for accessibility for those with restrictive medical conditions. So the Local Authority will have to cater for these deficiencies;
- Arrange litter clearance from paths, parks and car parks. Possibly a volunteer scheme like Reading Borough Council's RAYS;
- The increased use of PROWs during the pandemic has been a major contribution to increased physical and mental wellbeing. Getting people to undertake voluntary work on them could add to the benefits, for both parties;
- Circular trails should be devised and marked for example a 1-mile trail, a 3-mile trail and 6-mile trail, with good car parking / public transport links at the start of each trail, to encourage people to walk for health before branching out to design their own walks;
- Create well signed and well-furnished short circular trails with good car parking / public transport links and advertise the walks through Doctor's surgeries and hospitals. Provide areas for dog owners to 'exercise' their dogs in their locality avoiding the need to drive to

places others walk. Many parishes in West Berkshire have leaflets showing footpaths in the parish. WBC could work with each parish to provide leaflets downloadable from both parish and WBC website;

- It is clear from feedback and experience on the ground that there are competing needs of users already on Rights of Way in this area, and that the pandemic has increased the pressure on these resources. This is evident particularly on the Kennet and Avon Canal walkway where there are complaints of speedy cyclists endangering vulnerable users, and of course cyclists risk dangers from speeding cars where routes cross roadways, which will deter use of the routes unless these issues are addressed;
- Trail riding is a recognised form of exercise and reducing the available network restricts those who to choose to exercise through trail riding. Trail riding delivers a significant mental health benefit. Reducing the network increases stress on trail riders damaging their mental health. Many trail riders are over 65 and trail riding enables them to access the countryside in a way not possible through other methods such as walking or cycling as they have reduced physical mobility themselves. Removing access therefore damages the wellbeing of this section of society;
- There is an organised scheme of heath walks covering Goring and Streatley.³

³ <https://www.goringgapwalks.co.uk/>

People Living with Visual Impairment

This section includes comments from:

- *Berkshire Vision (two individuals – one blind and one with limited vision; both lost sight later in life)*
 - *West Berkshire Council Sensory Needs Service*
- Getting to public rights of way can be difficult, it is not just following the path itself which presents challenges. Issues such as crossing roads, parked cars and other obstacles can make actually reaching the public right of way hard for visually impaired people;
 - There is a lot of bureaucracy and poor communication which isn't actually responding to making things more accessible, particularly for visually impaired people;
 - Handrails are important on steps and bridges;
 - To accommodate a lack of peripheral vision, [my son] would avoid any area where he is likely to bump into people at the side or walking across his path. The second problem is to do with the uneven surface of the path; this has caused few trips on stones or potholes in the past;
 - Vegetation can be an issue especially overhanging branches;
 - It is important to know where the edges are on paths – this is easier with kerb stones in an urban environment than in the countryside;
 - Maintenance is important. Stiles and steps can often be negotiated with care but wobbly or damaged structures are hazardous and difficult to use;
 - Kissing gates are preferable to stiles;
 - Improving the standard to British Standard is needed across the network, over time;
 - In general, changes are difficult to deal with. If you know a route well it is difficult when conditions change (furniture, surface, trip hazards, obstacles blocking the path etc.) and takes a while to work it out;
 - Worry more about sudden drops, canal edges, slopes or mud than trying to get through a gate or stile – as the other hazards are unknown and unexpected;
 - Steps should have long treads and be regular, not different heights and widths;
 - Bikes are difficult as quiet and can be travelling fast;
 - Railway crossings and water are hazardous;
 - When lose sight you lose confidence and it is difficult to go out and explore. Need people to help you. Either friends and family or support from groups such as Berkshire Vision. Most partially sighted and blind people walk with a sighted guide;
 - The sighted guide will most often walk alongside, which means that a wider path is better. It is more difficult to use a narrow path where the route is only wide enough for one person;
 - Tend to go to the same places which you know and where you know what you will find, and where paths are in a good condition;
 - Would be good to link up with Health Walks to meet people and explore more areas;
 - Berkshire Vision run a walking group. There are 20 people on a walk with 4 volunteers.

People Living with Mobility Impairments and Dementia

This section includes comments from:

- Age UK
 - Canal & River Trust Trust
 - Local Access Forum Disabled Access Group
 - Mid Berks Ramblers
 - Mobility Issues Group for Goring and Streatley
 - Pang Valley Rambler Group
 - West Berkshire Ramblers
 - Wokingham Greenways
- Local Access Forum Disabled Access Group tabled 10 points which should be included in the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan. These covered (in summary):
 - Providing information online on parts of the network which are already accessible;
 - Improving path surfaces, widths and removing inaccessible infrastructure;
 - Develop accessible circular routes;
 - Maintain surfaces and keep clear of overhanging vegetation;
 - Parking spaces which are sufficiently large to accommodate and unload vehicles with mobility scooters;
 - Ensure any diverted routes are suitable for disabled access where physically possible;
 - Set up a user group to work with the Public Rights of Way team on issues of important to people living with disabilities;
 - Involve the Local Access Forum in discussion around paths affected by development;
 - Provide updates on progress of Rights of Way Improvement Plan actions relating to access for people living with disabilities, including the number of paths which have been improved, routes waymarked as suitable for disabled people and number of disabled-friendly gates installed.
 - Information needed on West Berkshire Council's website on suitable routes on the public rights of way network for people living with disabilities. Highlight routes which have been improved for disabled people;
 - Annual report needed on works that have been done to improve the network and information for people with disabilities;
 - Install and promote one circular route each year;
 - Documenting the routes used by Walking for Health could be a good way to begin getting a suite of accessible routes together;
 - There are lots of promoted routes already on West Berkshire Council's website – can any of these be adapted to provide information for people with disabilities?;
 - Develop 'Miles without Stiles' – Wokefield (e.g. the common), Snelsmore, Thatcham and Padworth could be good places;
 - Impossible for those with a mobility scooter to get past stiles and kissing gates. This also applies to pushchairs;
 - One of the main issues is the provision of information as don't know which paths are suitable for wheelchairs and disabled scooter;
 - Want 3 or 4 walks with good information, so that have confidence that they can do a circular route, with a leaflet detailing, showing

exits and infrastructure. Have not come across anything like this in West Berkshire to date;

- Boards could be installed at points along the route so know where you are and where to go giving clear information;
- Some infrastructure, such as large mobility gates, are expensive, but grants are available and it may be possible to work with partners (e.g. BBOWT) to progress projects;
- Bring together representatives from a range of organisations representing people with disabilities to meet with Public Rights of Way team annually;
- Many disabled people were once abled-bodied – and many people will become disabled later in life. The issue affects most people or their families;
- There is a lack of seating for older people and those with mobility impairments;
- With specific reference to people living with dementia the guidance around seating is - Does any seating look like seating? People with dementia will find this easier - so for example a wooden bench would be preferable to an abstract metal Z-shaped bench;
- Shorter walks are needed, which show detail on how accessible the route is. Even better if the route includes refreshments, toilets and seating;
- Toilets are very important for older and disabled people (this was raised by all stakeholders). It is important to show toilets on the promotional material, although there are fewer public toilets now, which creates a barrier for these groups of people;
- Maps should be clear and easy to read and understandable. Not everyone understands Ordnance Survey maps so think carefully

about design and wording (for example say 'Parking' rather than 'P'). Include lots of relevant information so that people have enough to decide whether they can attempt the walk;

- People with dementia don't want to get lost and need good signposting. Signposting can be very difficult to understand if lots of arrows in different directions – make it clear. It also needs to be very well maintained and no waymarkers or signs missing as a person with dementia will easily become confused. Lettering needs to be legible;
- Just have a few but really well promoted and maintained, high quality accessible routes;
- Promotional material produced at present isn't inclusive;
- Add key landmarks to maps as most people with dementia way find using points of interest.
- Age UK organises dementia walks with a leader;
- Greenham Common, Snelsmore, Wokefield Common, Kennet and Avon Canal⁴ mentioned as accessible places which would benefit from promotion to this audience;
- Age UK forwarded an Age Friendly Community Guide for review;⁵.
- Most towpaths are over 200 years old, designed for a horse to pull a boat and mostly never intended to be publicly accessible. This means that sometimes they are not very easy to use if you are using a wheelchair, a pram or have any other mobility issues.

⁴ Although the water was raised as a hazard by visual impaired users, made more difficult due to use of path by cyclists.

⁵ https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/age_friendly_places_guide.pdf

We'd like to change that and, wherever we can, make it easier for everyone to enjoy our waterway network where practicable. The Trust aims to provide safe multi-user access where practicable, although given the historic nature of our canals many of which are over 200 years old it is not always possible to be fully compliant with ODA especially around statutory designated structures like Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments i.e., some historic lock flights, bridges and weirs. [Canal & River Trust Trust];

- Barriers (stiles, even gates) are significant problems for this group, which can be extended to include the elderly (we have walkers in the 90+ age group!) Path surface, particularly mud, also becomes a serious issue here;
- There has been a big move over recent years away from stiles and towards gates. That is an improvement for Ramblers but still creates barriers for the people with mobility problems. The surface of paths is an issue for all in this group. Barbed wire adjacent to paths is extremely dangerous to all who use the countryside and should be replaced along all PROW;
- Some of the trails could be designed to cater for the disabled and visually impaired, as parts of the Speen Moor path have been;
- The Newbury area benefits from the existence of many excellent areas of Common Land, and the obvious conflict here seems to come between dog walkers and vulnerable elderly users, wheelchair or push chair users and toddlers;
- The online map is difficult to find and requires a high degree of competence to then use the layers to find stiles and gates and even then can't have a high degree of confidence in it – not enough to then venture out;

- Surfaces could be easily improved through the application of self-binding aggregate.

Tourism and Visitor Economy

This section includes comments from:

- *Mid Berks Ramblers*
- *Newbury Business Investment District (BID)⁶*
- *North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscape) (AONB) (now National Landscape)*
- *West Berkshire Council Senior Archaeologist and Assistant Archaeologist*
- *West Berkshire Museum⁷*
- *West Berkshire Ramblers*
- The countryside of West Berkshire is an important asset for the visitor economy and there are beautiful walks;
- No one is promoting West Berkshire as a whole for its visitor economy potential – using the countryside, itineraries of taking in

⁶ Newbury BID (Business Improvement District) is a not-for-profit organisation formed in 2012 by local businesses, for local businesses. It is a fully independent, business-led and business-funded Community Interest Company, which exists to allow the 600+ businesses of Newbury Town Centre to work together collaboratively towards a shared vision and purpose. “Our long-term vision is to establish Newbury as a go-to destination for businesses and visitors from all around the world, with the BID leading the way on place-shaping and town centre transformation.”

<https://visitnewbury.org.uk/about/>

⁷ <https://www.westberkshireheritage.org/west-berkshire-museum>

several attractions in countryside areas and promoted routes could help support business and is currently a missed opportunity;

- Routes could also incorporate urban areas, for example heritage walks, and public art trails, or interests, such as vegan food;
- West Berkshire Museum stocks 8 local heritage guides which are sold in the shop, covering a wide range of heritage topics. There are some walks on the website which include heritage features in villages and towns (Kintbury, Hungerford, Pangbourne, and Inkpen) plus a themed on World War II guide.⁸ These don't include public rights of way but a guide could be developed using public rights of way;
- Utilise the heritage assets of the area more fully in promoted material. Work in partnership with Heritage Team to ensure accuracy of information;
- North Wessex Downs AONB (now National Landscape) ran a Walking Festival in 2019 and will running it again in 2022 (paused due to pandemic);
- North Wessex Downs AONB (now National Landscape) posts information on walking and cycling in the AONB on its website;⁹
- I'm not sure West Berkshire is a hot tourist destination. I can't think of anything immediately;
- [How to support tourism] Through increased advertising of the network of rights of way, including defined circular and linear routes for people of all abilities. This could include a new set of leaflets for walks, and online availability of the same information,

⁸ <https://www.westberkshireheritage.org/local-heritage/heritage-walks>

⁹ <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/cycling-riding/> and <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/walking/>

including downloadable gpx data. There is a large number of organisations and individuals already publishing such information, so much of the work may already have been done. Access and path maintenance may be the best areas to concentrate on;

- The economy and tourism are particularly important for the livelihood of people in the countryside. Up to date leaflets including the Lambourn valley way, need to be readily available showing routes clearly with cafe and pub stops included.

Development and Growth

This section includes comments from:

- *Mid Berks Ramblers*
- *Newbury Business Investment District (BID)*
- *Pang Valley Rambler Group*
- *West Berkshire Ramblers*

- Development should be looked at strategically to ensure that there are sustainable / active travel routes (walking and cycling) from the developments on the outskirts of Newbury into the town centre;
- The urban interface in the North Wessex Downs AONB (now National Landscape) is important for people to get out to enjoy the countryside;
- Due consideration should always be given to sustainable travel and exercise facilities in any proposed development;
- Increased population and growth could mean increased usage of PROW leading to increased erosion of path surfaces, maintenance

of gates and stiles. Therefore increased budget provision will be necessary;

- Whilst we have a good network of Row in West Berkshire there is scope to improve. New housing developments should include a requirement to extend the existing public rights of way as part of planning and the provision of local dog ‘exercising’ areas to help keep footpaths free of dog mess. Footpaths and cycle ways both need to be increased but must be kept separate whenever possible;
- While looking at planning applications we are always looking for ways to improve the ROW network, however this is rarely successful;
- A mechanism to review the performance of recent developments, say in the last 10 years, in providing new footpaths and cycle ways to the development. Has the CIL money been wisely spent, have the developments led to increase in traffic?
- Development in areas will increase the population and will increase demand for access to the countryside and accessible routes.

Active Travel

This section includes comments from:

- *Canal & River Trust Trust*
- *Cold Ash Parish Council¹⁰*
- *Mid Berks Ramblers*

- There is a real opportunity to ensure high usage off-road routes like canal towpaths can be more flexibly used in the future, especially with the desire from the Government to move Cycle routes away from the road network and high volumes of traffic (LTN 1/20 - Cycle Infrastructure Design DfT 2020). The Trust are well positioned to have conversations with Local Authorities on how to promote our off-road routes, although as a Trust suitable funding must be secured to upgrade some sections of our network. Funding through S106, CIL and other sources is crucial to securing such improvements for the benefits of all users and supportive planning policies are needed, not just in the ROWIP, but in other transport, Infrastructure deliver plans and local plan documents to achieve this and maximise the benefits that the Kennet and Avon canal can bring to the West Berkshire area;
- [Use of the public rights of way network for travelling to work or school] It depends on the location of the PROW. In our parish, some PROWs lend themselves as a route to a local school, but these are few (less than 10%);
- More and safer cycleways and greater separation of pedestrians and cyclists;
- It depends on the location of the PROW. In some parishes, some PROWs lend themselves as a route to a local school, but these are few;

¹⁰ Cold Ash Parish Council also submitted a full audit of public rights of way in their parish and two PowerPoint presentations.

- To achieve this, it would be important to make sure the Row are safe for school children to walk e.g., paths need to be regularly maintained (perhaps adopted by the Schools for litter picking) perhaps street lighting could be provided.

A Better Network

This section includes comments from:

- Canal & River Trust Trust
- Councillor Hilary Cole (Chieveley and Cold Ash)
- Mid Berks Ramblers
- Pang Valley Rambler Group
- Trail Riders Fellowship
- West Berkshire Countryside Society
- The entire Kennet and Avon Canal towpath running through West Berks is shown on the West Berks online map. Most sections are owned by the Canal & River Trust Trust, however, along some short river sections the Trust are only the navigation authority. The Trust is currently working with West Berks Council on several partnership towpath projects where the intention is to improve the towpath for cycling and multi-user usage. These include GREE/7/1 Hambridge Road to Bulls Lock (950m), a section of high usage towpath which will follow on from the recently completed Newbury S106 section between the A339 and Hambridge Road (improvement works delivered in 2020). The Trust and West Berks are also looking at further improvements to the east of Thatcham Station where improvements were undertaken by West Berks in 2020. GREE/7 /2 Sustrans are currently working on developing a Paths for Everyone Activation project along the eastern end of the

Kennet and Avon Canal, one of six activation projects in the south of England (see the National Cycleway Network (NCN) 'Paths for Everyone' review 2018). PADW/20/1 Section between Aldermaston Wharf and Theale (Sustrans Activation Project South) BURG/24/2;

- The [Canal & River Trust] Trust has a national policy for towpaths - Better Towpaths for Everyone, with the aim to ensure our waterways and towpaths remain a treasured national resource for everyone. In particular the policy states: *"The Trust gives pedestrians priority but recognises the incorporation of towpaths as part of walking and cycling routes and, where designated as a bridleway, or as a permissive route, towpaths are also available for horse riding. The Trust are committed to encouraging better considerate behaviour by everyone on our towpaths, so that people can feel safe and secure when they use them. The Trust use clear and simple signage to encourage safer sharing. The Trust has its own branded signage, but we can incorporate partners logos in some circumstances. Where there are concerns over towpath capacity or condition, the Trust will seek opportunities to secure further external investment to undertake improvement work."* Towpaths are, by their very nature, narrow spaces but many are suitable to accommodate multi- use. Where appropriate, we have already "widened" the path (i.e., the surfaced path area within the towpath corridor) as this is often the best way to ensure that they are used safely and that conflict between visitors is minimised. We will continue to look for opportunities to optimise space where we can, but we will not do this at the expense of the character of the canal.
- The canal towpath is a free to use resource for walking and cycling throughout the district as well as providing access to the water space for other recreational users such as anglers and paddlers;

- Consider the use of public footpaths for horse and cyclist use to extend the network and regularise what is already happening;
- As a Parish Councillor, we receive complaints from users which are mainly based around landowner action and/or the surface of the PROW. The actions can take the form of:
 - Blocking the PROW;
 - Obscuring the PROW (i.e. planting over a path);
 - Use of barbed wire/electric fences adjacent to the PROW;
 - Aggressive unofficial signage;
 - Verbal abuse from landowners;
 - Surface issues can be a result of owner action or user behaviour.
- Opportunity is only limited by access. Most rural rights of way are only accessible by car for walkers – public transport is patchy at best. When organising group walks, finding a suitable, safe place to park a number of cars is frequently an issue. The opportunities for cyclists are limited by poor maintenance of tracks and conflict of use with walkers;
- The COVID pandemic has highlighted an issue that has been bubbling away in the background for many years. A number of rights of way in West Berks (and throughout the country, probably) pass through or very near to domestic properties. Some of the landowners have already put in place unofficial diversions or permitted paths to avoid contact with residents. A survey of such properties would be appropriate, and plans put in place to implement permanent diversions away from properties;
- We must not lose sight of the “Lost Paths” exercise with a deadline of 2026. This could be a source of some additional paths;
- Parking availability is a problem that has been highlighted by the pandemic. Car sharing has not been possible and consequently there is a requirement for parking above the pre-pandemic level. Even with restrictions placed on the numbers taking part in walks, it has been difficult to find locations where there is adequate parking. This has been a particular problem at weekends when activity is greater. Many rural locations do not have an adequate level of bus service and this will continue to mean that personal transport is the only realistic means of access to the countryside;
- Paths that requiring road walking to get from the end of one to the start of the next. Stiles in extremely poor condition. More resources to be put into removing stiles and installing gates. Paths inaccessible due to mud/flooding, whilst nothing can be done about the weather some measures could be taken to improve paths in problem areas e.g. boardwalks;
- Arterial routes such as the Kennet and Avon Canal could be used to divert cyclists onto more challenging uphill circular tracks, which would be popular with serious cyclists, and would create more space on the Canal route for slower moving traffic. One example already in existence is the Berkshire Circular Route leaving the canal at Enbourne Bridge. This route makes use of existing roads in parts, and perhaps a study could be undertaken to see whether traffic calming on these highway sections might encourage greater cycle use of the circular route? This principle could then be used elsewhere, to relieve pressure on the canal route. Another arterial route in the area where such diversions could be created is the Wayfarers Walk/Mid Wilts Way, where a circular route off is almost already existing via the Test Way. Church Lane, Combe is the only section which appears to use the Highway, and traffic calming of some sort here might be needed for users and welcomed by residents to increase recreational use of the route. The B4000

Roman Road could appeal to serious cyclists if suitable circular routes were promoted for leisure use. Stoney Lane Track and White Shute Track from Lambourn almost link to the Roman Road but should an improvement (upgrade?) to a short length of track create a suitable link in the area north of Woodland St Mary, the Lambourn Downs would become accessible and appeal to a huge number of Newbury cyclists. To the north the Lambourn Way and the Downland Village Riding Route already exist to cater for horse riders, so it would not seem unfair, and would divert cycle use away from those routes, if other circular routes were offered as recreational routes for cyclists. Perhaps improvements to the existing riding routes could be considered too where needed;

- There are clearly different classes of motor vehicle and ask that these are recognised and it is important to distinguish between 4x4's and motorcycles when matters of access are being considered. Where it is not possible for a 4x4 to co-exist it is highly likely that it would be possible for a motorcycle to exist as at a dynamic width of one metre they are no wider than a horse or cyclist. Recreational motor vehicle traffic only represents 5% of the traffic on PROW and that heavy farming machinery and landowner vehicles contribute significantly to the surface impact on them.

- *Age UK*
- *British Horse Society*
- *Mid Berks Ramblers*
- *Newbury Business Investment District (BID)*
- *Pang Valley Rambler Group*
- *Trail Riders Fellowship*
- *Walking for Health West Berkshire*
- *West Berkshire Council Senior Archaeologist and Assistant Archaeologist*
- *West Berkshire Countryside Society*
- *West Berkshire Museum*
- *West Berkshire Ramblers*

- Some public rights of way are heritage features in themselves and are listed on the Historic Environment Record and there are also high levels of access to some heritage features which could cause damage – would be beneficial for Public Rights of Way and Heritage Teams to co-ordinate knowledge and skills;
- Develop a heritage walk using public rights of way in partnership with West Berkshire Museum and West Berkshire Council Heritage Team;
- Utilise the heritage assets of the area more fully in promoted material. Work in partnership with Heritage Team to ensure accuracy of information;
- Produce good quality walks around the countryside to support the visitor economy, in partnership with Newbury BID and heritage;
- Want to extend Walking for Health to other parts of the district using public rights of way. It would be good to work more closely

Partnerships, Public Rights of Way Service and Delivery of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

This section includes comments from:

with West Berkshire Walking for Health to target areas to increase accessibility, for example through removing stiles and for the Public Rights of Way Team to advise on possible suitable routes. Would be very beneficial to build a good working relationship with one point of contact;

- Would be beneficial to work with Age UK to capture, map and promote the routes of the dementia walks;
- Age UK and other organisations can offer advice on the design of benches and other infrastructure;
- North Wessex Downs AONB (now National Landscape) can engage with public rights of way through projects, for which funding would need to be sought (could develop partnership projects with Public Rights of Way Team) where this meets the objectives in the AONB Management Plan;
- Could be more options for increasing access (possibly permissive) through new agri-environmental scheme Farming in Protected Landscapes;
- The British Horse Society submitted a paper on 'cross roads';
- The PROW team is too small and underinvested in, and, so, has to prioritise issues. This means that, in the main, only high priority issues get addressed and most of these are not dealt with in a timely manner. There seems to be no or limited proactive monitoring. Change its model to a public/voluntary arrangement, where WBC works in harmony with local organisations (Parish Councils and any other organisations that are happy to get involved). There are devolved powers, under which Parish Councils can operate, but these are not widely taken up. This needs to be encouraged through support and guidance;

- Setting up local Footpath Marshall's with local organisations (we're looking to set one up in our parish and, I'm aware, that the South Oxford Ramblers have set up a similar scheme in their area). This could cover monitoring and light maintenance, to ensure continued access;
- Support local voluntary groups with funding for materials, to improve PROW (i.e. a delivery option that would significantly reduce costs, by leveraging free labour);
- Overall we are pleased with the service. Responses to issues raised are normally quick and positive. We understand and regret the pressures on local authority budgets;
- The ROWIP as largely a strategy document has not concerned us. What we would be interested in seeing is any implementation plans resulting from the ROWIP, and probably annual reports on progress in implementing these plans. Such reports may already be produced, and may go to the Local Access Forum, but this is rather an obscure body which doesn't report very widely;
- *[How does the Public Rights of Way Service perform]* Very well; I receive rapid and courteous replies to problems raised with staff;
- There is an absence on the existing plan of a separate ROWIP which could cover a right of way which has been approved but on which implementation has not taken place after a long period of time;
- Many paths are fine but it is not clear how one should report problems;
- A key plus would be adequately resourcing the PROW team;
- Good cooperation exists between WBC, BBOWT and the Ramblers. However, WBC appear reluctant to use their

enforcement powers in some protracted cases regarding infringement of Public Rights of Way;

- Support the Ramblers in the establishment of Parish Footpath Wardens to help improve the footpath network;
- WBC could be more forceful with Landowners helpful in developing the new who block footpaths and generally do not public rights of way comply with Rights of Way law. There are improvement plan several long-standing issues within the area which should have been resolved by now. WBC prefer to negotiate which can be successful however WBC have the legal powers to use and need to be willing to use them when negotiation fails;
- 2010-20 RoWIP Plan - In the overview of the plan it clearly states that the RoWIP is there to improve access for all user groups. The plan then systematically and deliberately fails to recognise motor vehicles as a legitimate user group. The plan includes the statement. "Research and implement mechanisms to realign the road user hierarchy in favour of non-motorised transport – especially walking." We would remind WBC of the statutory guidance issued by DEFRA in respect of Rights of Way Improvement Plans (para 2.2.21) "Wherever possible proposals for improving rights of way should not unduly benefit one class of user at the expense of another. Improvements that are intended to benefit cyclists, harness-horse drivers, horse riders or walkers should not unduly restrict lawful MPV use of public vehicular rights of way." The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 it clearly states a RoWIP requires that an assessment should be undertaken in order to improve the network for all users. We see no evidence that an assessment for motorised vehicles was undertaken;
- Could get volunteers more involved to make some of the changes needed on the network, removing stiles etc. as the Chiltern Society do in the Chilterns;
- Could West Berkshire provide public liability insurance to cover volunteers which could help local communities to take more action.

Local Access Forum

An extraordinary meeting of the LAF took place in September 2022, specifically to discuss the ROWIP. The role of the LAF in this regard is to provide advice to the council. Those LAF members present discussed some of areas which had been raised through the stakeholder and public consultation.

Area 1 – Maintenance, effective working and reporting problems

- Some authorities use an online system, e.g. Oxfordshire County Council (CAMS system);
- Report a problem is adequate but not much guidance on how to use it;
- Limited on what you can report;
- People want to know the progress of their issue but this requires time commitment. LAF suggested that the reported problem is given a priority and that this should be conveyed to the person reporting the problem to manage expectations. Use standardised responses to streamline the process;
- When problem is resolved the LAF acknowledged that officers report back effectively but sometimes only with the number of the complaint. This makes it difficult to relate to the original issue unless the person reporting the problem has remembered to record this;
- Ward councillors should automatically be informed of problems being reported in their area. It should be possible to achieve this through GIS systems;
- Discussion around whether landowners could help to maintain PROW, being used as contractors to undertake work, for example vegetation cutting (only maintenance which is the responsibility of the council and not the landowner);
- Could be efficiency and costs savings as equipment on site;
- Question around administration of many small contracts and transactions;
- Need to ensure insurances are in place;
- More could be done with volunteers and these groups do more in other counties, e.g. Wiltshire and Hampshire;
- Parish councils may also be able to do more and be encouraged to help maintain some PROW, and the Public Rights of Way Service are extending working with them;
- There is a wide range of PROW – rural natural surface, surface, farm access tracks, urban rights of way. This needs to be recognised in the ROWIP;
- Some areas have a higher population density and lower density of public rights of way. May need to prioritise problem resolution and projects, perhaps to respond to areas of most need. It need to be clearer in the ROWIP how actions and work is prioritised;
- It is difficult to prioritise all issues in a geographic area, as some paths are more highly used than others; some paths better linked to the network etc.;
- Currently all paths are equal priority, except those on promoted routes or those which are routes to schools;
- Work and problems are prioritised on a path by path basis;
- It may be possible to rank every path on a priority basis but this would need careful consideration;
- This might mean that some paths receive less attention;

- Paths where people live may not be the only priority, also paths where people take their exercise. Horses for example are not kept where people live (urban areas);
- Cornwall County Council operates a system of prioritising paths into 'Gold', 'Silver' and 'Bronze';
- To date, WBC has focused on keeping the whole network in good condition and this has been very successful. There is a high degree of confidence that a route on a map will be in a useable condition and WBC should be credited for that;
- A prioritisation system may release resources to deliver improvements where they are needed and to meet the actions of the ROWIP but this may involve a trade-off whereby some areas do not receive as much attention;
- More resources are needed to make progress to implement the ROWIP;
- Central government is making large investment into walking and cycling. This route to funding should be explored;
- There is potential for PROW to be used as utility routes;
- Also WBC Public Health can access money and have been interested in utilising routes around villages;
- Consensus that an element of identifying strategic priorities and concentrating on priorities is important;
- Need to communicate the priorities to the public.

Area 2 – Accessibility and Improving Communication and Promotion

- WBC produces promotional material for circular routes but these can only be found on the WBC website if you know the title. The search facility needs to be improved;
- There is a GIS layer on the online map (recreational routes) but not easy to find;
- For active walkers there are about ten website promoting walks;
- Quality assurance of the routes publicised on other websites varies – some routes are checked and moderated and some are not;
- The Ramblers' Association (only available to members) and Visorando are moderated;
- WBC could link to other sources of information, but would need to caveat that the council does not have control over the quality of the information;
- WBC could provide information which fills gaps which others do not, for example for entry-level, shorter routes, rather than information for experienced walkers;
- Potential to link promotion to projects and improvements and produce promotional material and suggestions for walks and rides, highlighting different areas of the district;
- Council could priorities promotions from country parks and settlements;
- People who are less confident accessing public rights of way may not find maps very accessible. Paths could be named. Fingerposts with destinations;
- In terms of promotion, WBC should fill a gap of what is not being done or what is not being done well;

- Concerned that promotion of the Three Downs Link will disappear. It is currently on the Wessex Downs AONB and BHS websites;
- Promotion could also help to spread the load by directing people to exploring areas;
- Need to improve provision in terms of accessible routes for those living with disabilities;
- Need to have some accessible routes;
- Potentially option to hire mobility scooters the country parks;
- These needs also apply to those who are older, who need information on the route, seating places and facilities;
- If a route is publicised as accessible it needs more frequent checking to make sure it remains accessible and is as described;
- The public rights of way condition survey will assist in identifying routes which are accessible and will provide information on where improvements could be made;
- WBC needs to promote and take advantage of the assets of the area and link into the rural economy, heritage and tourism.

Area 3 - Specific User Groups

- Suggest contact Cycling UK for information on cyclists;
- Probably highest number of cycling users are mountain bikers but they may not have an over-arching body in West Berkshire to co-ordinate responses;
- BHS and Cycling UK work together as both users of higher rights public rights of way;

- A lot of cyclists use the towpath (National Cycle Network);
- Touring cyclists don't use off-road paths very much;
- It is difficult to reach motorised vehicle users which do not belong to a group or organisation;
- The Public Rights of Way Service has overall taken account of the needs of equestrians;
- It is difficult to create new routes and limited in what can be achieved;
- Behind the hedge routes could be pursued;
- More account of equestrians needs to be taken by WBC Highways in the implementation of schemes and should be properly considered in the assessment, design and implementation of schemes (e.g. Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding Assessment and Review – WCHAR). There needs to be a clear methodology for including equestrians;
- Some schemes have been implemented by WBC Highways where opportunities to improve the equestrian network have been missed;
- A more strategic approach needs to be taken looking at all projects together and how they can connect;
- Equestrians need to use the highway network as the network is not well-connected. Each equestrian has to assess the level of risk. WBC Highways need to recognise more fully the needs of these more vulnerable users.

Appendix

List of Stakeholders Contacted

4x4 Without a Club
 Age UK Berkshire
 All Wheel Drive Club
 Alzheimer's Society
 Arthritis Matters
 Autism Matters
 Berkshire Vision
 Berkshire Walkers
 Berkshire Weekend Walkers
 BOB Mountain Bike Club
 British Horse Society
 Canal & River Trusts Trust
 Carriage Driving representative
 Connecting Communities
 Berkshire
 Community United
 Country Land and Business
 Association
 CPRE Berkshire
 Dementia Walks with Age UK

Down's Syndrome - West
 Berkshire Support Group
 Eight Bells for Community
 Strength
 Eight Bells for Mental Health
 Environment Agency
 Fibromyalgia Support Group -
 West Berkshire
 GLASS
 Hants and Berks Rover
 Owners Club
 Historic England
 Hungerford U3A
 LARA
 Loddon Valley Ramblers
 Association
 Mencap - Newbury Gateway
 Club
 Mencap - Reading
 Mid Berks Ramblers
 Mobility Issues Group for
 Goring and Streatley (MIGGS)
 Motor Neurone Disease -
 Reading and West Berkshire
 Branch
 Multiple Sclerosis Society
 Newbury and District Group
 National Autistic Society (NAS)
 - West Berks Branch

National Farmers Union
 National Trust
 Natural England
 Neighbouring Highway
 Authorities:

- Oxfordshire
- Hampshire County
 Council
- Reading
- Wokingham
- Wiltshire
- Swindon

 Newbury BID (Visit Newbury)
 Newbury Road Club
 Newbury U3A
 Newbury Velo
 North Wessex Downs Area of
 Outstanding Natural Beauty
 (now National Landscape)
 Open for Hope
 Pang Valley Ramblers
 Parkinson's UK - Newbury
 Branch
 Planning - Strategic Planning /
 Local Plan
 Ramblers' Association
 (national)
 Reading Cycle Campaign
 Reading Cycle Club

Reading Outdoor Group
 Recovery in Mind
 Ridgeway National Trail
 Swings and Smiles
 Thames Path National Trail
 Thames Valley LEP
 Thatcham U3A
 The Advocacy People
 Trail Riders Fellowship
 Tu Vida
 West Berks Ramblers
 West Berkshire Council:

- Heritage Team
- Sensory Needs Service
- Adult Social Care
- Healthy Communities

 West Berkshire Countryside
 Society
 West Berkshire Spokes
 West Berkshire Museum
 West Berkshire Walking for
 Health
 Wokingham Greenways



West Berkshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

2025 – 2035

Statutory Consultation

Analysis of Responses

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Online Survey Responses.....	1
Profile of Respondents.....	1
Question 1: Additional Evidence Requirements.....	3
Question 2: Agreement with the Four Themes of the ROWIP.....	10
Question 3: Agreement with Priorities – Theme 1: Looking After the Network.....	19
Question 4: Agreement with Priorities – Theme 2: An Evolving Network.....	31
Question 5: Agreement with Priorities – Theme 3: Healthy and Prosperous Communities.....	43
Question 6: Agreement with Priorities – Theme 4: Effective Delivery.....	53
Question 7: Additional Priorities or Actions.....	60
Question 8: Ease of Reading the ROWIP.....	65
Question 9: Further Comments.....	69
Additional Responses Outside of Online Survey.....	78

Introduction

The statutory consultation for the West Berkshire draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2023-2033 (Main Report) ran between 31 August 2023 and 23 November 2023. The ROWIP, along with the two supporting evidence reports, was posted on West Berkshire Council’s consultation webpages. The evidence reports were posted to provide context and background information but were not part of the consultation. However, any errors or omissions raised by respondents were corrected.

A questionnaire was available from the webpage to receive comments on the ROWIP. Respondents could also send in responses through email or letter.

Online Survey Responses

242 respondents completed the online survey. Not all respondents answered all of the questions.

Profile of Respondents

Gender

The gender of respondents was as follows:

- Male - 56%
- Female - 32%
- Other - 0%
- Prefer not to say - 12%

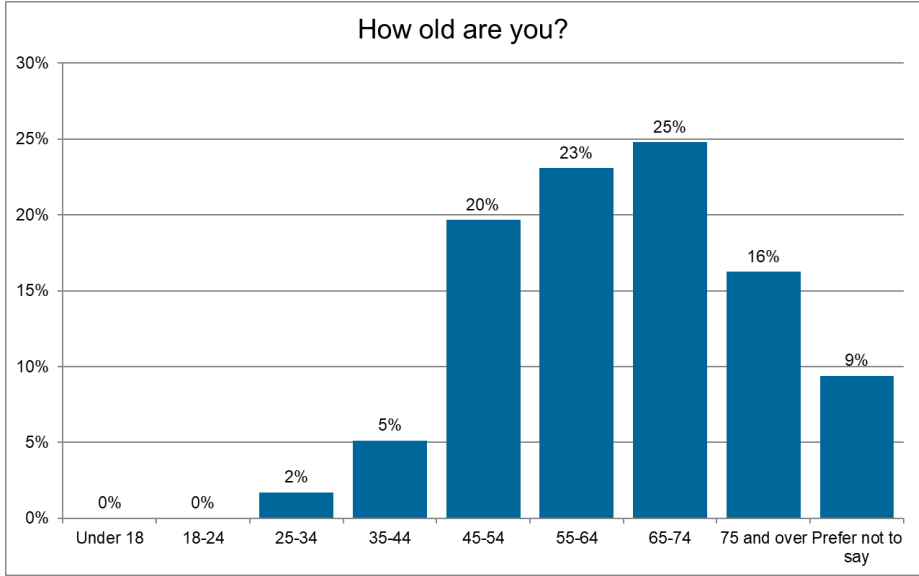
Age

84% of respondents were aged over 45 years old, see Table 1 and Chart 1.

Table 1: How old are you?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 18	0%	0
18-24	0%	0
25-34	2%	2
35-44	5%	6
45-54	20%	23
55-64	23%	27
65-74	25%	29
75 and over	16%	19
Prefer not to say	9%	11
Answered		117
Skipped		125

Chart 1: How old are you?



Ethnicity

Most respondents (86%) were white English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British, see Table 2.

Table 2: What is your ethnic group? Categories are based on those asked at the Census 2021

Answer Choices	Responses	
White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	86%	88
White Irish	0%	0
White other	2%	2
Gypsy, Irish Traveller or Roma	0%	0
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1%	1
Asian or Asian British	0%	0
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	0%	0
Prefer not to say	8%	8
Other ethnic group – please specify	3%	3
Answered		102
Skipped		140

Disability or Long-term Illness

Table 3: Do you have a disability, long-term illness, or health condition?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	18%	18
No	74%	75
Prefer not to say	9%	9
Answered		102
Skipped		140

Type of Respondent

Respondents were asked which of the following descriptions best described them. Respondents could choose more than one answer (Table 4)

Table 4: Which of the following best describe you? Please select all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	
A resident of West Berkshire	88%	213
A visitor to West Berkshire	5%	11
A West Berkshire landowner	6%	15
A West Berkshire business owner	5%	11
Employed by West Berkshire Council	4%	10
A Parish/Town Councillor	7%	18
A District Councillor	1%	2
A partner organisation	1%	3
Community group or charity	5%	11
Group or organisation representing users, e.g. Ramblers' Association, British Horse Society	2%	5
Member of the Local Access Forum	1%	3
Other - please specify below	3%	8
Additional information e.g. group/organisation name (if applicable):		23
Total		242

Answers given under 'other' were:

- Private individual with over 40 years volunteering for PROWs
- Bucklebury Commoner
- The Canal & River Trust
- Footpath Officer to Pang Valley Rambler Group of the Ramblers' Association
- Horse Riding Club
- Responding on behalf of ITS & Sustainable Travel Team, within WBC's Highways Network Management section
- Also a volunteer
- LARA - The Motoring Organisations' Land Access & Recreation Association
- I live on the border between West Berks and Hampshire and I work and shop in West Berks
- Ashampstead Recreational Trust
- Walk Leader with Wellbeing Walks
- Hermitage Parish Council
- Member of Disabled Ramblers and Hampshire Roamability
- West Berkshire Ramblers
- Hampstead Norreys Parish Council
- Hampstead Norreys Parish Council
- Visorando community, Free library of walks and Outdoor GPS
- Landowner with public footpath across the land.
- West Berkshire Countryside Society
- Live in bordering Basingstoke and Dean Parish.
- Farmer
- Neighbourhood plan Steering Group
- School governor in local schools

Question 1: Additional Evidence Requirements

Respondents were asked if there was any additional evidence which should be included in the ROWIP.

13% of respondents thought some additional evidence should be included, and 24 respondents gave further details of what they thought should be included (see Table 6, next page).

Table 5: Is there any additional evidence you think should be included?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	13%	25
No	39%	78
Not sure / no opinion	48%	96
	Answered	199
	Skipped	43

Table 6: Question 1: Please tell us what additional evidence you think should be included and why. Additional responses.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions A response of 'Noted' includes where the ROWIP already addresses the point made (sometimes stated)
1	14017293618	Looking at plans 1 and 2, much of the network is disconnected. This is presumably because they end or start on a tarmac or metalled road (or a permissive path). These roads are naturally narrow and potentially difficult to negotiate for some - or in some cases all - users. It would be useful to have a Plan 3 which showed where a road joined the path network to form the only connexion between two ROW paths. If opportunity arose, this could form the basis to select new ROW with maximum improvement to the network.	This information is assessed when developing new projects on a case by case basis, as there are many public rights of way which exit onto roads. Priority is given to safety improvements and links of proven need. The busy roads which create a barrier to users are highlighted in the ROWIP.
2	14018174269	Impact on the environment	Climate change mitigation and adaptation and impact of recreation on sensitive ecological sites is covered in the ROWIP and supporting evidence reports.
3	14018148498	Report on degree of completion of actions from previous Improvement Plan and reasons for success or failure. Use of such reasons to improve success of new plan.	Progress on actions from the previous ROWIP have been reported to the Local Access Forum and a final table setting out broad achievements is available.
4	14018129819	<p>1. OVER RELIANCE ON COMPUTERS etc. Two of your TARGET GROUPS' are affected. AGE and THE LEAST WELL OFF are overlooked. Areas of 'HIGH HEALTH INEQUALITY' are usually areas of 'LOW INCOME' where potential PROW users often cannot afford computers, smart phones etc and therefore cannot find out about walking. Similarly, OLDER PEOPLE are not always conversant with computers and much prefer HARD COPY. In May this year, at the suggestion of Yattendon Estate's CEO, I started putting FREE PARISH PATH LEAFLETS and CIRCULAR WALK LEAFLETS in Yattendon Stores. The parishes covered are YATTENDON, FRILSHAM, ASHAMPSTEAD and HAMPSTEAD NORREYS. So far this year 215 PARISH PATHS leaflets and 29 CIRCULAR WALKS leaflets have been taken, This demonstrates that HARD COPIES are essential.</p> <p>2. Re COVID-19. Personal Observation. Walking during Lock-Downs INCREASED DRAMMATICALLY on the many PRWs</p>	<p>It is generally beyond the resources of the Public Rights of Way Service to provide paper copies of promoted routes. However, partners would usually be supported to meet this need.</p> <p>Noted.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions A response of 'Noted' includes where the ROWIP already addresses the point made (sometimes stated)
		on Ashampstead Common but has fallen to LOW since.	
5	14018013020	Former university tutor.	Response not understood.
6	14017773752	<p>- On page 15, it is good that the ROWIP acknowledges the problems with lack of connectivity between PROWs in the specific areas, exacerbated by busy roads that cause severance. In addition to M4, A4 and A34, it is worth citing that the A339 and B4009 also pose particular issues.</p> <p>- On page 16, please refer to WBC's aspiration to connect a potential future northern extension of the Eling Way between Compton and Didcot in to The Ridgeway at a crossing point for the two paths, north of Compton. This could connect a proposed strategic north-south multi-user path with a historic, better-known east-west walking route</p> <p>- On page 17, please make reference to wheeling as well as walking and cycling - to cater for people using wheelchairs or similar walking aids, or push-along scooters</p> <p>- Please consider including references to the Wasing Way (Aldermaston Wharf to Aldermaston village) in which PROW also have a stake, as another example of a route that part uses Highway and is part PROW.</p>	<p>Noted. A339 and B4009 will be added.</p> <p>Future extension of Eling Way will be added.</p> <p>Wheeling will be added.</p> <p>Wasing Way will be added.</p>
7	14017775522	Detailed statistics of rights of way that are blocked or rendered unusable by landowners plus successful actions taken subdivided into successful resolution by negotiation, by advice by warning or by enforcement. Without this it allows inaction by the Council officers.	Noted. Detailed information is available to the Public Rights of Way Service and can be made available to others on request.
8	14017584770	The draft makes a great deal of PROW, but there is little reference to (a) footways, and (b) permitted paths. In the urban areas there is reference to the lack of public footpaths and (especially) byways, etc, but the corollary is that there will be a much larger number of footways for people to walk on. In particular, locally (Mortimer) we have a vast number of permitted paths through local woodland - especially through	<p>Noted. Footway and permitted paths are acknowledged as important parts of access and will always be considered should they contribute to the aims of this ROWIP</p> <p>Permitted paths are not generally publicised by WBC because they can change without WBC's knowledge.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions A response of 'Noted' includes where the ROWIP already addresses the point made (sometimes stated)
		Englefield Estate land and Wokefield Common. Whilst it is accepted that these could be removed by the landowner, this is highly unlikely.	
9	14017573104	Map Plan 3 shows meters of PROW per person - based presumably on resident population - this shows our area (Aldermaston) as having 10-20m per person. But the reality is that our area has a working population over 10 times larger than the resident population, so if you are looking at the ability of the PROW network to provide an active travel network you will see how woefully inadequate it is. Producing maps that also show density of working population would also be helpful to decide how the PROW network should be developed to promote active transport as well and leisure.	Noted. Improvements in active travel are led by West Berkshire Highways with support from the Public Rights of Way Team and therefore detailed research such as this would be taken forward by Highways.
10	14017555685	Cycling on footpaths.. since lockdown especially cycling has become a lot more popular.. riding on the road is always not an option.. cycle paths are ridden with debris and not cleaned causing punctures and accidents. There are not enough bridleways.. I for one cycle on footpaths .. not supposed to I know.. but making footpaths cycle friendly would be an advantage..	Noted. The ROWIP acknowledges that, in some parts of West Berkshire, there is lower provision of bridleways. There may be instances when the upgrading of a footpath to a bridleway would be of strategic benefit without loss of amenity for pedestrians
11	14017400245	I only skip read, but I didn't see any mention of Trail Running/off road running, which I do and seems quite popular. Needs may not be any different, but could be promoted as alternative to on-road running (fewer injuries!)	Noted. Will be added.
12	14016237220	Maybe you could ask people : - How do you plan your walks? On your own ? With some advice ? Are you part of a local or online community? - Where do you search for information related to your walks? (Digital platforms such as Komoot, Outdooractive, Ramblers, OSExplorer, Visorando, etc., Visitor center websites, Facebook groups, etc.) - Do you use any digital tools to search and follow your walks ? - Are you aware of who to contact if you find any issues on a	The public survey included questions around how users found information. The results were used to develop the actions on information provision.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions A response of 'Noted' includes where the ROWIP already addresses the point made (sometimes stated)
		route?	
13	14016787778	If you have evidence or a survey from those who have rights of way through their land it would be good to see that as a separate consideration. Not everyone is a large landowner, some like us have a footpath through their garden.	Noted.
14	14016761588	Looking at the areas in Crookham Common. If you need a person to show you these then just ask.	Noted.
15	14016739072	There should also be a review of the permitted pathways within West Berkshire. For instance the very popular permitted pathways within Beale Park (which can be seen on the West Berkshire pamphlet called "Footways, Byways, Bridleways of Basildon") have been completely closed off by Beale Park without any warning or reasoning. This is despite the area they are in being described in the pamphlet as "designated community woodland, part funded by a grant from the Forestry Commission".	Permitted paths are acknowledged as important parts of access and will always be considered should they contribute to the aims of this ROWIP. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace. Permitted paths are not generally publicised by WBC because they can change without WBC's knowledge.
16	14016735871	The boundaries of paths are important. Some paths have high fences or hedges being planted; others have barbed wire which is a real problem when the path is muddy and slippery - I am a fit and strong walker with excellent balance but even I have been injured falling onto a barbed wire fence on a narrow path.	Noted. These problems would be dealt with in the normal course of WBC's rights of way enforcement work.
17	14016715526	There should be some evidence of parking availability for people who want to use public footpaths away from home or public transport routes. No point in a public footpath which	The upgrades to the online map could include details of parking – however, West Berkshire Council does not wish to encourage more journeys by private car and is

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions A response of 'Noted' includes where the ROWIP already addresses the point made (sometimes stated)
		begins on a narrow busy road and is only accessible by using other footpaths if you are unable to walk that far.	seeking to encourage people to visit local areas, or access areas further afield by cycle or public transport.
18	14016701932	I believe that it is a mistake to look only at PROWs. These are linked by highways and pavements and you can have the best possible footpath, but if the pavement to access its start is overgrown then there is a disincentive to using the PROW.	Noted. Footway and permitted paths are acknowledged as important parts of access and will always be considered should they contribute to the aims of this ROWIP
19	14016526522	As a daily walker in the countryside, I am very aware of the lack of basic maintenance being afforded to public paths (and not just in West Berkshire). I question the extent to which the evidence survey conducted on-the-ground investigation. There is a significant lack of attention to the annual effect of vegetation growth - signs becoming obscured (a problem that occurs equally on rural roads, where it can lead to potentially dangerous situations), paths becoming obscured and challenging to proceed along, gateways and stiles overrun with nettles, brambles etc. If WBC lacks the funds to deal with these issues of maintenance, it would do well to think carefully about the wisdom of adding to the maintenance requirement with the introduction of yet more paths.	Noted. A condition survey was carried out in /2022. Culturally, WBC has always acknowledged the importance of achieving as high a standard of network as possible and always responds to reports of overgrown vegetation.
20	14016517671	In the Highclere area there are very many horse owners and riders but very limited access to off road routes. It would be very beneficial and safer to both horse and rider if some of the footpaths were changed to Bridleways. As a mountain biker and rider this would benefit so many extra outdoor exercisers and improve health and well being as the off road cyclists are also banned from using footpaths.	Noted by Public Rights of Way Service. This information will help to develop more specific equestrian actions. to the ROWIP document. WBC acknowledges that there may be instances when the upgrading of a footpath to a bridleway would be of strategic benefit without loss of amenity for pedestrians
21	14016255864	In the light of the proposal for making NORTHBROOK street pedestrian only 24H/D I believe there needs to be a specific survey of the "local" population, and regular users of Northbrook St (pedestrian and others) to gain specific input regarding this consideration	Noted. Specific projects will be set out in the ROWIP Delivery Plan, but in the case of town centres, such work will be covered by other WBC strategies.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions A response of 'Noted' includes where the ROWIP already addresses the point made (sometimes stated)
22	14016176461	I think there's a focus on how the network 'is' used not a focus on how the network 'will be' or 'could be used'. I think the Eling Way is a vision of build it and they will come. I.e. the plan should include some premier quality long term planning for long distance routeways based on major bridleways/old railway lines/ canal's. Plus we should think about how e-bikes may allow future access to people positively	Eling Way, Wasing Way and other strategic projects will be referenced (see also comment 6). The ROWIP is focusing on local need and locally accessible routes to support health and wellbeing and reduce travel, but the value of more longer distance links is acknowledged. These are most likely to be achieved by working in partnership with other WBC departments and third parties
23	14016170991	Evidence to show that the "Climate Emergency" is a load of hogwash, designed to make more money out of tax payers. You should show opposing studies and evidence	West Berkshire Council is committed to mitigating and adapting to climate change.
24	14015938685	mmm	Response not understood.

Question 2: Agreement with the Four Themes of the ROWIP

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the four themes of the ROWIP. 141 respondents answered this question, 101 skipped this question and 49 respondents made additional comments.

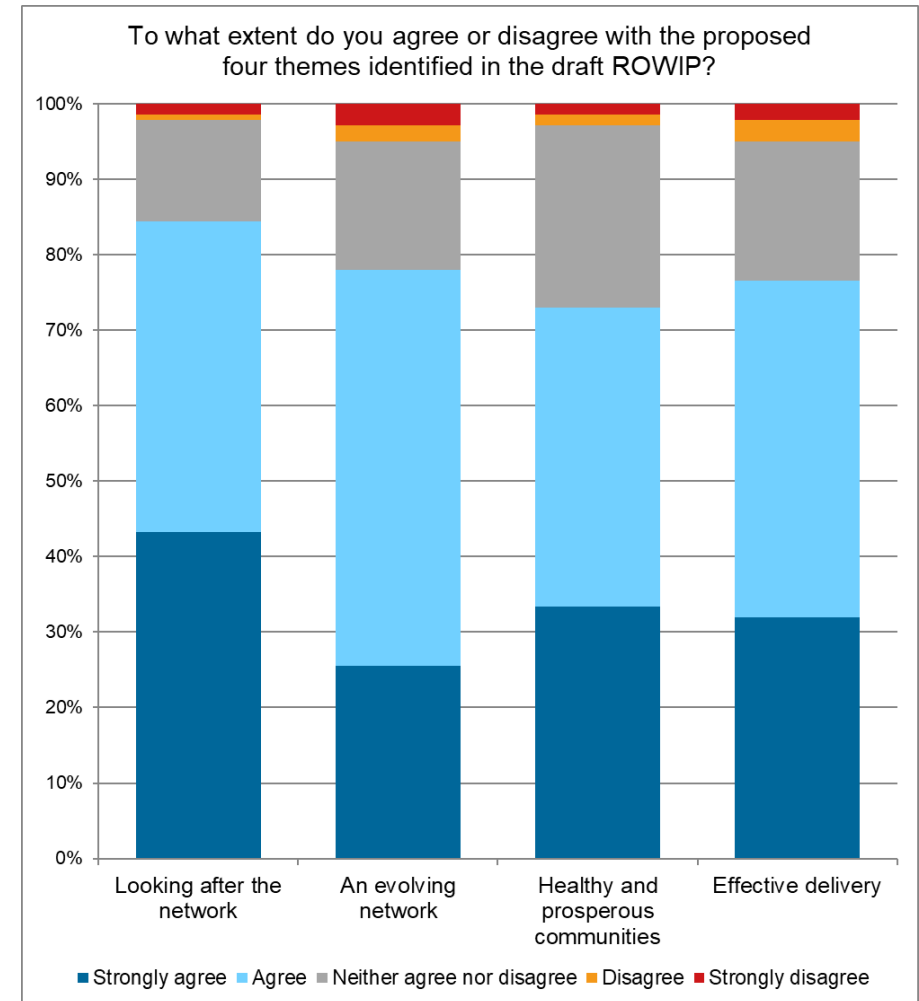
There was a high level of agreement with all of the themes, with the percentages agreeing or strongly agreeing with the themes as follows:

- Theme 1: Looking after the network – 84%
- Theme 2: An evolving network – 78%
- Theme 3: Healthy and prosperous communities – 73%
- Theme 4: Effective delivery – 77%

Table 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed four themes identified in the draft ROWIP?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Weighted Average
Theme 1: Looking after the network	1%	1%	13%	41%	43%	4.24
Theme 2: An evolving network	3%	2%	17%	52%	26%	3.96
Theme 3: Healthy and prosperous communities	1%	1%	24%	40%	33%	4.02
Theme 4: Effective delivery	2%	3%	18%	45%	32%	4.01
Answered: 141 Skipped: 101 Additional comments: 49						

Chart 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed four themes identified in the draft ROWIP?



Additional comments are shown in Table 8 (next page).

Table 8: Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed four themes identified in the draft ROWIP? Additional responses.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
25	14018231948	<p>"Basically I want the common to stay much as it is and has been for the last 50yrs. I agree it needs to be looked after but it must not become a park. I would worry about any 'evolving' actions as this sounds like development. 'Historical' byways should remain largely as they always have been.</p> <p>Obviously we want healthy and prosperous communities.</p> <p>Signs and gates and posts and general road furniture should be minimal, and thoughtfully designed</p> <p>If it's muddy we were wellingtons. Problem solved."</p>	Noted.
26	14017293618	<p>"All these themes seem well-integrated and to express important issues.</p> <p>The evolving network theme encompasses the point I made earlier about the problems of disconnected sections of RoW linked by narrow roads. These also form a restriction to access for some users."</p>	Noted.
27	14018148498	Need some form of prioritisation.	ROWIP actions will be implemented as resources and opportunities allow. Consideration is to be given to relative priorities
28	14018129819	<p>Partnership Officer is an excellent idea. A carefully worded job description could free up the professional staff considerably.</p> <p>ACTION 45. LIAISING WITH OTHER COUNCIL Depts. EDUCATION is key to a carefully used PROW and educating children to understand and value the countryside and its access is fundamental. Many PRIMARY SCHOOLS already include woodland visits but these stop at SECONDARY SCHOOL. However, at least three parts of the Secondary Curriculum contain subjects that the WBC Schools Dept. could be asked to slightly expand. GEOGRAPHY , Personal, Social and Health Education, RE - responsibility to the world around you.</p>	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
29	14018013020	In the present economic climate, as a realist I find number 3 difficult to envisage	Noted.
30	14016703624	Clearly there is no point in having the paths if people of all abilities cant access them. This is often a problem with brambles deep ruts and with the climate becoming wetter many of the paths become impassable during the winter due to slippery mud and surface water.	Noted.
31	14017867501	<p>On behalf of Pang Valley Rambler Group I submitted a response to West Berks Council ROWIP Consultation in 2021. Principal concerns were:</p> <p>1 Difficulty to get variety of walks we offer and establishing additional row is a time consuming and difficult exercise</p> <p>2 Loss of car sharing during the pandemic highlighted lack of adequate car parking. Many rural locations do not have an adequate level of bus services meaning personal transport is the only realistic means of access to the countryside.</p> <p>3 The move from stiles to gates is welcome for people with reduced mobility. Surface of paths is an issue.</p> <p>4 Increased population will mean maintenance budget provision will have to be increased.</p> <p>5 Clear signage should be placed to remind cyclists that riding on public footpaths is against the law and that on shared paths walkers have priority</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. It is not the aim of the ROWIP to seek additional car parking. There are PROW across the district, including close to where people live, and it is the priority of WBC to enable more use of these.</p> <p>Noted. Improvement of surfacing is an ongoing issue and is referenced in the ROWIP.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p>
32	14017834261	We need a body that keeps our bridleways open and in good order	Noted. This is already the remit of the Public Rights of Way Service.
33	14017773752	<p>Important to look after the existing network and maintain to reflect the relative level of current use and likely future growth in use</p> <p>- With additional route sections created by PROW being added to the network only where there has been close</p>	All noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>consideration in advance of how those are to be robustly maintained post-construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vital to create and sustain healthy and prosperous communities, tallying with the Council Strategy and broader objectives for public health and community development - Need for consistency of delivery across the District - a defined overall approach to delivery of improvements where realistic and crucially of maintenance of existing, even if the supporting parties such as volunteer groups may differ in composition 	<p>This has been a problem in the past where new routes are created as a result of development – steps have been taken to address this.</p>
34	14017755480	<p>There seems to me an over complication here - pages and pages of drivel mostly stating the obvious when all that's needed is for the Rights of Way to be kept clear and clearly signposted. This report is yet another example of the council wasting money.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>WBC already has an annual winter signposting project where the aim is to resolve all signposting defects.</p>
35	14017694141	<p>I belong to the Walk for Well Being groups and enjoy a huge range of paths several times a week - it has been central to my retirement activities and I've made so many friends</p>	Noted.
36	14017666050	<p>I don't have the time to read the extensive supporting info</p>	-
37	14017584770	<p>Rights of Way are vital for communities (and in particular their health and wellbeing).</p>	Noted.
38	14017467193	<p>PROW need to be easy to use to encourage residents to use them to increase their health and fitness.</p>	Noted.
39	14017445156	<p>You seem well aware of the issues</p>	Noted.
40	14017400245	<p>WB already has a good network and this needs sustaining. Although it doesn't affect me, I agree it is important to improve access from the urban fringe, especially in more deprived communities. This plus promotion will support health communities.</p> <p>There do seem to be an awful lot of actions and I am concerned whether these can be monitored and delivered. A more focused approach may enable more effective delivery, given the undoubtedly limited resources within the council</p>	<p>Noted. Added to Action 41.</p> <p>A more detailed Delivery / Action Plan will be produced to accompany the ROWIP.</p>
41	14017397571	<p>Our Rights of Way are extremely important and need to be looked after and planned appropriately. Our communities rely on the Rights of Way for recreation and travel and they are an integral part of West Berkshire.</p>	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
42	14017381433	<p>As a Council in the AONB we have many footpaths which provide much pleasure to our residents and visitors. We need to expand the use of wheelchairs, prams etc. and need the help and advice to do it.</p> <p>Effective delivery requires funds and people to quickly and professionally carry out the work. We should be able to use locally approved contractors to speed up repairs. I think that lack of funding will be the main reason why this initiative will not be effective although I like the ideas.</p>	Perhaps want to exercise their powers but do not know what council provided this response. As part of the Delivery Plan for this ROWIP, there will be actions and targets to liaise more closely with parish councils and to provide advice and assistance.
43	14017158210	The maintenance and development of existing and new ROW is very important and facilitates the well being of users.	Noted.
44	14017120797	neither agree or disagree	-
45	14017099756	<p>To get a better understanding of progress against the previous plan it would be valuable to see progress against the previous actions, as otherwise this plan may be seen as having no value. There is no progress against the 63 actions in the previous plan provided.</p> <p>There is discussion of "Delivery plans" to be created every 2 years. Is this a new concept for this area? If not, then how is the recorded progress against the detailed actions in these plans? 13 years after the previous Plan you would expect some progress and that it is reported in this document.</p>	<p>Actions from the previous ROWIP are reported to the Local Access Forum and a final progress table is available on request. Progress against this ROWIP will also be reported to the Local Access Forum.</p> <p>Delivery Plans have become common at WBC over recent years, so in a sense they are 'new'. Integral to a Delivery Plan is reporting on progress, e.g. via 'traffic light' colour coding and comments</p>
46	14016237220	A right of way is linked to diverse parts of a local development and are interdependent. A well-maintained, structured and promoted network, accessible to everyone, where some route co-created with stakeholders can be a success towards people's health, the local economy, etc. The challenge is to find a tool of platform used by the whole set of stakeholders.	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Part of the ethos of the new ROWIP will be much greater working with stakeholders and partners</p>
47	14016825428	These are all important issues and areas that ensure we have an effective. alternative transport network other than cars/roads	Noted.
48	14016787778	Rights of way are hugely important, but the approach must be holistic and work for users and the communities that routes go through	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Many ROWIP actions mention further dialogue with stakeholders.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
49	14016762191	I live next to a wood with right of way surrounding my property	Noted.
50	14016749084	We need our open spaces to be kept accessible for all community members.	Noted.
51	14016746661	Footpath No 8 between Silchester and the Reading Road going through Ravenswing mobile home site. Had been allowed to overgrow. After contacting Aldermaston parish council it has now been cleared. However if it's not monitored it will be allowed to overgrow again.	Noted. Due to resources, WBC responds to requests to clear rights of way but relies on third parties to report the problem.
52	14016735871	Rights of way are about providing access to our country for more of our society and this needs to be continually developed and extended as we change the environment.	Noted.
53	14016735207	Some rights of way are in a terrible state and some are well kept but this I soften down to ramblers or local people	Noted.
54	14016715526	I agree that you should look after the network, that it should evolve and be effectively delivered. I'm not sure how I agree with 'healthy and prosperous communities. Either they are or they aren't. Rights of way are unlikely to make a huge difference to this. Seems like the healthy and prosperous people are more likely to use rights of way in some areas (i.e. for leisure activities) whereas the less healthy and prosperous and more likely to use them in other areas (i.e. to avoid busy roads and as shortcuts for people without access to transport).	Noted. The idea is to find ways to encourage people to use the rights of way network who might not have done this in the past
55	14016692915	I've noticed too many bridleways end up merging into footpaths. Being a disabled emountain biker this causes me major problems as I am unable, or find it difficult walking on the footpaths. Can you re look at some of these or consider a disable permit to allow cycling on footpaths.....with care obviously.	Noted. Addressing discrepancies in the network is included as a priority in the ROWIP. 'Dead end' cyclable rights of way are rare and it would be useful to know more about the areas where this is a problem.
56	14016528855	Ready access to the countryside is a valuable aid to good health and has to be cherished	Noted.
57	14016526522	Theme 1. I welcome in general the proposals for looking after the network. Theme 2. In my comment on the preceding page I have referred to maintenance shortfalls and the fact that every	Noted. Noted. The ROWIP does not prioritise urban over rural dwellers but does address where the majority of people live. It

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>facility that is added is another facility to be maintained. I am also uncomfortable with the sense that much of the “evolving” material has perhaps been written by people who dwell in towns. Those who dwell in the rural areas do not so lightly talk about the options of cycling and walking everywhere, for a variety of good reasons (e.g. remoteness from shops / workplaces etc, lack of rural public transport, absence of pavements). For dwellers in rural areas, the car remains a necessity and so do the roads on which to get to shops, work, medical appointments etc. Leisure surely must come AFTER necessity.</p> <p>Theme 3. The third theme has some welcome ideas, but again I see the “urban” view popping up all too readily. I would remind WBC that urban dwellers have countless miles of pavements in and around our communities, on which to take exercise.</p> <p>Theme 4. I see lots of grand ideas, involving recruiting people to talk to each other and develop more plans. I wonder whether the not-inconsiderable WBC resources envisaged in all this might be better spent on ground-level action with the existing paths network, but also with a very real attempt by the Council to bring onboard the local (i.e. Parish) Councils for greater local organisation and involvement.</p>	<p>is beyond the scope of the ROWIP to address public transport deficiency, but schemes such as the Eling Way and its future extension will serve rural residents for both leisure and utility needs. There is scope for other rural rights of way to be improved so as to increase transport choices.</p> <p>Noted. The experience of using a pavement is very different from using an off-road public right of way.</p> <p>Noted. Parish Councils are being engaged to develop projects and improve the PROW network.</p> <p>There will be a Delivery Plan attached to this ROWIP, containing specific targets.</p>
58	14016527361	Public rights of way are one of the best local and national assets we have in England	Noted.
59	14016517671	We need more access for cyclists and equestrians in the Highclere region.	Noted by Public Rights of Way Service. This information will help to develop more specific equestrian actions. to the ROWIP document.
60	14015931263	The proposed four themes have been well developed and cover every aspect necessary to take our PROW network into the future.	Noted.
61	14016336090	It is important that a clear understanding of the access people have to the spaces around them. And to understand those spaces so they can value and help protect them for future generations. Enable people to ‘own’ and take responsibility	Noted. Partnership working is a priority in the ROWIP.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		for protecting their environment. It is also very important that all agencies work together to ensure that they reach the same goals. It is detrimental to that goal if the various agencies and areas only look after their own interests.	
62	14016288635	Existing network needs to be maintained so that it exists in the future. Network must evolve to reflect changes in population centres and people's activities. If people are out-and-about, more likely to use local shops etc. WBC and other statutory bodies are responsible for using taxpayers' money in a way that ensures the taxpayers see value from the spending of their money.	Noted.
63	14016200439	The existing network needs more attention before you think about evolving. Some paths are almost impassable with missing signage.	Noted.
64	14016195562	Very important to maintain access which helps to maintain a healthy and prosperous community. There is a clear cost to this and additional funding should be sought. Planners need to be very careful when considering planning applications that will reduce the amount of ROW	Noted.
65	14016176154	We should be developing and extending rights of way.	Noted.
66	14016174828	WBC devotes far too much time and expense to this at the expense of more important needs e.g. highway maintenance , social care and transport	Noted.
67	14016171303	All out door spaces need protection public path ways even more so they must be kept accessible for all	Noted.
68	14016170991	Anything taking into account "Climate change" is unnecessary and simply causes more costs to tax payers	Noted.
69	14016170786	This network is a distinctive asset for West Berkshire particularly its bridle ways and byways As well as promoting the health and well-being of its communities it is a tourism asset and can provide important links between communities	Noted. The ROWIP addresses needs of all users.
70	14016169050	I believe we need to make adequate provision for continued sympathetic use of motorcycles on BOATs which will avoid illegal use in other areas	Noted. The ROWIP addresses needs of all users.
71	14016168683	Greater accessibility required. Safety and CCTV needed.	Noted.
72	14016168146	A successful network needs periodic review and assessment	Noted. There will be a monitored Delivery Plan attached to this ROWIP.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
73	14015992034	<p>In Stanford Dingley Parish there are several rights of way where the surface is unsuitable for all users this has been reported online several times but still the surface is very poor. So there is still work to be done to look after the present network.</p> <p>Evolving the network and opening existing paths to different types of users needs to be done in full consultation with the landowners and other stakeholders. It is not the responsibility of neighbouring landowners to provide amenity space to new developments. These should be considered in conjunction with any major application. All too often it seems that a footpath adjacent to a new development results in people using a right of way to open space which affects rural businesses</p>	<p>Noted. Work to improve surfaces is ongoing and is included in the ROWIP.</p> <p>Noted. This is a matter for the Local Planning Authority, although the Public Rights of Way Service is a consultee and will provide information and advice.</p>

Question 3: Agreement with Priorities – Theme 1: Looking After the Network

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the two priorities under Theme 1: Looking After the Network. 129 respondents answered this question, 113 skipped this question and 36 respondents provided additional responses.

Overall there was a high level of agreement with the priorities (see Table 9), with the percentages agreeing or strongly agreeing with the priorities as follows:

- To protect the network and maintain it in the best condition possible, prioritising safety and areas of greatest need and seeking improvements where possible – 84%
- To improve environmental sustainability of public rights of way maintenance and contribute to environmental and climate stewardship - 73%

Additional comments regarding the two priorities are shown in Table 10 (next page).

Respondents were also asked if they had any additional comments on the actions under the two priorities, see Table 11.

Table 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed priorities for the theme 'Looking After the Network'?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Weighted Average
To protect the network and maintain it in the best condition possible, prioritising safety and areas of greatest need and seeking improvements where possible	2%	2%	12%	36%	47%	4.26
To improve environmental sustainability of public rights of way maintenance and contribute to environmental and climate stewardship	4%	7%	16%	36%	36%	3.95

Table 10: Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed priorities for the theme 'Looking After the Network'? Additional responses.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
74	14018231948	But any signage and 'furniture' must be absolutely minimal and of appropriate and tasteful design.	Noted.
75	14018195739	Difficult to argue against - even if immediate priorities elsewhere make these aspirational.	Noted.
76	14017293618	How could one disagree? The second, more general, priority seems likely to include the first. The first is obviously important, especially with the key word "possible"	Noted.
77	14018148498	Essential if wish to maintain network under changing climatic conditions	Noted.
78	14018129819	I have included these in the sections above.	Noted.
79	14018013020	Highly desirable goals. It is to be hoped the resource will be there to achieve them.	Noted.
80	14017867501	Please see responses to previous question. With an ageing population accessibility is a priority both in terms of width of gates and having suitable surface on paths for mobility scooters and wheelchairs.	Noted.
81	14017834261	Keeping Bridleways open and in good order is essential	Noted.
82	14017773752	Resource and staffing considerations may mean it is not always possible to do more than the minimum to maintain a safe and accessible route for all, let alone environmental enhancements. This is particularly given PROWs current emphasis on providing for walkers above all and your recognised desire to also provide for people cycling, riding and wheeling too	Noted. As part of implementation of the ROWIP there will be an emphasis on closer working with third parties and colleagues to 'add value'.
83	14017795758	This needs to include the signage to RoW as well as the RoW themselves.	There is a fingerpost at the start of each public right of way where it leaves the road. There is not presently the resource to provide additional signage, except for waymarking on the routes, but some destination information may be possible in the future.
84	14017775522	I don't see evidence of enforcement on landowners who persistently ignore their responsibilities	Enforcement is carried out in line with West Berkshire Council's Public Rights of Way Enforcement Procedure and matrix.
85	14017755480	These are all things the council are already responsible for. Nothing new here and no expensive report necessary to highlight them.	There is a legal requirement for a ROWIP.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
86	14017621984	Well maintained paths will encourage use.	Noted
87	14017584770	Previous answer.	-
88	14017573104	I am wary of all resources being focused on urban areas where they will provide benefit to the greatest number of residents. WBC must also keep in mind that many rural areas in the Kennet East Areas people do not have access to parks, and the footpath network is scant and not joined up. Plus most of our roads, including minor roads, lack pavements and are very busy making them unsuitable for use by pedestrian/cyclist/horse riders. The lack of PROW network also means that people employed in the big businesses here also have to commute by car. In our parish we have AWE Aldermaston with over 6k workers and many industrial parks (Calleva, Easter, Staceys, and Youngs plus lots of smaller clusters of industrial units).	<p>Noted. Keeping the network in a sufficient standard for use is a legal requirement regardless of where in the district. Additional resources must be allocated to where there is the greatest need.</p> <p>The ROWIP acknowledges the disjointed nature of some of the network in the south eastern area.</p>
89	14017467193	Climate change must be addressed for the sake of future generations.	Noted.
90	14017381433	Footpaths should do as they say and provide pedestrians with full access all the year round. Puddles and mud are the main reasons in the winter when access is blocked. Drainage should be a higher priority on the repairs list.	Surfacing and drainage issues are included in the ROWIP and issues are addressed each year, as resources allow.
91	14017158210	The network requires a lot of managing due to vegetation growth, natural deterioration of materials and deliberate or accidental damage to signage.	Noted.
92	14017099756	Whilst these are good priorities, please provide some means of measuring the delivery of these priorities, as otherwise there is no means of measuring the progress towards these priorities.	SMART objectives have been applied to all actions in the ROWIP where this is appropriate. The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions will be reported to the Local Access Forum.
93	14016237220	<p>To protect and maintain the network as a whole seems important. Depending on the route influx, some areas would need more care in terms of safety/maintenance. Then, regarding the areas of greatest needs, several factors could be taken into account before investing in them? Maintenance is an important subject. The difficulty is to find a sustainable system to maintain those right of way.</p> <p>Local walking groups are great resources as they regularly walk some routes. Nowadays a great part of walkers use</p>	<p>Work is already underway to improve the longevity of work undertaken on the network.</p> <p>West Berkshire Council is aware of the Visorando platform. Further exploration of delivery mechanisms may be explored as the ROWIP is delivered.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>online platforms to search and follow routes with their smartphones. They are less tempted to visit websites dedicated to one destination only as it has been shown on the survey (75% of the public is not aware of the available resources on West Berkshire Council website and there are tensions related to some walker's behaviours). Have you ever thought about reaching out to global online communities such as Visorando which offers systems where :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - walkers share regular feedback on the walks helping in their maintenance? It is free and the team contacts the local authorities and authors with whom they work with. - You can also access statistics and data on the attendance of the routes to know where people go. - They can provide a map showing where people mainly roam so you can adjust campaigns. - They financially help local authorities in investing in information boards, events, etc. - They work with local walking leaders who provide digital navigation courses training people on how to navigate and behave. Etc. <p>Those information are important to adjust some development strategies. This could be added to the list of stakeholders to contact in your Action 5 and 13.</p>	<p><i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p>
94	14016796114	Many public footpaths terminate on fast and dangerous roads, where there is no provision for non-car users. This is dangerous and needs improvement. Climate change action is a fashionable distraction while the existing network is so poorly maintained.	Noted. There are objectives to seek to improve connectivity in this ROWIP
95	14016749084	We need to keep our environment as pristine as possible	Noted.
96	14016528855	A safe environment is crucial	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
97	14016527361	I think there are multiple ways to increase and improve our rights of way. A great example are all the abandoned railway tracks; these should all be public rights of way, ideally at least bridleways.	Noted.
98	14016526522	Practicality.	Noted.
99	14015931263	The priorities should make the network future-proof. It is often the day-to-day 'niggles', such as overgrown paths, which can leave a lasting impression on users, so it should be easy to report such problems and for them to be swiftly rectified.	Noted. For information, WBC's online reporting system has recently been updated. Longevity of works undertaken will be sought.
100	14016444576	Climate stewardship should not be the province of local councils, since initiatives concerning climate change, a global phenomenon which cannot be affected at local level, invariably bring decreased convenience, increased cost and unwanted restrictions	Steps to assist with climate change mitigation and adaptation are within the remit of West Berkshire Council.
101	14016336090	If society allows its environment to decay, decline and deteriorate then every living thing is the loser. Having access to these spaces not only provides a place of wellbeing for us but also provides the opportunity for people to understand the needs of nature and the environment. Having high aspirations and ideals has to be matched by commitment to achieve those aspirations and ideals, otherwise it will fail.	Noted.
102	14016174828	Environmental issues should not be a main responsibility of local government	Environmental responsibilities are part of what is required of local government, including a legal biodiversity duty.
103	14016172065	Sounds like a good excuse for doing less maintenance	Noted.
104	14016170786	This network is a great asset which needs priority	Noted.
105	14016170991	Don't do anything. Nothing needs to be done. Anything proposing getting people out of cars is simply the government wanting to do away with private car ownership	Noted.
106	14016169050	Use of BOATs to be maintained	Noted. To protect the rights of responsible vehicular users is part of WBC's statutory duty.
107	14016168683	Maximise the usage of what we have for the people who live here	Noted.
108	14016168146	Maintaining the environment is of utmost importance	Noted.
109	14015992034	With an increasing number of users it is vital that the network is maintained well. As long as rights of way to not have a detrimental effect to the environment they should be well maintained. The wider landscape generally should be used to improve the environment	Noted.

Table 11: Question 3: Do you have any comments on the proposed actions for the theme 'Looking After the Network', which can be found on page 33 of the draft ROWIP?

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
110	14018231948	Commoners must be consulted too.	Noted.
111	14018190282	There should be more TROs, and they should include all motorised vehicles. On Bucklebury Common motorbikes cause a large amount of damage to byways during the winter, they are shut to 4 by 4s, which is great, but the motorbikes also cause a lot of damage. This should be a priority.	TRO's are implemented in line with West Berkshire Council's policy on motorised vehicle use on public rights of way.
112	14017293618	They seem to cover most aspects	Noted.
113	14018148498	Little if no mention of proposed action to maintain and improve drainage on network	This is included in the ROWIP and is addressed annually as resources allow. The importance of drainage, both for PROW maintenance and environmental reasons, is acknowledged.
114	14018129819	I have included these in the sections above.	-
115	14018013020	Yes. The recognition of the role that it is hoped landowners will be able to play in the plan comes over clearly in Actions 2 and 4. Most interested people, however, realise that landowners have taken a hit as a result of the withdrawal of EU subsidies through Brexit and it remains uncertain how this might affect the contribution they can make. A condition survey after 5 years might be a better option than the 10 proposed. It depends on whether annual maintenance is effective	Noted. Resources will determine the frequency of the condition survey and at present there are only sufficient resources for a ten year survey, to coincide with and inform the next ROWIP.
116	14017867501	No. The council has a legal duty to maintain PROW in conjunction with landowners.	Noted.
117	14017773752	Action 7: Is it realistic to add destinations to fingerposts? Will these actually be maintained/updated on top of other tasks?	<p>Action states destinations will be added where there are sufficient resources to do so. These will be prioritised on the basis of need.</p> <p><i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		Amend Action 10 to read “Work with the Council’s Highways Network Management and Highways Maintenance teams to develop guidance for design, surfacing and ongoing maintenance of multi-user paths where these also use or connect into the public Highway”	Will be amended. <i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme ‘Looking after the Network’. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i> See also response X010.
118	14017794988	A condition survey every 10 years seems inadequate. It would be desirable for this to be done more frequently to keep on top of issues as they emerge. This could be achieved through increased use of volunteers. As a minimum high-use routes with known issues should be prioritised for more frequent surveys (e.g., the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath).	Noted. Resources will determine the frequency of the condition survey and at present there are only sufficient resources for a ten year survey, to coincide with and inform the next ROWIP. Volunteers are already helping with surveys and the idea to target this resource towards well-used routes is noted.
119	14017584770	I question whether the condition survey should be a five-year rather than a ten-year task	Noted. Resources will determine the frequency of the condition survey and at present there are only sufficient resources for a ten year survey, to coincide with and inform the next ROWIP.
120	14017573104	Action 5 – to ‘Develop partnerships with parish and town councils and other stakeholders to implement and improve maintenance and identify local priorities’ is good. However, WBC must recognise some PCs consist of a small number of unpaid councillors working with a tight budget, so should not expect the PCs to be able to take on the responsibility of PROW upkeep. PCs can usefully work with WBC as eyes-on-the-ground and to identify PROW development opportunity	Noted. Parish Councils do receive CIL funds which can sometimes be used to improve local PROWs. <i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme ‘Looking after the Network’. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i>
121	14017467193	No. Support all	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
122	14017445156	<p>Action 10 – a standard is a good idea. Some surfaces could be more accessible if the size of gravel (plentiful in this area) is smaller and more compacted, e.g. for Greenham Common and around the lake at Thatcham's Nature Discovery centre. Large flints are not wheelchair or smaller mobility scooter friendly Kissing gates are not helpful to wheelchair or push chair users or to mobility scooters unless they come with a radar key, such as used at Snelsmore Common for access to their Accessible Route</p> <p>Action 13 is a good idea. The reality is that disabled people can probably not access other routes which are fragmented. Small circular routes would be most welcome in other areas; or a longer "out and back" routes if it is not feasible to join up short sections</p>	<p>All noted.</p> <p><i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p>
123	14017400245	They all look sensible. I do think some more thinking is required on the off road driving issue on BOATS, as this does damage the routes for other users. It may be that where certain easily eroded BOATS are regularly used by off road vehicles and motorbikes, a parallel path for walkers and cyclists may be needed. Some vulnerable BOATS may need their legal status changed to reduce the environmental impact.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
124	14017397008	would like to see west Berkshire create routes suitable for impaired mobility/wheelchair users and list them.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
125	14017257093	Action 1 needs to be much more specific and should involve LAF and include more regular updating and monitoring of priorities for maintenance and unresolved issues.	To be more specific at this stage would pre-empt any conclusions drawn through the more detailed analysis and discuss of what how maintenance and projects could be prioritised. The LAF will play an advisory role in this but will be led by West Berkshire Council
126	14017158210	<p>Yes, first you could make greater use of the volunteers in West Berks Ramblers to swap out more stiles with gates, this is limited by West Berks Council resources available to liaise with landowners.</p> <p>Secondly the volunteers and the council should stop installing wooden hanging posts for gates as they rot out within ten years, use aluminium and if land owners object offer green</p>	<p>Noted. Elaine you might want to look at these. West Berkshire Ramblers.</p> <p>Consideration of how to prevent rotting posts is ongoing. The suggestion of use of recycled plastic is noted but there are also concerns about its environmental footprint.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>powder coated aluminium, it will out last us all!</p> <p>Thirdly the Ramblers Volunteers have a Power Tool Group who can be called upon to cut back overgrowing vegetation, we have rarely been called out, this needs attention.</p> <p>Fourthly new posts for signage could be made from recycled plastic rather than wood or steel, as both deteriorate whereas recycled plastic is more environmentally friendly and will last longer.</p>	The Power Tools Group has been successful and the comment is acknowledged.
127	14017099756	Many of the actions have no means of measurement, so it will be impossible to know whether they are being done / completed. Examples would be: 1. Action 17 Progress strategic projects with partners where these address West Berkshire's needs and the priorities of this Rights of Way Improvement Plan. 2. Action 54 Improve provision of feedback on progress of the problem to those reporting problems. This is not an exhaustive list. There is no indication in this Plan (in contrast with the previous 2010 Plan) of the anticipated funding, priority and cost. Without this information it is very difficult to review / agree the actions.	SMART objectives have been applied to all actions in the ROWIP where this is appropriate. The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions will be reported to the Local Access Forum.
128	14016237220	Maybe you could add an action related to education where you could develop codes of conduct, a promise to increase local people and visitors' awareness on their impacts with those practices and what their key role is in the maintenance of those networks? Extend the Duke of Edinburgh project awareness maybe ?	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
129	14016796114	Protection from accidental contact by walkers from electric fences is needed.	Noted. Placement of electric fencing covered in British Standards and guidelines for landowners. WBC also has a protocol for dealing with these problems.
130	14016735871	"Please seriously consider how to use "open source" concepts around the data for rights of way. For example adding them to https://www.openstreetmap.org and contacting the UK coordinators at https://osmuk.org/ Knowing about the network is essential to being able to use the network.	<p>Noted.</p> <p>A PROW layer is available on the WBC interactive online map. This information can be used by third party information suppliers.</p>
131	14016739072	There should also be a review of the permitted pathways within West Berkshire. For instance the very popular	Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		permitted pathways within Beale Park (which can be seen on the West Berkshire pamphlet called "Footways, Byways, Bridleways of Basildon") have been completely closed off by Beale Park without any warning or reasoning. This is despite the area they are in being described in the pamphlet as "designated community woodland, part funded by a grant from the Forestry Commission".	scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
132	14016704288	All footpaths should be cleared regularly not just those deemed by the council to have priority	Noted.
133	14016528855	The list appears to be totally consistent with ongoing maintenance and support	Comment not understood.
134	14016527361	Maintaining access during the summer months when vegetation can reduce or prevent access is critical. I'd also like to see more footpaths become multi use e.g. bridleways so that off road cyclists and horses can use them where possible. I both walk and ride a bike a lot, and it seems there are quite a lot of footpaths that could be used for bikes. This would also help join up the network better to avoid having to use busy roads.	Noted. It is acknowledged that in some instances it may be beneficial to 'upgrade' footpaths without severe detriment to pedestrians.
135	14015931263	The actions seem to include everything that is necessary to make the network future-proof.	Noted.
136	14016336090	It reads a bit like a 'mission statement'. It has high ideals but not much in the way of specifics. But the aspirations are sound.	The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress
137	14016255864	none	Noted.
138	14016202782	There should be a better link with the planning commitments - there is no point improving a bridleway and then planners allowing access through a bridleway for a period of 5 years - the PROW officers in my experience so not give enough focus on this element - every response I have seen is no comment or no issues - in many cases they don't even seem to know the official designation of a PROW and do not engage actively with Highways either	It is acknowledged that improvements are needed in securing new access long-term, and also in arrangements for ongoing maintenance.
139	14016176461	yes - focus on a couple of major routeway extensions - such as expanding Eling Way or making the K&A towpath more bike friendly	Noted. This work is being actively pursued by WBC's transport teams
140	14016174828	A very expensive piece of work but of little value	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
141	14016173644	No mention of permissive paths	Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service.. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
142	14016170786	I agree with them. While the way marking along paths is reasonably comprehensive it is not always easy to see the general direction from one to another. Leicestershire County Council uses a simple wooden stake painted yellow which you can see from the other side of a field. It is cheap and very effective	Noted.
143	14016169131	I have briefly reviewed the document. I just wanted to say even as a very courteous motorcycle rider I experience a lot of hatred and aggression towards me riding carefully and slowly even in fully legal byways. I would suggest that TROs closing 4x4s are clearer as some people do not read them correctly thinking it's closed for motorcycles too. Of course motorcycles cause less damage than 4x4s and probably even horses / erosion from people walking a lot. I hope there will not be any more byways closed as already it is extremely difficult to find areas to enjoy the countryside on my motorcycle, having to travel further to find one is not good for the environment either. I also see a lot of horse riders riding on pavements which is intimidating towards people and dogs. Thank you.	The suggestion to make TRO notices clearer will be taken forward straight away. The ROWIP does include objectives towards education of PROW users.
144	14016168807	Developing a policy shouldn't take precedence over some of the other actions.	Noted.
145	14016168683	More all weather surfaces	Noted.
146	14016131106	In total there are 54 actions set out in the ROWIP - as set out across many pages within the report, this makes it hard to review all the proposed actions to consider their possible impact as a whole. It would be useful to: 1) set out the actions in one summary section of the document 2) review and determine relative priority between the 54 actions - as to try to complete all in parallel is unrealistic	An executive summary is provided at the beginning of the Main Report.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		3) clarify and record the ownership of the actions (within WBC) and set timescales for completion	Actions are not prioritised and will be addressed as opportunities and resources allow and based on need. The Delivery Plan will identify some priorities. All actions are owned by WB PROW team
147	14015992034	Ensure that any businesses that are affected by rights of way are fully consulted and informed by any works that will take place.	Noted.
148	14015985879	Action 13 is very important. It often feels like you need to be in with a certain group, know the right people to access the countryside. It creates honeypot locations. I'd love to see welcoming signs to car parks (however small) to encourage people to explore the whole of West Berkshire. I have a few places I know and don't feel confident or free to explore many places. New Zealand does this incredibly well. Signage and welcoming features, dog poo bins etc. Unfortunately it can also lead to local people feeling 'ownership' of a particular walk / area and being unwelcoming to others. The local authority could lead in the notion that all ROW are for all.	Noted. <i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i>

Question 4: Agreement with Priorities – Theme 2: An Evolving Network

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the three priorities under Theme 2: An Evolving Network. 125 respondents answered this question, 117 skipped this question and 35 respondents provided additional responses.

Overall there was a high level of agreement with the priorities (see Table 12), with the percentages agreeing or strongly agreeing with the priorities as follows:

- Ensure that access is strategically planned and delivered to meet the needs of West Berkshire's residents – 82%
- Ensure that the network evolves to meet current and future needs of users and that connectivity is improved – 82%
- To uphold the council's legal duties to provide an up-to-date definitive map and statement – 83%

Additional comments regarding the two priorities are shown in Table 13 (next page).

Respondents were also asked if they had any additional comments on the actions under the two priorities, see Table 14.

Table 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed priorities for the theme 'An Evolving Network'?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Weighted Average
Ensure that access is strategically planned and delivered to meet the needs of West Berkshire's residents	2%	1%	15%	47%	35%	4.14
Ensure that the network evolves to meet current and future needs of users and that connectivity is improved	2%	2%	14%	36%	46%	4.21
To uphold the council's legal duties to provide an up-to-date definitive map and statement	1%	0%	16%	36%	47%	4.29

Table 13: Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed priorities for the theme 'An Evolving Network'? Additional responses.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
149	14018231948	Destination signage is unnecessary and adds clutter, imposing on the natural environment. People have maps/GPS and that's all they need.	Noted.
150	14018195739	Very carefully chosen word 'evolve' which is absolutely spot on and fits exactly how these routes have developed since time immemorial.	Noted.
151	14018129819	I have included these in the sections above.	Noted.
152	14018013020	We need to know what the critical elements of a strategic plan for access are seen to be to meet the varying needs of West Berkshire's residents Otherwise it is difficult to give a definitive response to the first statement	Noted.
153	14016703624	The demand for people to get out and exercise will only increase so I believe that some form of developing opportunities for new routes should be implemented or the existing network will deteriorate. Eling is a great example.	Noted.
154	14017867501	All 3 issues are important	Noted.
155	14017773752	Any ambition for evolution of the ROW network needs to take account of WBC's existing commitments to maintain the existing network, and reflect availability or otherwise of resources to allow for that expansion/evolution	Noted.
156	14017755480	See previous answers	Noted.
157	14017621984	Connectivity can be a real problem - particularly for rights of way other than footpaths where bad connectivity can limit options for cyclists and equestrians	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
158	14017584770	The definitive map is a legal duty, so why is it a priority? Having said this, the WBC interactive map is excellent and better than many others.	Included for completeness of all PROW service functions. Maintenance and enforcement are also statutory duties.
159	14017573104	In order to meet WBCs carbon net zero target, the focus should be on developing sustainable transport routes. All roads in our area are so busy that they are no longer suitable for walking or cycling even short distances, so we are becoming increasingly reliant on private car transport.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
160	14017467193	All are good things.	Noted.
161	14017445156	I found the online map useful when zoomed in but there did not seem to be a key to the coloured lines which would have	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue. Actions included to improve the map and public interface.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		been handy on the display. Assumed dashed green footpaths, continuous green bridleways, dashed red - byways? Lots of useful routes for locals to "escape" their houses but more need for longer strategic routes. Joining West Berks Ramblers of course enables people to go on a longer route where someone has put together all these types of paths	
162	14017400245	Connectivity can be an issue, especially where paths end on a fast road and some walking is needed which can be hazardous with small children. Perhaps undertake a map/GIS analysis of where improved verges as paths would be particularly beneficial and then follow up with a feasibility survey. Could be funded from highways as it will reduce the accident risks.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue. Some work is already beginning to identify suitable verge links.
163	14017381433	Easily read maps are crucial to attract visitors to our village and lunch in the pub. Perhaps make them more readable regarding directions. I think that in these times of increasing leisure that PROW's and their access are as strategically planned as footpaths would be.	Noted. The ROWIP acknowledges the links with the local economy.
164	14017158210	This is of vital importance. New rights of way must be created to preserve links to existing ROW to avoid any reduction in access. This becomes of great importance where ROW connect to unadopted streets which later become 'private access' will in effect cut the footpath network. To prevent this ROW must be created on every unadopted road to preserve the network for future generations.	Noted. This will be addressed in part via the 'Lost Ways' legislation.
165	14017099756	Whilst these are good priorities, please provide some means of measuring the delivery of these priorities, as otherwise there is no means of measuring the progress towards these priorities.	The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions.
166	14016237220	It seems important to ensure access for local residents first as in a sustainable way, it would also attract visitors, keeping them aware of the user practice. New technologies and online platforms play key roles in how people behave and access lands. Providing an up-to-date map seems important for the land-owners in terms of legislation and for people to refer to when there is any issue on a right of way. Have you thought about contacting Slow Ways or Visorando to help with	Noted. West Berkshire Council is aware of the Visorando platform. Further exploration of delivery mechanisms may be explored as the ROWIP is delivered.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		maintenance and development matters?	
167	14016787778	Since Covid and the lockdowns footfall on the path through our garden has more than tripled, its vital that this change is reflected across the whole network. New visitors have discovered paths and routes they didn't know about and make great use of them, but also don't know the old country code about gates, litter etc. This creates a tension for residents and increased pressure on the infrastructure. A clear map and statement would also help massively with public knowledge about do's and don'ts. Ours is a footpath but we routinely deal with motorbikes, and people trying to bring and park cars and vans in our garden for access to the Thames. It's challenging when they believe its a public space and therefore fair game.	Noted. The ROWIP contains actions to address problems of irresponsible behaviour.
168	14016749084	All projects should be protected and reviewed as regularly as possible to maintain their integrity.	Noted. The Delivery Plan will be regularly reviewed.
169	14016528855	Particularly important that access is clearly identified on maps and that this information is up to date.	Noted.
170	14016527361	Improving connectivity is vital. It can only help get people out more which can only be a good thing.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
171	14016526522	This conjures up an image of the Department for Transport attempting, from London, to micro-manage the nations minor roads!	Noted.
172	14016517671	It's imperative the rights of way network does what it says: offering rights of way through private land from A to B	Noted.
173	14015931263	Perhaps it could be possible to update the definitive map more regularly? And to have up-to-date paper copies of the map, showing all PROWs, readily available - especially for parish councils and the like?	Noted. The PROW team can already supply large paper PROW maps to parishes on request.
174	14016444576	The connectivity and other issues should address and increase the availability of routes for motorised access	Noted. WBC's statutory duty is to protect the rights of all PROW users.
175	14016336090	An evolving and changing demographic population requires different aspects of needs. It is important to constantly ensure that those considerations are monitored and adapted accordingly. Open space is under a constant barrage of new demands either from development or agricultural. Balancing those demands to meet all needs but maintaining a precious	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		asset is crucial. Rules are constantly changing on land use, having a robust policy that can withstand the pressures from differing needs is important.	
176	14016255864	1. there is no RIGHTS OF WAY strategy detailed in this ROWIP	The ROWIP is the strategy. Comment not understood. However, there is to be a Delivery Plan connected to the ROWIP actions.
177	14016200439	Connectivity needs improving to try and avoid busy roads. Maps are easily available on apps nowadays.	Noted.
178	14016174828	Do not waste too much time and money on this	Noted.
179	14016170786	There is an opportunity to work with evolving Neighbourhood Plans to achieve this	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
180	14016170991	Stop evolving the network to improve cycle/pedestrian access. Evolve it with the motor vehicle in mind	The purpose of this strategy is for public rights of way, but WBC's statutory duty is to protect the rights of all PROW users.
181	14016168683	The information states intent rather than definitive actions which are likely to be cut when spending scrutiny is reviewed	Noted. The Delivery Plan to accompany the ROWIP will be approved by the WBC Executive.
182	14016168146	Again, evolution requires a programme of review	The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions
183	14015992034	An evolving network needs to be done in full consultation with landowners and businesses affected by changes to the network.	Noted.

Table 14: Question 4: Do you have any comments on the proposed actions for the theme 'An Evolving Network', which can be found on page 41 of the draft ROWIP?

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
184	14018276867	<p>On behalf of Farmers, land owners, all users; Add an action or add to action 29 the following:</p> <p>"consider all applications for definitive map modification orders, and determine in line with government guidance, in particular, "Government guidance on diversion or extinguishment of public rights of way that pass through private dwellings, their curtilages and gardens, farmyards and industrial or commercial premises". It sets out how local authorities should respond when considering diverting or extinguishing public rights of way. Add endnote link and to references. Add the following paragraph to "Making Changes to the Network",: "In August 2023 The department of Food and Rural Affairs published "Government Guidance on diversion or extinguishment of public rights of way that pass through private dwellings, their curtilages and gardens, farmyards and industrial or commercial premises" This Guidance not only acknowledges the impact intrusive/dangerous footpaths have on the farmer/landowner but recognises the vast majority of members of the public who would rather not go through such places - not least because of the associated safety risks that come from walking in such places where heavy machinery is in operation, livestock etc etc. Inspectors appointed by the secretary of state will take this particular guidance into account and apply it to their decision making.</p>	<p>There will be an updated Action 29: Consider all applications for definitive map modification orders, including for the recording of unrecorded or under-recorded Rights of Way, and determine these in line with transparent criteria, annual Case Programmes and statutory timescales, <u>having regard to relevant Government guidance.</u></p> <p>The legislation quoted explains the background as mentioned here and sits alongside much other relevant legislation, all of which must be considered. It is referenced in the ROWIP footnotes.</p>
185	14018231948	<p>I'm not sure what 'evolving' means. If it means 'development' then of necessity this would mean more paths, more traffic, more signage and clutter so destroying the landscape we seek to preserve. We should limit all human intervention as far as possible. That's what 'natural' means!</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
186	14018190282	<p>No</p>	<p>-</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
187	14017293618	Improved provision for equestrian use should not be allowed to get in the way of either pedestrian exercise routes or use of paths/potential byways for practical transport purposes (i.e. substituting foot or cycle use for cars)	Comment not understood. However, the introduction of any additional access along existing PROWs would always seek to avoid detriment to existing PROW users.
188	14018129819	Action 21. It is my experience that setting up a Permissive Path requires considerable 'legal' time.	Noted. This tends to be the case only where there is a legal agreement.
189	14017867501	No. These are good aspirations	Noted.
190	14017773752	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome these proposals for action and in particular the emphasis on further joint working with Highways colleagues - Action 20 - the proposals for expansion of the Eling Way represent a prime opportunity to continue working with Highways colleagues to deliver against this action - Action 23 in respect of cyclists: this can be gleaned through the Cycle Forum, on which PROW team has representation - Action 24 in respect of Equestrians: can the British Horse Society representative on the LAF assist PROW team with the location of demand for riding facilities? 	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted – the Cycle Forum is a good place to raise this.</p> <p>The BHS and the LAF would be among the first places to seek advice.</p>
191	14017794988	The K&A Canal towpath is identified as an important route for both leisure and active travel, with much of the towpath forming part of Eurovelo 2 and National Cycle Network Route 4. However, much of the towpath is in a very poor condition due to a lack of maintenance over an extended period of time. Sections are virtually unpassable by bike due to grass encroaching from the sides to such an extent that it leaves a narrow rut of less than 30cm width in places. There are also embayments that encroach into the path, which present considerable safety threats to users. Also, the Canal and River Trust (CRT) has reduced its vegetation clearance to just one cut a year, and as a result, the towpath can become unusable by walkers or cyclists due to encroaching nettles and other plants. The situation will only deteriorate from 2027 due to significant cuts to government grant funding to the CRT from this date. A massive programme of investment is needed to bring the towpath up to an acceptable standard for cycling, which would be far in excess of the funding available through the Council's Rights of Way Team and its partners. This should be picked up as a key risk in the ROWIP, with a	<p>The reduction in CRT vegetation cutting has already been flagged as a risk. However, work to improve the surface can attract grant funding.</p> <p>Eling Way extension will be included as per comments, but this will not be prioritised over other projects within the ROWIP.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>comprehensive set of mitigating actions developed in conjunction with partners such as the CRT and Sustrans to mitigate the risk.</p> <p>The Eling Way extension southwards to Newbury and northwards to link with existing routes in Oxfordshire should be identified as a top priority within the ROWIP's action plan on the basis of the benefits delivered by Phase 1 of the scheme and the fact that it is identified within the Local Plan.</p> <p>Datasets such as Strava Metro should be treated with caution, as Strava tends to be used by sports cyclists and it does not pick up the journeys by less confident / leisure cyclists who by definition are more likely to value traffic-free routes. Volunteers could help with route surveys – Spokes would be happy to facilitate this for key cycle routes.</p> <p>The ROWIP should recognise the benefits of long-distance cycling routes such as Eurovelo 2 and the National Cycle Network Routes that pass through the district, as well as the King Alfred Way. These have the potential to deliver considerable economic benefits for West Berkshire, but their potential has been severely limited by the condition of the rights of way network, particularly on the K&A Canal towpath, which leads to a poor user experience.</p> <p>Cycle tourists should be identified as a separate user group with particular needs, such as routes that are maintained to a higher standard, route waymarking and information around accommodation, cafés, and pubs.</p>	<p>The availability of Spokes and other volunteer groups or individuals is noted.</p> <p>The ROWIP acknowledges that there is an economic benefit from walking, cycling and equestrian tourism.</p>
192	14017584770	<p>I'd like to see specific projects identified and actively supported - e.g. the emerging Mortimer to Burghfield footpath / cycleway/ equestrian route.</p> <p>I endorse Action 21, which emphasises what I said previously about local permissive paths. I recall the previous approach to (e.g.) parish councils about identifying 20-year rights of way</p>	<p>The Delivery Plan will contain reference to specific projects, note however that some of the larger new multi-user routes are being developed by the Highways team and are not PROWs.</p> <p>Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		and think that Action 29 needs to be explained further.	Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
193	14017573104	Some good ideas like Actions 17 and 18 but who is going to fund these projects? I would like to see new developments required to fund and/or provide land for connective active travel infrastructure to ensure that the immediate area outside their red site zone benefits from better PROW and to ensure that the development itself doesn't have a detrimental impact on existing residents.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue. Grant funding can be significant. It is acknowledged that more work can sometimes be done to realise off-site planning benefits.
194	14017467193	9. TRO process needs to be clear. 10. Advertise point of contact for resurfacing 10 & 11 Make whose responsibilities/ permissions & liabilities clear 13 Unsure about feasibility Fully support 15, 16, 17 & 18"	Noted. This information is on the PROW pages of WBC's website.
195	14017445156	Very useful Actions. See my previous comments against 10 and 13	Noted.
196	14017400245	Action 19 and 20 to include off road/trail runners	Noted. These are included under pedestrians
197	14017381433	No	-
198	14017257093	Re Action 27: In view of the possibility that the deadline for recovering Lost Ways, etc may be extended only to 2026, not 2030, the priorities here should be reassessed, as follows: 'Ensure that there are adequate resources to deal with increased demands for RoW modifications of all sorts in view of the potential 2026 deadline - and consolidate the Definite Map and Statement by 2030'. This should replace the current wording: 'Consolidate the definitive map and statement by 2030 and ensure adequate resources to deal with the increased demands of new legislation.'	The ROWIP states that the Definitive Map needs to be consolidated again by 2030, and that adequate resources will be needed for the new legislation.
199	14017158210	As above	-
200	14017099756	Many of the actions have no means of measurement, so it will be impossible to know whether they are being done / completed. Examples would be: 1. Action 17 Progress strategic projects with partners where these address West Berkshire's needs and the priorities of this Rights of Way Improvement Plan. 2. Action 54 Improve provision of feedback	SMART objectives have been applied to all actions in the ROWIP where this is appropriate. The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions will be reported to the Local Access Forum.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		on progress of the problem to those reporting problems. This is not an exhaustive list. There is no indication in this Plan (in contrast with the previous 2010 Plan) of the anticipated funding, priority and cost. Without this information it is very difficult to review / agree the actions. "	
201	14016237220	Action 22 : It seems important to understand the evolution of user's interests and needs alongside political and development matters as often users do not have the same perspectives and goals as local authorities. Users do not think in terms of geographical district boundaries but more of an area to visit and explore despite if whether it is in a destination or another.	Noted. The ROWIP considers cross-boundary issues and populations. Whilst WBC can work in partnership it cannot deliver beyond its boundary.
202	14016787778	As in point 7, the use of rights of way has changed massively in the last couple of years. Encouraging people outside and to use local routes to walk, run and cycle instead of drive must be a consideration	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
203	14016735871	I will repeat my previous comment in case it helps to be linked to the "definitive map" point: Please seriously consider how to use "open source" concepts around the data for rights of way. For example adding them to https://www.openstreetmap.org and contacting the UK coordinators at https://osmuk.org/ Knowing about the network is essential to being able to use the network.	Noted. A PROW layer is available on the WBC interactive online map. This information can be used by third party information suppliers.
204	14016739072	"There should also be a review of the permitted pathways within West Berkshire. For instance the very popular permitted pathways within Beale Park (which can be seen on the West Berkshire pamphlet called "Footways, Byways, Bridleways of Basildon") have been completely closed off by Beale Park without any warning or reasoning. This is despite the area they are in being described in the pamphlet as "designated community woodland, part funded by a grant from the Forestry Commission".	Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
205	14016171270	Being a horse rider in the Cold Ash and Thatcham area, it has become increasing worrying using the roads to reach bridleways. Drivers are sometimes rude and downright dangerous. The parish council is making little if no effort to increase awareness of riders by putting up signs. It would be a	

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		huge bonus to have ways of avoiding main roads. As well as road signage.	
206	14016528855	Permissive paths are of concern if their availability is curtailed	Noted.
207	14016527361	Yes, make much more use of abandoned railways and increase proportion of network for cyclists.	Noted.
208	14015931263	The actions seem fine. It was brought to my attention a while back that the process for reporting a necessary change to the network is very cumbersome, requiring input from an unrealistic number of different people. For example, there is a path not shown on the WBC map, which makes a triangle together with SHAW/21/1 and SHAW/21A/1. It is a tarmac path which has been there for many years, but is not shown on the map. It should be a very simple process to report the fact that it needs adding. There is no landowner issue or anything else which should make it a problem.	Noted. The processes for modifying the definitive map or adding or altering PROW are not set by WBC but are legally proscribed. The 'Lost Ways' legislation will require routes not registered as public highways to be recorded by 2032, but this will require input from the public. The site mentioned has been noted.
209	14016336090	A clearer explanation of the difference between green and blue infrastructure is required to help understand the policies and how they interact. A ready response to changes in regulation and user demand - i.e. different technology being used on ROWIP, for example: use of e scooters, drones and electronic games and gadgets. Thought needs to be given to having a pre prepared adaptable draft ready to publish etc, to meet those needs.	Noted.
210	14016255864	none	-
211	14016174828	Comply with the law but do not set more social priorities for political reasons	Noted. The ROWIP is a statutory document which complies with and delivers legal requirements.
212	14016170786	I agree with then	Noted.
213	14016169131	I have briefly reviewed the document. I just wanted to say even as a very courteous motorcycle rider I experience a lot of hatred and aggression towards me riding carefully and slowly even in fully legal byways. I would suggest that TROs closing 4x4s are clearer as some people do not read them correctly thinking it's closed for motorcycles too. Or course motorcycles cause less damage than 4x4s and probably even horses / erosion from people walking a lot. I hope there will not be any more byways closed as already it is extremely difficult to find areas to enjoy the countryside on my motorcycle, having to	Noted. Repetition. See comment 143.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		travel further to find one is not good for the environment either. I also see a lot of horse riders riding on pavements which is intimidating towards people and dogs. Thank you."	
214	14016168807	You've got a long list of priorities, all of which sound sensible. Have you got enough people to carry them all out, or do you need to prioritise further? It's all very well having the hope to do something...	Noted. There will be a Delivery Plan, setting out specific actions along with some necessary prioritisation.
215	14016168683	See above	-
216	14016131106	In total there are 54 actions set out in the ROWIP - as set out across many pages within the report, this makes it hard to review all the proposed actions to consider their possible impact as a whole. It would be useful to: 1) set out the actions in one summary section of the document 2) review and determine relative priority between the 54 actions - as to try to complete all in parallel is unrealistic 3) clarify and record the ownership of the actions (within WBC) and set timescales for completion"	Repetition see comment 146.

Question 5: Agreement with Priorities – Theme 3: Healthy and Prosperous Communities

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the two priorities under Theme 3: Healthy and Prosperous Communities. 122 respondents answered this question, 120 skipped this question and 40 respondents provided additional responses.

Overall there was a high level of agreement with the priorities (see Table 15), with the percentages agreeing or strongly agreeing with the priorities as follows:

- Improve the accessibility of public rights of way so that more people can use them for enjoyment, health and mental wellbeing – 79%
- Improve information provision to enable more people to use public rights of way, support the economy and reduce conflicts – 80%

Additional comments regarding the two priorities are shown in Table 16 (next page).

Respondents were also asked if they had any additional comments on the actions under the two priorities, see Table 17.

Table 15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed priorities for the theme 'Healthy and Prosperous Communities'?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Weighted Average
Improve the accessibility of public rights of way so that more people can use them for enjoyment, health and mental wellbeing	2%	4%	16%	39%	39%	4.11
Improve information provision to enable more people to use public rights of way, support the economy and reduce conflicts	2%	2%	16%	42%	39%	4.13

Table 16: Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed priorities for the theme 'Healthy and Prosperous Communities'?
Additional responses

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
217	14018231948	More people means more traffic and damage. 'Yes' to more information in the form of making it absolutely clear what traffic can go where. Otherwise people can find their own way and discover for themselves. That's part of the fun! It should be unequivocal where, for example electric bikes can go. I don't know.	Noted.
218	14017293618	Both are valuable priorities, but are easier to "retrofit" to a basically sound network than some of the other priorities in earlier sections	Noted.
219	14016164639	The Society supports the proposal of the Local Access Forum to add the following text in Section 2.2: ' We will endeavour to give greater clarity on the West Berkshire Online Map and elsewhere to Common Land, Access land and Permissive paths, and the rights of access to them	Action 38 will be amended to incorporate this idea Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
220	14018013020	Nothing to argue with in the first statement. It reflects the policies expected of benign governments. The hint in the second statement that information provision is inadequate should be tested. WBC provides much PROW information online and on published paper, It is to be questioned whether it is widely read. A number of respondents to the surveys cited local knowledge and OS maps as alternatives to material provided by WBC. WE have suggested elsewhere that the PROW team might consider running a synectics session to explore how the existing body of information might better be delivered into the public domain	Noted. The ROWIP acknowledges that new ways are needed to publicise the available information.
221	14018129819	I have included these in the sections above.	Noted.
222	14016703624	There is sometimes conflict caused by lack of understanding of rights of way - a good example is Corbins wood/Middle Wood.	Noted.
223	14017867501	Both are matters which we support	Noted.
224	14017773752	With regard to information provision, there may be scope for PROW to link in more with third-party, configurable Mobility as a Service apps, which Transport Policy team are	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		investigating, and initiatives such as Slow Ways to aid navigation. Budgets and other commitments may mean that WBC is not necessarily in a position to do more than the minimum in terms of information provision	
225	14017584770	I fully support accessibility for all the reasons given, but I would be concerned if some PROW became too engineered.	Noted.
226	14017573104	These aims are good and should not be confined to built up areas as the problem of accessibility is equally found in many villages	Noted.
227	14017467193	26: There is an existing cycleway between Hermitage & Hampstead Norrrys that if extended to Compton by means of where the old railway track was would provide a safe and convenient route to Compton Secondary School for pupils from Hermitage/Hampstead Norrrys and environs33, 34 & 35 Particularly support these	This is the potential Eling Way extension, already referenced in the ROWIP.
228	14017445156	The leaflets for different Parishes are useful and to have additional accessibility information would be helpful. More information on the suitability of each path is needed before a serious accident, inconvenience or frustration are encountered. This applies not just to the disabled person themselves but to the family and members of the public who try to help out someone who has got "stuck".	Noted.
229	14017400245	I think information is an interesting issue. There is plenty out there and in England and Wales we have the best mapped path network and out door spaces in the world. I think it is more about awareness and overcoming the 'fear of the unknown' for those communities/individuals who don't use the network. Most regular walkers don't need more information - it is about reaching the 'hard to reach'.	Noted.
230	14017397571	Conflict of use is an issue on paths I use. Some motor cyclists and horse riders (racehorses specifically) do not take care when encountering pedestrians and seem to believe that there is no need to give any space for pedestrians. Our Rights of Way are shared spaces and everyone needs to understand that. We also have conflicts due to the state of the pathways - motor cycles and horses churn up the surfaces leaving them impassable for walkers due to	Noted. Action 42 will be amended.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		mud/flooding.	
231	14017381433	People should be able to use PROWS for their original use to connect villages and areas. This time it would be for recreation but unless they are easily accessible with the right information people will not use them. Perhaps start with key footpaths in an area and make sure that they are accessible all year round together with useful information.	Noted.
232	14017099756	Whilst these are good priorities, please provide some means of measuring the delivery of these priorities, as otherwise there is no means of measuring the progress towards these priorities.	The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions.
233	14016237220	Accessibility is important for inclusion matters and information is a key point. One of the hardest points for any area/destination is to organise an offer and understand where and how to communicate to users about their routes and the behaviors to adopt. More and more users use Facebook groups, online communities and tools to plan, prepare and share their routes. Each type of user has its own kind of tool. What is your target user's journey?	Noted. Action 40 will be amended
234	14016825428	PROW are already well signposted (well done WBC). Some of the best.	Noted.
235	14016796114	I some stiles are dangerous and rickety. This impedes accessibility.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
236	14016787778	Accessibility is a must but so is educating people to respect the areas they are in. Litter, vandalism and anti social behaviour have gone through the roof since covid and is centered around the rights of way in our village.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
237	14016761588	I am a horse rider and I would love to ride around the area without worry, ducking for the bushes	Noted.
238	14016749084	The ability to have free and safe access to our countryside is increasingly beneficial to our physical and mental health.	Noted.
239	14016692915	If it includes a provision for disabled users either in wheelchairs or bicycles.	Noted.
240	14016528855	It just makes good sense	Noted.
241	14016527361	Everyone should be able to enjoy the great outdoors and they can only do so if it is accessible and they know about it.	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
242	14016517671	Motorbikes/cars are not conducive with peace, nature, clean air. Cars should not be allowed to use these paths and motorbikes should be severely restricted.	Noted. WBC has a statutory duty to protect the rights of all PROW users.
243	14015931263	Accessibility for all is so important.	Noted.
244	14016336090	The wider the net can be drawn, to include a greater proportion of the population enabling them to gain access to their environment they live in, has to be of benefit for all. Removing obstacles whilst maintaining the sanctity of the environment is the crucial factor in achieving that aim. A lot of work needs to be implemented in providing clear accessible information about all aspects with ROWIP. Whether it is someone requiring clarification on its use or reporting an issue, clear helpful way markers, or being made aware of the values and highlights of a particular environment .	Noted.
245	14016288635	No mention of the Chairman's Walk prepared at the time of the Millenium that took / takes you around the boundary of West Berkshire. Number of other documents missing that the parish councils should be aware of that detail walks in their parishes. Eg Brightwalton, Peasemore ..."	The promotional work in the ROWIP is aimed at identifying where there are gaps in provision. The existing promotional material is still available.
246	14016266762	I'm only disagreeing as in this day and age of global warming , you are looking at potentially increasing the access for motorised vehicles, the bulk of which will be polluting the atmosphere. This surely cannot be a sustainable way forward.	The ROWIP is not encouraging greater car use, but is encouraging people to explore locally without the need to travel.
247	14016202782	It is very hard to find meaningful information about the "reality" of accessing the network - accessibility / transport links - all comes back to the theme of a lack of integration - people will use PROW if they know where they are / what accessibility and facilities are available - what bus routes etc run nearby or at least links	Noted. The updated online mapping plans to address this.
248	14016178645	People need public countryside for various reasons, predominantly health.	Noted.
249	14016174828	Doubtful value	Comment not understood.
250	14016172065	Improving accessibility is subject to the law of diminishing returns. You end up spending huge amounts of money to service a tiny minority.	WBC and the ROWIP rightly regard access for everyone as important.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
251	14016170786	There are limited facilities for cyclists. Again Neighbourhood Plans align well here Lambourn has an aspiration for a cycle way from Upper Lambourn to Eastbury	Working more closely with others is a key theme of the new ROWIP.
252	14016170991	Yes, this needs to be better primarily to stop the government from building all over our beautiful countryside, which is what is going on right now	Noted.
253	14016168683	Not enough info on the gates etc to get into these rights of way. Even using google street view as a back up I have had to make several site visits by car to see if my mobility scooter and electric trike will fit through the turnstiles or over the ramps designed to stop motorbikes and quad bikes.	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
254	14016168146	Good health builds a more resilient community	Noted.
255	14015992034	Whilst the use of rights of ways is to be encouraged I believe that education of users of how to behave, particularly in rural areas in order that the environment is not damaged to the detriment of other users. For example signs to highlight key themes of the countryside code."	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
256	14015985879	As per my previous comment - it would be amazing if ROW were accessible to all and not best kept, local secrets. Signage, clear parking, maps etc to encourage to all to stop and explore across West Berkshire rather than sticking to the few bits they know or honeypot locations. I have found 'locals' unwelcoming as they feel an ownership to the local area and see you as interloping on their patch. It would be lovely if a clear message was welcoming signs and free access to everyone.	Noted.

Table 17: Question 5: Do you have any comments on the proposed actions for the theme 'Healthy and Prosperous Communities', which can be found on page 48 of the draft ROWIP?

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
257	14018190282	No	-
258	14017293618	No	-
259	14018013020	<p>We think that 'Quality of Life' would be a better term to use than 'Prosperous or Prosperity', both of which have a connotation with material wealth.</p> <p>Action 33 to remove stiles will obviously favour the quest for greater accessibility. It was therefore surprising that a voluntary group had busied itself in rebuilding 200 stiles. Is this a case for better communication between the authority and the various support groups?</p> <p>Action 34 to upgrade is an essential improvement. An illustration of this comes in two long flights of concrete steps installed in Chieveley to accommodate a change in the levels of two footpaths. These are dangerous and are probably not used.</p> <p>The aim to identify PROW links with public transport is an overdue reform (Action 38)</p>	<p>Prosperity is used to recognise that PROW have an economic benefit.</p> <p>A key theme of the ROWIP is to work more closely with others, including voluntary groups.</p> <p>Noted.</p>
260	14018129819	Only - as stated above - remember that not everyone has a computer and a smart phone. Many such people would benefit hugely from non-digital information.	Noted. It is generally beyond the resources of the Public Rights of Way Service to provide paper copies of promoted routes. However, partners would usually be supported to meet this need.
261	14017867501	There is no dispute that walking and other open air activities have a positive effect on health and mental well being	Noted.
262	14017794988	It is agreed that it would not be a good use of Council resources to develop promotional materials, but the Council should signpost people to existing sources of information. Collaboration with local walking and cycling groups could help to identify appropriate circular routes for a wide range of distances and abilities, with information hosted on partners' websites. In addition to working in partnership with the	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		National Trail Partnerships, the ROWIP should have a commitment to working in partnership with Sustrans to promote the National Cycle Network and with Cycling UK to promote the King Alfred Way.	
263	14017584770	I note Action 41 regarding the Mortimer Burghfield route referred to previously.	Noted.
264	14017467193	Covered above	-
265	14017445156	All very commendable	Noted.
266	14017400245	All looks sensible and I like the idea of improving condition and accessibility information. Can the communities/parishes ramblers etc get involved. I use the North Berkshire paths regularly and would be happy to provide info - I just don't know how. Maybe even find 'path guardians' for the network - you would need 740 volunteers if each took 1 mile, so they could update the condition info and highlight issues (and then the data could be public). This kind of 'citizen mapping' would be cheap!	Volunteers to assist with surveys is acknowledged as a valuable resource.
267	14017381433	No	-
268	14017099756	Many of the actions have no means of measurement, so it will be impossible to know whether they are being done / completed. Examples would be: 1. Action 17 Progress strategic projects with partners where these address West Berkshire's needs and the priorities of this Rights of Way Improvement Plan. 2. Action 54 Improve provision of feedback on progress of the problem to those reporting problems. This is not an exhaustive list. There is no indication in this Plan (in contrast with the previous 2010 Plan) of the anticipated funding, priority and cost. Without this information it is very difficult to review / agree the actions.	SMART objectives have been applied to all actions in the ROWIP where this is appropriate. The Delivery / Action Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions will be reported to the Local Access Forum.
269	14016237220	They are interesting and seem complete	Noted.
270	14016749084	All of the community will benefit from free, safe access to countryside	Noted.
271	14016735871	No	-
272	14016739072	There should also be a review of the permitted pathways within West Berkshire For instance the very popular permitted pathways within Beale Park (which can be seen on the West Berkshire pamphlet called "Footways, Byways, Bridleways of	Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		Basildon”) have been completely closed off by Beale Park without any warning or reasoning. This is despite the area they are in being described in the pamphlet as “designated community woodland, part funded by a grant from the Forestry Commission”.	context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
273	14016528855	No particular comments, it all makes good common sense	Noted.
274	14016527361	Makes sense.	Noted.
275	14015931263	These actions appear to cover all needs.	Noted.
276	14016336090	It is important that no one particular group should have exclusive rights over another to rights of way. No one should be excluded or feel left out by another. Providing a one stop shop for access to clear and precise information is the way forward. Having clearly stated maps, local information, means of access. - parking, public transportation, nearby amenities etc. This information should be collated from the many users/managers of the rights of way into a comprehensive website and/ or booklet, leaflets etc. into one format. Thus cutting down ambiguity and misunderstanding whilst making clear and easily accessible information on where people might roam, safe in the knowledge that they are not breaching guidelines, whilst imbibing local information and wellbeing when visiting these sites. It must also be remembered that a public right of way should allow the user to access parts of the area that would otherwise make life difficult should it be excluded or by diversion. It doesn't necessarily have to have the merits of beautiful countryside to be of benefit to wellbeing.	Noted. Improved interactive mapping is a goal of the ROWIP, and hard copy publications produced by third parties may be supported.
277	14016255864	none	-
278	14016196007	When improving for humans don't forget wildlife were there first ie; tow paths. Don't make too tidy, birds need to nest.	Noted. Managing the network in a more environmentally sustainable way is a goal of the ROWIP.
279	14016179000	Please do not 'overdevelop' the public rights of way, I know there is a balance to be drawn between accessibility and natural landscapes - but one of the prime benefits of the rights of way is 'getting back to nature' and that is not achieved when on a path that looks like a residential road."	Noted.
280	14016174828	Back off	Comment not understood.
281	14016170786	Broadly agree	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
282	14016169131	I also see a lot of horse riders riding on pavements which is intimidating towards people and dogs. Thank you.	Noted.
283	14016168683	If you are going to limit the entry points provide radar key facilities for disabled people	Noted.
284	14016131106	<p>In total there are 54 actions set out in the ROWIP - as set out across many pages within the report, this makes it hard to review all the proposed actions to consider their possible impact as a whole. It would be useful to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) set out the actions in one summary section of the document 2) review and determine relative priority between the 54 actions - as to try to complete all in parallel is unrealistic 3) clarify and record the ownership of the actions (within WBC) and set timescales for completion 	Repetition see comment 146.

Question 6: Agreement with Priorities – Theme 4: Effective Delivery

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the three priorities under Theme 3: Healthy and Prosperous Communities. 122 respondents answered this question, 120 skipped this question and 37 respondents provided additional responses.

Overall there was a high level of agreement with the priorities (see Table 18), with the percentages agreeing or strongly agreeing with the priorities as follows:

- Ensure that this ROWIP is resourced and delivered, and that progress is monitored, and the plan reviewed – 83%
- Increase involvement and working with partners, communities and volunteers – 84%
- To continue to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction and seek ways to improve – 83%

Additional comments regarding the two priorities are shown in Table 19 (next page).

Respondents were also asked if they had any additional comments on the actions under the two priorities, see Table 20.

Table 18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed priorities for the theme 'Effective Delivery'?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Weighted Average
Ensure that this ROWIP is resourced and delivered, and that progress is monitored, and the plan reviewed	1%	2%	15%	39%	44%	4.24
Increase involvement and working with partners, communities and volunteers	2%	2%	12%	42%	42%	4.2
To continue to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction and seek ways to improve	1%	0%	16%	43%	39%	4.2

Table 19: Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed priorities for the theme 'Effective Delivery'? Additional responses.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
285	14018276867	DONT forget to include FARMERS and landowners!	Noted. The ROWIP addresses this issue.
286	14018195739	Working close in with others is exactly the right way to reduce and minimise dispute.	Noted.
287	14018013020	It's not made clear whether Actions with respect to Effective Delivery are expressed in order of priority and be undertaken accordingly where possible or will some be run concurrently?	There is no priority order to any of the actions. The Delivery Plan to accompany the ROWIP will contain some prioritisation.
288	14017293618	The first two is vital; the second will be essential to execute the first. The third needs careful management to avoid meaningless measurements or short-term target setting	Noted.
289	14018129819	To have any value, all Management Plans MUST be regularly reviewed and revised. I have included these in the sections above.	Noted. The Delivery Plan to accompany the ROWIP will be regularly reviewed.
290	14016703624	The creation of this plan has cost time and money and is the easy part! Finding the money, resources is critical to having a plan. I would also say that a ten year cycle is too long as is only checking the paths once every year. Many paths have become impassable and needs urgent action during the winter.	Noted. The Delivery Plan to accompany the ROWIP will have one to three year targets and will be regularly reviewed.
291	14017867501	All aspirations that we can support	Noted.
292	14017773752	Uncertain as to whether the objective mentioned in the draft ROWIP of updating the Delivery Plan every two years is realistic.	Noted.
293	14017621984	Uncertain as to whether levels of volunteering can be sustained - evidence nationally points to a drop-off in levels of volunteering, see report in The Guardian dated 02 May 2023	Noted. WBC is also aware of the trend
294	14017584770	With limited budgets it is far too easy for these types of considerations to slip down the priority order of local authorities. The wide benefits of having and implementing a ROWIP mean that it would be a real shame if this document becomes little more than an un-funded doorstep....	Noted. The intention is for the ROWIP to form the framework for the Council PROW Service for the next ten years,.
295	14017573104	Parish Councils may need financial resources to support this work, especially the small ones with minimal precepts.	Noted. Parish Councils are allocated CIL money which can help.
296	14017467193	Nice idea to work with partners - it might be best to work with businesses who have the resources to sponsor initiatives. Small PCs like ours lack manpower or resources to take on any PROW work currently done by WBC.	Noted. Lack of resources in Parish Council is acknowledged but they do received CIL money, which can help.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
297	14017445156	First 2 ensure a high quality network. Feed back on complaints from needs to be less formulaic and describe the problem in text not as a number to make it useful.	Noted. The ROWIP contains an action to improve the customer interface, and this has already happened to an extent.
298	14017400245	Seems to be essential to run an effective ROW system	Noted.
299	14017397571	Use the volunteers!	Noted.
300	14017381433	Coproduction should be used in communities to ensure we are delivering services the communities want.	Noted. A number of actions in the ROWIP involved identifying local access needs further.
301	14017158210	Resources and key partnership arrangements are the only way that ROWAP will be delivered. Without community help I doubt it will ever be fully resourced.	Noted. This is acknowledged in the ROWIP.
302	14017099756	All good and necessary actions	Noted.
303	14016237220	Whilst these are good priorities, please provide some means of measuring the delivery of these priorities, as otherwise there is no means of measuring the progress towards these priorities. The whole of section 6.5 can be translated into "we currently don't have the resources and budget required". This puts in doubt the value of the whole plan.	The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions
304	14016749084	Those points seem important as involving all the stakeholders in the process would help structure the whole offer and having a common document to refer to would help reduce some issues. Co-create actions and documents seem to be a sustainable approach to developing a project. The customer's journey is a key point in any destination and even more in terms of movement. Involving diverse partners in the success of their journey is a must-have as they will be the ones interacting with the customer making his experience unique, motivating him to come back. I suggest you look into the Banff Lake Louise ambassador program.	Noted. The Programme mentioned is about the relationship between local residents and recreational users, something which can also be addressed through increasing awareness about appropriate behaviour – addressed in this ROWIP.
305	14016528855	The public needs to be reminded or shown how important it is to have a clear view and understanding of the environment	Noted. The ROWIP addresses the need for greater awareness of appropriate behaviour.
306	14016527361	This resonates with the aims of the West Berkshire Countryside Society and in particular the activities of its volunteers who would be very happy to engage with the upkeep or rights of way	Noted. The offer of help from the West Berkshire Countryside Society is noted and welcomed.
307	14016517671	I hear some snippets of news from the local parish council, but progress can often seem very slow.	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
308	14015931263	Local people should be invested in their local rights of way	Noted.
309	14016444576	It is important that there is joined-up thinking between this plan and the transport plan. Users of the PROWs should have information at their fingertips which would help them combine the one-way use of a PROW with, say, a convenient return journey on public transport.	Noted. Addressed by the ROWIP
310	14016336090	These statements are really quite meaningless. Why would you not want the plan to be resourced and delivered?	Noted.
311	14016255864	These are the high ideals.	Noted.
312	14016288635	Seeing them happen is another matter. A check point needs to be in place to ensure those ideals are being delivered along the way, and if not then what remedial steps need to be taken to maintain those ideals.	Noted. A monitored and reviewed Delivery Plan will accompany this ROWIP
313	14016202782	3. do you currently HAVE "high levels of customer satisfaction"? if so how is it measured	Noted. Was measured in the public survey carried out for the ROWIP.
314	14016200439	Not clear how customer satisfaction will be measured. Relying upon parish councils will not give a representative answer.	Noted. Was measured in the public survey carried out for the ROWIP.
315	14016174828	It is not about more resourcing - it is about improving effectiveness	Noted. This principle is acknowledged – the ROWIP looks at more effective ways of working.
316	14016170786	Don't waste money on producing page after page, just get on with actions.	Noted. A strategy is important in order to give direction for the actions.
317	14016170991	You will improve if you are less bureaucratic	Noted.
318	14016168807	Town and Parish Councils and Neighbourhoods planning all have key interfaces	Noted. Closer working with parish councils is covered by the ROWIP.
319	14016168683	You won't do any of this, you never consult people. No one wants Net Zero. You just keep asking the people who will give you the answers you want. I was told that you asked lots of people about the cycle lane along the A4. I was never asked, despite being a regular cyclist.	Noted.
320	14015992034	The third priority is a bit meaningless...	Noted.
321	14015985879	My council tax should be paying for this not volunteer led.	Noted.
322	14018276867	I believe volunteer groups and communities are vital to improving the rights of way in West Berkshire. There appears to be a greater drive for communities to work together to improve services.	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
323	14018195739	Empowering the community to look after their area is key. We should be the custodians of the ROW. Litter bins and perhaps litter grabbers on loan at car parks? More education around clearing up dog mess. Perhaps enforcement in poor areas - such as by busy hot spot car parks - dog owners often flick it to the edge of a path where children like to explore. Unruly dogs off lead is probably the worst thing about ROW which stop my children wanting to go out, but I don't know how that could be stopped. Certainly some action around dog owners use of ROW would be helpful.	Noted. Encouraging more responsible behaviour is covered by the ROWIP.

Table 20: Question 6: Do you have any comments on the proposed actions for the theme 'Effective Delivery', which can be found on page 52 of the draft ROWIP?

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
324	14018190282	No	-
325	14018013020	It's difficult to make helpful comments until the Delivery Plan is published.	Noted.
326	14017293618	This is a bit of a wish-list. It is a useful analysis of what needs doing. I would argue that action 47 says it all!	Noted.
327	14018129819	Sadly, it is not within the powers of the PROW Group or West Berks Council to 'ensure that this ROWIP is resourced ...' I have included these in the sections above.	Noted.
328	14017867501	Recruitment is a matter for the Council bearing in mind the budget pressures for an expanding population and the effect that this will have on erosion on PROWs	Noted.
329	14017794988	The ROWIP recognises the potential to make greater use of volunteers. There are already a number of disparate groups who undertake maintenance activities, but there is no coordination of these groups, which is inefficient. This may be an area for the Council to explore with its partners. Existing community groups such as West Berkshire Spokes could be approached to identify additional volunteers.	Noted. A volunteer coordinator, who can also work to recruit volunteers, is an aspiration of the ROWIP
330	14017584770	I'm surprised to see Action 43 in the ROWIP given the budget implications - is this action agreed by Exec/Senior Management before it appears in a public policy?	Action Such an appointment has not been approved, but it may be considered appropriate in the future.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		Regarding Action 45, the ROWIP fails to comply with its own aim - the ROWIP refers to areas as "Downlands and Rural", and (both) "eastern Kennet Valley" and "Kennet Valley East", but fails to accord with the emerging Local Plan, which doesn't refer to these but rather to Newbury and Thatcham, North Wessex Downs AONB, and Eastern Area. It would be better to have one definition of spatial areas and be consistent?	– The areas are based on PROW provision / characteristics so the criteria for selection differ from the LTP.
331	14017467193	Support all, particularly 54.	Noted.
332	14017400245	Really focus on actions 51-53!	Noted.
333	14017381433	No	-
334	14017099756	The first actions (43-46) are try to get resources and funding. Then action 47 would create a plan based on resources and funding available. Actions 48 / 49 then report progress against the plan. This raises two needs: * costs and priorities for the actions in the plan* sight of the progress following the previous 2010 plan	Noted. The Delivery Plan is being drawn up in the context of existing resources
335	14016749084	An inclusive approach is the best way to get support from the community	Noted. Greater liaison with the community and third parties is part of the ROWIP.
336	14016739072	There should also be a review of the permitted pathways within West Berkshire. For instance the very popular permitted pathways within Beale Park (which can be seen on the West Berkshire pamphlet called "Footways, Byways, Bridleways of Basildon") have been completely closed off by Beale Park without any warning or reasoning. This is despite the area they are in being described in the pamphlet as "designated community woodland, part funded by a grant from the Forestry Commission".	Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
337	14016528855	see above comments	-
338	14015931263	The actions are all-encompassing.	Noted.
339	14016336090	These plans now and for the future, involving all users and stakeholders should be inclusive and not exclusive to individual requirements. No one particular partnership should have more sway over the plan's than another. Disagreement should be resolved democratically.	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
340	14016255864	Action 43: you have to employ ANOTHER officer to do this? wasn't this activity staffed previously	Noted. There is no dedicated staff officer to deliver the ROWIP.
341	14016196007	Be open and assessable with named contacts readily available.	Noted.
342	14016174828	Back off	Comment not understood.
343	14016170786	This network is a wonderful heritage and deserves not only to be supported by the Council but celebrated	Noted.
344	14016169131	I have briefly reviewed the document. I just wanted to say even as a very courteous motorcycle rider I experience a lot of hatred and aggression towards me riding carefully and slowly even in fully legal byways. I would suggest that TROs closing 4x4s are clearer as some people do not read them correctly thinking it's closed for motorcycles too. Or course motorcycles cause less damage than 4x4s and probably even horses / erosion from people walking a lot. I hope there will not be any more byways closed as already it is extremely difficult to find areas to enjoy the countryside on my motorcycle, having to travel further to find one is not good for the environment either. I also see a lot of horse riders riding on pavements which is intimidating towards people and dogs. Thank you.	Noted. Repetition. See comment 143.
345	14016168807	Again, lots of proposed actions here. It would be helpful to have deadlines, so that the years don't pass in planning rather than action.	The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions.
346	14016168683	Partner with non commercial organisations such as berks wildlife national trust etc	Noted. Increased working with third parties is part of the ROWIP.
347	14016131106	In total there are 54 actions set out in the ROWIP - as set out across many pages within the report, this makes it hard to review all the proposed actions to consider their possible impact as a whole. It would be useful to: 1) set out the actions in one summary section of the document2) review and determine relative priority between the 54 actions - as to try to complete all in parallel is unrealistic3) clarify and record the ownership of the actions (within WBC) and set timescales for completion	Repetition see comment 146.

Question 7: Additional Priorities or Actions

Respondents were asked if they thought there should be any additional priorities or actions.

24% of respondents (29) indicated that there should be additional priorities of actions and gave additional responses, see Table 22, next page.

Table 21: Are there any additional priorities or actions you think we should consider including?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	24%	29
No	41%	50
Not sure / no opinion	35%	43
Answered		122
Skipped		120

Table 22: Question 7: Please tell us what additional priorities or actions you think we should consider including and why. Additional responses.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
348	14018231948	We must continue to try to ban motorised vehicles of all sorts. (Unless working, with authority.) I understand at the moment it is not possible to ban anything other than 4x4s with TROs. We're not allowed to put fencing or gates on the common. It's been done! Let us work consistently to ban all motorised vehicles permanently. (Except mobility scooters less than 4mph).	Motorised vehicles have the legal right to use BOATs. WBC will not seek to ban all motorised vehicles from exercising their legal rights.
349	14018013020	The plan seems a little light on 'action' or 'utility' use of PROWS We understand that this probably means commuting and social use Given the nature of the climate threat some more robust ideas seem necessary If this is to be a realistic aspiration lighting and some protection from the weather may have to be introduced. South Korea has already progressed some way towards this with cycle ways alongside major roads, providing canopies for shelter and PV cells for lighting	Noted. Active travel / sustainable utility travel is led by the Highways team and taken forward in the LCWIP and LTP. The ROWIP links to this and supports delivery.
350	14017293618	See earlier comments on connectivity. The plan obviously does mention this, but is a bit weak on what specific actions follow. On the other hand, I'm not sure what actual actions I would include	Noted. The ROWIP is to be accompanied by a Delivery Plan.
351	14017773752	Section 4.3, consider stating that there are plans to extend the Eling Way through Hermitage (this Stage 1 proposed for construction 2024/25 subject to landowners and Planning consent) and aspirations to extend it further south towards Newbury, with Feasibility work well underway, currently led by Highways working closely with PROW colleagues Also consider citing the Wasing Way (Aldermaston Wharf to Aldermaston village) in which PROW are key stakeholders	Noted. Will include, as previous comment.
352	14017584770	What is missing is the budget. All sorts of improvements can be identified/proposed, but without the funding it's a little pointless.	Noted.
353	14017400245	Improved verge paths on fast rural roads, as these are dangerous for people, horses and cars.	Noted. This is mentioned in the ROWIP.
354	14017158210	I might have missed it in the report but have you included publicising the method for notifying the ROW dept. about problems on the network, blocked paths, water inundation, deep mud, over grown vegetation, missing or damaged	Noted. Improving customer liaison is part of the ROWIP but Action 54 will be amended

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		signage etc. We need to encourage all users to report on all faults rather than get round them and carry on and then do nothing about the fault.	
355	14017099756	The actions in the plan need some indication (as in the previous 2010 Plan) of the anticipated funding, priority and cost. Without this information it is very difficult to review / agree the actions. There needs to be some discussion of the progress against the actions of the previous plan.	Noted. There will be a monitored and reviewed Delivery Plan to accompany the ROWIP
356	14016825428	The research of PROW analyses the use of existing infrastructure. However, what is not known is where PROW is needed (e.g. off road cycle routes). For example alternatives to the A34. Strava heatmap suggests there is no need for a sustainable route. However, this does mean nobody wants a direct North-South low traffic route.	Noted.
357	14016796114	Better provision of roadside paths where a footpath terminates at a road.	Noted. Improved connectivity, including road verges, forms part of the ROWIP.
358	14016761588	To make more areas for the horse people (rides)	Noted.
359	14016741226	Better enforcement of obligation to maintain existing rights of way. Quality of maintenance has declined in recent years.	Noted.
360	14016739072	There should also be a review of the permitted pathways within West Berkshire. For instance the very popular permitted pathways within Beale Park (which can be seen on the West Berkshire pamphlet called "Footways, Byways, Bridleways of Basildon") have been completely closed off by Beale Park without any warning or reasoning. This is despite the area they are in being described in the pamphlet as "designated community woodland, part funded by a grant from the Forestry Commission".	Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
361	14016706389	Better signage needed, especially on rarely used footpaths to save them falling into disuse.	Noted.
362	14016701932	Widen the scope to include all paths for walkers and cyclists including those along highways. Many walks involve a mix of footpaths and highways and pedestrians and cyclists should be considered in reviewing highways issues including pavements.	Noted. Improved connectivity, including road verges, forms part of the ROWIP.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
363	14016692915	Make reporting issues with byways easier and as mentioned provision for disabled cyclists on footpaths. THE ROADS ARE TOO DANGEROUS.	Noted.
364	14016527361	I've already mentioned the old railways. They should all be open for public use.	Noted.
365	14016517671	Equestrian and cycle routes should be increased to use most of the footpaths, widen them if it doesn't ruin the natural environment. A big problem is the blind crossing for equestrians across the A343 along The Wayfarers Walk near Highclere. This road 100% prevents access to this route. It is blind and the fast kitties and cars prevent safe crossing."	The site mentioned is in Hampshire.
366	14016450653	Increasing access to the countryside. This does not JUST mean keep the existing footpaths well maintained and open but engaging with the public where they want areas joined or new access opened. We pay landowners and awful lot of hard earned tax to no increase at all for access to the countryside. Time this was changed and the public have the right to petition for increased access and landowners should enable a certain percentage of their land to public access via sensible new footpaths.	Noted. Permitted paths assist in providing access in addition to PROWs.
367	14016444576	The plan does not state explicitly that motorised access will be reduced but implicitly, by not mentioning in it will discriminate, and is in danger of creating resource that those in the council may want but no-one will use.	WBC has a statutory duty to protect the rights of all users of PROWs.
368	14016336090	Understanding where, how and what to expect from any right of way is imperative to its use. I think that a lack of knowledge is a key factor in people accessing and using the ROW. Having access to a single point of up-to date information is the way forward. Along with clearly marked routes and information points. Circular routes, or routes connecting easily accessible public transport would be useful, along with parking options.	Noted. Improved interactive mapping is a goal of the ROWIP, and hard copy publications produced by third parties may be supported.
369	14016266762	only the potential extending of encouragement for motorised transport as this is not logical in the situation of global warming.	The ROWIP seeks to encourage people to use PROW close to home and does not seek to increase motorised personal travel.
370	14016195562	To ensure these actions are taken in to consideration by the planning committee when consideration applications for large housing estates to ensure ROW are not eroded by builders	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
371	14016179000	Improve overall access to countryside/natural resources - aim for a general 'right to roam'	Noted. Creating a general 'right to roam' is outside the power of a local authority.
372	14016174794	Ban dog walkers. They are dangerous and dirty animals. A threat to wildlife and walkers.	Noted. Encouragement of responsible behaviour, including by dog owners, is part of the ROWIP.
373	14016170786	Ensuring bus services connect with important entry points to the network and publicising	Noted.
374	14016169131	I have briefly reviewed the document. I just wanted to say even as a very courteous motorcycle rider I experience a lot of hatred and aggression towards me riding carefully and slowly even in fully legal byways. I would suggest that TROs closing 4x4s are clearer as some people do not read them correctly thinking it's closed for motorcycles too. Of course motorcycles cause less damage than 4x4s and probably even horses / erosion from people walking a lot. I hope there will not be any more byways closed as already it is extremely difficult to find areas to enjoy the countryside on my motorcycle, having to travel further to find one is not good for the environment either. I also see a lot of horse riders riding on pavements which is intimidating towards people and dogs. Thank you.	Noted. Repetition. See comment 143.
375	14016168683	Disabled users.	Noted.
376	14015992034	Ensuring green-spaces are included in all major developments so rights of ways are not paths to unofficial parks and recreational spaces.	Noted.

Question 8: Ease of Reading the ROWIP

Respondents were asked how easy they found the ROWIP to read.
Most respondents – 84% - found it 'easy' or 'neither easy nor difficult'.

38 respondents made further comments, see Table 24.

Table 23: How easy do you find the draft ROWIP to read?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Easy	36%	44
Neither easy nor difficult	48%	58
Difficult	16%	20
Please tell us the reasons for your response.		38
Answered		122
Skipped		120

Table 24: Question 8: How easy do you find the draft ROWIP to read? Additional responses.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
377	14018276867	The ROWIP is massively under represented by farmers and landowners resulting in a bias comments against farmer/landowner .	Landowners were approached in drafting the ROWIP but few provided comments. The ROWIP is not biased against landowners but recognises the essential role as partners with WBC in regard to the PROW network.
378	14018013020	It's written in good English with few technical terms. It's irritating though that the author couldn't get the correct spelling of 'complement' since the spelling of 'complementary' which followed shortly afterwards was correct	Will be corrected.
379	14018129819	In my professional career I had considerable experience of management plans. To be effective they have to be concise and easily remembered by the people who have to implement them. I, personally, found this one much too long and there is very much too much repetition. Also, other WBC Policies and Plans were referred to which I, again personally, found distracting without adding anything.	An executive summary is provided at the beginning of the Main Report.
380	14016703624	The plan would be more effective for the people who are not involved in the planning by having an effective preface summary. I think a lot of people will not wade through 50+ pages with significant repetition.	An executive summary is provided at the beginning of the Main Report.
381	14017868458	Congratulations on producing an excellent report. It is comprehensive, well-researched and well presented. Thank you.	Noted.
382	14017773752	Would prefer for all the material to be in a single document rather than accessed via subsidiary weblinks	Noted.
383	14017781924	simpler language and bullet points would have been helpful	Noted.
384	14017755480	Unnecessarily long winded and irrelevant	Noted.
385	14017666050	Too extensive to read (and not included in the estimated 10 minutes to complete survey)	Noted.
386	14017621984	A lot of the general text is easy to read and understand. I feel this is less the case for the actions which are verbose in some cases. A smaller number of more clearly articulated actions might be more useful than the current long list that tries to capture all perspectives and priorities.	Noted.
387	14017502737	Very informative and a lot of work had obviously been done. The only problem was finding the time to read it all	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
388	14017467193	Very clear and necessarily but unfortunately rather lengthy.	Noted.
389	14017445156	Layout clear with Actions clearly set out. photographs helpful	Noted.
390	14017400245	It's quite long and detailed. Not sure how many other the very interested will wade through it. Is their a highlights document? The survey takes longer than 10 minutes if you are adding comments!	Noted.
391	14017381433	N/A	-
392	14017099756	There are now 54 pages, many pictures and some unreadable maps. The volume of text is huge and must have taken much time to write. Without any clarity of funding is this a good use of time?	Noted.
393	14016237220	In the document, it has been included visual data and text explaining the reasons for the actions. It also includes parts of the survey to explain the choices.	Noted.
394	14016749084	A lot of the wording and plans are repetitive and vague	Noted.
395	14016741226	Too wordy.	Noted.
396	14016723811	Too long	Noted.
397	14016171270	There is a huge amount of information but it is clearly laid out.	Noted.
398	14016701932	It is full of gobbledegook and trendy stuff and does not cut to the chase. It is hard to find the real issues.	Noted.
399	14016528855	It is laid out well and is written in clear unfussy language	Noted.
400	14016526522	"Difficult" is the wrong word. What I would say is that the document is absurdly long and wordy. I speak as one who has over many years been required to digest, analyse and comment on documents like this in central government and in industry. There really is a better way to present results, but especially if the intention is to have the document read and commented on by members of the general public, many of whom will (happily for them) be quite unused to tackling reports of this size and wordiness.	Noted.
401	14015931263	Well laid out, with proposed actions clearly shown.	Noted.
402	14016479382	There is a large amount of repetition that makes the plan tedious.	Noted. Will review for repetition. However, the ROWIP needs to cover a broad range of areas and also set out background to PROW management and issues.
403	14016444576	Very simplistic	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
404	14016336090	I have dyslexia making any form of wordy documents difficult to manage. I spent several hours reading, understanding and completing the process, a little longer than the ten minutes suggested. But an important subject to be discussed. Overall I have experienced considerably more difficult forms to master than this, and would consider them to be fair.	Noted.
405	14016255864	Extremely long winded. No doubt this report took hundreds of hours of council officers' time - and more will be taken looking into the responses and making changes. What percentage of council time (money) is spent on PREPARING to do things rather than DOING things?	Noted.
406	14016200439	As usual, too much waffle and wokeness. Get to the point.	Noted.
407	14016179000	Too long, needs better summary.	Noted.
408	14016174828	Far too full of consultant speak and political ambition	Noted.
409	14016170786	Well laid out	Noted.
410	14016170991	Too much waffle. You are trying to hide agendas in there that the average person won't pick up on. Try stating that better access for bicycles means less access for motor vehicles because this is what you are actually aiming for. See how many people vote for it then	Noted.
411	14016169289	I'm on a mobile device, and the ROWIP is a pdf. You should make this web accessible content considering most people's primary device is a smartphone.	Noted.
412	14016168807	It's very long. I'm not sure quite who the target audience is. And the actions could do with being more concise and SMART	This has been reviewed by the PROW team and SMART objectives included where possible. A balance needs to be struck between SMART objectives and the need to deploy limited resources to the priorities in the ROWIP and to respond to project opportunities and needs as they arise. Note that a separate Delivery Plan table will form part of the ROWIP.
413	14016168683	Wordy, maps difficult to navigate - needs a key facts infographic	An executive summary is provided at the beginning of the Main Report.
414	14016131106	as laid out, the report does not provide a clear summary of the identified actions - it would be useful to summarise the 54 actions in a single section in the document - to make it easier to read.	An executive summary is provided at the beginning of the Main Report.

Question 9: Further Comments

Respondents were asked if they had any further comments.

45 respondents provided comments, see Table 25.

Table 25: Question 9: Do you have any further comments?

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
415	14018013020	No apart from congratulating the team on a well researched plan	Noted.
416	14018190282	No	-
417	14017293618	No. Well done!	Noted.
418	14016164639	<p>The Society congratulates the Council on the production of a well researched and well produced document. It appreciates the recognition of equestrians and equestrian needs throughout the document. The Society has commented on the previous drafts and many of its comments have been incorporated. Further comments</p> <p>Page 21 Evidence</p> <p>The Society thanks the Council for including detailed information on the horse industry in West Berks on page 21 and differentiating the racing and non-racing components. However, the Society would prefer if the sentence 'However these postcodes extend beyond the district' was removed as it implies more uncertainty in the figures than there needs to be. The Society did supply data which accounted for the numbers of non-racing horses in West Berks adjusted by the % of a postcode found in West Berks (data available on the internet) but for some reason this has not been used. The Society will leave it to the Council to decide what to use in this ROWIP but it may adjust the figures (which will be slightly lower) in the future in its own publications.</p> <p>Page 36'This could include equestrian access in areas where there is a deficiency of this type of public right of way'. The</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The postcode of the passport does not necessarily represent where a horse is kept, but rather the location of the owner. This creates inaccuracy in the data and only approximately reveals the distribution of horses across West Berkshire. It would increase the inherent inaccuracy in the data by taking a proportion of the total passports in each postcode based on how much of that postcode is in West Berkshire, as this would be purely guesswork. The passport data can only help to a small degree, through providing an estimate of the total of horses. New data were sought from Defra through a FOI and this has been used as it showed a (possible) increase in data from the BHS data supplied which was more historic.</p> <p>Change in wording accepted.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>Society would prefer this wording: 'This should include equestrian access in areas where there is a need and a deficiency of this type of public right of way'</p> <p>Page 37 Equestrian use needs to be accommodated wherever possible, especially where there is a lower level of provision for these users and busy roads'. Replace 'wherever possible' by 'where needed'</p> <p>Action 21 Permissive paths The Society supports the proposal of the Local Access Forum that Action 21 is strengthened by using 'support' instead of 'be open to'.</p> <p>Section 2.2 West Berks Online Map: Access and Common Land and Permissive paths The Society supports the proposal of the Local Access Forum to Add the following text in Section 2.2: ' We will endeavour to give greater clarity on the West Berkshire Online Map and elsewhere to Common Land, Access land and Permissive paths, and the rights of access to them.</p> <p>The Society is disappointed that the ROWIP has not been produced as a Countryside Access Plan as has been done by other local authorities. Equestrians use public spaces irrespective of whether they are rights of way, common land or other places with public access. Thus the ROWIP is not comprehensive. Consultation with the Local Access forum on this issue at an early stage would have been advisable.</p>	<p>Change in wording accepted.</p> <p>Action 21 Be open to the use of permissive access as a means of achieving network improvements. Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service.. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.</p> <p>Noted. Access to the wider countryside is, however, included in the forthcoming Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the ROWIP makes strong links with this Strategy.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
419	14018129819	No, but I admire the effort that has gone into its creation. Reading it has brought home to me just what a complex task the PROW Group have to tackle and I wish them well I have worked alongside the Group for many years - always profitably. Finally. I have written a number of books about the West Berkshire Landscape including two which could provide useful information about the PROW network. These are:- 'Around the Valley of the Pang' 14 Chapters, each a circular walk in the Pang Valley. with a clear map and detailed info about the history and wildlife along the route. 'Around the 3 Valleys' 17 Chapters, each a circular walk in the Lambourne, Kennet and Pang Valleys. Format as above with geology added. I have already provided Elaine with samples of the leaflets I mentioned, and if I can be of any help please ask me and I will be delighted to be of help.	Noted.
420	14016703624	The devil is in the detail and the plan has little detail - hopefully that will come later.	Noted. There is to be a Delivery Plan to accompany the ROWIP.
421	14017902538	<p>Thank you for consulting the Canal & River Trust on the draft West Berks Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Canal & River Trust has a national network of over 2000 miles of towpaths across England and Wales, and recently entered into an MOU with Sustrans to work collaboratively on multi-user access provision. Our towpaths offer safe off-road routes for the many millions of people who use them every year, from walkers, runners, and cyclists to people who simply want to experience our calm, tranquil environment. The Trust wants to offer all users an enjoyable towpath experience and recognises that this is dependent on people being considerate, particularly to those who are not moving, are slower, or more vulnerable.</p> <p>The entire Kennet & Avon Canal towpath running through West Berks is a public footpath and is shown on the West Berks online map. Significant sections are owned by the Canal & River Trust. The Trust has worked with West Berks Council and Sustrans on several partnership towpath projects where the intention is to improve the towpath for cycling and</p>	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>multi-user usage.</p> <p>To encourage appropriate solutions to upgrading and maintaining our towpaths the Trust published a Design Guide in 2011 and this guide has recently been updated and will be available to the public soon. Towpaths aren't roads and should never be seen as fast routes. When we make changes to towpaths, we bear this in mind, often employing "softening" measures which encourage visitors to slow down, such as tactile surfaces or planting. In places where speed is a real concern, we will undertake risk assessments and consider introducing appropriate speed measures, as long as this doesn't decrease safety, prevent access or displace the risks elsewhere. Towpaths are, by their very nature, narrow spaces but many are suitable to accommodate multi-use. Where appropriate, we have already "widened" the path (i.e., the surfaced path area within the towpath corridor) as this is often the best way to ensure that they are used safely and that conflict between visitors is minimised. We will continue to look for opportunities to optimise space where we can, but we will not do this at the expense of the character of the canal. Front and back verges are an important part of this character and also have an important function as they provide places for boats to moor, safe havens to fish, a tactile warning of the water's edge and increase the biodiversity of canals. It is not possible to set a minimum standard for path width as each stretch is different and has unique characteristics.</p> <p>The Canal & River Trust a waterways and well-being charity, and we fully support the aims of the ROWIP to improve green and blue infrastructure, health and wellbeing, active travel and help support the visitor and tourism economy. The Canal towpath has an active role to play in all of these aspirations Please note that the correct names of the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Canal & River Trust uses an ampersand. The Canal is correctly recognised in the document as both a popular recreational route and for active travel as a</p>	<p>Correction will be made.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>commuting route. The Kennet & Avon Canal towpath is also an important route. Although for some parts of the canal we act as navigational authority only the managed by the Canal and River Trust, the majority comprises public rights of way.</p> <p>The Trust welcomes recognition that new development can have an adverse impact on existing rights of way as a result of increased usage. We support the need for consideration of the impact of recreational use beyond the development 'red line' and the overall access in the area and the recognition of the need to seek developer contributions to improve paths which will receive higher use, make paths more accessible and provide information for users. Actions The Trust is generally supportive of the actions identified by the council and look forward to working together to achieve these aims.</p> <p>With regard to action 10, which identifies the need to work with West Berkshire Highways to develop guidance for design and surfacing of multi-user paths, the Canal & River Trust have our own standards and guidance for canal towpath improvements and will work with WBC highways to agree a suitable specification on any projects on parts of the canal towpath under our ownership and management.</p> <p>Actions 19 & 20. Although towpaths were originally used by horses to pull barges this was a time when there were few other users. Unfortunately, today the canal towpath is not considered suitable for equestrian use due to its limited width, surfacing and the presence of unfenced edges in most locations. This results in the potential for conflict with other users and safety concerns. Any proposal to use a stretch of towpath to improve the rights of way network access for equestrians should be discussed with the Trust at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p><i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p>Action 26 -The Canal towpath is one of the more accessible routes in West Berks and the Trust will continue to work with WBC to improve areas.</p> <p>We note the desire to provide more information about levels of accessibility across the public rights of way network. The Canal & River Trust have towpath condition grades assigned to the whole towpath route through the county so we could work with WBC to identify the most accessible locations and the worst locations to coincide with WBCs target areas to consider ways of achieving further funding to improve them</p> <p>Action 50 As previously mentioned, the Canal & River Trust welcome the development of collaborative projects to improve the towpath, not just with WBC but with other stakeholders such as Sustrans and community groups</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. The WBC Rights of Way Team attends the West Berkshire Cycle Forum.</p>
422	14017867501	I would refer to the answers given to our response to the ROWIP Consultation 2021	Noted.
423	14017834261	A telephone number for this department would be helpful to report closures by landowners and fallen trees blocking passages	Noted.
424	14017773752	Important to link in with Neighbourhood Development Plans, as the Eling Way initiative is with the NDPs for Hermitage and Compton for example	Noted. The link with NDPs appears in the ROWIP.
425	14017795758	Need to make sure signage to a RoW and signage on the RoW is also maintained	Noted.
426	14017755480	Just to reiterated that all that is needed is to keep Rights of Way clear and well signposted.	Noted. Physical accessibility of the network has traditionally been a focus of the WBC rights of way service.
427	14017621984	None	-
428	14017573104	The report is long and deals with priorities and policy in general terms. It identifies area where there is less PROW per person and the need to develop the network, but provides lo detail on how how/where the development will take place. It is this details that is of interest. It would also be useful to have an understanding of what was achieved under the current PROW plan. On the WBC Interactive Map one can add 'Public	<p>Noted</p> <p>Progress on the previous ROWIP can be seen on request and has been reported to the Local Access Forum. An action to look at this section of the mapping layer will be taken forward asap.</p>

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		Rights of Way Improvement Plan' which overlays lots of sections of PROW in purple but clicking on an individual route gives no information. Are these proposed routes and where can we find details?	
429	14017467193	Do hope extension of Eling Way both north and south of Hermitage can be brought about. B4009 is dangerous for cyclists and can cause driver frustration. Keep up the good work	Noted.
430	14017445156	I prefer gates to kissing gates as they are more accessible, but I appreciate farmers will worry they are left open, unless fitted with a good closing system. Radar keys on a kissing gate will only be held by the physically disabled, so families with a heavier buggy could not get through a kissing gate (too heavy to lift over). Both are much preferred to stiles.	Noted. Pedestrian gates are preferred to kissing gates as they are less restrictive.
431	14017397571	I welcome this plan - it looks very comprehensive and is easy to understand.	Noted.
432	14017381433	No	-
433	14016237220	Have you thought about directly contacting Visorando, Alltrails, and other platforms which already work with a local organisation such as REDA, Chiltern Society, Chilterns AONB, etc. who could help in giving away some insight for free on how to help structure, maintain, and promote those right of way?	Noted.
434	14016825428	Page 20. "However, Please rephrase this. Women are not the weaker sex who can't handle traffic. I agree that cycling for leisure is a male dominated sport but comments such as those above only reinforce negative connotations. Local cycling clubs are doing lots to make cycling more universally accessible.	Noted. However, this is based on research on preferences of a range of types of user. Wording will be revisited.
435	14016787778	Wonderful to see this kind of strategic thinking, just please consider all the people involved.	Noted.
436	14016762191	No Just keep them trimmed ,not left to be overgrown	Noted.
437	14016761588	No	-
438	14016749084	No	-
439	14016741226	Surface of rights of way in my area greatly deteriorated, as a result of overuse by heavy agricultural machinery. Result is that some are impassable, and prone to local flooding.	Noted.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		Similarly, failure to cut back overhanging hedges and surface grass, which used to be well done, makes many tracks hazardous for those with restricted mobility. Finally, routes across fields not kept sufficiently cut back and liable to be ploughed without proper reinstatement. General impression is that Council has lost interest in quality.	
440	14016739072	There should also be a review of the permitted pathways within West Berkshire. For instance the very popular permitted pathways within Beale Park (which can be seen on the West Berkshire pamphlet called "Footways, Byways, Bridleways of Basildon") have been completely closed off by Beale Park without any warning or reasoning. This is despite the area they are in being described in the pamphlet as "designated community woodland, part funded by a grant from the Forestry Commission".	Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace.
441	14016692915	No	-
442	14016528855	No thank you	Noted.
443	14016527361	Please keep us updated over the next ten years.	Noted.
444	14016517671	Many I improvement to RoW for equestrians and cyclists is long overdue and hugely required	Noted.
445	14015931263	n/a	-
446	14016479382	No	-
447	14016336090	Thank you for the opportunity allowing my involvement.	Noted.
448	14016255864	none	-
449	14016288635	A stakeholder group missing is property owners (specially not those considered landowners) whose property adjoins a PRow.	Noted.
450	14016202782	No	-
451	14016178645	No, all seems satisfactory.	Noted.
452	14016174828	Try to adopt a sensible and practical approach and not some kind of idealistic political ambition	Noted.
453	14016174794	More plan speaking and less waffle.	Noted.
454	14016170786	No	-
455	14016169131	I have briefly reviewed the document. I just wanted to say even as a very courteous motorcycle rider I experience a lot of hatred and aggression towards me riding carefully and slowly	Noted. Repetition. See comment 143.

No	Respondent	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		even in fully legal byways. I would suggest that TROs closing 4x4s are clearer as some people do not read them correctly thinking it's closed for motorcycles too. Or course motorcycles cause less damage than 4x4s and probably even horses / erosion from people walking a lot. I hope there will not be any more byways closed as already it is extremely difficult to find areas to enjoy the countryside on my motorcycle, having to travel further to find one is not good for the environment either. I also see a lot of horse riders riding on pavements which is intimidating towards people and dogs. Thank you.	
456	14016168807	Thanks to the Council for doing this.	Noted.
457	14016168683	Please consider disabled and trike users and make rights of way all weather. I would pay for an annual pass to use these	Noted.
458	14016131106	In total there are 54 actions set out in the ROWIP - as set out across many pages within the report, this makes it hard to review all the proposed actions to consider their possible impact as a whole. It would be useful to: 1) set out the actions in one summary section of the document2) review and determine relative priority between the 54 actions - as to try to complete all in parallel is unrealistic3) clarify and record the ownership of the actions (within WBC) and set timescales for completion	Repetition see comment 146.
459	14015981599	The ones that mainly destroy the byways are the ones that do not care about the byways and go off piste and do not abide by code of conduct, that give the rest of us a bad name	Noted.

Additional Responses Outside of Online Survey

26 additional responses were received via email, outside of the online survey.

These are detailed in Table 26. For confidentiality the identity of the respondent is held separately from this report.

Table 26: Additional Responses

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
X001	<p>The supporting evidence document 1 (Network and Needs Analysis) page 64 mentions the TRF Green Road Map but incorrectly states that it is free access to all. You actually have to be a TRF member. I may have given you this misunderstanding in the past.</p> <p>* 'Damage to surfaces' is mentioned a few times but the report intimates this is caused exclusively by leisure vehicles and does not seem to consider that damage is also caused by agricultural, forestry and estate vehicles. Particularly when surface damage is exponential to the ground pressure of the vehicle. Or horse for that matter. It is also interesting that people do not appear to complain about damage by non-leisure vehicles and continue to walk, cycle, etc on these surfaces without an apparent problem. Nb the photo of ruts in section 3.3 might be considered by many readers to have been caused by leisure vehicles when actually the damage could have been from other use.</p> <p>* Tension between users and expectations of such. Whilst the report highlights an issue of tension between motorised and other users it appears that there is no intended action to improve this situation. For example; it seems people have a different expectation regarding traffic when travelling on a surfaced road than they do on an unsurfaced (green) one. Better education on rights of users and information on what to expect (i.e. vehicles could be on this route) would certainly help in this respect. That said, the various motorised user groups also have a responsibility to educate motorised users on expectations of responsible use.</p>	<p>This will be corrected.</p> <p>This aspect will be clarified.</p> <p>This is included in the ROWIP through the provision of information and 'pop-up' awareness campaigns.</p> <p>We are aware of and grateful for offers of help in this regard</p>
X002	<p>Thank you for getting in touch with LARA (the motoring organisations' Land Access & Recreation Association) about the consultation on the draft West Berkshire ROWIP.</p> <p>I don't think that LARA is well placed to comment on to what extent the new ROWIP reflects the needs of West Berkshire's residents. However, we are pleased to note that the ROWIP equitably considers the needs of users of motor vehicles and includes reference (on page 23) to the latest LARA guidance on managing the use of vehicles on public rights of way and to the TRF (Trail Riders Fellowship) code of practice, in endnotes 25 and 26</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>respectively.</p> <p>TRF is representative of users of 2-wheel vehicles and I think it would be helpful if a reference to guidance for users of 4-wheel vehicles could also be included. We note that GLASS (the Green Lane Association, which represents users of 4-wheel vehicles) is mentioned in page 23 and we suggest that an additional endnote could readily be added, just above the photograph, to include a link the GLASS code of conduct. The link is as follows.</p> <p>https://glass-uk.org/about/our-code-of-conduct</p> <p>I very much hope that this suggestion could be accommodated as we believe it would be in the interests of all users of public rights of way.</p>	<p>Link will be added.</p>
X003	<p>Good morning,</p> <p>Further to your email below. Purley on Thames Parish Council would like to know what positive actions are being proposed to ensure that the Countryside Code is fully embedded in this proposal. Examples are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Misuse of Barbeques/do not light fires. * Keeping dogs on leads/ dog poo bins * Leaving rubbish behind and dumping waste – always taking litter home * Follow local signs and keep to marked paths. * Respecting the River <p>I look forward to receiving your comments</p>	<p>Responsible use of the countryside and public rights of way is an area which will be delivered through the ROWIP, through promotion and information provision.</p>
X004	<p>Thank you for mailing me the request for views on the ROWIP. It is possible that our society's response may not come from me, but we will respond.</p> <p>May I make a request, meantime, regarding our identity in the report. In the R.O.W. Improvement plan Appendix 2 para's 1.13 and 1.24 we are referred to as the Pang, Kennet, and Lambourn Countryside Project which we were known as until the demise of FWAG some 12 years ago. Since that time, we have been registered as a Not-for-Profit organisation known as the West Berkshire Countryside Society. Is it possible to update the Appendix in this respect?</p>	<p>This refers to the previous ROWIP. Name is correct in the new ROWIP.</p>
X005	<p>We are interested in rights of way, both as (often) historic routeways in their own right, but also as a means of accessing the wider historic environment of West Berkshire –</p>	

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>overlapping and interwoven of course with the natural environment. I'm sorry the word 'archaeological' is completely missing from the document!</p> <p>I have used many public footpaths myself to get an appreciation of West Berkshire's earthworks, historic buildings and industrial remains and when we create new entries in the HER we often do log where these are accessible/visible from a road or RoW.</p> <p>We'd be happy to help in this Action:</p> <p>Action 12 Make an inventory of public rights of way which cross SSSI's, heritage sites or other sensitive nature conservation areas and consider appropriate maintenance of these, including vegetation clearance regime. [We take this to mean all types of heritage, but of course there are tracks across Scheduled Monuments, eg Walbury Camp and Combe Gibbet long barrow]</p> <p>And also in the objectives expressed in these paragraphs in the document:</p> <p>There is a need for more information for all types of users. Rather than producing more promotional material showing routes, which is now available on a range of websites, the council will concentrate on information which is lacking and which meets needs which are not being fulfilled – e.g. for routes in the urban fringe, for people with physical mobility needs, for types of users which have less information available to them, and for highlighting cultural assets. More use will be made of social media and digital technologies.</p>	<p>All noted – the heritage, and archaeological importance, of some PROWs is acknowledged in this action and the PROW/National Trails teams are working together with PROW team support. The need to greater liaison is acknowledged also.</p> <p><i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>Section 60 of the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 states</p> <p>Every local highway authority (i.e. West Berkshire Council) shall prepare and publish a plan, to be known as a rights of way improvement plan (and review it at intervals of not more than ten years), containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The following matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public (b) the opportunities provided by local rights of way (and cycle tracks) for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the authority's area, (c) the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems. - a statement of the action they propose to take for the management of local rights of way, and for securing an improved network of local rights of way, with particular regard to the matters dealt with in the assessment. <p>The wording of the Act has been edited for clarity.</p> <p>The Town Council notes that a ROWIP is not limited to addressing these matters. In particular, many opportunities for Thatcham residents for their open-air recreation rely on both public rights of way and other types of open space – such as Greenham Common and permissive paths.</p> <p>3 Partnerships with Town and Parish Councils</p> <p>Thatcham Town Council welcomes the Actions in the draft ROWIP to develop partnerships with parish and town councils:</p> <p>Action 5: Develop partnerships with parish and town councils and other stakeholders to implement and improve maintenance and identify local priorities.</p> <p>Action 53: Develop partnerships with parish and town councils to resolve public rights of way issues, improve standards, implement maintenance, seek improvements, development priorities and communicate with the community.</p>	<p>Wider access issues are addressed in the forthcoming Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.</p> <p>Action 5 will be removed. <i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7,</i></p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>However, Action 53 almost completely duplicates Action 5. We therefore suggest that they are merged into one, or that they are re-worded to remove the duplication.</p> <p>4 Permissive paths</p> <p><u>Case Study 1</u> <i>A permissive path connects the junction of footpaths THAT/10 and THAT/11 (at Lower Henwick Farm) with Waller Drive in Manor Park. This is used both for leisure (especially dog walking) and utility journeys (e.g. by pupils of Trinity School who live in Thatcham). A permissive path runs to the north of Crookham Common Road, westwards from the end of THAT/16 (near the former Traveller's Rest). This enables leisure walkers to avoid walking along the road. A permissive path connects the southern end of footpath GREE/6 (at Burys Bank Road) with the Bowdown Woods Car Park. This avoids walkers needing to cross the road on a dangerous blind bend. These permissive paths all have West Berkshire Council finger posts, so must be recognised in some way.</i></p> <p>Permissive paths have an important role in improving the connectivity of the network of local rights of way. Most landlords are reluctant to dedicate new public rights of way (because of the permanent implications), but are often more supportive of permissive paths. However, permissive paths are only mentioned twice in the ROWIP; Action 21 appears only to address new paths and is rather equivocal.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Replace the wording of Action 21 with "Promote the use of permissive access as a means of delivering network improvements.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Permissive paths are only useful if users know of their existence. Therefore, The Council should request the Ordnance Survey to show them on its maps (there are specific symbols for permissive footpaths and bridleways, and these are used quite widely on OS maps covering other Local Authority areas).</p> <p>5 Improving accessibility</p> <p><u>Case Study 2</u> <i>Footpath COLD/4/3 passes over the bund of the Tull Way flood attenuation scheme. Before this was constructed, there were around five steps down from the road to the footpath and a single five bar gate. Following construction, there are two sets of around ten steps over the bund, with two wooden kissing gates, which are too small for a buggy to get</i></p>	<p><i>Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p> <p>Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace. No change to text.</p> <p>Action 33 - Continue to remove stiles, barriers and restrictive infrastructure and replace with gaps, gates or kissing gates. Support communities and user groups to achieve this aim. Aim for at least 10 per year. Action 34 - Upgrade existing structures, such as bridges and steps, to ensure maximum accessibility, for example providing handrails. Prioritise these improvements along busy routes and those close to urban areas.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p><i>through. This scheme was managed by West Berkshire Council, and constructed to designs commissioned by it. The lack of accessibility was highlighted by the PROW team during the planning application process.</i></p> <p>We are pleased that a 'Tramper' mobility vehicle is now available for loan at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre. This enables people with physical disabilities to venture further in the countryside. This complements the measures to improve the accessibility.</p> <p>The current wording of Actions 33 and 34 only mention the target for the numbers of removals and improvements. Without knowing the total number of removals and improvements required, we cannot tell how long they would take to complete.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Actions 33 and 34 should be strengthened. There should be a target within the ten-year period of this ROWIP to remove of restrictive infrastructure and improve existing infrastructure on all busy routes and those close to urban area (unless they have natural features that would prevent accessibility).</p> <p>6 Greenham Common and open spaces</p> <p><u>Case Study 3</u> <i>Bridleway THAT/18 and Footpath GREE/6 end at Burys Bank Road, opposite access gates onto Greenham and Crookham Common. The opportunities provided by rights of way rely on the paths on the Common completing the network. Footpath THAT/6 starts opposite the access land of Marsh Meadow, just north of Dunston Green. Paths across Marsh Meadow and Dunston Green complete a circular route in the network of rights of way starting in the centre of Thatcham.</i></p> <p>The text of the draft ROWIP focusses almost exclusively on rights of way, and does not sufficiently address other types of access that complement and complete the rights of way network. We note that Section 60 of CROW specifies matters that a ROWIP must 'contain'; it does not limit the ROWIP to those matters.</p> <p>The Town Council welcomed the experimental traffic regulation order for Lawrences Lane, which provides a safer route for walkers and cyclists from the town to Bucklebury Common and its rights of way network. We hope that this will be made permanent (although that decision is outside the remit of the ROWIP).</p>	<p>Whilst the condition survey has highlighted furniture or other aspects which reduce accessibility, further investigation is needed to determine the feasibility of rectifying these in each case. Therefore the scale of the task, and the resources required, has not been quantified. This, along with the uncertainty of the budgets available, make it impossible to commit to the targets suggested. Targets already included in actions 33 and 34 to remain as they are – no change.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>PROPOSAL: The ROWIP should address access on Commons and access land that complements and completes the rights of way network (in the area of Thatcham, primarily Greenham and Crookham Common) – and this should be mentioned in at least one of the Actions.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: West Berkshire Council should have an integrated approach for promotion of routes for walking and cycling, encompassing routes on rights of way, routes partly on rights of way and partly relying on other types of access⁴, routes using other types of access (such as walks on Greenham and Crookham Common) and urban routes (such as history trails) and accessible access (such as the tramper at the Nature Discovery Centre).</p> <p>7 Particular considerations for urban paths</p> <p>Case Study 4 Footpaths THAT/8/3 and THAT/20 and bridleway THAT/18 have been subsumed into the street structure of housing developments – often following a convoluted path across the heads of closes. These routes are not well waymarked at all of the 'decision points' for users.</p> <p>Thatcham Town Council has twice bid from a grant from a GWR scheme for waymarking of a walking route from Thatcham Station to The Broadway – but has so far been unsuccessful. This route would use THAT/20. Due to the limited time that applications were open, we were not able to provide detailed costings. This would mainly use stickers on street furniture (as is used for National Cycle Route NC4), rather than finger posts.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: The waymarking of urban rights of way should be improved where they have been subsumed into the road network.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: West Berkshire Council (Highways and Rights of Way Teams) should work with the Town Council to prepare a stronger bid for the anticipated next round of the GWR grant scheme.</p> <p>Case Study 5 Footpath THAT/9 runs to the north of Westfield Road, providing rear garden access to its residents and a route from the 'Rivers Estate' to bus stops on Westfield Road and the convenience store on Northfield Road. However, it has no lighting and dark (it is</p>	<p>The ROWIP sufficiently addresses access provided by public rights of way and details the resources provided by the wider access network.. Links are to be made with the forthcoming Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. No change.</p> <p>Decisions on waymarking will be provided on the basis of greatest need. Signposting in urban areas often overlaps with highways, cycleways, linkways and other destination signposting.</p> <p>Urban paths are not excluded from the ROWIP and needs on these paths will be addressed based on demonstration of need. Provision of lighting is not a core function of the Public Rights of Way service and would be taken forward by Highways.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>surrounded by fences). It is now isolated from the rights of way network and has little utility for leisure and recreation.</p> <p>The ROWIP focuses largely on paths in rural areas and on the urban fringes, and does not address the particular needs for urban paths – particularly those that are now used primarily for utility journeys.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: The ROWIP should address the needs of urban paths, particularly lighting.</p> <p>8 References</p> <p>Many of the references consist only of a web link. These change frequently, due to restructuring of websites or revision of documents. The ROWIP has a 'life' of more than ten years, and the references need to be identifiable for this duration.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: All of the references should include the title, author/publisher and date of publication (if known), as is already the case for references without a web link.</p>	<p>Action 32 has been amended to reflect the comments.</p>
X007	<p>There is reference to climate change, and focus on longer periods of dry, but no real mention of prolonged or heavier periods of rainfall. I mention this as water runoff is a key factor in surface damage, be it ruts or channels, scouring of surfaces or flooding and mud. The new ROWIP doesn't make specific mention of water management, attenuation or aquifer recharge as a policy for ROW improvement. I mention this as the previous ROWIP had a clear action on this.</p> <p>ROWIP 17: work within the context of the biodiversity action plan and European Habitats Regulations 2007. Relevant procedures would include: vegetation clearance; the provenance of surfacing materials and their compatibility with local aesthetics, soil type and geology; surface repair specification and the need to reduce surface water run-off entering watercourses, and to accommodate future flash-flooding events and other effects of climate change. Also, the need to ensure that works are consistent with historic landscape characterization. Measures are needed in order to comply with the European Habitat Regulations.</p>	<p>Will be included and actions amended.</p> <p>A new action under Theme 1</p> <p>Covered broadly under Action 11 <i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>I was wondering if it there should be a more concise reference to improving drainage. Specifically attenuation of flows, using grips, sumps and engineered soakaways for capture, storage and dispersal of surface water flows. Removing load, where possible, from the highways drainage network, preventing run-off from PROW onto highways and private property, both of water and debris. Prevention where possible run-off directly into water courses, especially if it will deposit debris or cause water turbidity. Managing storm flows of other land onto the PROW. Capturing and storing water run-off to help with aquifer recharge.</p>	<p>Covered by a new action under Theme 1</p>
X008	<p>Chieveley Parish Council Response</p> <p>This Plan was published in July 2023. Its timing, in the midst of the holiday season, could be seen as less than ideal for some people to read it in its entirety, weigh its contribution to society in the time it takes to come to conclusions on it and draft a considered response by 23 November 2023.</p> <p>Notwithstanding that, the document design is comprehensive, focused on the central issues and well researched. It is essential to recognise that it has been prepared and written in what must be described as highly unfavourable circumstances. Central government funding of services delivered by local unitary authorities has all too frequently been uncertain, fluctuating from one year to another and generally inadequate to discharge their legal responsibilities satisfactorily.</p> <p>Much of this has resulted partly from global events over which the UK central government has limited influence. The banking crisis of 2008 onwards, the ensuing period of austerity and the Covid pandemic are examples. The withdrawal from the EU, numerous foreign military adventures and varying degrees of central government decision reversals are home-grown problems.</p> <p>Does all this matter as far as Chieveley public rights of way are concerned?</p> <p>Yes, it does. It does because it affects the quality of the service which West Berks Council is able to offer to the people of West Berkshire in providing the well-maintained rights of way that give those people so much pleasure.</p> <p>A continuing issue raised in the Plan is how its proposals are going to be financed. Given the character of the service provided by the PROW network, - free at the point of delivery, funded in part by local tax revenue, hypothecated transfers and income from its services -</p>	

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>its financial base is inherently unsteady.</p> <p>As it states, "Some aspectsof the Plan may be delivered using existing resources and workstreams, but additional funding will be needed to deliver many of the actions"</p> <p>Planning for a major capital expenditure programme to run alongside revenue expenditure on the network makes longer term financial planning to accompany it difficult, if not impossible.</p> <p>In the light of these issues, therefore Chieveley Parish Council are mindful of the limitations that might be imposed upon its implementation over the coming decade.</p> <p>Our evaluation of the Plan embraces the following form.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Our overall impression. ii. Our comment on the objectives. iii. Our analysis of the methodology iv. Our assessment of the implementation strategy v. Our comment on the findings vi. Tidying up. vii. What next? <p>Our overall impression</p> <p>As we have said, we feel that the West Berks Council research teams who prepared the Plan are to be congratulated on producing such a comprehensive study of a service which, prior to its development, probably offered little by way of data to go on. The expertise they demonstrated, particularly in the collection, collation and presentation of the material in Evidence Report 2, was noteworthy.</p> <p>It is obvious from their differing styles and general presentations that different teams worked on the two Evidence Reports. However, each provided adequate databases for the Draft Consultation document.</p> <p>It would be interesting to know who are the authors of the Plan, but probably West Berks Council protocols do not allow it.</p> <p>Our comment on the objectives</p>	<p>The PROW team is active in applying for capital funding for improvement projects.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>The objectives are published in the appendix to Evidence Report 2. There is little to criticise in the objectives themselves, although whether all of them can be achieved must be open to doubt. The first four (increasing physical activity, improving quality of life and health and encouraging active travel) accord with what may be expected of a benign government, and if achieved would offer immense social benefit. Likewise for improving the environment and green infrastructure.</p> <p>However, it is difficult to see how action resulting from the Plan might have a significant effect in mitigating climate change.</p> <p>Overall the objectives are laudable, even though two of them are more visionary than practicable</p> <p>Our analysis of the methodology</p> <p>The methodology emerges from the two Evidence Reports which form the core of the Improvement Plan. Evidence Report 1 deals with the network and user needs. It uses the same survey method as Evidence Report 2, but its presentation is slightly less engaging.</p> <p>Although the material is unmistakably aimed at identifying and assessing the issues of network and need the presentation creates some confusion. Apart from the opening pages all that follows is incorrectly labelled "Evidence Report 2.". This suggests that further proof reading is required</p> <p>This is disappointing, since much of the content is informative, providing a database, much of which will guide the Authority in the pursuit of the improvements.</p> <p>Some of the statistics used for analysis could have been more up to date. For example, the Ward population figures in Table 2 could have been drawn from the 2021 census report, instead of relying on 2020 estimates.</p> <p>There are many points to commend in the Report, nevertheless. It is well furnished with maps, tables and charts.</p> <p>Most of the detail on methodology is found in Evidence Report 2, where public and stakeholder surveys are the predominant, if not the only vehicle of data collection.</p>	<p>Will be changed.</p> <p>The 2021 Census was not available at the time of writing.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>Respondents to the survey questions are self- selected members of the public and stakeholders. Whether the former constitute a representative group is probably not as important as achieving a large body of opinion offered by well-informed people. Thus the question arises as to whether the sample sizes are large enough. This thought must have occurred to the researcher who set up the 95% confidence interval to achieve a statistical test of significance.</p> <p>However the fact that this was the only sample response in the public survey where the test was used to support the result could indicate that the team did not feel completely confident in the reliability of the other results.</p> <p>One response that comes through clearly from the surveys is the claim of information deficit with respect to public sector rights of way.</p> <p>As a council we do not agree with this contention. West Berkshire Council provides wide coverage regarding PROWs, both online and in their literature. A number of parish councils also post maps of their local rights of way in public places One has to conclude that much of it is not read.</p> <p>We offer the suggestion therefore that West Berks consider holding one or more focus groups to debate the question of how the existing fund of information might be directed into the public domain more effectively without incurring sizable expenditure increases.</p> <p>The interaction of ideas and views in a focus group often reveal new courses of action. Syntectics (lateral thinking) sessions in particular, where all prejudgments are suspended, have been shown to deliver innovative results. These sessions have been used by central government institutions, companies and universities to help solve hitherto intractable problems.</p> <p>Zoom obviously provides the means of holding such sessions. Membership requires not only diverse experience among participants, but also sound knowledge of PROW issues</p> <p>It is possible that West Berks has already tried such schemes, but has not so far revealed them in its plan.</p> <p>Our assessment of the implementation strategy</p>	<p>The team were confident of other results. Incorrect inference.</p> <p>West Berkshire Council does not believe there is an information deficit; there is a lack of awareness of currently provided by West Berkshire Council. Incorrect inference. West Berkshire Council, however, does not wish to increase the provision of information itself and is not in a position to actively guide the public to resources. The actions in the ROWIP will improve the information provided by WBC through improvements to the online map, 'pop-up' information and signposting to other high-quality resources.</p> <p>There is often wide ranging discussion at the Local Access Forum, which can be seen as such a focus group. The LAF wishes to make its work more widely known amongst parish councils.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>The implementation strategy appears extremely ambitious. Pages 28-33 of the draft consultation document offer a broad insight into the issues to be addressed. Work on a number of these has been underway for some time and is still in progress. Much of this could not be achieved without a major contribution from the various volunteer groups. These have achieved much already, For instance, the work of the Volunteer Maintenance Group in replacing 200 stiles is particularly impressive, but It might be questioned whether their replacement is consistent with the intention to make the walking experience more comfortable for the physically disabled. Stiles are a particular bugbear for these users The work of other voluntary groups is also acknowledged.</p> <p>The question of how the Plan is to be delivered is discussed in Section 6, which speaks of effective delivery requiring the identification of priorities. This need therefore becomes the first of the action points</p> <p>These action points pick up the issues raised in the responses to the survey questions. They deal with a very wide range of issues and imply a heavy workload descending on those incurring the responsibility of managing the improvements. Unsurprisingly this leads to the expectation that much of the work of maintenance and innovation will be devolved onto partners, prominent among whom are the parish councils. There is no mention of any consideration for this.</p> <p>We support the intention to work for more active travel to be highly desirable. It will necessitate the closure of gaps in the network which can give rise to difficult negotiations to acquire new rights over land. The hope is that the outcome of this will be to get more cars off the road and more bikes of various types replacing them in what the Plan calls 'utility' use, namely journeys to work.</p> <p>With regard to references, we have checked a number of those cited, - approximately every tenth one, - for relevance and what endorsement they provide for the authority's proposals, We found some bordered on the irrelevant, others were quite helpful. An example of the latter was the reference to the Ridgeway, which discussed the legal entitlement to use it by different groups of user.</p> <p>A reading of all the fifty four action points showed that all the issues of primary concern raised in the survey reports in some measure by the proposed remedial action</p> <p>Tidying up</p>	<p>The ROWIP does advocate the need to work more closely with partners in order to realise some of the objectives.</p> <p>It is an incorrect inference to assume that maintenance work will be devolved to parish councils. The resourcing of the ROWIP is to be determined by WBC. It is acknowledged that the ROWIP is wide-ranging and ambitious in its scope and that not all actions will be able to be funded from the outset. The ROWIP itself should help to unlock additional funding.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>What next?</p> <p>There is little or nothing in the consultation document on how the progress of the Plan is to be monitored and, more importantly, how its success (or failings) are to be measured.</p> <p>For the latter a comparison of photographs of, for example, footpath surfaces as at present could be compared with those at points in time after improvements have taken place. The photograph of the surface ruts in Section 3.3 Maintaining the PROW Network may be a starting point for a surface condition comparison.</p>	<p>The Delivery Plan will provide further detail and progress towards actions will be reported to the Local Access Forum.</p>
X009	<p>COMMENTS FOR LAF on the W BERKSHIRE ROWIP FOR THE CONSULTATION JB comments in red.</p> <p>1. Policy on Access Land and Common Land (comment on para 7 of the section headed Publicly Accessible Greenspaces on ROWIP p 15, ie in Section 2.2)</p> <p>We request that WBC adds a sentence here to this effect: 'We will endeavour to ensure that greater transparency and clarity is given to Access land and Common Land and means of access to these types of land, on the West Berkshire Online Map and elsewhere'.</p> <p>I endorse this but is this an action for the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy? A decision seems to have been made some time ago to produce a rights of way plan and not a full countryside access plan as done by some other local authorities.</p> <p>I have been trying to get BBOWT to state on its website that there is equestrian access to the 1899 Commons in West Berks but to no avail. I do not know whether that is because they do not accept the legal position or that they cannot alter their website. I support some clarity.</p> <p>Queries on looking at WBC online map:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is any CROW access land shown apart from commons? Have we got any in West Berks? How does the WBC online map compare to Defra's MAGIC map? - The little information given for each common on the online map is of no use to the public. Where does the public get knowledge about what access is allowed to all the land shown as common land on the online map? A lot of 'pink' land is shown. There is a lack of clarity on cycling and equestrian access to commons and access 	<p>The CROW Act dataset from Natural England will show all access land, which includes accessible common land.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does WBC have a register of all the land the public has access to and how does the public know about this land? <p>2. Policy on Diversions of footpaths (comment on para 3 of Making Changes to the Network on ROWIP p 40 in Section 4.5)</p> <p>In view of the new DEFRA Guidance on RoW diversions dated August 2023, we request new wording here: 'the Council will ensure, in the event of a diversion/extinguishment of an RoW, that there is no reduction in the standard of accessibility and infrastructure currently available, ie no replacement by a less well-suited route, such as a public road'. This should replace the current wording in the ROWIP, which reads: 'the highest standard of accessibility and of infrastructure appropriate to the location'.</p> <p>Agree with a change of wording here. What does accessibility mean?</p> <p>But suggest using 'commodious' as I believe that is a word used in reference to rights of way</p> <p>'the Council will ensure, in the event of a diversion/extinguishment of an RoW, that the new provision is not less commodious for the user groups lawfully entitled to use the ROW, for example, replacement by a less well-suited route, such as a public road or unsuitable farm track'</p> <p>3. On specific Actions (these are perhaps rather too much the overwhelming focus of this Consultation):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Action No 1 on p 37 of ROWIP needs to be much more specific and should involve LAF and include more regular updating and monitoring of priorities for maintenance and unresolved issues. <p>This is section 3.7</p> <p>I can't recall what the current policy is on maintenance priorities is so I don't know how well it is working. I thought there was one for maintenance based on severity of the problem.</p>	<p>The CROW Act dataset from Natural England will show all access land, which includes accessible common land.</p> <p>See also X022.</p> <p>The suggested change is too specific and limits case-by-case judgement. The tests for PROW modifications are included in legislation elsewhere. No change.</p> <p>The tests for PROW modifications are included in legislation elsewhere. Accessibility is specifically included to increase access for less mobile or otherwise disabled people. The word is well-recognised in this context and commodious does not have the same meaning. No change.</p> <p><i>Action 1: Develop a new policy approach for prioritising public rights of way maintenance and improvement projects, based on the needs identified in this ROWIP. Include 1 to 3 year specific targets for dealing with structures identified as unsatisfactory in the 2022 survey.</i></p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>ii) Action No 27 on p 42 of the ROWIP</p> <p>In view of the possibility that the deadline for recovering lost paths, etc may be extended only to 2026, not 2030, the priorities here should be reassessed, as follows: 'Ensure that there are adequate resources to deal with increased demands for RoW modifications of all sorts in view of the potential 2026 deadline - and consolidate the Definite Map and Statement by 2030'.</p> <p>This should replace the current wording: 'Consolidate the definitive map and statement by 2030 and ensure adequate resources to deal with the increased demands of new legislation.</p> <p>I understand that 2030/31 is now in law. I can't see a problem with the existing wording</p>	<p>The LAF receives regular reports on maintenance in any case. It is normal to consult the LAF on new draft policy.</p> <p>Noted. Consultee concurs with exiting wording.</p>
X010	<p>WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL Environment, ITS and Sustainable Travel Team Response to PROW team on detail points in draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan Rev 1 (complements our online survey response) Last updated: 07 November 2023</p> <p>This follows the invite to respond to the <u>survey</u> on the <u>draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)</u>.</p> <p>Our team has responded to the online survey, but are also forwarding these suggestions on the document for PROW colleagues' consideration.</p> <p>Our team welcomes the ability to continue very positive work alongside Countryside team colleagues, given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increasing emphasis on active travel nationally and locally, also reflected in Priority 3 within the new Council Strategy 2023-27 • The importance of maintaining and improving links between on-Highway paths and Public Rights of Way (PROWs); and • The opportunity to develop, over time and as funding and stakeholder engagement allow, new routes connecting urban and rural areas and enabling circular walks or rides, exemplified by the Eling Way and the established Wasing Way which part-use 	<p>Noted.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>Page 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest highlighting up front that the ROWIP is an aspirational document – could adjust paragraph above the pie chart to “This ROWIP is an aspirational document. It is based on extensive engagement with stakeholders and the public, coupled with a thorough review of evidence.” <p>Page 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could benefit from a high-level map showing the general location of the two regions (Downlands and Rural versus Kennet Valley East. Consider moving Plan 3 from Page 25 to, or have a copy of it here in, the Executive Summary Important that the ROWIP, in common with the LCWIP, highlights the barriers created by major roads and the issues associated with traffic <p>Page 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest rephrase to: “The ROWIP is informed by...” <p>Page 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it realistic (given the resource situation and PROW team’s necessary emphasis on maintaining routes for pedestrian use above all) to commit to updating the Delivery Plan at least every two years? <p>Page 15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good that the ROWIP acknowledges the problems with lack of connectivity between PROWs in the specific areas , exacerbated by busy roads that cause severance. In addition to M4, A4 and A34, it is worth citing that the A339 and B4009 pose particular issues Amend to read “All of the towpath is a public footpath” and have the reference to “National Cycle Network route 4 (NCN4)” <p>Page 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worth referring to WBC’s aspiration to connect a potential future northern extension of the Eling Way between Compton and Didcot in to The Ridgeway at a crossing point for the two paths, north of Compton. This could connect a proposed strategic north-south multi-user path with a historic, better-known east-west walking route <p>Page 17</p>	<p>Will be changed.</p> <p>Noted, will add.</p> <p>Connectivity is addressed in the actions</p> <p>Will be corrected.</p> <p>The Delivery Plan progress will be reported to the Local Access Forum and Portfolio regularly, to enable an ongoing review</p> <p>See also comment 6 which suggests additional road to be listed as barriers. Will be added.</p> <p>Will amend.</p> <p>Will add.</p> <p>Will add</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under Active Travel heading: add in wheeling after walking and before cycling, and say “encourage people to walk, wheel or cycle” Opportunity here again to highlight issues with connectivity between routes that are suitable for cycling and wheeling as well as walking <p>Page 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From discussions at Active Travel Group, we understand the intention is for Transport Policy team to update the Active Travel Strategy in conjunction with LTP4 Paragraph relating to Eling Way: replace “extent” with “extend” <p>Page 23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend to “In a 2021 survey...” <p>Page 28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The headings ‘Sign Road’ and ‘Sign not Road’ in Table 3 and Chart 1 could do with explanation <p>Page 30 (and Action 7 on page 33)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it realistic to add destinations to fingerposts? Will these actually be maintained/updated on top of other tasks? <p>Page 31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider providing a weblink as well as a footnote to the list of seasonally-closed Byways 	<p>Will amend</p> <p>Should be in the 2021 survey. Will be corrected.</p> <p>Action states destinations will be added where there are sufficient resources to do so. These will be prioritised on the basis of need. See also comment 117. New adhesive additions to signs may help to do this easily <i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme ‘Looking after the Network’. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p> <p>Will add.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>Page 33</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend Action 10 to read “Work with the Council’s Highways Network Management and Highways Maintenance teams to develop guidance for design, surfacing and ongoing maintenance of multi-user paths where these also use or connect into the public Highway” <p>Page 37</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 4.3, consider stating that there are plans to extend the Eling Way through Hermitage (construction 2024/25 subject to landowners and Planning consent) and aspirations to extend it further south towards Newbury, with Feasibility work underway Also consider citing the Wasing Way (Aldermaston Wharf to Aldermaston village) in which PROW have a key stake <p>Page 38</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equestrians: can the British Horse Society representative on the LAF assist PROW team with the location of demand for riding facilities? Worth reiterating in this part of the document that at present, PROW’s emphasis also given resources is on maintaining routes for walkers <p>Page 40</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 4.5: consider providing a weblink to the maps in addition to a footnote <p>Page 46</p>	<p>Will amend. See also comment 117. <i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme ‘Looking after the Network’. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p> <p>Will amend</p> <p>There will be ongoing liaison with LAF members and the BHS in meeting targets.</p> <p>The BHS members have helped but not all equestrians are BHS members. Wider engagement is needed.</p> <p>This assumption is incorrect – whilst walkers are the highest user group by number, and can use all PROW, the ROWIP does not prioritise a user group above others. No change.</p> <p>Will be added.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could information of types of PROW and routes be downloadable and then routes set up by the user to follow cycle routes on bridleways, etc.? Action 38 on page 48 will be key to delivering this. 	Potential for easy downloads to phones ought to be explored as part of this action.
X011	<p>Thank you for forwarding this, and can I praise the excellent work done by the LAF team on this project.</p> <p>My only, very minor query is in Section 3.1, a typo RORIP?</p>	Will be changed – not in main report? Perhaps in an evidence report.
X012	<p>ROWIP CONSULTATION – NOVEMBER 2023.</p> <p>1) General comments</p> <p>This ROWIP is an impressive document with respect to its format and the amount of research on which it is based. It is a big step up from the first ROWIP which, although thorough, was not produced as a professionally set-out document. The new ROWIP is now on a par with other council policy documents which is to be welcomed.</p> <p>However, as is pointed out on page 7 and in section 6, the ROWIP is an aspirational document and the mechanisms and the funding to achieve improvements to the path network are limited. This is a major failure of ROWIPs in general.</p> <p>Note: have we had a report on the achievements of the first ROWIP?</p> <p>During the period of the first ROWIP, significant improvements to furniture were achieved by working with volunteers but little was achieved in the way of new routes. The bridleway in front of Hilliers in Hermitage (pictured twice in the draft) was achieved through planning gain before the first ROWIP was published but is not recorded on the definitive map. A footpath in Streatley also achieved through planning gain still has not been set out on the ground over 15 years after permission was given. An attempt to create a link path to Snelmore Common on publicly accessible land and identified through the Chieveley parish plan, has not been achieved. The most notable achievement during the period of the first ROWIP in achieving new access, the Eling Way, was not a direct result of the first ROWIP but through a project led by the Council's Highways dept. It is noted that the ROWIP makes reference to working with other departments and this may be the way ahead but the LAF is cautious about making existing rights of way more suitable for one user group over another.</p> <p>2) there are a lot of actions: are all of these feasible?</p>	<p>This is not the official response of the MWBLAF.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Progress reports on the previous ROWIP were presented to the LAF prior to embarking on the current review. The final report made is available on request.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that creation of new access as a stand-alone project has been beyond the staff resourcing of the PROW team. There have however been new links created as part of the Definitive Map review, planning, and diversion proposals.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that working with partners will be a key part of delivery.</p> <p>An action has been updated to reflect this.</p> <p>Noted. Additional resources will need to be sought.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>3) Section 5.6 Is there an Action for creation of additional accessible /easy access / disabled routes? Presumably this means making existing PROW accessible, not creating new routes.</p> <p>4) Section 6.6 / Action 47: Delivery plans every 2 years: the LAF looks forward to working with the Council on these.</p> <p>Typos Page 14: NCN not NC Page 20: ' missing in 'Quality of life'</p>	<p>Action 33 specifically, but actions 31 – 36 also contribute.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Will amend.</p>
X013	<p>As per my email sent this am, please find attached a PDF version of the PROWIP draft document containing the comments from the Environment Delivery Team.</p> <p>In terms of our comments, it would be really good to meet at your convenience to go through them and look at any other climate change / ecological / biodiversity comments you might receive as part of the consultation. We could help you respond to those / make amendments if that would be helpful? There might be more that comes out of a conversation in terms of other links and changes which could be helpful.</p> <p>Also, if Transport Policy haven't had time to respond today then we could link in any comments in a meeting. However, we know you are very good on active travel and the links with the Local Transport Plan. The parts of the draft plan on active travel that we read looked good.</p> <p>Annotated draft ROWIP report Attached</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Changes to be made Adding the environment p4 Adding blue infrastructure throughout Wildlife corridors p6 Action 11 amended to include longevity Add Climate Change Service to action 15 Add Environment Strategy to Action 45 Climate and ecological emergency added Add user awareness of habitats and pressures Add re. Biodiversity Net Gain Legislation</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
		<p><i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme 'Looking after the Network'. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p>
X014	<p>Official LAF Response</p> <p>MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM West Berkshire Council Draft Right of Way Improvement Plan Comments by Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum</p> <p>1 Introduction</p> <p>The Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum has welcomed the engagement by West Berkshire Council and its consultant during the gathering of evidence and the development of the draft ROWIP, and we now welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft ROWIP. The timing of the consultation did not align with meetings of the Forum, so these comments have been agreed by email rather than a formal meeting. They therefore do not constitute formal advice, and are submitted by the Chair of the Forum on its behalf. However, we hope that West Berkshire Council will consider them in the spirit of formal advice.</p> <p>The Forum congratulates the Council on the format and presentation of the ROWIP and the extent of the research on which it is based; this is now on a par with other council policy documents, which is to be welcomed. However, as is pointed out on page 7 and in section 6, the ROWIP is an aspirational document and the resources and funding to achieve improvements to the path network are limited. Therefore, an important function of the ROWIP is to provide a basis for the Council to make applications in the future to relevant grant schemes, to seek partnerships and sponsorships, and to respond to planning applications.</p>	

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>During the period of the first ROWIP, significant improvements have been made to infrastructure by working with volunteers, but little has achieved in terms of new public rights of way on the ground. Most proposed new routes have been only for permissive use, and many of the aspirational routes identified in the first ROWIP have not been achieved. The 'flagship' new route in West Berkshire is the Eling Way, but this was delivered as a Highways project rather than through the ROWIP. Streatley Footpath 21 is not yet navigable, despite having been created through a Section 106 agreement for planning approval and being shown on the definitive map for more than a decade. We therefore suggest that the Council undertakes a review of the achievements of the first ROWIP, with input from the Forum, to inform the Delivery Plans for this one.</p> <p>We make a number of comments and suggestions for specific modifications to the ROWIP document in the following sections.</p> <p>We would also make two general comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very few of the actions have measurable targets, especially ones that can be measured at intervals during the period of the ROWIP (rather than only at the end). We hope that, even at this late stage, some more SMART objectives can be added (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound). - To residents engaging in open-air recreation, the network of rights of way, access land, permissive paths, commons and other open spaces form one 'package' of access to the countryside, and the statutory scope of the ROWIP is therefore artificial. <p>We wish to express our full support for the document as a whole. We believe that it is ready for final approval, hopefully incorporating the comments that we have suggested. Simon Pike, Chair of Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum 22nd November 2023</p> <p><i>NOTE: proposals for modifications to the ROWIP document are underlined for additions and struck through for deletions.</i></p>	<p>The specific cases of Streatley Footpath 21 and the Snelsmore Bridleway link will be added to the new Delivery Plan.</p> <p>SMART objectives will be applied to the Delivery Plan for actions in the ROWIP. No change.</p> <p>The ROWIP references public rights of way in the wider provision of accessible spaces. It was not, however, intended to be a 'Countryside Access Plan'.. The forthcoming Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will also include the wider access network. No change.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>2 Accessibility</p> <p>2.1 Needs for different types of disability</p> <p>Section 60 of CROW refers separately to “blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems”. While there is substantial overlap between the needs for different types of disability, some needs are distinct – for example waymarking for people with visual impairments, and handrails on steps would assist people with visual impairments and mobility problems when walking, but would not assist users of mobility vehicles. While Action 36 states “Work with partners to increase understanding of the needs of users with health needs and physical, visual, neurological and other disabilities and to develop access improvement projects and information provision”, the draft ROWIP seems to conflate physical disability and visual impairment – all of the descriptive text in the document relates to physical obstructions.</p> <p>While Action 36 is welcome, it is a pity that this work was not carried during the development of the ROWIP, so that the ROWIP could include specific and tangible actions for all types of disability.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: The ROWIP should distinguish between the needs of blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems in appropriate places, using the wording of Section 60 of CROW.</p> <p>2.2 Target for Accessible Routes</p> <p>Action 26 says “Aim to create / publicise 10 new accessible routes in the course of this Rights of Way Improvement Plan.” – i.e. only one per year, or perhaps none until the final years of the ROWIP. The work required to make a route accessible can vary from a single handrail or BS5709-compliant gate to an extended length of hard surface, suitable for mobility vehicles. This Action needs to be ambitious, because it could be used to justify grant applications, and we feel that one a year is not ambitious enough. The ‘slash’ in the sentence is ambiguous; we assume that it is intended to mean ‘and’, but it could also mean ‘or’.</p>	<p>Extensive consultation was carried out with users with disabilities, including interviews with persons with visual impairments. However, learning does not end with the production of the ROWIP and Action 36 references the need for this continued need for improving understanding to meet needs of these users. The needs of people with disabilities varies greatly even within a ‘type’ of disability, e.g. visual impairment, and therefore it is not possible to separately list improvements for those with visual impairments and those for people with other disabilities. This is an artificial distinction as many of the issues faced are similar. The ROWIP is more inclusive in language and scope in encompassing a range of mobility and other impairments, reflecting understand in 2023 vs. that when the CROW Act was written in the late 1990s. No change.</p> <p><i>Action 26 - Use rights of way condition surveys to identify public rights of way with no restrictions for those with mobility impairments or with buggies and to prioritise areas for improving the network and reducing restrictions to access for these users, maximising cost-benefit. Aim to create / publicise 10 new accessible routes in the course of this Rights of Way Improvement Plan.</i></p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>PROPOSAL: Replace the final sentence of Action 26 to: <u>Aim to create and publicise five new accessible routes per year, at least one of which should be of the scale of a capital project.</u></p> <p>2.3 Improvements to Infrastructure to enhance accessibility</p> <p>Actions 33 and 34 give targets of ten and five per year for different types of improvement of infrastructure. However, the ROWIP does not say how many of each type need improving – and therefore how long these actions will take to complete.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Either the targets should be modified to be the completion within the timeframe of this ROWIP of all the improvements of particular types, or the total number of each type of infrastructure requiring improvement should be added to the body of the ROWIP.</p> <p>3 Scope of the ROWIP</p> <p>3.1 Green and Blue Infrastructure</p> <p>The Forum believes that Greenham and Crookham Commons and the commons of West Berkshire form an integral part of the network of local rights of way either as destinations themselves or as public open spaces that that connect gaps in the rights of way network. Section 60 of CROW specifies several ‘matters’ that a ROWIP must contain, but a ROWIP need not be limited only to those matters. We are therefore very disappointed that the commons are not addressed within the draft ROWIP, but are instead promised for inclusion in a ‘Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy’, to be produced at some unspecified</p>	<p>This target is possibly beyond the resources of WBC but an achievable target will appear in the Delivery Plan.</p> <p><i>Action 33 - Continue to remove stiles, barriers and restrictive infrastructure and replace with gaps, gates or kissing gates. Support communities and user groups to achieve this aim. Aim for at least 10 per year.</i></p> <p><i>Action 34 - Upgrade existing structures, such as bridges and steps, to ensure maximum accessibility, for example providing handrails. Prioritise these improvements along busy routes and those close to urban areas, as identified in Action 31. Target of 5 per year.</i></p> <p>Whilst the condition survey has highlighted furniture or other aspects which reduce accessibility, further investigation is needed to determine the feasibility of rectifying these in each case. Therefore the scale of the task, and the resources required, has not been quantified. This, along with the uncertainty of the budgets available, make it impossible to commit to the targets suggested Targets will be moved into the Delivery Plan –</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>time in the future.</p> <p>The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is described in the Council's Local Development Scheme :</p> <p><i>"The Council is also intending to produce 3 Supplementary Planning documents to augment the policy framework proposed within the Local Plan Review to provide additional guidance. This [SIC] are topic specific SPDs:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Net Zero Carbon SPD</i> - <i>Nutrient Neutrality and mitigation SPD</i> - <i>Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (GBI) SPD</i> <p><i>The above 3 SPDs are already work in progress through existing evidence base work with the GBI and Net Zero Carbon SPDs being undertaken by the Environment Team."</i></p> <p>In the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) , supplementary planning documents are defined as follows:</p> <p><i>"Supplementary planning documents: Documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan."</i></p> <p>Therefore, the scope of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is defined by its status as a Supplementary Planning Document in the Local Development scheme (which is part of the draft Local Plan that the Council has already submitted to the Secretary of State) and by the NPPF. Its scope is determined by the statutory basis under which it is prepared, and it may therefore not in law be capable of fulfilling the function that is suggested in the draft ROWIP. The Government has also announced its intention that Supplementary Planning Documents will be replaced by a Supplementary Plan by December 2027.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: We therefore urge West Berkshire Council to address Commons and relevant open spaces in the ROWIP.</p> <p>3.2 Permissive paths</p>	<p>It will be made clear in the Delivery Plan under Action 20 that the wider access network will be included where appropriate.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>The Eling Way is a major achievement of the Council in providing a new permissive route that is accessible to a wide range of users (including walkers, cyclists of all ages, horse riders and users of mobility vehicles). It is mentioned twice in the draft ROWIP, with a photo. Permissive paths play a valuable role in enhancing the connectivity of the rights of way network, including two sections of the Lambourn Valley Way. Some of these permissive paths are marked by West Berkshire Council finger posts.</p> <p>Landowners are often reluctant to dedicate new public rights of way, but may be more willing to offer permissive access. Permissive paths and bridleways are therefore likely to play a significant role in delivering the objective in Section 60 of CROW “<i>for securing an improved network of local rights of way</i>”.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Action 21 is strengthened: Be open to Support the use of permissive access as a means of achieving network improvements when it is not possible to dedicate a public right of way.</p> <p>4 Involvement of Local Access Forum</p> <p>We welcome the statements on page 51 on strategy, policy and delivery plans in relation to the implementation of the ROWIP. These are effectively actions, so should be given an Action under ‘Effective Delivery’ on the following page. We will appreciate receiving progress reports, but the frequency should be stated.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Add the following Action to the section on ‘Effective Delivery’: Provide annual reports to the Forum on the current Delivery Plan and the progress towards achieving the Actions in the ROWIP, and seek its advice on strategy, policy and the formulation of new Delivery Plans.</p> <p>5 Government guidance on diversion or extinguishment of public rights of way</p> <p>We expect that West Berkshire Council will follow this new guidance without it needing to be stated in the ROWIP. However, including a specific mention in the ROWIP will give confidence to householders and landowners that this is the case.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Add the following to Action 29: Action 29: Consider all applications for definitive map modification orders, including for the recording of unrecorded or under-recorded Rights of Way, and determine these in line with</p>	<p>Permissive paths, although agreed that they can form a useful component of the access network, are outside the scope of the ROWIP as they are outside of the control of the Public Rights of Way Service.. They are referenced in the ROWIP as context re. the wider access resource in the same way as publicly accessible greenspace. No change.</p> <p>This will be added.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>transparent criteria, annual Case Programmes and statutory timescales, <u>having regard to relevant Government guidance.</u></p> <p>PROPOSAL: Add the following paragraph to the section headed 'Making Changes to the Network':</p> <p><u>In August 2023, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published 'Government guidance on diversion or extinguishment of public rights of way that pass through private dwellings, their curtilages and gardens, farmyards and industrial or commercial premises'. It sets out how local authorities should respond when considering diverting or extinguishing public rights of way or when considering making a 'modification consent order' under section 54B of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981[add endnote link to the references section].</u></p> <p>PROPOSAL: Add a reference to this guidance in the References section:</p> <p><u>Government guidance on diversion or extinguishment of public rights of way that pass through private dwellings, their curtilages and gardens, farmyards and industrial or commercial premises; DEFRA, August 2023: [add link to gov.uk website if available]</u></p> <p>It is also important to give confidence to users of PROW. We therefore propose adding text to Section 4.5:</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Modify Section 4.5 as follows:</p> <p>Each new path or diversion needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The council will seek the highest standard of accessibility <u>(including having sufficient width)</u> and of infrastructure appropriate to the location and will <u>not accept any reduction in the standard. Gates and gaps</u> should conform to British Standard BS5709: 201841 <u>(stiles should not be used on new routes or diversions unless totally unavoidable)</u>. Diversions must be as convenient as the previous route <u>and not be less suitable (such as diversion onto a public road or unsuitable private access track).</u></p> <p>6 Cut-off date for recording of Rights of Way</p>	<p>This will be added.</p> <p>Text has been amended to include this</p> <p>Action 29 and 30 have been amended</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>As the Government has recently enacted legislation that defines a cut-off date of 1st January 2031 for recording of public rights of way based on historic evidence, some consequential changes may be needed to the related sections of the draft ROWIP. It should be an objective of the Delivery Plans to ensure the recording before the cut-off date of all applications made in due time, and to provide the resources to achieve this.</p> <p>7 Public Path Orders</p> <p>There is only one mention of Public Path Orders in the draft ROWIP- and none in an Action.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: There should be an explicit mention of the Councils responsibilities, case programme and targets for Public Path Orders in an Action, either by an addition to Action 29 or a new Action.</p> <p>8 West Berks Online Map: Access and Common Land and Permissive paths</p> <p>While Commons are shown on the West Berkshire online map (and Greenham and Crookham Commons are shown as a specific layer), there is no information on the rights of access to these areas. Access Land is shown on the background 1:25,000 map, and this is lost when you 'zoom in' to a smaller area.</p> <p>The Eling Way is an important means of access to the countryside in West Berkshire. It was built using a substantial Government grant, but is only a permissive route. There are quite a few other permissive paths that have West Berkshire finger posts, and therefore must be recognised in some way by the Council, but these are not shown on the west Berkshire online map or on the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Add the following text in Section 2.2:</p> <p><u>We will endeavour to give greater clarity on the West Berkshire Online Map and elsewhere to Common Land, Access land and Permissive paths, and the rights of access to them.</u></p> <p>PROPOSAL: Request the Ordnance Survey to add permissive footpaths and bridleways to its 1:25000 maps covering West Berkshire, where these are subject to long-term agreements or on Council owned land.</p>	<p>Action 38 has been updated to include wider forms of access.</p> <p>Contacting the OS about a national matter is more an action for the LAF itself.</p> <p>This will be rectified on the online map.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>9 Promotion of routes</p> <p>The way that the public find routes for outdoor recreation is changing, with an increasing proportion using specialist websites rather than purchased paper maps and guidebooks. Some of these websites provide both printable route descriptions (some with full Ordnance Survey 1:25000 mapping) and a smartphone app (with a marker on the map showing the current location). These websites/apps include Ordnance Survey, Visorando, Alltrails, Komoot and Slow Ways.</p> <p>Several Actions in the draft ROWIP relate to promotion of walking, cycling and horse-riding routes: Actions 13, 18, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41 and 42.</p> <p>Action 38 appears to suggest that West Berkshire Council will develop a feature on its own website to suggest routes to all types of user. It is important that 'definitive' information about the rights of way network is available on its website, but we believe that promotion of outdoor recreation and recommendation of routes to the general public will be more effective through the nationwide websites and apps, which are already known to the public and have a wide range of features that would be expensive to replicate on a bespoke system for West Berkshire .</p> <p>PROPOSAL: We suggest adding the following paragraph (there are several possible locations, as indicated by the number of related actions):</p> <p><u>The way that the public find routes for outdoor recreation is changing, with an increasing proportion using specialist websites rather than purchased paper maps and guidebooks. Some of these websites provide both printable route descriptions (some with full Ordnance Survey 1:25000 mapping) and a smartphone app (with a marker on the map showing the current location). When seeking to promote routes to the general public, we will use the method that is most likely to have 'reach' to the target audience.</u></p> <p>10 References</p> <p>Many of the references consist only of a web link. These change frequently, due to restructuring of websites or revision of documents. The ROWIP has a 'life' of more than ten years, and the references need to be identifiable for this duration.</p>	<p>Change agreed.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>A precis of this will be added.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Will be added if known. Some direct only to webpages. Action 52 updated.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>PROPOSAL: All of the references should include the title, author/publisher and date of publication (if known), as is already the case for references without a web link.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Include in the list of references - Rights of Way Circular (1/09) - Guidance for Local Authorities; DEFRA, October 2009.</p> <p>11 Duplication of Actions relating to Parish and Town Councils</p> <p>Action 53 on developing partnerships with parish and town councils almost completely duplicates Action 5.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: These two Actions should be merged, and the resulting Action located in whichever section is more appropriate.</p> <p>12 Volunteer support and grant funding</p> <p>On page 50, the ROWIP says “Ways in which volunteer involvement could be increased will be explored during the lifetime of this Rights of Way Improvement Plan.” We suggest that this should be ‘front-loaded’ to the beginning of the period of the ROWIP, because the volunteer involvement will then increase the capacity to deliver improvements.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Modify the sentence to say “Ways in which volunteer involvement could be increased will be explored during throughout the lifetime of this Rights of Way Improvement Plan.”</p> <p>Some major projects are likely to rely on external grant funding, as was the case for the Eling Way, or commercial sponsorship.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: add these aspects to the role of Volunteer Support Officer: “Seek a Volunteer Support Officer to expand volunteering and community action, <u>and to seek external grant funding and commercial sponsorship.</u>”</p> <p>13 Prioritisation of Actions</p> <p>The draft ROWIP contains a large number of Actions, and it is difficult to tell which are most important. We envisage that the detailed prioritization will be done through the Delivery Plans. However, the Actions fall into different categories that inherently have</p>	<p>Not necessary to include such background items, of which there are many, in the ROWIP.</p> <p>Will be amended as per previous comment.</p> <p><i>[NB there has been a change in the numbering of actions in the final ROWIP, all in the theme ‘Looking after the Network’. The original Action 5 has been removed. Subsequent numbering has been altered – original Action 6 becomes 5, Action 7 becomes 6, Action 8 becomes 7, Action 9 becomes 8, Action 10 becomes 9, Action 11 becomes 10, Action 12 becomes 11, Action 13 becomes 12 and Action 14 becomes 13. A new Action 14 has been added. All subsequent numbering remains unchanged]</i></p> <p>It is accepted that external funding will be needed to deliver some aspects of the ROWIP, but this may not be carried out by the Volunteer Support Officer. The skill set of such an officer may not be the same as a fundraising officer and the addition of this text would be too limiting. No change. A comment has been added to the Delivery Plan.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>differing priorities – and it would be helpful if these could be indicated in the plan.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Define different categories of Action, and assign a category to each action (with a new column in the table?), for example: 'statutory requirement', 'repair', 'maintenance' and 'improvement' and 'enhancement of network'.</p> <p>14 Cycle Tracks</p> <p>The definition of "local rights of way" in Section 60(5) of CROW includes cycle tracks, and cycle tracks therefore fall within the scope of a ROWIP. However, there is no mention of cycle track within the draft ROWIP.</p> <p>For example, PROW THAT/8/1 and THAT/8/4 appear to be cycle tracks, because they have traffic signs for 'Route for pedal cycles and pedestrians only' (Diagram 956 in Chapter 3 of the Traffic Signs Manual), although they also have barriers that obstruct access by certain types of cycle. There may well be similar rights of way elsewhere in the district.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: The ROWIP should include references to 'cycle tracks' and an indication of their number in West Berkshire.</p>	<p>Cycle tracks are part of an overall access picture which is well referenced in the ROWIP.</p>
X015	<p>This is an area that is new to us.</p> <p>The plan has not defined BBOWT's relationship with WBC nor identified that they are responsible for the Commons which automatically excludes these from the ROWIP. An omission from the ROWIP because I don't think Sharon is aware of this relationship.</p> <p>Helena and I work closely with BBOWT who are always helpful. I suggest the RoW team talk to BBOWT with a view to implementing this system on Speen Moor as proposed by Tony Vickers.</p> <p>Should this be an addition to the ROWIP? I think so.</p>	<p>Commons are not included in the ROWIP as common land and wider access, whilst included in the evidence and considered in the identification of needs within the ROWIP, is not an area of implementation for WBC Public Rights of Way. BBOWT sites (including those managed on behalf of WBC) are included in the Evidence Report. No change. Commons are acknowledged as forming part of the wider access picture.</p>
X016	<p>I have seen a copy of the Draft Consultation Document for the 2023 - 2033 Rights of Way Improvement Plan and I wish to express my extreme concern regarding the proposals on page 46 to make it easier for motorised vehicles to find suitable rights of way.</p> <p>In Bucklebury the public rights of way are being progressively destroyed for walkers, particularly in the winter months, due to the frequent use by motorcycles. The current TRO</p>	<p>Noted. WBC has a policy on TROs and use of public rights of way by motorised vehicles. There is also a Bucklebury Common Advisory Committee which addresses the specific issues around Bucklebury. Motorised vehicles have the legal right to use BOATs.. The</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>in place only restrict 3 wheels and above thereby continuing to allow use by motorcycles, the riders having little regard for the delicate state of the paths over which they travelling. Any attempt to make access easier and more accessible to others will only make the fragile environment worse and the only responsible solution is ban all motorised vehicles during the winter months to prevent its ongoing damage.</p> <p>Motorised vehicles on the byways and other rights of way create a hazard for walkers with dogs, walkers with children, horse riders and the wildlife at large as in my experience very few motorised drivers/riders take other users into consideration and it is not unknown for walkers to have to take avoiding action to prevent being injured by such vehicles. Far from make access easier Bucklebury's byways should be made restricted for use only for access to properties of emergency vehicles.</p>	<p>ROWIP states the need for steps to be taken to increase responsible behaviour. No change.</p>
X017	<p>Thank you for asking me to comment upon the West Berkshire ROWIP review. I have experience in the planning of the Greenways scheme in Wokingham, in the creation of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan and a number of years as a representative of cyclists on the Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum, which covers the area of your ROWIP.</p> <p>In addition to this general experience, I have visited a number of areas in West Berkshire through this work, and although I am not widely familiar with the region, I have based my specific comments largely upon a 'desktop study' of an OS map of the area. For this reason, some examples that are sited may not be entirely suitable, but demonstrate an idea, or point that I am making which could be explored and applied more aptly in other places.</p> <p>With regard to the first question posed by the review, it is clear from feedback and experience on the ground that there are competing needs of users already on Rights of Way in this area, and that the pandemic has increased the pressure on these resources. This is evident particularly on the Kennet and Avon Canal walkway where there are complaints of speedy cyclists endangering vulnerable users, and of course cyclists risk dangers from speeding cars where routes cross roadways, which will deter use of the routes unless these issues are addressed.</p> <p>Arterial routes such as the Kennet and Avon Canal could be used to divert cyclists onto more challenging uphill circular tracks, which would be popular with serious cyclists, and would create more space on the Canal route for slower moving traffic. One example already in existence is the Berkshire Circular Route leaving the canal at Enbourne Bridge.</p>	<p>This problem is touched on in the actions.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>This route makes use of existing roads in parts, and perhaps a study could be undertaken to see whether traffic calming on these highway sections might encourage greater cycle use of the circular route? This principle could then be used elsewhere, to relieve pressure on the canal route.</p> <p>Another arterial route in the area where such diversions could be created is the Wayfarers Walk/Mid Wilts Way, where a circular route off is almost already existing via the Test Way. Church Lane, Combe is the only section which appears to use the Highway, and traffic calming of some sort here might be needed for users and welcomed by residents to increase recreational use of the route.</p> <p>The B4000 Roman Road could appeal to serious cyclists if suitable circular routes were promoted for leisure use. Stoney Lane Track and White Shute Track from Lambourn almost link to the Roman Road, but should an improvement (upgrade?) to a short length of track create a suitable link in the area north of Woodland St Mary, the Lambourn Downs would become accessible and appeal to a huge number of Newbury cyclists. To the north the Lambourn Way and the Downland Village Riding Route already exist to cater for horse riders, so it would not seem unfair, and would divert cycle use away from those routes, if other circular routes were offered as recreational routes for cyclists. Perhaps improvements to the existing riding routes could be considered too where needed.</p> <p>The Newbury area benefits from the existence of many excellent areas of Common Land, and the obvious conflict here seems to come between dog walkers and vulnerable elderly users, wheelchair or push chair users and toddlers. However, there is a further conflict, between dog walkers and the environment. In the Wokingham area SANGs have been created to provide residents with areas for dog walking which do not threaten ground nesting birds, and therefore provide a solution to the pressure of development on the Thames Basin SPA. This does not apply to West Berkshire but it would appear from the outside that a similar Policy initiative is required on Common Land areas near to new housing developments. Common Land is not intrinsically wild land, has been managed over centuries as a particular semi-natural/semi-cultivated environment, but increasingly it is being managed by entities with a conservation agenda and rewilding schemes in other areas of the country are being touted for Common Land. This is an issue with implications for areas of high usage where Common Land connects with PROWs, and as the Local Authority is using a conservation organisation to manage this land on their behalf, perhaps a Policy should be devised by the LA which gives clear guidelines to prevent conflicts moving forward, as increased development puts more pressure on resources. The ROWIP</p>	<p>The Delivery Plan makes mention of working more closely with the Transport Policy Team on such problems.</p> <p>The ROWIP has actions to improve education around responsible behaviour.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>cannot solve this problem.</p> <p>Finally, looking at the map, these are but rough ideas for improvements to ROW, but perhaps worth a closer look by an expert:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South of Hungerford, the Inkpen Road area would benefit from routes off using upgraded existing footpaths to link the Kennet and Avon Canal safely to the existing Berkshire Circular Route to the south. • Plantation routes off the B4000 in the Wickham Heath area could be upgraded to provide off road cycle/recreation routes, perhaps owners could be incentivised using benefits from the Agriculture Act? This principle could be extended to landowners of other plantations. • Upgrade existing footpaths in the Georges Wood/Long Copse/Kenton Wood area and link to the Kennet River at Crookham Manor with bridleways. • Upgrade existing footpaths to create a circular route south of Kings Bridge to provide a link from Midgeham Bridge, using the Brenda Parker Way along the southern section. • Upgrade footpaths to bridleways to link the Burnt Bush Lane track with the Berkshire Circular route across Crays Copse, Wynals Copse and Hawkrigge Woods near Frilsham. • Create a circular off-road route south of the M4 in the Horseclose Copse area north of Hungerford Newtown area using the existing byway which crosses the motorway by the Holt. This route could re-cross the M4 by junction 14. • Create an ambitious circular route crossing the M4 twice by upgrading the existing tracks south of the motorway across Winterbourne area via Borough Hill, Wyfiled Copse, Lower Farm Winterbourne Farm and Bussocks Wood to join the Green Lane at Horsemoor, Chieveley. <p>Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information, or if I am not clear, but I do hope that these ideas help. I have tried to answer the three issues that were highlighted in the brief by flagging the benefits of PROW and the need to cater for increased demand, suggesting a Policy measure to resolve conflicts on Common Land areas, and listing ideas for specific improvements and expansions to the existing PROWs.</p>	<p>Ideas noted.</p>
X018	The duplicate para I mentioned is on page 67. Minority Ethnic Groups. Para 1 last 3 lines. I learned a lot!	Will be corrected.
X019	List of Parish Path Leaflets I have made	Noted.

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>I couldn't find a suitable place to add this list, so see below. I would be happy to send you hard copies if they would be of any use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aldworth • Ashampstead • Beenham • Chieveley • Compton • Frilsham • Hampstead Norreys • Hermitage • Yattendon 	<p>We are already in liaison about these publications, which contain useful details on relative ease of use.</p>
X020	<p>WBC Draft ROWIP consultation 2023 Transport Policy Team comments</p> <p>P13 – The definition of BOATs doesn't seem to clearly clarify what these are. Whilst these are a public right of way for all road users, including motorised vehicles, they are mainly used for the purposes that footpaths and bridleways are used. In addition, the surface may not be suitable for use by many motorised vehicles.</p> <p>P16 - The current Local Transport Plan 2011-2026. A new LTP4 is currently being prepared, which will run to 2039 (in line with the expected Local Plan timeframe). It is expected that the new LTP4 will be formally adopted by the Council during 2024.</p> <p>P18 – The Council's Active Travel Strategy is due to be refreshed in 2024. Once this has been adopted, it will become a supporting document for the new Local Transport Plan. (Typo – should extent be extend?).</p> <p>P18 – Eling Way - There may be opportunities to extend the Eling Way both north of Hampstead Norreys and south of Hermitage (towards Newbury). A southern connection to Newbury in particular would help provide a safe active route to connect to many everyday services and facilities (including employment) in the Newbury/Thatcham area, as well as providing a longer recreational active travel route.</p> <p>P38 – "Other routes with public access and unmetalled, unclassified country roads</p>	<p>The definition is adequate and accurate.</p> <p>Forthcoming LTP will be mentioned.</p> <p>Forthcoming Active Travel Strategy will be mentioned. Typo will be corrected.</p> <p>Noted. The ambition for an extension to the Eling Way has been raised in other comments and will be added.</p> <p>Noted and welcomed.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>could also help to connect the public rights of way network". The new Local Transport Plan currently being prepared takes these issues into account, recognising that "vehicle speeds can be intimidating to some users; there may be opportunities across a large rural road network to reduce speeds and / or traffic volumes to provide attractive routes for walking, cycling and horse riding".</p> <p>P51 – Active Travel: "New multiuser routes in new developments will be pursued". Active Travel provision is routinely sought through the development management process both within the development and connecting to areas outside the development area. This could include linkages to the PROW network, where appropriate, to help provide opportunities for sustainable leisure active travel.</p> <p>The provision of new active travel infrastructure being compliant with the Council's emerging Residential Design Guidance and LTN 1/20 (Cycle Infrastructure Design).</p> <p>P51 – Economy and Visitor Economy: "There are also opportunities to enhance the visitor offer in West Berkshire through working with tourism and heritage partners"; This could be extended to link with bus and rail operators to encourage sustainable tourism / visitors to West Berkshire. For instance, walking/active travel could be encouraged from West Berkshire stations as many lie within close distance of the PROW network, K&A towpath or the Thames Path (Pangbourne).</p> <p>P52 – Action 45: This should read as Local Transport Plan. Also need to refer to the Active Travel Strategy.</p>	<p>This potential is mentioned in the Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Noted and welcomed.</p> <p>Noted and will be added. A comment has been added to the Delivery Plan</p> <p>Will amend.</p>
X021	<p>Ahead of today's meeting and in response to your e mail of 02.09.2023 and having read through the drafts I would like the newly implemented presumption guidance mentioned/stated in the ROWIP. Also some wording added / changed as follows:</p> <p>As no landowner seemed to be invited to contribute in this section, I as a landowner would like to represent and propose (identified comments and changes):</p> <p>In 'Evidence report 2', page 69 ; 'A better network" where comments from groups include The Mid Berks Ramblers and Pang Valley Rambler group go on to state the need for, "plans put in place to implement permanent diversions away from properties" where rights of way pass through or near to domestic properties. This / the wording should include "farm yards, working farm yards and commercial or business premises". Furthermore, the presumption guidance should be mentioned here (as well as other places in the ROWIP ?).</p>	<p>This is not the official response of the MWBLAF.</p> <p>Landowners had the opportunity to comment.</p> <p>It is not appropriate to add this onto a comment made by another organisation as this is a record of their comments. No change.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>The stakeholder working group that helped form the Presumption Guidance included The Ramblers as well as OSS, BHS etc so I would expect no objection to my request? Thankfully, inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State will take guidance onto account and apply it to their decision making. This guidance is great news for all users and landowners as it will help to speed up the process so we can get on with using and improving the network to make safe for all!!</p> <p>Can the group discuss? Can you send to the rest of the group if you feel it is ok?</p>	<p>See also comments 184, X009 and X014 (latter is the official MWBLAF response).</p>
X022	<p>COMMENTS FOR LAF on the W BERKSHIRE ROWIP FOR THE CONSULTATION</p> <p>1. Policy on Access Land and Common Land (comment on para 7 of the section headed Publicly Accessible Greenspaces on ROWIP p 15, i.e. in Section 2.2)</p> <p>We request that WBC adds a sentence here to this effect: 'We will endeavour to ensure that greater transparency and clarity is given to Access land and Common Land and means of access to these types of land, on the West Berkshire Online Map and elsewhere'.</p> <p>2. Policy on Diversions of footpaths (comment on para 3 of Making Changes to the Network on ROWIP p 40 in Section 4.5)</p> <p>In view of the new DEFRA Guidance on RoW diversions dated August 2023, we request new wording here: 'the Council will ensure, in the event of a diversion/extinguishment of an RoW, that there is no reduction in the standard of accessibility and infrastructure currently available, ie no replacement by a less well-suited route, such as a public road'. This should replace the current wording in the ROWIP, which reads: 'the highest standard of accessibility and of infrastructure appropriate to the location'.</p> <p>3. On specific Actions (these are perhaps rather too much the overwhelming focus of this Consultation):</p> <p>i) Action No 1 on p 37 of ROWIP needs to be much more specific and should involve LAF and include more regular updating and monitoring of priorities for maintenance and unresolved issues.</p> <p>ii) Action No 27 on p 42 of the ROWIP</p>	<p>This is not the official response of the MWBLAF.</p> <p>As per previous comments, CROW Act land will be added to the online map using Natural England data. This will include all accessible common land.</p> <p>The suggested change is too specific and limits case-by-case judgement. The tests for PROW modifications are included in legislation elsewhere. No change.</p> <p>Dealt with via an amended action.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>In view of the possibility that the deadline for recovering lost paths, etc may be extended only to 2026, not 2030, the priorities here should be reassessed, as follows: 'Ensure that there are adequate resources to deal with increased demands for RoW modifications of all sorts in view of the potential 2026 deadline - and consolidate the Definite Map and Statement by 2030'.</p> <p>This should replace the current wording: 'Consolidate the definitive map and statement by 2030 and ensure adequate resources to deal with the increased demands of new legislation.</p>	<p>Dealt with via an amended action.</p> <p>Dealt with via an amended action.</p>
X023	<p>West Berkshire Council draft Right of Way Improvement Plan Comments by Simon Pike</p> <p>1 Introduction</p> <p>This submission addresses a recent change in legislation that affects the responsibilities of West Berkshire Council in relation to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. This legislation is recent, and could not have been addressed in the draft ROWIP. It appears to represent a significant change in the Council's responsibilities in relation to rights of way within the AONB, and therefore should be addressed in the final ROWIP.</p> <p>I am a member of the Council of Partners of the North Wessex Downs AONB and the Chair of the Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum, but this comment is submitted in a personal capacity.</p> <p>2 Changes to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000</p> <p>The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 was passed on 26th October 2023. Section 245 of this act makes an addition to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW).</p> <p>The relevant part is copied below:</p> <p><i>(5) The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is amended in accordance with subsections (6) to (10).</i></p> <p><i>(6) In section 85 (general duty of public bodies etc) —</i></p> <p><i>(a) before subsection (1), insert—</i></p> <p><i>“(A1) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved</i></p>	

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p><i>Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty. ..."</i> <i>The definition of 'relevant authority' is very broad, and West Berkshire Council is a 'relevant authority'.</i></p> <p>Section 255 of the Act specifies that this provision will come into force two months after the act was passed – i.e. on 26th December.</p> <p>This provision effectively strengthens the responsibilities of the Council in relation to the natural beauty of the AONB from 'shall have regard to' the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area to 'must seek to further' it.</p> <p>This provision will also have an impact on other functions of the Council, including planning.</p> <p>3 Proposal</p> <p>The ROWIP should include a description of how this strengthened duty in the amended CROW affects its responsibilities in relation to rights of way and related access. Some consequential changes may be needed to other parts of the ROWIP. Simon Pike, 22 November 2023</p> <p>Footnote: 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales' will become known as 'National Landscapes', with that change taking place on 22nd November. This includes the North Wessex Downs AONB which will now be known as North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The legal title remains 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', as this is used in legislation.</p>	<p>Change of name and strengthened duty will be included.</p>
X024	<p>Please find enclosed responses to the draft West Berkshire ROWIP on behalf of Wasing Parish and Estate:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is reference in the previous ROWIP (2010 to 2020) of funding for permissive access and open access via direct Stewardship payments – to our knowledge, this source of funding has fallen away. Since the pandemic there has been increasing trespass across the Parish and Estate – with people leaving the public rights of way and sometimes being well away from the path. There has also been a rise in stock worrying, abuse of locals, estate staff, and contractors. Fencing would be appropriate in certain locations. 	<p>This is outside of the control of WBC</p> <p>Noted and acknowledged in the ROWIP. There are actions to address anti-social issues and increase awareness of the Countryside Code.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We would like to see funding/resources for improved/new waymarking signage in the ROWIP. We also suffer from trespass by ponies and quad bikes – who gain access via the PROW network and cause damage to both the surface of the footpaths themselves and to other ground nearby. We would like to seek funding towards installation of fencing/gates in certain areas to reduce this. Footpath ALD 9/1 is particularly affected. We have an agreement for a cycle path alongside the Basingstoke Road between Malthouse Cottages and Frouds Lane – unfortunately there have been maintenance issues, with fencing and items that should be repaired by West Berks falling into disrepair. We have been asked to consider an extension of this route, alongside Frouds Lane, but until/unless repairs to the existing route are made, we are unwilling to enter into a further agreement of this sort. 	<p>Waymarking is included in the ROWIP. Funding will be allocated based on need.</p> <p>We will be in contact separately about these two specific matters as part of the ROWIP work to increase engagement with parish councils.</p>
X025	<p>I have been in contact with Simon Pike who shared with me the draft West Berkshire ROWIP. I also saw your webpage https://www.westberks.gov.uk/countrysideroutes including great self-guided walks.</p> <p>My name is Delphine, I am community developer UK at Visorando, a free, participative library of walks, outdoor GPS app, and community: https://www.visorando.co.uk We have been mentioned in the report you wrote. My background is strategist in tourism development. I supported the Chilterns Tourism Network in some of their projects. I would like to know :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you would like to organise a chat to discuss some parts of your draft ? 2. If you would agree to contribute by allowing me to copy and share them with our community ? I know your time is precious, I can enter some of them in your name. <p>Copyright is important to us. As you stay the author of your walks, your logo and website would appear on each walk, it would raise your visibility. Visorando is growing fast - we celebrated our 4 million-th regular user in 2023!</p> <p>At Visorando the walks published have been curated. With a team of volunteers, we read and moderate each walk making sure they follow editorial quality guidelines. The idea is that anyone can follow the description without having a look at the map and the author stays in control of their walks.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Contact will be made with a third party provider, e.g. Visorando, to increase the scope for effective promotion. This is reflected in the Delivery Plan.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>We now have over 28,000 walks available on our platform - more than 3,000 of which are in English in the UK. This wouldn't be possible without our incredible network of contributors sharing their best walks, from individuals to organisations such as Chiltern Society, Tring, Town Council, The Wildlife Trust, Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, and many more.</p> <p>Why also share with our community ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73% of the people you surveyed had not used any of the circular walk leaflets. You would offer more people the chance to find and follow your routes by offering free and easy tools to use, • Access comprehensive data and statistics about the attendance of each of your walks. Walker's feedback are also ideal to maintain your routes. <p>Our team of volunteers and I are here to keep an eye on them and warn you when someone gives feedback that can help you.</p> <p>Please see the attached document for further information about Visorando, and how working with us would be beneficial.</p> <p>If you are also interested in knowing more about what we could do to help each other, please drop me a quick email and we can find a time that works for you.</p> <p><i>Also included in this submissions were two items of promotional material.</i></p>	
X026	<p>Principle Performance, Research and Consultation Officer</p> <p><u>Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2023-2033</u></p> <p>Cold Ash Parish Council has reviewed the RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023-2033 that has been produced by West Berkshire Council and has the following comment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overall - a very good and comprehensive plan that sets a solid direction for the work to be carried out. The proposed collaboration with other interested parties is very positive and likely to be central to achieving the aims of the plan. More information will be needed on how this will work in practice. Are there plans to work with the other parties in shaping this? 	<p>No changes, the consultee has made comments on the previous 2010 – 2020 ROWIP.</p> <p>Most of these observations are answered by the Delivery Plan to accompany the ROWIP.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Scope of Plan - There are 63 Rights of Way Improvement Plan areas of focus. Whilst these have been given priorities and sizing's, there is no indication as to the outcomes that are expected to be delivered in the first, or subsequent, years. Therefore, there is no baseline against which to assess the success, or otherwise, of the delivery plan. Are these available elsewhere? 3. Assessing performance vs plan - an annual progress report is planned to be delivered (ROWIP63) but without agreed success criteria (see point 2) this could turn into a retrospective of what has been done, rather than an assessment vs commitment. The plan states that 'project-based... good practice, and lessons learnt...' will be adopted. The establishment of agreed success criteria and performance indicators fall within this definition, as without them any review will be subjective and unable to support an objective assessment or provide a basis for lessons learnt. Are these available elsewhere? 4. Working with Parishes - there are 15 ROWIPs on which WBC intends to work with parishes. This includes 'encouraging parish councils to use their full range of powers...' and establishing 'parish council public rights of way officers...' (ROWIP47). Delivery of training is planned for these (ROWIP48) but it's unclear how this engagement will work beyond this. Are you able to provide any more information at this stage? 5. Working with volunteers - there are 10 ROWIPs on which WBC intends to work with volunteers. Delivery of training is planned for these (ROWIP48) but it's unclear how this engagement will work beyond this. Are you able to provide any more information at this stage? 6. Risk - the assessment of risk is based on 'likelihood of failure'. There's no sense of impact of failure (good practice normally assesses overall risk by the combination of likelihood and impact). Without the establishment of success criteria and supporting performance indicators, it's unclear how failure, or success, will be assessed. 7. Dependency Management - the dependencies between the ROWIP will influence the sequencing and drive what is achievable in any given period. A dependency map (PERT or similar) would be helpful. 8. Schedule of activity - no schedule of activities has been provided. Deriving this from the dependencies (point 7) and available resources, would support, and be a check-and-balance on, the success criteria and performance indicators. 9. Grant funding - the grant scheme (ROWIP56) would be a positive step to support collaboration. Has consideration been given to doing this on a match-funding basis with parish councils? This would increase the funding available and show 	<p>Risk - The Delivery Plan progress will be colour coded and progress reported at least annually.</p> <p>Dependency management – The Delivery Plan timelines will go some way towards addressing the sequencing.</p> <p>Grant funding – a Small Grant Scheme for parish councils has been considered before and will be revisited, perhaps taking the form of matched funding. This is noted in the Delivery Plan.</p>

Number	Responses	WBC Response and Actions
	<p>commitment from all parties in the collaboration.</p> <p>10. Best Value Performance Indicator 178 - it's positive that WBC has decided to continue to BVPI178 as part of its annual assessment, even though it ceased to be a national requirement in 2008. We assume this will in part cover some of the performance metrics; those on the actual status of the PROW network.</p> <p>11. A minor point: The version of the plan I received states it covers the period 2010-2020, rather than 2023-2033.</p> <p>Vice-chair, Cold Ash Parish Council, on behalf of Cold Ash Parish Council</p>	<p>The comments and actions do not relate to the 2023 – 2033 ROWIP – the consultee has commented on the previous 2010 – 2020 ROWIP.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank