

# Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2020 – 2030

This document forms the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)  
for purposes of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

 **MonLife**  
Ar gyfer meddwl, corff ac enaid ein cymuned  
For the mind, body and soul of our community

Final CAIP, Version 5, January 2020. Endorsed by Cabinet 19th February 2020

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# 1 FORWARD

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Monmouthshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan sets out our shared objectives for the county's rights of way network, countryside sites and wider public access for the next 10 years. The plan is the combination of detailed research, analysis and consultation with the public and stakeholders. It sets out the very positive outcomes that are delivered through an extensive 1,659km of Rights of Way network and recognises the value in access to quality green space in terms of mental and physical well-being for residents and visitors. Our plan is both ambitious and realistic about the challenges that Monmouthshire and our wider society face. We are confident that delivery of this plan will contribute significantly to making Monmouthshire a healthier, more prosperous and more enjoyable place in which to live. I would like to thank everyone who has worked on the development of this plan and all those who contributed to the consultation, helping to shape our priorities for the next decade.

**Richard John**

County Councillor for Mitchel Troy

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and MonLife

## 2 MONMOUTHSHIRE VISION

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1. To recognise the economic, social and heritage value of our public rights of way network and countryside sites as an important investment in the future for residents and visitors of Monmouthshire.
2. To maintain and improve local rights of way and countryside sites in order to promote and encourage greater use and enjoyment of them, for the physical and mental well-being of all of Monmouthshire's residents and visitors.
3. To sustain the quality and diversity of Monmouthshire's countryside and to promote responsible countryside access for all.

## 3 ABOUT THIS PLAN

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This plan sets out a bold and visionary approach to providing and managing access to Monmouthshire's countryside for the benefit of all Monmouthshire's residents and visitors.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Monmouthshire (RoWIP) was first published in 2007. It has since guided the work of the countryside access service, giving direction and focus. Legislation requires that the plan is reviewed every 10 years and this plan is the product of the review carried out in 2017/18.

The review required the following assessments to be undertaken along with extensive consultation:

- Review of the ROWIP 2007 -2017 (Appendix 1)
- Review of current policy, legislation, strategies, academic studies, market research (Appendix 3 & 5)
- Analysis of current provision and likely future demand (Appendix 2 & 3)
- The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the County. (Appendix 2 & 3)
- The accessibility of rights of way (row) to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems (Appendix 2)
- The condition of the row network and its record (Definitive Map and Statement), publicity and management (Appendix 3)
- Resources available to meet people's needs (Appendix 3)
- Opportunities to contribute to Active Travel objectives, Well-Being objectives, The Equality Act 2010 (Appendix 3)
- Opportunities to deliver other plans and objectives. (Appendix 3)

**This plan is structured around the outcomes of the above assessments and consultation results** (Appendix 4), which have given us insight into the needs and priorities of Monmouthshire's users and those who do not currently use the network, but might be encouraged to do so. These assessments are available on request.

The scope of this plan includes all rights of way shown on the Definitive Map, all other footpaths, bridleways and all cycle tracks not on the side of carriageways. We are also able to extend the scope of the plan to include Access Land, Countryside

Sites and other provision which is important in our area. Hence the title of this plan is “Monmouthshire’s Countryside Access Improvement Plan” (MCAIP), unlike the 2007 version which was primarily about rights of way.

The Well-Being of Future Generations Act requires that the service must think about the long-term, work better with people, communities and other services to look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

Health walks and using rights of way to improve health, improving access in and to open spaces, improving the network available to horse riders, runners and cyclists, better promotion to targeted audiences, development of bite sized doorstep opportunities, connecting people with wildlife and landscapes are some of the identified issues that are addressed within this plan.

The assessments show the countryside access service must prioritise where it focuses resources to reflect areas of most demand. It must also be able to be adaptable to cover such things as bad weather events. A Countryside Access Policy, Protocol and Operational Management Guide has therefore been produced. It brings all of countryside access policy and procedural guidance into one place and shows how the service delivers its statutory work and that of the CAIP.

This plan sets out some bold ambitions, not necessarily constrained by the resources available, or by our legal duties, but focussed on meeting the needs of residents and visitors. It is undeniable that changes in the availability of resources for local government delivery has, and will continue to have an impact. Reductions in funding levels are likely to continue for some years to come, and will create new challenges for service delivery. Therefore, the statements of action within this plan are not fully resourced; it recognises the need to work with partners and stakeholders to deliver many of its elements.

However, this is a plan that aims to secure the best possible outcomes with the resource that is available and the assessments recognise that the countryside access service must explore other ways of raising funds, involving the community, large scale partnerships and relating the service to the general public.

**This plan was prepared with the assistance of Monmouthshire’s Local Access Forum and informed by various consultations and responses from a wide range of organisations and individuals (Stakeholders). The Council wishes to thank everyone who participated.**

## 4 THEMES

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Six broad themes have emerged from the assessments and previous ROWIP. The plan is structured around these themes. The first three themes are our top priorities. Each has a main objective and a number of actions and benefits which are detailed in the Statement of Action.

**1. Well Maintained Network**

- To target improvements on rights of way to ensure greatest public benefit is obtained

**2. Active Healthy Lifestyles**

- To improve the accessibility of the network and make it easier for people to incorporate walking, riding and cycling into their everyday lives
- To promote and support the use of network for purposeful journeys.

**3. Knowing what's out there**

- To achieve an up-to-date and accessible Definitive Map and Statement and to promote the network

**4. Community Involvement**

- To support and enable volunteer groups to be actively involved with countryside projects, contributing to wellbeing and creating sustainable and resilient communities.

**5. A prosperous Wales**

- To maximise the economic benefits of countryside access

**6. Future Focused**

- Working for a resilient and future focused service in partnership with others, to provide wider benefits to residents and visitors to Monmouthshire

A delivery plan will be published separately to monitor improvements made from the plan.





## 5 WHAT IS MONMOUTHSHIRE LIKE?

The County has a distinctive identity arising from its location in the borderlands between England and Wales. It is a large rural county, covering 850 square kilometres of countryside with an estimated population of 92,476, half of which live in the main towns of Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Caldicot and Chepstow.



Monmouthshire's greatest asset is its landscape and natural environment. The County is home to internationally and nationally designated landscapes. These stretch from the flat open coast line of the Gwent Levels to the Black Mountains and World Heritage Site in the Brecon Beacons National Park and the picturesque river gorge of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The breath-taking natural scenery here has enthralled visitors for centuries, including painters and poets from Turner to Wordsworth. The work

undertaken to inform Monmouthshire's Well-Being Assessment and the consultation for this document, shows the "pull" people feel to the county and the unparalleled access it can offer to awe- inspiring environments.

With many historic market towns dotted across the county, you can always be assured of finding something exciting to do, tasty to eat or interesting to explore. This is aided by the extensive network of footpaths throughout the County and lots of other opportunities to canoe, ride, cycle, climb or carry out other recreational activities.

Overall people in Monmouthshire live longer than elsewhere in Wales and are healthier. However, Monmouthshire has an increasingly aged population. Daffodil Cymru projects an 87% increase in Monmouthshire's population aged 65 and over with dementia by 2035. This is above the increase projected across Wales of 72% and the second highest in Wales. There is also an increase in the number of children recorded as obese. These are trends which could put significant pressures on the local authority and health board.



In 2018 2.24 million visitors came to Monmouthshire, generating £219 million to Monmouthshire's economy<sup>1</sup>. Tourism spend supports the most employment in the accommodation and food & drink sectors. In addition, a significant number of self-employed people in Monmouthshire earned a living from tourism<sup>2</sup>.

There is a reliance on car ownership due to the rural nature of the county. Public transport remains a problem with travel times on public transport considerably longer in parts of Monmouthshire than elsewhere in Wales. Poor public transport was highlighted as an issue by the Countryside Access and Disability Assessment report.



Monmouthshire has a strong sense of community and volunteering base. This is particularly seen within Countryside work and an expressed wish for volunteering opportunities to be expanded and supported. Estimates show Monmouthshire has the highest rates of volunteering in Wales.

Monmouthshire saw a rise in Welsh language speaking population to 9.9% in 2011. It is a generally prosperous area offering a high quality of life for its residents, but deprivation still exists within this setting.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.visitmonmouthshire.com/tourism-business-support.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> STEAM Survey 2018

## 6 What countryside access provision is there and what opportunities does it provide?

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This section describes the opportunities available from local rights of way and other types of access provision to Monmouthshire's residents and visitors, for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and enjoyment of the countryside.

### 6.1 CURRENT ACCESS PROVISION

The Countryside Access provision in Monmouthshire is extensive and provided not only by Monmouthshire County Council but by a wide range of other organisations. Monmouthshire is the gateway to the Brecon Beacons National Park and the county has canals, rivers, market towns, food festivals, castles, dark sky discovery sites, walks, horse riding routes, walking festivals, vineyards, mountains, gorges, caves, hills, public forest, priories & abbeys, Wales Coast Path, Offa's Dyke Path National Trail, paragliding, museums, paddle boarding experiences and more traditional past time sites like golf courses. There is therefore no shortage of opportunity to access the countryside in Monmouthshire for exercise, well-being and enjoyment. Information for visitors and residents can now be found on Monmouthshire's tourism website: [www.visitmonmouthshire.com](http://www.visitmonmouthshire.com)

### 6.2 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The Definitive Map records minor highways known as public rights of way (PROW). These minor highways are protected by the same highway legislation as the wider highway network. However, they are distinguished from other all-purpose highways in the way they are recorded and can be used. This is dependent on what their status is. PROW are broken down into four levels of status:

- Footpath, a highway over which the public has a right of way on foot only.
- Bridleway, a highway over which the public have a right of way on foot as well as equestrian and cycling rights.
- Byway open to all traffic (BOAT), a PROW open to all types of users, including use by horse drawn and motor vehicles, but which is mainly used for the purposes for which footpaths and bridleways are used.
- Restricted byway (RB), a new category of highway introduced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), over which the public have a right of way on foot, horseback, bicycle and horse-drawn vehicle. Under the CROW Act, all PROW which were designated as a Road Used as Public Path (often denoted as CRB's or CRF's on Monmouthshire's Definitive Map) were re-designated as Restricted Byways (unless one of the provisions in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act applies).

There are 2,164.83km of rights of way in the County of Monmouthshire and 1609.6km<sup>3</sup> of other public highways (roads). However, an agreement is in place for

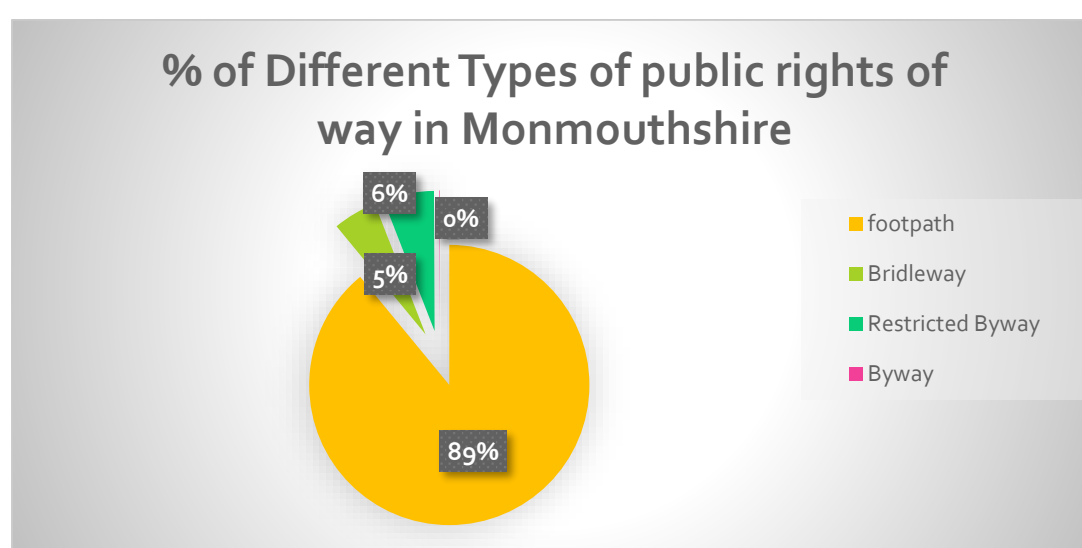
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<sup>3</sup> <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Transport/Roads/Lengths-and-Conditions/roadlength-by-typeofroad-year>

the 505.78km of public rights of way in the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) to be maintained by that Authority. Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) pays an annual sum to the National Park Authority for this work. Should this agreement ever be rescinded then the rights of way in the BBNP would be covered by the procedures and policies that apply to the rest of Monmouthshire including this plan. MCC and BBNP have worked closely to develop their improvement plans. The MCAIP was produced to include the whole of Monmouthshire, including that part within the park, in case the maintenance agreement with the BBNP is ever rescinded and to ensure all parts of Monmouthshire are treated equally. With agreement the BBNP have also produced their own ROWIP and both have similar statements of action. Fresh arrangements will be made to review both plans in ten years' time.

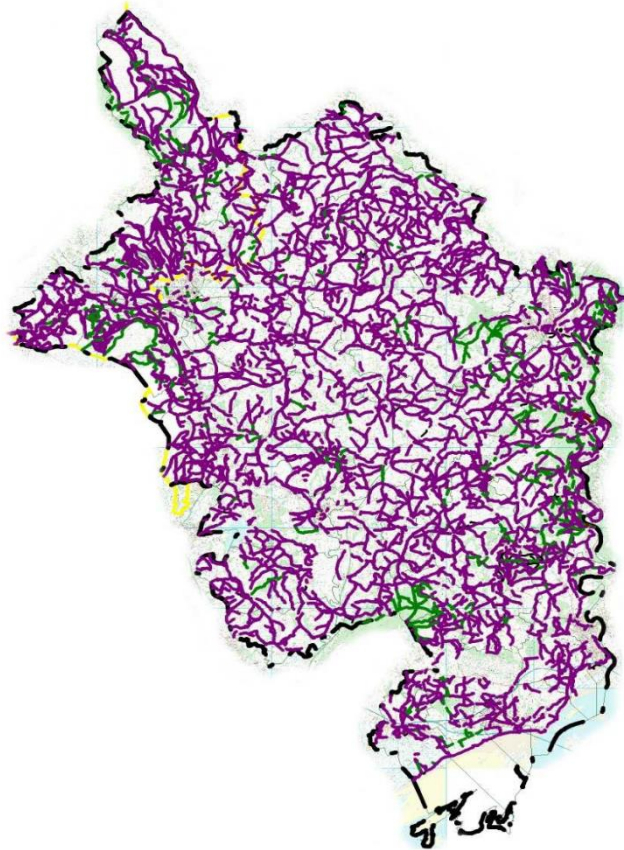
**Table 1 Extent of highway network in Monmouthshire (including BBNP) 2018**

Status of Path	Km in Mon	Km in BBNP	Total km in all of Monmouthshire	Percentage of total type of PROW
Footpath	1490.12	437.19	1927.30	89%
Bridleway	82.45	26.86	109.31	5%
Restricted Byway	84.95	41.73	126.68	6%
Byway	1.528	0	1.528	0%
Total km	1,659.05	505.78	2164.83	
Total km of other Highways (A, B, and other roads shown on list of streets)			1609.6	
Total PROW in Wales			33,200km	6%



The amount of Bridleways has increased from 71km in 2007, to 82.45km in 2017. This is probably because of legal changes to the Definitive Map and the Tread and Trot bridleway project which created some new bridleways.

The map here and Table 1 shows the high density of rights of way that exist in Monmouthshire, particularly footpaths. It also shows the highly fragmented and



limited bridleway, restricted byway and bridleway network. Footpaths are shown as purple lines and other routes in green.

There are however 459.3km of County Unclassified Roads “C” roads (many of which are not surfaced) which provide access to all types of users and are essential links to the rights of way network. They are particularly useful for cyclists, carriage drivers and horse riders.

Monmouthshire has many promoted routes but the most well-known are the Wales Coast Path and Offa’s Dyke Path National Trail, both of which attract grant funding because of their status and importance to the regional and national economy of Wales.

The Wales Coast Path was opened in 2012. It is 870 miles long in all and a total of 2.8 million visitors walked the route in 12 months to June 2013. 14 miles, or 22km, of the Wales Coast Path runs from Chepstow to Magor. It is maintained by Monmouthshire County Council in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales, other local authorities and Welsh Government. The path is promoted by Welsh Government internationally and was voted by Lonely Planet as the top destination to visit in Wales.

The 870 miles of coast path links with Offa’s Dyke Path National Trail to create a 1030 mile continuous walking route around the whole of Wales. The Wales Coast Path also links to other routes in Monmouthshire such as the Wye Valley Walk, Tewdrick’s Trail and a whole host of smaller local circular routes. Soon it will also link to the England Coast Path.

The county is also well covered with five other promoted long distance routes, all with the exception of the Monnow Valley Walk are promoted by Monmouthshire County Council and or the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

1. The Wye Valley Walk
2. The Usk Valley Walk

3. Three Castles Walk
4. St Tewdricks Trail
5. The Beacons Way
6. The Monnow Valley Walk

256.4km of PROW are promoted routes. We also have a series of health walks and 30 pathcare walks which are locally promoted routes.

There is opportunity for other walks to be developed. The Cambrian Way and Monmouthshire Way are routes where discussion is underway with individuals and the Ramblers Association to promote and manage the routes in the future. Local Groups are developing and maintaining circular walks.

### **6.3 PERMISSIVE WALKING AND HORSE RIDING ROUTES**

Permissive paths are where the landowner allows, by his consent, certain users to use a route on his land either as a footpath or bridleway. These are not that common and are not usually recorded but we are aware of 4,174m of permissive footpaths and 3,381m of permissive bridleways. Significant parts of the Usk Valley Walk and Wye Valley Walk are on permissive routes. The disadvantage of permissive routes is that they can be closed at any time and they are usually not maintainable at public expense.

### **6.4 HORSE RIDING AND CARRIAGE DRIVERS**

Despite the lack of bridleways, byways and restricted byways the county has some superb facilities for horse riders at the Broome Event Centre, Chepstow Race course and Coleg Gwent. There is also now a series of promoted bridleway routes known as the Tread and Trot Trails and a concentration of riding routes in Wentwood Forest.

Large sections of the Welsh Government woodland estate are subject to a concordat between Natural Resources Wales and the British Horse Society, which provides permissive access for horse riders. NRW and the BHS have a mutually agreed concordat, setting out the collaborative approach to horse riding. This applies to permissive access on forest roads and tracks on NRW managed freehold estate and not which includes Welsh Water land.

Horse drawn carriages are permitted on restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. Carriage drivers in Monmouthshire advise that they principally use quiet roads.

There is opportunity to make use of county unclassified roads as “quiet lanes” (when this legislation is applied to Wales), which would benefit more recreational users by looking at how these routes are signed, managed and promoted. There is also opportunity to increase riding routes in some of the public forests managed by Natural Resources Wales.

### **6.5 COUNTRYSIDE SITES, GREEN AND BLUE SPACES**

Research shows that access to green space is important for the mental and physical health of residents and has a positive effect on longevity of life. There are:

- 11 Countryside access sites including one country park (Caldicot Castle) which provides access for walkers to picnic, kite fly etc. Other county council land holdings also allow further countryside access opportunities.
- 44 Historic Parks and Gardens, which have been identified as having a Special Historic Interest, covering 1,910 hectares.
- 3 landscapes of “Outstanding Historic Interest” (namely parts of Blaenavon, the Gwent Levels and the Lower Wye Valley) –and one landscape of Special Historic Interest, (the Clydach Gorge) within the Monmouthshire area identified by Cadw in the Registers of Outstanding and Special Historic Interest in Wales.
- The Wye Valley AONB is a popular tourist destination which attracts significant numbers of walkers, cyclists and day trippers for its scenic beauty, ecological, geological, historic and cultural attributes.

Opportunities exist to improve provision in country parks/ countryside sites to encourage more people to use them through better signage, promotion and enhancing routes to and from the sites.

## **6.6 COMMON LAND AND VILLAGE GREENS**

There is an estimated 3,853.587 hectares of mainly rural commons in Monmouthshire. Common land is owned, e.g. by a local council, privately or by the National Trust. There is normally a right to roam on foot over it. However, some common land has different rights, so for example the commons in Glascoed can also be used for horse riding.

Additionally, there are 24 village greens which can be used for sports and recreation, e.g. playing football or walking your dog. Many greens are maintained by local community councils, but some may be privately owned.

## **6.7 OPEN ACCESS LAND**

The public can walk on Open Access Land. It is mapped on Access Maps produced by Natural Resources Wales and is shown on their website. Access Land is also shown on 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey maps. It is defined as mountain, moor, heath, down land and common.

In Monmouthshire (outside of BBNP) there is about 150 hectares of mainly rural commons which are designated as Open Access. In addition, 3,550ha of freehold Welsh Government Woodland Estate has been dedicated as open access in Monmouthshire.

## **6.8 WOODLANDS**

Walking in woodlands is very popular with Monmouthshire residents. The Woods for People project created a UK wide inventory of accessible woodland and it is known from this, that in 2014, 43% of woods in Wales were publicly accessible. The Woodland Trust has undertaken a major analysis of woodland access provision and deficit across the UK. The project, named “Space for People” suggests that in 2016 23.6% of the Welsh population live within 500 metres of a wood of 2 hectares or



more and 80.6% live within 4 kilometres of a larger wood of 20 hectares or more<sup>4</sup>. The main activity undertaken in woodlands according to the Wales Outdoors Study is walking.

There is scope to extend other activities such as horse riding or cycling more formally over woodlands in Monmouthshire if landowners agree.

## 6.9 OUTDOOR EDUCATION

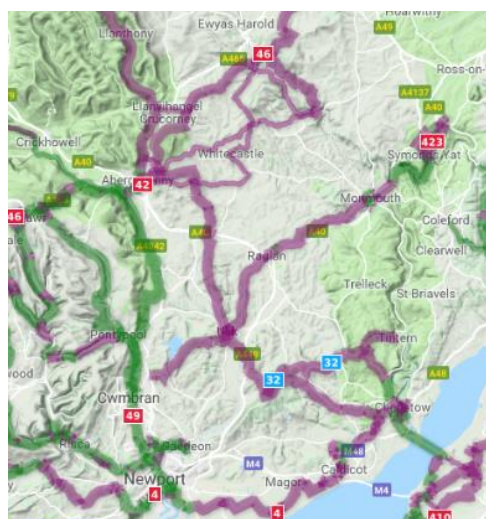
Monmouthshire has an outdoor education service with two sites at Gilwern and Hilston Park. Gilwern Outdoor Centre can accommodate large groups of around 80 people and is set in 15 acres of grounds. There is a bouldering wall, climbing tower, woodland and large meadow for camping. As it is not far from Clydach Gorge it can also provide caving experiences.

Hilston Park in Monmouth is a listed country house, just 10 minutes from the River Wye. It is ideal for people who like to canoe, fish or walk parts of the Wye Valley Walk. Offa's Dyke Path National Trail is also not far away.

Other private companies also offer opportunities to participate in caving, climbing, canoeing, kayaking, hill walking, camping, raft building, fishing and other adventure pursuits.

## 6.10 CYCLING

Cycling in Monmouthshire is increasingly popular with lots of quiet lanes to follow. We have two of the long distance routes of the National Cycle Network starting in Chepstow: the Celtic Trail (220 miles traversing the southern edge of Wales heading west across the Newport Transporter Bridge), and Lon Las Cymru (185 miles heading north through Brecon Beacons to Snowdonia). The map<sup>5</sup> below shows the National Cycle routes available in Monmouthshire.



We are home to the prestigious Abergavenny Festival of cycling<sup>6</sup>, which includes on its programme family rides as well as events which provide the opportunity to watch professional riders, including the annual Velothon giving all the chance to ride the route of champions.

Monmouthshire is also home to “the Tumble” – a legendary 6km 10% gradient climb (listed as one of the greatest cycling climbs in Britain). In addition, Sustrans have and are developing routes through Monmouthshire. The Peregrine Way between Wyesham (Monmouth) and Symonds Yat is popular and they are looking to

<sup>4</sup> Forestry Statistics 2017

<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forstats2017.nsf/0e01ca232ca463ed802570a60054c205!CreateDocument>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.visitmonmouthshire.com/things-to-do/cycling-in-monmouthshire.aspx>

extend this route to Redbrook. The cycle way from Llanfoist to Clydach extends to the Heads of The valley cycleway at Brynmawr. The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal also provides a cycle route from Llanfoist to Goytre.

In 2014 a series of “Tread and Trot” routes were made available. These are multi-purpose mainly off road routes suitable for cyclists, horse riders and walkers.

All of the cycle routes in Monmouthshire can be downloaded at <https://www.visitmonmouthshire.com/things-to-do/cycling-routes-in-monmouthshire.aspx>

Monmouthshire has developed a set of Integrated Network Maps which set out the Council's plans for improving active travel routes in and around key settlements over the next 15 years. The maps can be found [here](#).

Currently the county has a limited and fragmented bridleway network for off road cycling. However, the Council recognises that there are opportunities to expand cycling in Monmouthshire and is developing a Cycling Strategy to take advantage of the opportunities Active Travel brings, as well as extending the network of routes out of major towns to connect to other villages and places of interest.

## **6.11 RUNNING**

There are plenty of places where it is possible to run such as Country parks, village greens and commons, open access land, footpaths, bridleways and byways, woodlands and nature reserves.

There are many organised running events in Monmouthshire but these all require permission from the landowners involved. Parkrun has a popular run at Rogiet Countryside Park that runs every weekend and the Severn Bridge parkrun has also recently started. More parkrun's are desirable if suitable locations with parking can be found.

## **6.12 WATER SPORTS**

Llandegfedd Reservoir operates a brand new water sports centre. It offers land and water based activities from team building, windsurfing, dinghy sailing, paddle boarding, kayaking, raft building and environmental studies.

Canoeing is available on the river Wye.

Close to Monmouthshire is the National Diving and Activity Centre at Tidenham Quarry in Chepstow<sup>7</sup>. Here you can experience a complete SCUBA diving package for beginners through to professionals with speciality diving courses for both the sport diver and recreational diver. Depths range from 1-82m making this the deepest inland dive site in the UK.

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<sup>7</sup>

<https://www.visitmonmouthshire.com/thedms.aspx?dms=3&venue=1291730&rgn=Monmouthshire&catid=28&feature=1000>

A favourite for walkers, cyclists and nature lovers is the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. The navigable section is 35 miles long. This is managed by The Canal and Rivers Trust who promote the canal towpath as part of the Natural Health Service, as an outdoor gym, a perfect place for free recreation. The towpath also forms part of the National cycle network (NCN 49).

### **6.13 AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEMES**

63 farms in Monmouthshire were within the Tir Gofal agri-environmental scheme, which in many cases included additional permissive access. Although formal Tir Gofal agreements have ended some permissive routes are known to still exist, but these are not mapped. This scheme has now been replaced with Glastir which also includes the provision of permissive access. The Welsh Government promotes Glastir access on its website through a mapping system called Lle Map. This also shows the Wales Coast Path, National Trails and Open Access Land.

### **6.14 OTHER TYPES OF EXISTING ACCESS**

- There are 201 scheduled ancient monuments in Monmouthshire including several dozen castles, some of which are only accessible by public rights of way.
- Cadw has 15 monuments in its guardianship most of which are located in rural or semi-rural areas and all lie either on or within a few hundred metres of public rights of way. Some of these, including the Roman City of Caerwent and Grosmont Castle form part of substantial landholdings with multiple routes crossing them; all of them form outdoor visitor destinations or amenities.
- The National Trust look after mountains (Sugar Loaf & Skirrid), meadows, woodlands (St Marys Vale), waterfalls and traditional hill farms across Monmouthshire as well as a medieval castle (Skenfrith Castle – in guardianship of Cadw), Clytha Park Estate and a naval temple (The Kymin). This not only allows for a diverse range of landscapes to be accessible but it also provides opportunities to understand and enjoy Monmouthshire's biodiversity, stories, heritage and culture. It also gives opportunities to volunteer.
- Natural Resources Wales manages four National Nature Reserves in Monmouthshire:-
  1. Coed y Cerrig National Nature Reserve near Abergavenny
  2. Cym Clydach, in the Clydach Gorge
  3. Lady Park Wood NNR, near Monmouth
  4. Fiddlers Elbow NNR, near Monmouth

Natural Resources Wales have a free app "PlacesToGo" which can be downloaded on smart phones and shows all the walking routes on their managed land along with information on their recreation facilities.

- Other accessible countryside sites are managed by Gwent Wildlife Trust (including Beacon Hill, Magor Marsh, New Grove Meadows, Pentywn Farm and

Wyeswood Common), Woodland Trust (including Beaulieu Wood and large parts of Wentwood) and other public and voluntary sector land managers.

- Geocaching is a treasure hunting game using maps and global positioning system (GPS) enabled devices. The aim is to navigate to a specific set of GPS co-ordinates and then attempt to find the Geocache hidden at that location. If you find a cache you can record your visit and swop treasures. Some of Monmouthshire's sites and promoted routes like Offa's Dyke National Trail also offer geocache sites. The Geocaching Association of Great Britain has links to websites that list geocache sites.

### **6.15 WHERE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS PROVISION IS NOT MET**

- The bridleway, byway and restricted byway network are limited and fragmented, leaving little provision for horse riders, off road cyclists, carriage drivers and vehicular users. There is also limited access for those with mobility or health issues.
- There is a lack of maintenance on verges and minor road routes which provide connectivity to the rights of way network, inhibiting active lifestyles.
- There is a gap in the rights of way network at the Hendre Estate where no public rights of way were registered at all. Llangdeffedd reservoir has recently opened up a permissive footpath around the reservoir which is extremely popular but it is not available all year round.
- There is a need to work with landowners of woodlands in particular Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to extend access for a wider range of users. There is also opportunity to improve access to routes through Cadw sites.
- The Monmouthshire Greenspace study which examined access to green space, suggests that there needs to be a focus on addressing blockages to footpaths close to settlements and on circular routes beginning and ending within settlements, in order to benefit urban populations. It also suggests creating more circular routes around settlements.

## 7 REFLECTION OF THE DELIVERY OF THE ROWIP 2007-2017



The first phase of the production of this document consisted of an assessment of what had and had not been delivered through the first ROWIP for Monmouthshire which ran from 2007 to 2017.

See "Appendix 1 Rights of Way Improvement Plan Summary of Delivery of ROWIP 2007 – 2017" for further details of achievements over last decade which forms evidence base and is available on line or on request.

- The ROWIP was successful in being used as a bidding document for additional resources with funding received from HLF, RDP and a range of other grants.
- Monmouthshire was the first authority in Wales (if not the UK) to produce a Public Rights of Way Biodiversity Action Plan and Technical Guidance which is used daily.
- The adoption of a Least Restrictive Access Policy has seen the removal of large numbers of stiles. Monmouthshire was the first authority to make our stretch of the Offa's Dyke stile free. The Usk Valley Walk, Wye Valley Walk and many other paths are now also stile free. A Countryside Furniture Guide was produced for contractors, landowners & others to use which continues to assist in making the network more accessible to all. This needs updating to reflect new standards and needs to be more widely promoted.
- The countryside access service was instrumental in setting up GP referral Walks from the Leisure Centres, but in terms of securing health benefits activity needs to be targeted at, and communicated in a way that encourages use by the public/schools and by health and other providers.
- The creation of coherent networks of higher status routes for horse riders and cyclists remains a significant challenge. Greater consideration needs to be given to using existing roads and verges to reduce the fragmentation of the network of bridleways, cycle tracks and byways.
- We have increased access to the Definitive Map by provided an on line version for public use. <https://access.monmouthshire.gov.uk/>
- The service will continue to need to embrace new technology and improve existing systems if it is to improve levels of customer service.
- After extensive consultation a prioritisation system was introduced for maintenance & enforcement issues. As a result, a significant number of new bridges have been installed and many repaired, but there is still a significant backlog of work and inspections remain a problem.

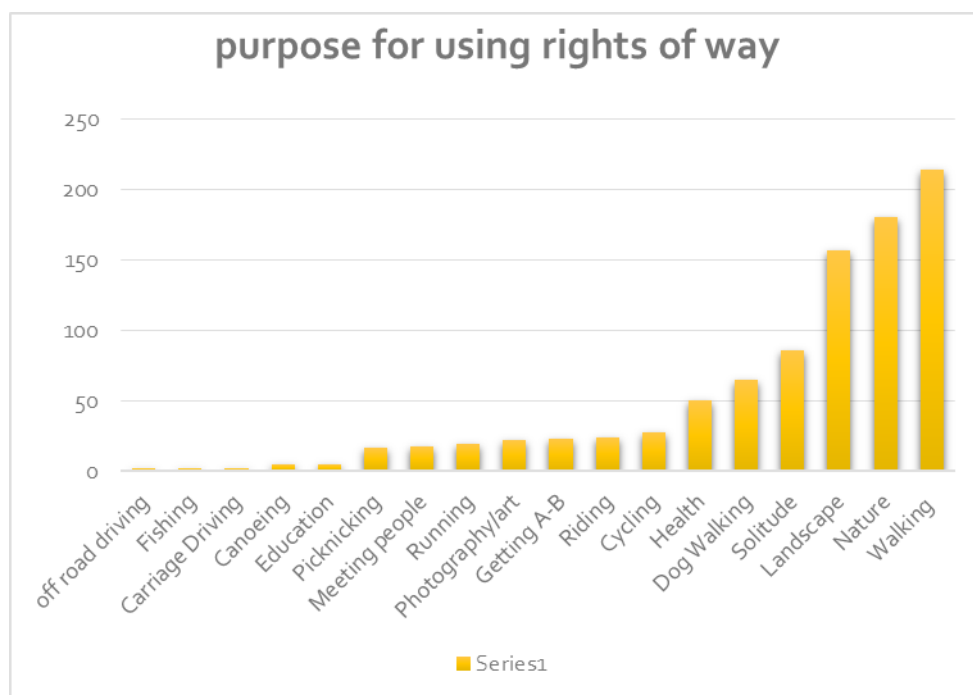
## 8 EXTENT TO WHICH RIGHTS OF WAY AND OTHER ACCESS PROVISION MEETS PRESENT AND POTENTIAL FUTURE USE

Information was gathered from our customer/stakeholders and those that do not use the outdoors, to understand their priorities and needs and how the network currently meets demands. This and national survey research also helped determine how the network must evolve to meet future requirements for residents and visitors, providing services accessible to all people within the community. Through analysis of the information gathered common themes emerged which have been used to guide the delivery of this plan and Statements of Action.

See the *Rights of Way Review assessment reports* which provide the detailed evidence base, available on line or on request.

### 8.1 KEY FINDINGS

- The top two most popular reasons for using the PROW in Monmouthshire is “Walking” and “Nature”, closely followed by “Landscape”.
- 78% of customers/stakeholders in Monmouthshire were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with public rights of way they used.



- The majority of customers/stakeholders daily use public rights of way in Monmouthshire
- The percentage of adults with a demand to do more sport ranged from 41% in Gwynedd to 70% in Monmouthshire.
- The types of activity in most demand include indoor and outdoor swimming, walking, any cycling (including BMX & mountain biking) climbing/mountaineering/rock climbing, canoeing, horse riding and gym or fitness classes.



- In general, there was greater chance adults were satisfied with life, felt that things done in life were worthwhile, were happy, and were not anxious if they participate in sport three or more times a week.
- Adults who are lonely are more likely to want to do more sport or physical recreation.
- People enjoy a diversity of places. The residents of Monmouthshire favour using rights of way, woods, permissive paths (many of these are in woods), rivers and historic features.
- Walking Groups within Monmouthshire enjoy routes of 5-10 miles on a weekly basis. But the average walker enjoys 2-5 miles and has travelled less than a mile from home, with 30% of visits being to a local park. This suggests that access to “doorstep opportunities” is an important factor for engagement in outdoor recreation for many people.
- Social recreation activities are still popular with people enjoying a picnic, taking children to playground, or taking part in informal games such as playing Frisbee. The popularity of these activities reflects the importance of “easy to do” pursuits that require little if any specialist equipment, skills or facilities.
- Wildlife watching and engaging with the environment is popular in Monmouthshire.

There were significant gender differences in the types of activities that people take part in, with women more likely than men to say they had taken children to playgrounds, or been for a picnic. In contrast men were much more likely to have taken part in virtually all active outdoor pursuits, particularly road cycling, mountain biking and fishing.

## **8.2 WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS PREVENTING CURRENT USE OR MORE USE OF PATHS AND TRAILS IN THE FUTURE?**

- The top two issues that were stopping PROW use were: overgrown vegetation (grass & crops) and unclear routes. Overgrowth was a particular issue for the elderly and disabled.
- Lack of information acted as a greater barrier for the younger age groups than the older demographic who relied more on “word of mouth” to find routes. Lack of information was also a deterrent to the disabled
- There is a lower frequency of PROW use for those who had a disability compared to those who do not.
- The lack of toilets particularly in small villages along walking routes.
- Fragmentation of the network for higher status routes and problems using roads/verges that link paths was also an identified barrier to some.
- Negative perceptions- fears and concerns can exist which determine people’s willingness to access the natural environment and or public green spaces.
- Motivation is an identified barrier – There are easier, less challenging things to do in which case there can be a lack of motivation to engage with the natural environment.
- Lack of physical fitness - This can deter people from wishing to engage with the natural environment, particularly if the activity involved is perceived to require a degree of fitness.
- A key barrier and potential inequality is the availability of good accessible green spaces near where people live with the appropriate facilities.

### 8.2.1 Under represented groups

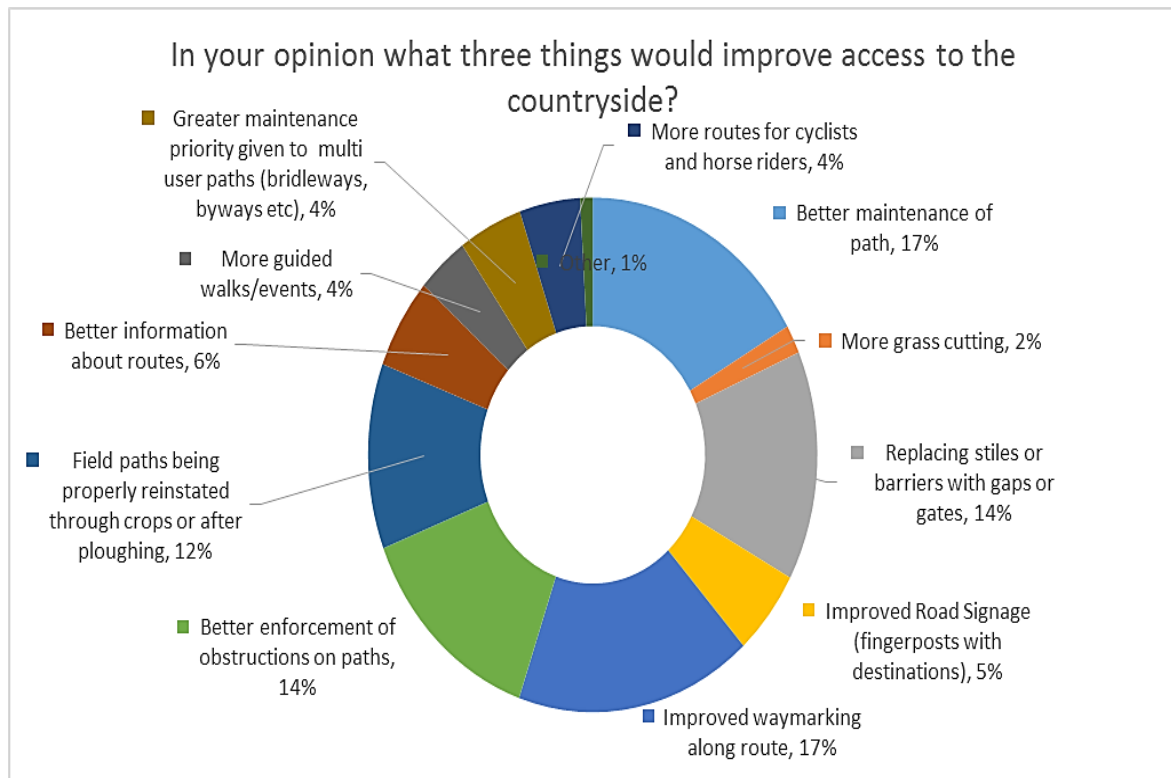
- Disabled people, younger age groups and those from ethnic minorities visit the countryside less frequently.
- Younger age groups were less likely to be interested in using the PROW network.

Among those young people who said they did not engage in outdoor walking the main reasons identified were:

1. The activities were viewed as something for adults and not a young person's thing.
2. It is not clear what is involved and what is available
3. Time is limited if you have school and a weekend job.

### 8.3 ENCOURAGING PROW USE

- PROW non users were less confident in their knowledge of PROW. Increased knowledge improves confidence and encourages use. “knowing where routes are” and “where will it take me” is important.
- The top three answers to what would encourage people to use public rights of way more were “if they were confident that the paths were in a good condition”, “confidence in not getting lost”, “complimentary activities i.e. bird watching”.
- Design – Issues such as signage, information sheets, navigation aids and labels are important in addressing the complexity that begins to act as a barrier to people, particularly those with a disability. Familiarity with a place can be important to some groups (like those with dementia) as can Way-finding aids in some green spaces (such as dementia friendly signage) could overcome some of their concerns about getting lost.
- Improvements to reporting system. Older groups preferred to complete a form or email, whilst younger people preferred the on-line mapping facility. Options for reporting need to be made clearer as many people thought there was only one facility.
- Physical accessibility – Access to cheap, reliable transport and parking facilities.
- Expense- This is a particular issue for people of lower socio-economic groups where cost is cited in some research as a primary reason for not accessing the natural environment.



## 8.4 EVOLUTION OF THE NETWORK

Through stakeholder engagement the following were identified as key ways in which countryside access needs to evolve to meet future demands:

- Commitment from Natural Resources Wales & other landowners to the maintenance and provision of waymarked walks/rides
- Improved waymarking/signage along routes, and more localised display boards available from points within villages.
- Innovative solutions to encourage younger people to use the outdoors.
- Better maintenance & enforcement of paths
- Remove barriers and replace stiles with gaps or gates.
- Improve areas around entrances to paths
- Provide good short circular promoted routes for health, leisure and tourism
- Provide links or connect routes to schools and places of interest
- Link activities
- Families are looking for multi-purpose routes to undertake leisure activities together, such as cycling in a safe environment.
- Better communication on the condition of paths & rights of way & promote how to report issues.
- Visitor friendly sites – more picnic benches, toilets and information
- Improve verge maintenance along roads to provide safe access to connecting rights of way
- Safe parking
- Improve local transport & toilet provision

In addition, stakeholders who were blind, partially sighted and had mobility or health problems identified the following actions:

- Improvements to the physical network specifically removing barriers where feasible
- Consider surfacing, gradients and camber on surfaces and provide where possible smooth, wide all weather surfaced routes.
- Improve information to enable decision making about route choice.
- Improve or identify areas of no mobile phone coverage which would be an issue should emergency services or help be required.
- More easy access routes



## 9 POLICY CONTEXT

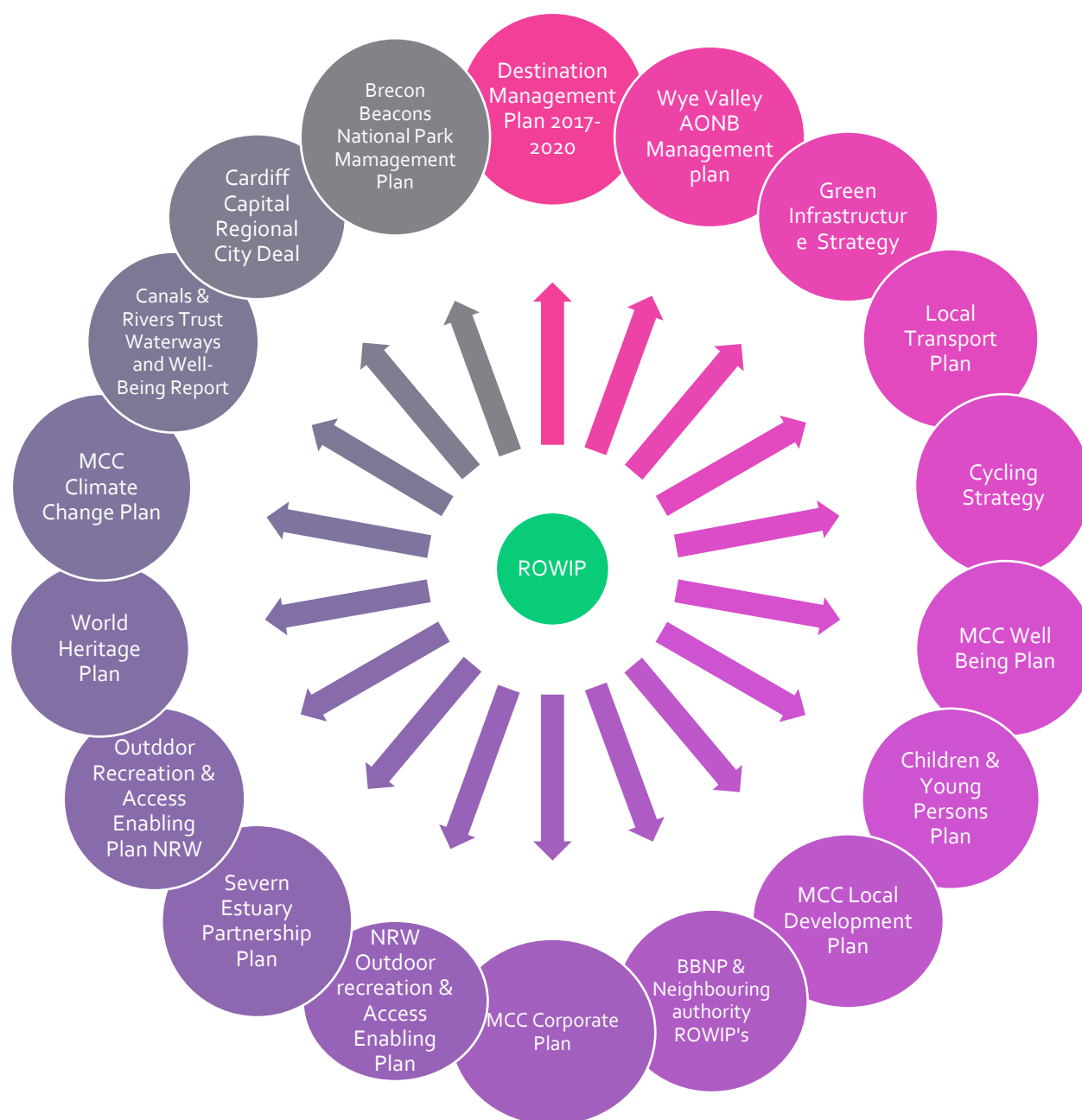
The importance of the PROW network, countryside, riverside, forests, coast and publicly accessible green spaces is recognised in many national and local strategies and is afforded strong protection in law. An estimated 4000 individual statutes, regulations and judgements have a direct relevance to its protection, use and development.

Recently there have been specific Welsh Acts which have a direct and long term change both in the management and direction of countryside access in Wales and specific access legislative changes are expected within the life of this plan.

More detail is available in the RoWIP Assessment Reports which are available on line. In particular, the *Monmouthshire Countryside Access Policy, Protocol and Operational Management ROWIP Assessment Report* outlines all Countryside Access Policies.

Well Being of Future Generations Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Act requires that the service must think about the long-term, work better with people, communities and other services to look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach</li> <li>➤ The Public Service Board agreed <a href="#">The Well-Being Plan</a> for Monmouthshire in April 2018.</li> <li>➤ From this plan a set of Actions has been produced. The aims of The Well-Being Plan covers areas which the Monmouthshire Countryside Access Improvement Plan (MCAIP) is also involved with, such as health, climate change, protecting landscapes &amp; biodiversity, reducing levels of inactivity, working with communities etc.</li> </ul>
Active Travel Wales Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 is a landmark Welsh law to make it easier for people to walk and cycle in Wales. The Act requires local authorities to continuously improve facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists and to prepare maps identifying current and potential future routes for their use. This aims to enable positive behavioural change in our daily routines to reduce the need for car usage, to connect us with access to sustainable transport modes (such as buses and trains) and which also provides opportunities to strengthen community cohesion. The MCAIP contributes to these objectives. See Chapter 11 Active Healthy Lifestyles.</li> </ul>
Environment Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act puts in place a Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty for public authorities (including the Welsh Ministers) who must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as is consistent with the exercise of their functions in Wales. Natural Resources Wales is developing Area Statements to assist with this and the MCAIP will link into these.</li> </ul>

Due to the wide-reaching work of the PROW and Access Service, the MCAIP not only directly contributes to many legislative Acts, but also the delivery of many of Monmouthshire's policies and strategies. Some of these are Monmouthshire County Council's and others are those of partner organisations. The diagram below shows the policies and strategies that share common objectives to the MCAIP.



There are many policies and strategies both nationally, regionally and locally with similar aims and objectives, which gives opportunities to expand partnerships to achieve the public benefits that access can bring. This will be reflected in the Statements of Action in this plan.



## 10 WELL MAINTAINED PROW NETWORK & COUNTRYSIDE SITES

### 10.1 COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS RESOURCE

There are a range of resources that the Countryside Access Team has at its disposal including staff, allocated budget, volunteers, PROW & countryside site asset and funding raised through external sources.

The Countryside Access Team based in MonLife, part of Monmouthshire County Council, consists of 14 staff, only 7 of which are full time. The team are assisted by various volunteers and volunteer groups.

*See "Appendix 3 Rights of Way Improvement Plan Condition of the Network and Opportunities Assessment Report 2017/18"* which provides detailed evidence base and is available on line or on request.

There are a wide range of organisations and services that are active in the management of Monmouthshire's countryside and have much to contribute towards the improvement of the public right of way network and countryside sites. Partnership working with these organisations and services is key to the delivery of this plan.

Some of our key partners include:- Landowners, Cadw, Natural Resources Wales, National Trust, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trust, Wye Valley AONB, Brecon Beacons National Park and other neighbouring authorities, NHS, Ramblers Cymru, NFU, Monmouthshire Highways, Leisure Services.

### 10.2 RIGHTS WITH RESPONSIBILITIES



The Countryside Access Team has a statutory duty to ensure the network is recorded, protected and maintained. It is important that we work with the landowning community in ensuring statutory compliance and in delivering improvements to the network. We advise on and where appropriate, progress applications to amend the PROW network in the interest of the public and/or the landowner. Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Team will continue to promote responsible use by the public when exercising their rights. This includes responsible dog ownership.

### 10.3 WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF THE NETWORK?

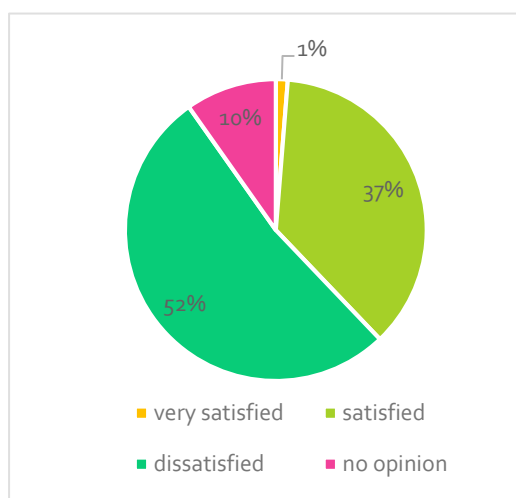
From March 2012 to March 2018 the Countryside Access Team have received 2800 enforcement and 9400 maintenance issues.

The Countryside Access Team are resolving approximately 55% of enforcement issues and 66% of maintenance issues per year.

The current network is historic in origin, but in order to make it fit for future use this means the countryside access service must prioritise where it focuses resources to reflect areas of most demand and benefit. It may also mean moving away from the traditional wooden gate to metal ones which last longer.

**Table 4: Types of outstanding maintenance and enforcement issues**

Issue	Number outstanding	Issue	Number Outstanding
Fingerposts/signage	1160	Improvement	70
Obstacle	1005	Slope	60
Surface vegetation	846	Behaviour	35
Stiles	475	Order implementation	30
Waymarking	440	Deposit	30
Bridge/culvert	273	Crops	28
Obstruction buildings	265	Drainage	27
Alignment	253	Notices/signs	24
Other	190	Animal	22
Surface	161	Information	21
Gate	159	Enforcement surface	15
Obstruction landscaping	98	Hazard abutting	12
Overhead/side vegetation	95	CROW section 130 Notice	5
Tree	79	Section 56 repair notice	3



- There is currently a backlog of 1585 enforcement issues. 37% of users are satisfied with the general enforcement of issues such as obstructions on routes. But 52% were dissatisfied.
- Obstacles are the most recorded type of enforcement. These usually consist of some type of gate or fence obstruction, but can also be things like a builder's skip.
- Better resourcing of legal orders is required to divert footpaths around permanent building obstructions and more planning application checks to ensure there are no further building obstructions.

## Maintenance Requirements

To keep the rights of way network in good condition there is a need to replace:-

4 Fingerposts per week (not including the backlog of 1160 signage issues)

One new bridge every 2-3 weeks.

10 stiles & gates per week (not including the backlog of 1005 issues).

Also for safety & maintenance reasons there is a need to:

- Undertake 15 bridge inspections per week

The Public are concerned about cropping. This is increasing due to climate change and changes within agriculture, which make more crops in Monmouthshire viable.



- ⇒ Signage (waymarking and fingerposts), surface vegetation, stiles and bridges are the highest reported maintenance issues
- ⇒ Surface vegetation is a growing problem, partly due to the weather in recent years which has meant more than the usual two cuts have been required.
- ⇒ There are 3848 stiles and 4004 gates known to be on the rights of way network. 89% of stiles and 96% of gates are in a good condition.
- ⇒ Any new gates, stiles or other furniture needs to be authorised before it can be installed. All aspects of the countryside access service take account of the Equality Act and the “Least Restrictive Access Policy” (LRA), which has proved beneficial in removing many stiles and making routes more accessible to all. The policy and procedure for LRA & authorising structures will continue. See Active Healthy Lifestyles page 31 to view this policy.
- ⇒ The Countryside Access Design Guide was produced to ensure a high standard of furniture is used by staff, contractors and landowners. It needs to be updated to reflect recent changes in British Standards and be more widely promoted.
- ⇒ In 2018 we now have a total of 1326 bridges recorded on the rights of way network of which 9% are now recorded as “unsatisfactory”.
- ⇒ There are 273 bridge issues. 85 need repair, 67 bridges need replacement and a further 81 are recorded as missing bridges. 88 bridges have “other” issues on them, including 51 bridges which require full inspection to further ascertain what the bridge issue is. Of particular issue are the bridges which are 10m and over and require replacement or repair.

The Top Three Things Stakeholders would like are:

- Better maintenance of paths
- Better enforcement of obstructions
- Field paths reinstated after cropping

**Consultations for this plan show that there are particular things Stakeholders do not like, or would like to see being done differently regarding rights of way maintenance and enforcement.**

Improved signage.

Improving structures for those less able and for dogs.

More enforcement on rights of way

Enforcement against illegal off-roading.

Improved communication

More use of volunteers and community councils to maintain & fund improvements

#### **10.4 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ASSET**

Some parts of the PROW network are the responsibility of the County Council, such as surface maintenance, fingerposts, safety barriers and many bridges. Other elements are the responsibility of landowners. Funding shortfalls remain a serious concern to all interested parties.

- The current capital budget for maintaining the network in 2019 is £38,000 and 10x too small. There is no specific budget for volunteers, legal orders, modification orders, enforcement or promotion.
- The backlog of known maintenance issues is estimated at £4 million +
- The backlog of building obstructions will cost £532,000+ if dealt with by legal order.
- Annually there is a need for £452,151+ to be spent on maintaining the network to replace signage, bridges, gates & some surfacing (not including backlog of issues & revenue costs like staff, or cutting programmes) to keep the asset in optimum condition.
- The 2007-2017 RoWIP provided opportunity for significant grant income, from a number of sources, which has provided the means to make improvements. In the last 5 years this has totalled £623, 095 of grant from Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, Heritage Lottery Fund and European Funding (£1,060,705 since 2011).
- £4m has been secured through collaborative landscape partnership schemes in the Wye Valley, Blaenavon World Heritage Site and recently for Living Levels for improving (amongst other things) access infrastructure and visitor experience.

## 10.5 COUNTRYSIDE SITES CONDITION

Countryside Sites provide important opportunities for sport, recreation and tourism and can also act as a visual amenity and may have conservation importance.

- There are 9 countryside sites which are directly managed by the Countryside Access Team. These are Castle Meadows, Clydach Ironworks, Goytre Hall Wood, Llanfoist Crossing, Abbey Tintern Furnace, Lower Wireworks car park, Black Rock picnic site, Rogiet Countryside Park and Warren Slade.
- Caldicot Castle Country Park and Tintern Old Station are much larger sites and are managed as part of MonLife's attractions portfolio.

There is one Warden who looks after the sites in conjunction with "Friends of" Groups, volunteers and partners such as Keep Wales Tidy.



- Each of the sites provide different challenges according to their location and use. For example: Black Rock picnic site suffers from erosion and maintaining coastal defences are a problem, whilst the scheduled ancient monuments at Abbey Tintern Furnace and Clydach require specialist management and present significant maintenance challenges.
- There is an ongoing requirement to keep boundary fences and structures maintained particularly where there is stock involved.



Management Plans for each site are being developed as it is necessary to work in partnership and find creative ways in which to fund identified improvements. As of May 2019 there is an estimated list of project works that will cost £419,000



## 10.6 WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE MORE USE OF COUNTRYSIDE SITES

- Improved publicity and promotion
- Car parking improvements
- Increased biodiversity value, through additional tree planting, or the creation of less intensively managed natural areas, restoration of ponds and other appropriate measures.
- Cycle way surface improvements at Castle Meadows and all year round surfaces elsewhere
- Improved path surfaces at Rogiet Countryside Park to provide extension to parkrun routes.
- Refresh and improve signage, promotion and enhancing routes to and from sites.
- Picnic areas, Benches/seats/resting areas



# 11 Active Healthy lifestyles

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## 11.1 SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL ENCOURAGING ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

- Walking and cycling as a means of transport to reach a destination, termed “active travel” allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives.
- Active travel brings a range of health and wellbeing benefits reducing traffic congestion and air pollution.
- Physical activity is essential for healthy growth and development, it increases cognitive outcomes and school attainment and improves social interaction and confidence.
- In March 2018 the National Institute for Health and CARE Excellence (NICE) published new guidance relating to the importance of physical activity in the local environment and how the PROW and cycle network and public open space can help facilitate active lifestyles.
- A lack of routes, poor availability of information about routes and concerns over safety can all act as barriers to people choosing active travel.

## 11.2 HEALTH & WELL BEING

- The cost of physical inactivity to Wales is around £650 million per year.
- Physical inactivity is the fourth leading cause of ill health in the UK and spending on the NHS is recorded at £1,000 per second on dealing with preventable ill health
- Over half of adults in Monmouthshire are classed as overweight or obese and Monmouthshire has an estimated 100 classrooms of obese children with 2.1% of 4 and 5 year olds in the county classified as overweight or obese.
- Public Health Wales warn of a Type 2 diabetes epidemic, across Wales with rates of diabetes increasing.
- Daffodil Cymru projects an 87% increase in Monmouthshire’s population aged 65 and over with dementia by 2035
- Being active can help towards the prevention of at least 20 different chronic health conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems.
- Increasing evidence suggests that one of the most efficient ways to manage mental health issues is through physical activity, especially in the natural environment which gives feelings of revitalisation, increased energy and decreases in tension, confusion, anger and depression.
- Benefits of exercise in the natural environment happen almost immediately: only 5 minutes of exposure improves self- esteem and mood irrespective of gender, age and health status.
- Health & wellbeing is also improved through regular horse riding. It is particularly relevant to the under 16s and women over the age of 45 who would otherwise be sedentary.

An additional 10 minutes walking per day is likely to be seen as achievable by those people who are currently classified as “inactive” and could lead to lifting them out of the inactive category at which the greatest risks to health persist. Public Health



England state that “if 1 in 10 people aged between 40-60, or from lower social economic groups, started to do 10 minutes walking per day, it is estimated it would prevent 251 deaths per year and achieve an economic saving of £310 million per year”.

The MCAIP has significant role to play in helping to deliver health and wellbeing benefits.

### **11.3 THE ACCESSIBILITY OF RIGHTS OF WAY TO BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED PERSONS AND OTHERS WITH MOBILITY PROBLEMS.**

- The opportunities provided by designated access land within Monmouthshire and the land managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are particularly valued given their suitability for all ability access. (Also appreciated is the provision of car parking, toilets, waymarked routes and information posted on NRW’s website.
- There was recognition amongst some stakeholders that good work had been done to make certain paths accessible to disabled people and there was a wide range of resources available within the County.

However, an overarching conclusion drawn from stakeholder evidence is that Monmouthshire is far from being joined up in terms of addressing the barriers to and maximising the potential of its outdoor walking opportunities, notably to help combat declining physical ability among its population and poor health through obesity. There are worthy individual initiatives in operation but there is no central structure, or finance, to promote cohesion in terms of plans and priorities that could lead to more effective outcomes.

### **11.4 FIT4LIFE WALKING GROUPS**

The above represent well established outdoor walking opportunities, formed under the previous ROWIP and County’s Exercise Referral Scheme and part of the Lets Walk Cymru programme for those wishing to improve their health and wellbeing through outdoor exercise with regular walking groups. These groups have their own trained volunteer leaders who carry out risk assessments and safety measures generally. This includes matching the suitability of the walk programmes in terms of member’s capabilities and factors such as the condition of furniture along paths, surface and the weather.

There are 4 Fit4Life Groups one of each in Chepstow, Abergavenny, Monmouth and Caldicot, with leisure centres acting as a base. Recently insurance has become an issue and has stopped GP referrals to these groups and this is an issue of great concern.

#### **11.4.1 Benefits of Walking Groups**

The fact that exercise can reduce illnesses and lower the risk of early death by up to 30% has a strong bearing on the sustainability of the groups. In addition of particular value to members of the groups is the companionship and social interaction that they develop within their groups.

## 11.5 EQUALITIES ACT & LEAST RESTRICTIVE ACCESS POLICY

Monmouthshire countryside access service is mindful of the Equality Act and other legislation. In delivering work the countryside access service undertakes assessments of the likely impact on the diverse communities and individuals who access our services. Where potential adverse impacts are identified we seek to mitigate them and ensure that discrimination is prevented. Where opportunities to improve the service provided or the accessibility of the public rights of way network are identified we will do our best to bring about those improvements within resources available; for example, the practical implementation of the least restrictive access policy.

Monmouthshire was the first Council in Wales to adopt (in 2004) a policy of least restrictive access. The policy seeks to limit the introduction of further structures on the rights of way network and actively seeks the removal of existing stiles. It is one way in which the authority actively tackles disadvantage within communities. Where stiles remain they prevent use of paths by many in the community, particularly the elderly, young and those who suffer from some form of ambulant disability.

The Offa's Dyke Path National Trail within Monmouthshire, the Usk and Wye Valley Walk have had all their stiles removed or replaced with gates. There is now only one stile remaining on the Wales Coast Path. The policy of Least Restrictive Access has clear benefits to the public and will continue to be supported and widely promoted.

## 11.6 DISABILITY STAKEHOLDER MEASURES TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

There appears to be scope for wider measures to support greater interest and participation in walking if pursued with partnerships.

- A regular flow of new members is needed for sustainability and potentially the formation of additional FIT4Life walking groups or other social prescribing schemes.
- Signpost people to outdoor fitness groups and ramp up the promotion of available opportunities

### Least Restrictive Access Policy

The County Council operates a "minimum barrier" policy, with respect to Public Rights of Way. Wherever maintenance issues arise to replace, repair or install new items of furniture on Public Rights of Way the opportunity will be taken to place the least restrictive barrier possible on site. Each case will be individually assessed by a Rights of Way Officer and any necessary furniture installed taking into account:

1. the paths status
2. current historical furniture on site
3. topography
4. nature of farming and land use
5. what would be the least restrictive access in that particular location.
6. the landowners wishes.

Gaps are preferred to stiles unless farm animals need to be restricted, in which case either a gate, self-closing gate, gates with boxes or kissing gates will be used in preference to stiles.

See also Monmouthshire Countryside Access Policy, Protocol and Operational Management Report

- Remove barriers on paths such as narrow kissing gates and stiles.
- A rolling marketing campaign perhaps using radio, press and TV to try sell the benefits of outdoor exercise through local features and case studies.
- Better signage for disabled people and in particular the partially sighted
- Improve limited transport services to the countryside, promoting where possible bus services to access the countryside and promoted routes.
- A number of suggestions were also made regarding promotion. See Chapter 12.

## **11.7 HOW THE MCAIP WILL ENCOURAGE HEALTHY & ACTIVE LIFESTYLES**

The MCAIP will aim to encourage active lifestyles through:

- Addressing barriers that prevent use;
- Working in partnership with planning, developers and others to create well-designed, accessible environments that encourage active travel and walking, cycling and horse riding as recreational pursuits.
- Resolve issue of insurance, improve publicity and promotion from GP Referral Scheme to Fit4life and seek to expand this and other forms of social prescribing schemes.
- Use partnerships more successfully to promote countryside access opportunities and their benefits for improving health and well-being.

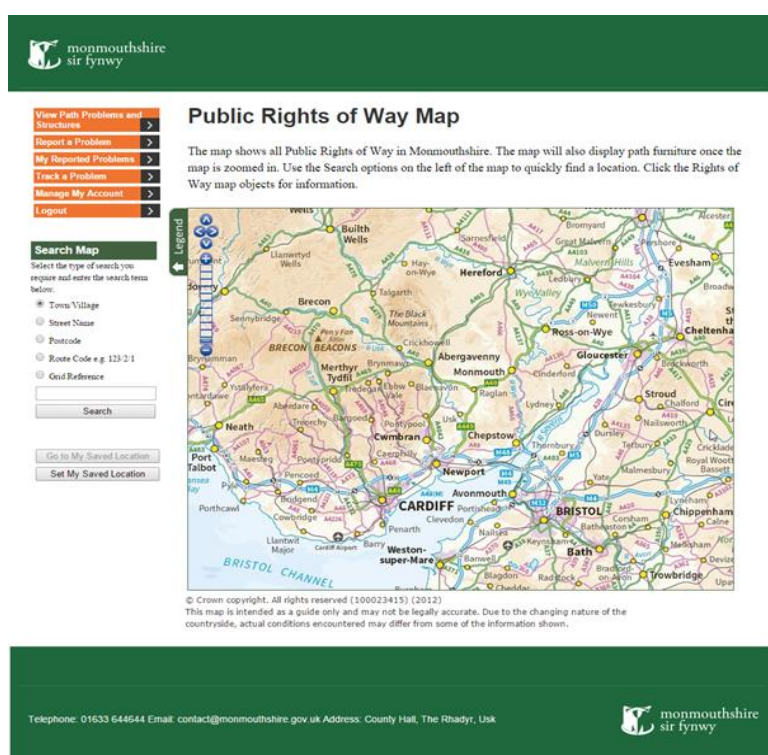
## 12 KNOWING WHAT'S OUT THERE

Results from research showed that the most common barrier preventing use of the network is lack of information. People want to know where routes are and where they will take them.

We will continue to encourage new users to the network as well as increasing current use, through targeting information, improving signage and improving provision around key leisure and recreational facilities.

See Assessment Reports which provide detailed evidence base and are available on request.

### 12.1 THE DEFINITIVE MAP & STATEMENT



The Definitive Map & Statement defines the legal status and alignment of public rights of way. An up-to-date and accessible Definitive Map is crucial to landowners & to the public knowing what is out there to use and to delivering improvements on the ground.

94% of Organisations in Monmouthshire are aware of the Definitive Map and 81% of them have used it. 81% of Landowners said they were aware of the Definitive Map, but only 62% of these have used it.

The Definitive Map records are also essential for the delivery of front line maintenance, enforcement and for dealing with:

- Daily Property Searches
- Applications (also known as “claims”) to add unrecorded rights or amend recorded rights on the Definitive Map & Statement (backlog of 41 cases). These can be viewed on-line.
- Recording statutory declarations to protect land from future claims. These can be viewed on-line [here](#).
- Applications to divert, create or extinguish existing PROW in the landowner or public interest (backlog of 80 cases)
- Anomalies (backlog of 253) and width enquiries

A “working” copy of the Definitive Map can be viewed on-line at <https://access.monmouthshire.gov.uk>

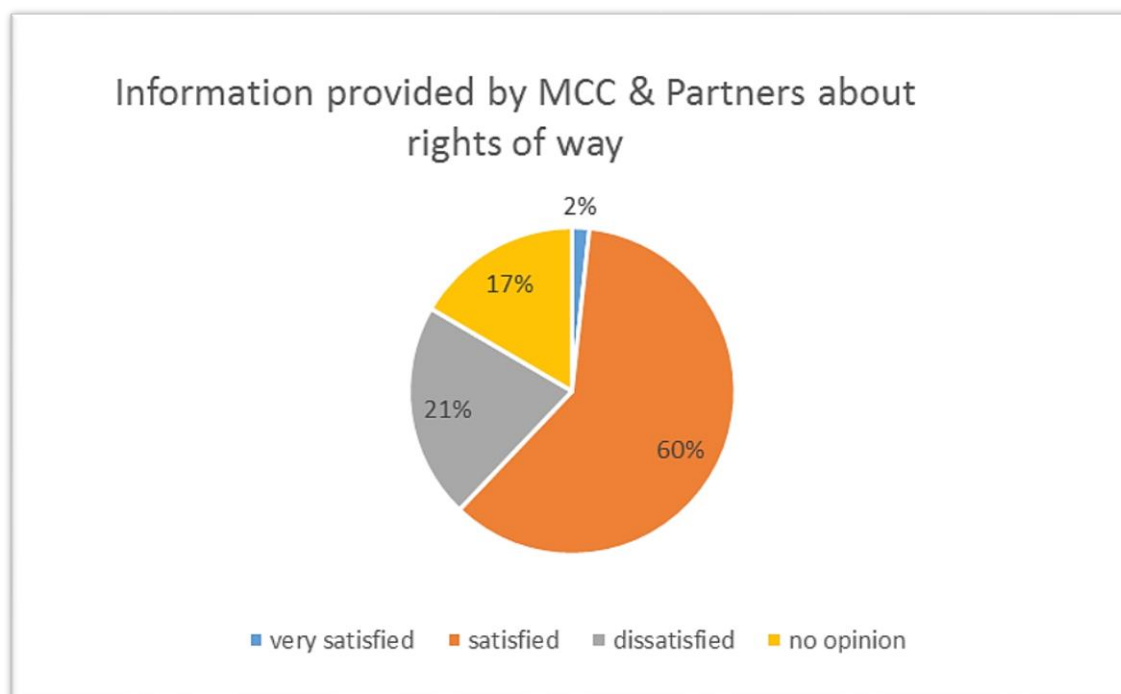
It is expected that the Welsh Government will legislate within the lifetime of this plan to allow for an “All Wales” digitised version of the Definitive Map. Until then Monmouthshire County Council is still required to bring the Definitive Map up to date in paper format.

## 12.2 STAKEHOLDERS ACTION FOR THE DEFINITIVE MAP

- An up to date and accessible Definitive Map and Statement
- A review of the Prioritisation for dealing with “claims” and more resources to complete the backlog of such work.
- Work with NRW to produce access management plans and reduce number of claims on their land to prioritise most public benefit
- A register of orders (diversions & closures) on-line.
- Seek more resources to tackle backlog of legal orders
- Temporary orders for long closures should come with conditions that paths should have an alternative route and be re-opened sooner rather than later.

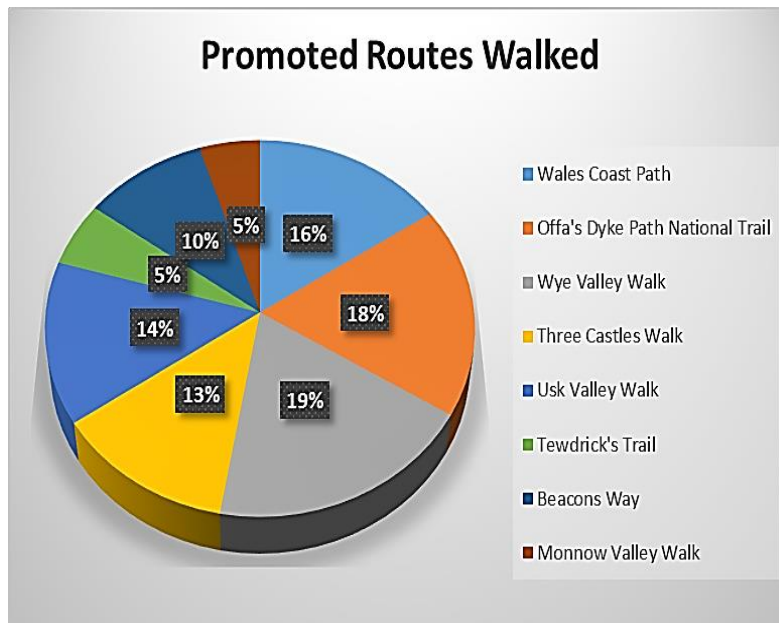
## 12.3 PROMOTION

Monmouthshire was one of the first tourist destinations and the extensive network of rights of way and varied special landscapes provides great potential to market the County to a wide audience.



60% of Stakeholders say that they are satisfied with the information provided by the Council and its partners, whilst only 21% were dissatisfied.

Information on walking and other activities is principally available through official long distance route websites, [www.visitmonmouthshire.com](http://www.visitmonmouthshire.com) , [www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk](http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk) and other organisation websites and national websites like [www.walk4life.com](http://www.walk4life.com) or [www.go4awalk.com](http://www.go4awalk.com)

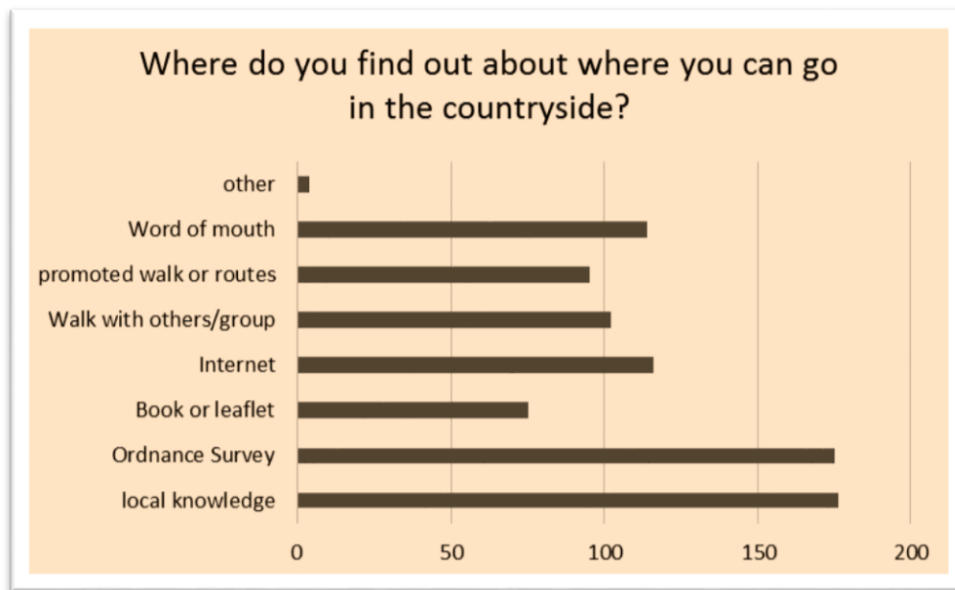


- Stakeholders say that the Wye Valley Walk followed by the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail are the most used promoted routes in Monmouthshire.

- The ambition still remains from the last ROWIP to have stronger invigorated regional partnerships along the whole lengths of these trails to ensure maximum promotion, economic and social benefits.

- Research and stakeholders have said that there is still a need for some printed material as not everyone uses the Internet.
- Stakeholders find out about where you can go in the countryside predominately through "local knowledge" and Ordnance Survey (OS), but there is a need for OS Maps to be updated.
- Word of Mouth and the Internet are also popular methods of getting information and suggest there is opportunity to work with local walking groups, community councils and other partners to disseminate information more widely.





Monmouthshire has developed a Walking Product Development Strategy which says that:

- More can be made of existing routes
- New products need to be developed to appeal to targeted audiences
- There needs to be co-ordination between maintenance and marketing
- New products should be developed around a range of identified themes.

#### **12.4 DISABILITY & OTHER STAKEHOLDER IMPROVEMENTS FOR PROMOTION**

- Consider a forum to clarify the extent of information sources and consider options and access to generally raise the profile of the County's outdoor walks product.
- Develop a focused set of paper –based media for those not using on-line services and seek community partnerships to help ensure that this material reaches the intended client groups.
- Engage with relevant organisations to ensure that hard copy material is made available to meet the needs of those of other minorities e.g. those with visual impairment and those from ethnic groups.
- Better promotion of health walks – distribute leaflets to GP surgeries/chemists etc.
- Identify and promote technology driven measures that would appeal to younger age groups. (sponsored Onesie walk, Pokémon Go Walks, regular Geocaching events etc.)
- More guided walks and events
- Hold a walking conference
- Signpost walkers to local walking or other outdoor user groups and also make better use of these groups and local publications to disseminate information.
- Promote responsible access
- Seek clarity from NRW on access rights (particularly for group activities)
- Connect people with wildlife and landscapes

- Better information about what access is available in woodlands.
- Ambassadors are underutilised –they should be the “go to people”.
- Provision of and updating Information Boards in all communities
- Improve the User Face of the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS)
- Produce library of resources
- Link to Visit Monmouthshire all types of walks
- Update the Countryside Access Design Guide
- Promote opportunities to use scheduled bus services



## 13 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There are at least 1600 volunteers supporting MCC, from Tourism Ambassadors to Community Bus drivers, Sports Ambassadors and Countryside volunteers. Volunteer input is high! We have a long and healthy history of volunteering and local action in Monmouthshire.

- The Countryside Access Service is supported by 150 volunteers and 17 volunteer groups who undertake a wide range of countryside tasks.
- Volunteers are active and effective in many activities and communities.
- Volunteers are often dynamic and skilled workers/contributors that may volunteer across departments and sometimes different authorities and organisations.

### 13.1 VOLUNTEERING BENEFITS

- Volunteering in Wales has an estimated value of £757 million.
- 1 in 10 GP appointments are attributable to loneliness, costing the NHS £1.53bn per annum<sup>8</sup>. Volunteering can help combat loneliness, providing opportunities for social interaction and combatting the feeling of isolation.
- Volunteering is positively linked with mental wellbeing.
- Volunteering can improve skills, provide valuable experience and lead to employment
- Volunteering is positively linked with individual and community development. People who volunteered reported higher levels compared to those who did not volunteer, of
  - Feeling able to meet the goals they set themselves
  - Continuing to try when they find things difficult,
  - Feeling that people in their local area can be trusted.

### 13.2 VOLUNTEER RESOURCE

There are a wide range of organisations, services, charities and local groups that are active in providing volunteering activities that contribute to improvements to local paths or the monitoring of them. Partnership working with these organisations and services is key to the delivery of this plan.

Some of our key partners include: - Sustrans, The Canal & Rivers Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Brecon Beacons National Park, Cadw, Town & Community Councils, U3A Groups, Walkers Are Welcome Groups, Friends Groups, Local Ramblers Association Groups

#### Volunteer Vision

Monmouthshire County Council wish to become a local authority capable of working with our citizens, helping people do things for themselves and creating the conditions that enable people to help each other.

The Authority wants to create a movement that mobilises people across Monmouthshire, to respond to the priorities within their communities.

<sup>8</sup> Extract from Public Policy Exchange.co.uk Training Flyer 14062017

The level of interest of organisations in being <u>more actively</u> involved in maintaining or improving the network of paths in their local area			
	Very interested	Moderately interested	Not interested
<b>Maintenance</b>	Sustrans, Canals & Rivers Trust, Llanbadoc CC, Pontypool & District RA, Trellech United CC, The Narth & District Footpath Group, Chepstow Walkers Are Welcome	St Arvans CC, Llangwm CC	Caldicot U3A
<b>Promotion</b>	Sustrans, St Arvans CC, Llanbadoc CC, Pontypool & District RA, The Narth & District Footpath Group, Chepstow Walkers Are Welcome	Caldicot U3A, Llangwm CC, Trellech United CC	
<b>Improvements</b>	Sustrans, Llanbadoc CC, Trellech United CC, The Narth & District Footpath Group, Chepstow Walkers Are Welcome	St Arvans, Caldicot U3A, Llangwm CC, Pontypool & District RA	
<b>Other (specify)</b>	Sustrans: Construction promotion and maintenance of national cycle network CLA Cymru: representing landowners The Narth: Survey and monitoring. Events village walks etc. Waters of Wales: We are particularly interested in RoW leading to/alongside water. Friends of Castle Meadows are also interested in encouraging groups and individuals in the enhancement and conservation of Castle Meadows Countryside Site.		

The above table was compiled from the responses received to the questionnaire for organisations carried out in the assessments helping to inform this plan. However there are a large number of other groups known to be interested in maintenance and promotion. Many already make valuable contributions. An overwhelming number of Stakeholders said that enabling volunteer groups to be active could be expanded if simple processes, tools and staffing resources were available.

Community and Town Councils can and often do play a significant role in supporting local volunteer groups and improving their local countryside sites or rights of way in other ways. There is a need to improve relationships and knowledge about the benefits of access improvements with Community Councils so that they are aware of their present powers, duties and the opportunities that access improvements can

bring to their locality. Resources need to be found to enable these important relationships to be formed and maintained.

### **13.3 IDENTIFIED NEW VOLUNTEER IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

The research and consultation for this plan has shown a number of new projects that community and volunteer groups are well placed to help with.

- Work in partnership with appropriate organisations and with volunteers to eradicate invasive species.
- Identifying new Health Routes
- Providing information on path improvements (to increase use and make routes more accessible), such as identifying barriers that could be removed like stiles.
- Identify annual overgrowth issues around furniture and arrange for clearance by either trained volunteer with strimmer/brush cutter (ideal if several volunteers in adjoining communities got together) or a contractor
- Fund and download monitor information
- Provide and maintain benches/seats to enable people to walk further
- Provide more guided walks/events

### **13.4 STAKEHOLDER MEASURES TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEERING AND IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE**



- Access to grants or other funding
  - “Availability of workforce or volunteer group”, was cited by Canals & Rivers Trust, Sustrans, Caldicot U3A, Pontypool & District Ramblers, St Arvan’s, Llangybi and Trellech Community Councils.
  - The ability to carry out Volunteer work with Natural Resources Wales on permissive routes on their land and to take account of the Equality Act and Monmouthshire’s Least Restrictive Access Policy.
  - Greater use of Community Councils and Volunteer Groups to maintain & fund improvements
  - Improved communication
  - More field officers to support volunteers
  - Investigate opportunities to encourage younger people to volunteer, perhaps via other agencies such as The Scout Association, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Outdoor Education Services and schools.
- Develop and publish guidance on responsibilities for groups and insurance requirements



### 13.5 MCAIP ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Seek additional resources to expand and maintain community and volunteer group involvement with countryside sites and rights of way.
- Seek appropriate training and funding for volunteer groups with adjacent authorities and other organisations.
- Improve and update publicity and information on the opportunities that are available for countryside volunteer groups and community councils.
- Reinstate volunteer walking website to include toolkits, ambassador training & other relevant information. It should also provide means of sharing activities/events/experiences.
- Work with the Wye Valley AONB Partnership Group and Wye Valley Walk Partnership to establish a “Friends of” Group to assist with the promotion and pathcaring of the Wye Valley Walk. Other regional routes like the Usk Valley Walk could also benefit from this approach.
- Improve information technology and mapping interface to be more useful for volunteer projects and enable the service to respond more effectively.
- Include the benefits of access and improvements, including establishing local volunteer groups in local community plans.
- Provide information to Community and Town Councils on how they can be involved, their powers etc.

#### Llanbadoc Volunteers Bridge Building





## 14 A PROSPEROUS WALES

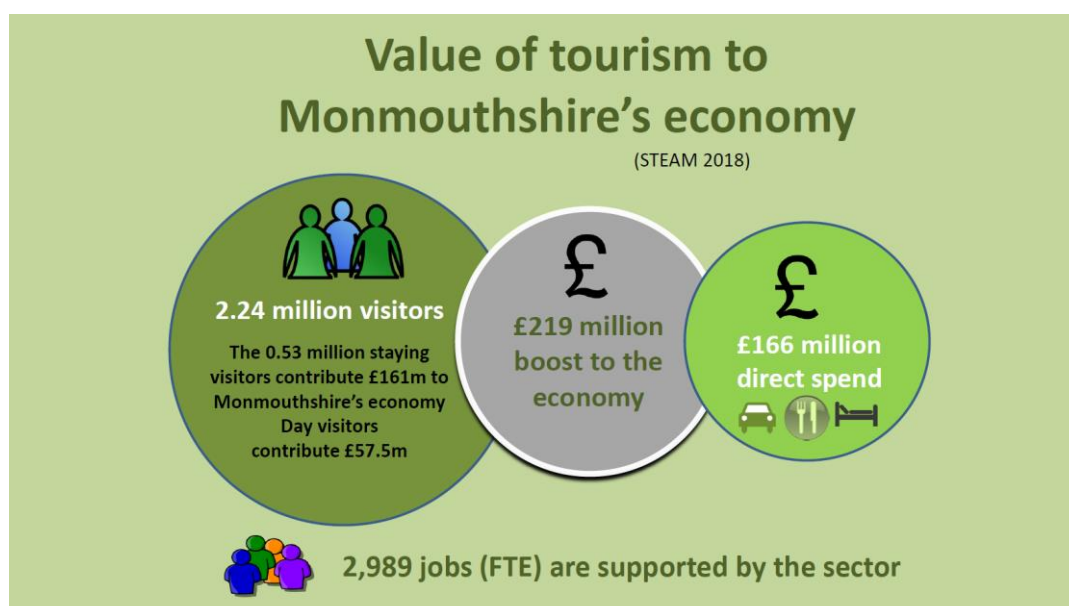
This plan can help contribute towards a robust infrastructure that enables development and encourages economic growth leading to regeneration and attraction of new businesses. It has a significant role in supporting sustainable economic growth, directly contributing towards transport, green infrastructure and open spaces.

The MCAIP as a statutory document can also inform, support and add weight to policies within Monmouthshire's Local Plan and community plans to help achieve economic benefits.

### 14.1 SUPPORTING RURAL ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

- A well planned green infrastructure which promotes and encourages sustainable active travel and economic development is required and the PROW network is a significant element of this.
- Working with partners both locally and regionally on schemes like Blaenavon World Heritage Site Management Plan, will not only provide jobs and training opportunities but deliver landscape, interpretation and access improvements leading to sustainable economic growth in the region.
- Monmouthshire's landscape is a key tourist attractor. It offers the Wales Coast Path with links to the England Coast Path and Offa's Dyke Path National Trail, 5 regional routes, Blaenavon World Heritage Site, Brecon Beacons National Park and the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The Rights of Way Network is not just a recreational facility but an important tourism product which if better maintained could expand upon the number of visitors to the county.

### 14.2 ECONOMIC VALUE OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS



- In 2018 2.24 million visitors came to Monmouthshire, generating £219 million to Monmouthshire's economy<sup>9</sup>.
- A study by the Welsh Economy Research Unit published in 2011 revealed that in 2009 there were 28m walking related trips to the Welsh coast and countryside. Expenditure associated with these walking and hill walking trips was around £632m. Walking accounts for around 16% of Welsh tourism.
- The economic value of the equestrian sector in 2015 was £4.3 billion across a wide range of goods and services. There is a significant growth in the number of young riders aged between 16 and 24 and there is recognised demand for longer off road rides and accommodation for horses and riders.
- Every £1 of public spend on green spaces (like parks) levers in £4.20 of private sector investment, boosting regeneration.
- Statistics from Visit Britain in 2015 show that road or mountain biking generated £520 million in spend.
- A significant number of jobs are generated from walking and cycling in Monmouthshire

### **14.3 STAKEHOLDERS VIEWS:**

- Long distance cycle track/bridleway/multi-purpose routes required
- Promote Goytre Wharf as a walking hub. The Usk Valley Walk includes a stretch of towpath and several walks which include the canal are promoted within the World Heritage site.
- Publish a set of sustainable 4x4 promoted routes

### **14.4 MCAIP IMPROVEMENTS FOR PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES**

Sustainable rural leisure and tourism is a key way to support the socio-economic well-being of rural areas, providing jobs and supporting community services. The PROW network and the MCAIP has a critical role in this.

- There is a need to improve social media presence
- Contribute to delivery of the Destination Plan to develop walking, cycling and riding products
- Use Ambassadors to promote countryside access provision and ensure they are kept up to date with improvements in their area.
- Make use of Volunteer Groups to promote appropriately targeted circular walks and events

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.visitmonmouthshire.com/tourism-business-support.aspx>

## 15 FUTURE FOCUSED

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The Countryside Access service is under several pressures, some constant, others variable. Legislation requires that this plan is for a 10-year period. Additionally the Well-Being of Future Generations Act requires that the service must think about the long-term.

There are several identified issues which are, or will have, an increasing effect on access.

### 15.1 CLIMATE CHANGE

- Climate change could accelerate the introduction of invasive species, pests and diseases leading to adverse impacts on native biodiversity and the landscape. Winter flooding and summer drought are likely to increase.
- Widespread snow events have occurred in 2009, 2010, 2013 and 2018.
- The most recent decade 2008 – 2017 saw 8% more rainfall than in 1961-1990.
- 2012 was the wettest year in 100 years and had a significant impact on the amount of work that could be delivered on the ground and the usability of the network particularly on stretches of the Wales Coast Path.
- An increase in storm events has resulted in greater tree fall and landslips and in 2017 we had to increase the amount of grass cuts on promoted routes as the warm wet weather promotes the grass/crops to grow more quickly.
- There is an increase in the introduction of new crops and increased viability for new crops i.e. vineyards, along with new animals like wild boar, ostrich and Llamas.
- Changes in patterns of visitor numbers with increased usage throughout the year, particularly during spring and autumn have also occurred.

Monmouthshire has many strategies and policies, including the Green Infrastructure Strategy, to tackle Climate Change and the Statements of Action in this plan will link in with these.

### 15.2 AGRICULTURE

Anything that changes the economics of farming may lead to land use change which can have significant environmental and social impacts. The opportunity must be taken to work better with land managers in Monmouthshire to provide long-term benefits for all.

### 15.3 DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

One of the main public reasons for not getting out into the countryside is poor design and obstructions. There is a need for better technology for monitoring, working with planners and developers before building occurs and more resources to take immediate enforcement. Otherwise the number of obstructions (266) on rights of way will continue to expand.

The current average cost for a diversion is £2000. It will therefore cost £532,000+ to resolve the backlog of building obstructions.

#### **15.4 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

Littering and fly-tipping is now becoming a problem in Countryside sites and rights of way. There is a need for promoting widely responsible behaviour and for continued partnership working with Keep Wales Tidy and our volunteers.

There are an extensive number of county unclassified roads which are important links in the rights of way network. Many of these routes are only maintained to a “green lane” standard and this can cause conflict between vehicular users and walkers/horse riders when these are not adequately signed or maintained to a suitable standard.

Conflict also arises when vehicles use footpaths, bridleways, commons and woodlands where they should not be. To avoid this there needs to be more work to signpost such users to suitable and legal routes using county unclassified roads in Monmouthshire, as there are only 2 Byways in the County.

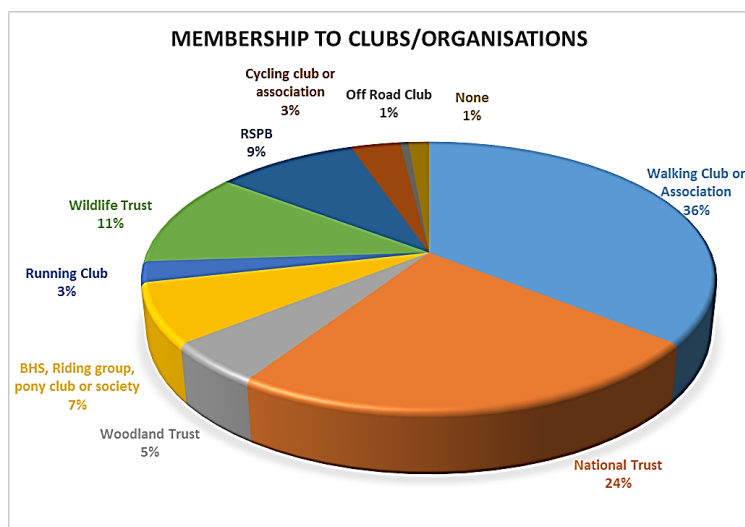
Nuisance use of PROW network is an issue raised by many Users and generally reflects wider issues in society. There is a role for Monmouthshire’s Local Access Forum in promoting understanding between different stakeholders and responsible use of PROW network by the public.

#### **15.5 QUALITY OF LIFE/CONNECTION TO LANDSCAPE AND BIODIVERSITY**

Residents of Monmouthshire value the landscape and nature. However, the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and the development of the Living Levels Landscape Partnership scheme have both recognised the national trend of the loss of connection between people and the natural environment.

- More effective information is therefore required to increase the overall appreciation of the landscape and the designations in it to encourage more people in understanding, contributing and benefiting from Monmouthshire’s landscapes.
- It should be noted that Monmouthshire has developed and is delivering a clear mechanism (Green Infrastructure) that delivers ecosystem services in which landscapes, biodiversity, rights of way/accessibility and quality of life benefits are supported through sustainable communities.

## 15.6 PARTNERSHIP WORKING



Our customers belong to many organisations which provide similar aims and objectives regarding access opportunities.

36% of our customers belong to a Walking Club or Association. More can therefore be made of using local groups and other organisations to disseminate information.

Only with considered and strategic direction of resources, especially through working with the Local Health Board, Natural Resources Wales, Green Infrastructure colleagues, and Highways colleagues, the Strategic Places Plans, Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, Active Travel Plan and the Well-Being Act, can the PROW network be further utilised to address local wellbeing issues within local communities.

Partnership working is therefore now key in delivering large scale improvements and accessing grants to deliver them.

An example is the £4 million Living Levels Project, which is led by RSPB Cymru, but Monmouthshire and adjoining authorities are key partners, as are local communities. The landscape partnership scheme covers the Gwent Levels south of the M4 from the River Wye to the River Rhymney. It is delivering landscape, interpretation, and access improvements to less visited part of the county but one that is a "gateway" to Wales. Joint working and projects such as this enable improvements to happen that the countryside access service could not do alone.

There is particular potential expressed by Cadw, to implement either smaller local schemes or a more ambitious conservation and access project in Monmouthshire where it is possible to combine the conservation of historic assets with access schemes and rights of way enhancements.

Partnership project work requires significant amount of staff time, sometimes over many years, both to create the partnerships, deliver the projects themselves and then manage their legacy.

## 15.7 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

It is expected that within the life of this plan that there will be substantial changes in Wales to access legislation. Some of the proposals include:

- Allowing for horse riders and cyclists to use footpaths
- Extend access land to coast & cliffs

- A single digital Wales Definitive Map including open access land and designated National Trails.
- Creating a new type of public right of way, cycle paths
- Improve access to inland water

The countryside access service will have to adapt current management procedures as legislation changes occur.

## **15.8 VALUE OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS**

The Countryside Access Team often uses “counters” as a measure of the use of a route. Other tools are now coming into existence and need to be used (such as the Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool, ORVal), or created, to evidence the value and benefits that are derived from publicly accessible space and PROW network within Monmouthshire including that part within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Improved mapping and data tools can be used to prioritise areas for future action and investment based on levels of population needs. This can support strategic decision making with regard to service provision and to identify projects which focus on preventative action giving greatest value in health and well-being benefits. However, there needs to be investment into adequate Geographical Information Mapping and Technology.

An asset management approach to maintenance is being developed, which has helped to ascertain the resources required to maintain the rights of way network, but this does not include variables (such as increasing material costs, project management etc.) or the improvement work such as increasing the number of orders dealt with, promotion, volunteer management, required to maximise the benefits of this plan. Improvements in the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) Database to allow simpler easier recording and reporting of all costs and improvement projects is essential.

## **15.9 MCAIP FUTURE FOCUSED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS**

- The service must explore and exploit further ways of promoting how it works, what it does, and the importance of that work.
- The Countryside Access service is under several pressures, some constant, others variable. The service requires greater resources than present to help overcome these pressures.
- The service must be able to adapt and implement any new changes in legislation
- A dedicated and properly resourced countryside access service with a strong public service ethic and commitment to the network and its use by residents and visitors is essential. This lies at the heart of the MCAIP and was recognised by many Stakeholders. Staff are front-facing, customer focused, dealing with often very complex issues and need to be highly adaptable to a variety of pressures. Appropriate training and continual professional development is essential to maintain and improve the service into the future.



- The service should adopt an asset management approach in order to establish financial on-going costs of the service.
- The service should consider and where possible, look to work with other local authorities and partners to deliver maintenance and purchase materials/equipment. This should include looking at new technologies and more sustainable products like plastic boardwalks, metal gates and finger posts, recycled surfacing products.
- The service should look to establish a research project in conjunction with Brecon Beacons National Park and others to establish the true value of the local walking and riding product.
- The service should seek ways in which to better provide relevant information on rights of way to landowners.
- The Authority and Monmouthshire's Local Access Forum should promote understanding between different stakeholders and responsible use of PROW network by the public



## 16 SPECIFIC PATH IMPROVEMENTS REQUESTED BY STAKEHOLDERS

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During the consultation process for this plan various specific projects for new access or access improvements were requested. The outline of these projects are listed below and they will be actioned only when additional resources and opportunities arise and in accordance with any maintenance prioritisation, or requirement to gain appropriate consents is achieved.

- Creation of multi-purpose path along old railway line running to Caerwent
- Upgrading of furniture and route improvements on the Piercefield House Circular Walk in Chepstow
- Improvement of towpaths on Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal and routes to and from it.
- Tintern to Wentwood off road cycling route
- Wheelchair access from Wye Bridge to Dixton Church
- Replace 3 stiles at Cowlings Lane, Monmouth, to gates and fill in depressions.
- New housing Estate, Wonastow, Monmouth, - increasing need for walking routes. Upgrade stiles in area to gates/gaps. Put up signs around edges of estate to show where access is, in conjunction with Monmouth Walkers Welcome.
- Add destination and distance to fingerposts near tourist destinations.
- The inclusion of a ramp from Usk Island up onto the railway.
- The railway track from Usk to Lt Mill be developed as a cycle track.
- Creation of cycle track/footpath from Little Mill to Usk Primary School along old railway line adjacent to BAE, over river bridge through tunnel to the old Monmouth Road.
- Creation of surfaced footpath along riverbank path running South from road bridge to the cricket ground on the East side of the River Usk.
- Upgrading of footpath to a cycle track or bridleway running from the south side of A472 (opposite Halfway Inn) to the railway line.
- Llanvair Kilgeddin to Nantyderry improvements to structures and clearance. Route identified by Volunteers as beneficial to local economy in connecting Pont Kemys caravan park, Swanmeadow Cottages, Glanusk farm bed & breakfast, the new glamping site and the former school.
- Improvement to the surfaces of paths in Usk which currently act as a barrier to use by the disabled and limit available access.
- Review of access at Chepstow Park Wood to improve access opportunities currently available to all and provide access management plan to enable any future cutting to take account of access at earliest opportunity.
- Improvement to the marketing of Llandogo as tourist destination and link along river bank so that there is access other than the car to adjoining villages or footbridge across Wye to Brockweir village.
- Abergavenny Groups wish to enhance the Gavenny valley in terms of water quality, green infrastructure, wildlife resources and public access.
- Improve signage and waymarks to Cefn Ila
- Improvements to paths in Llangybi

Other specific route improvement requests are stated within the Green Infrastructure Strategy Delivery Plan.

## 17 DELIVERY PLAN/STATEMENT OF ACTION

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This plan provides an insight into the needs and priorities of Monmouthshire's residents and visitors, what they would like from the service and how we can improve walking, riding and cycling opportunities in Monmouthshire. The key themes which have emerged sit well with the previous ROWIP and meet requirements of new legislation. This ensures a continuity of service and the assurance that the previous ROWIP was well directed.

The key themes are not in order of priority and each has a main objective and set of actions that form the basis of the countryside access service's 10- year delivery plan and statement of actions.

With budgets under increasing pressure decisions will need to be made on how best to allocate resources to meet statutory obligations and to meet the improvements that user's desire. There is a need to ensure that each programme or project delivers the greatest public benefit and aligns closely with Monmouthshire's relevant strategies and policies.

Evaluation of this plan's effectiveness is crucial and will be delivered through an annual delivery plan and through a ten-year review.

### Key for Benefits








- 🚲 Supports Active Travel
- ♥ Increasing levels of activity leading to physical and mental well-being
- £ Supporting Monmouthshire's economy
- ★ Improved customer experience









### Key for Resource/Limitation






- £✓ Deliverable with existing resource levels
- £+ Additional resource required
- £😊 Potential for income generation or budget savings
- ✎ Additional staff time required

## Well Maintained PRow Network and Countryside Sites

To target improvements to ensure greatest public benefit is obtained.








Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource	Key Partners
WM1	Better network/sites for leisure & daily use	<p>1.0 Seek ways in which to extend cutting contracts or to manage vegetation in conjunction with Community Councils/Partners and volunteers</p> <p>1.1 Work with NFU / FUW / CLA &amp; Landowners to reduce cropping issues</p> <p>1.2 Seek ways in which to reduce the number of obstacles on the rights of way network.</p> <p>1.3 Improve general fingerpost &amp; waymarking maintenance to encourage use and build confidence, prioritising areas within and near communities with high use.</p> <p>1.4 Prioritise and undertake bridge repairs and replacements.</p> <p>1.5 Improve maintenance on restricted byways to particularly enable carriage drivers &amp; cyclists to use the PROW network.</p> <p>1.6 Promote and provide better signed circular routes to increase confidence in wider use.</p> <p>1.7 Work with Community Councils and Volunteer Groups to target activity to improve the amenity of routes &amp; identify barriers for removal enabling more</p>	   	  	<p>Landowners &amp; Land Managers, NFU</p> <p>Community &amp; Town Councils</p> <p>Volunteer &amp; User Groups</p> <p>Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>Brecon Beacons National Park</p> <p>Contractors</p> <p>Highways</p> <p>Mon Life, Countryside Access &amp; GI Staff</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales</p> <p>Canal &amp; Rivers Trust</p>

		<p>people to use and enjoy routes and sites.</p> <p>1.8 To target surface maintenance programmes and natural flood management to encourage the use of PROW &amp; Sites for daily walking, cycling, riding especially in urban areas and for short journeys. Prioritise those routes which are suited to wider use of network.</p> <p>1.9 Annually review the delegation agreement with BBNPA</p> <p>1.10 Maintain Offa's Dyke Path National Trail &amp; Welsh Coast Path to their agreed quality standards.</p> <p>1.11 Maintain regionally promoted routes to a high standard, seeking stronger invigorated regional partnerships along the whole lengths to ensure maximum public benefits.</p> <p>1.12 Maintain countryside sites and prepare management plans for each site.</p>			
WM2	Compliance	2.0 Work with landowners to ensure higher levels of compliance with their obligations in respect of PROW and sites. Take enforcement action where required to ensure PROW are open and available to the public.	  	  	CLA, NFU, Landowners, Land managers, Gwent Police
WM3	Promote responsible use	3.0 Promote the Countryside Code and responsible use by the			All partners

		<p>public particularly dog ownership and England/Wales Dog Walking Code. Where possible link into other organisations existing schemes such as Canal &amp; Rivers Trust Share the Space and Drop the Pace and NRW's position statements.</p> <p>3.1 Provide advice and guidance to landowners regarding PROW responsibilities.</p> <p>3.2 Work with key partners to prevent conflict between different user groups</p> <p>3.3 Work with Stakeholders/Partners to minimise impact of use on sensitive and protected sites, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments.</p> <p>3.4 Support responsible use of the network and sites to address local issues such as anti-social behaviour, working in partnership with the Police where necessary.</p> <p>3.5 Support measures to prevent or reduce anti-social and criminal behaviour while preserving public access.</p>	 		
WM4	<p>Evolution of the network</p> <p>Increase Accessibility of PROW network</p>	<p>4.0 Continue to uphold our policy of Least Restrictive access and seek to remove other barriers to use such as steps and narrow gates.</p> <p>4.1 Utilise data on CAMS to target removal of stiles</p>	   £	<p>£✓</p> <p>£+</p>	<p>User Groups &amp; volunteers</p> <p>Highways &amp; Green Infrastructure &amp; Countryside staff</p>
















		<p>where greatest impact is shown.</p> <p>4.2 Provide more, short, circular promoted routes, for health, leisure and tourism.</p> <p>4.3 Work with Highways colleagues to find resources and ways in which we can better manage county unclassified roads to provide multi- purpose routes. This would also encourage safe walking, horse riding and cycling particularly where rights of way only connect by vehicular roads.</p> <p>4.4 Signpost carriage drivers &amp; other vehicular users to suitable and legal country unclassified roads and work with Volunteer Groups such as Treadlightly to assist with maintenance and contribute to responsible use.</p> <p>4.5 Update the Countryside Access Design Guide</p> <p>4.6 In conjunction with Cadw seek to establish a project combining the conservation of historic assets with access improvement schemes.</p>			<p>Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales</p> <p>Gwent Police</p> <p>Disabled Ramblers</p> <p>Cadw</p>
WM5	Improve Green Infrastructure	5.0 Work with planners/developers to create planned strategic green infrastructure which incorporates the PROW network to promote and encourage sustainable, active travel and provide opportunities for recreation & leisure.	★ 🚲 ♥	£✓ £+ ✎	<p>Planning &amp; Developers</p> <p>Green Infrastructure &amp; Countryside Access Team</p>














		<p>5.1 Work with Stakeholders to create places where people are not impeded in undertaking physical activity, accessing nature and having low pollution levels.</p> <p>5.2 Maintenance &amp; Improvements will be designed to be in keeping with surrounding habitat. For example a tarmac path would not be a suitable choice through a woodland habitat.</p>			<p>Natural Resources Wales</p> <p>Canal &amp; Rivers Trust</p> <p>Landowners</p>
WM6	Safe Travel	<p>6.0 Look to improve safety of road and railway crossings where possible, working with Highways, Welsh Government Network Rail and PROW Partners.</p> <p>6.1 Work in partnership to provide new and upgraded routes in areas of evidenced need and to encourage use through well designed safe routes.</p> <p>6.2 Maintain highway verges and unsealed highways to improve connectivity to ROW network and provide safer routes for walkers, horse riders and cyclists</p> <p>6.3 Identify and support measures that will reduce traffic speed and volume where this will preserve or improve network connectivity for non-motor vehicle users.</p>	   	  	<p>Network Rail</p> <p>Welsh Government Transport Natural Resources Wales</p> <p>MCC Highways &amp; Planning</p> <p>Community &amp; Town Councils</p> <p>Landowners &amp; User Groups</p>

## Active Healthy Lifestyles

To improve the accessibility of the network and make it easier for people to incorporate walking, riding and cycling into their everyday lives. To support the rights of way network for purposeful journeys.

Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource	Key Partners
AHL1	Increase Health & Well Being Benefits	<p>7.0 Target priority areas and deliver improvements to the network and sites addressing health inequalities through increasing active travel and recreational activity.</p> <p>7.1 Prioritise maintenance on those PROW providing access to natural greenspace and public open space or where providing an accessible resource for community based activities such as health walks.</p> <p>7.2 Support Volunteering on sites and rights of way &amp; seek opportunities for specific groups to also enhance access on permissive paths on NRW land.</p> <p>7.3 Work with partners to support implementation of health improvement initiatives, such as Fit4Life Groups, Walking for Health, cycling and walking initiatives and GP referral.</p> <p>7.4 Ensure insurance for Fit4Life Groups is reviewed and resolved.</p> <p>7.5 Improve connectivity &amp; consider equestrian and other parking where reasonable to encourage recreational and leisure activity; including access to countryside sites/parks, other facilities of high leisure use, the National Trail, Wales Coast Path, Regional Routes and routes leading to World Heritage Site and other significant features/places.</p> <p>7.6 Tackle health disadvantage by promoting access to the natural</p>	<p>£ </p> <p> ★</p>	<p>£ </p> <p>£ </p> <p>£ </p> <p></p>	<p>Health care providers &amp; professionals</p> <p>Community Councils</p> <p>User &amp; Interest Groups</p> <p>Canal &amp; Rivers Trust</p> <p>Disabled Ramblers</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales (NRW)</p> <p>Active Travel Steering Group</p> <p>Monmouthshire Highways</p> <p>Mon Life Staff</p>











		<p>environment and green space beyond urban areas, providing connectivity to the landscape and nature.</p> <p>7.7 Identify partners in schools, outdoor education and colleges to promote the health benefits of countryside access to pupils and students in innovative ways.</p> <p>7.8 Encourage active travel to schools through promoting and enhancing PROW &amp; cycle routes, thus educating responsible lifestyles and reducing obesity.</p> <p>7.9 In conjunction with partners look at installing &amp; maintaining picnic benches/seats to enable more use of sites/PROW for those with disability or health issues.</p>			
AHL2	Active Travel	<p>8.0 Work with colleagues in the Council and MonLife to raise the profile of the contribution of rights of way for purposeful journeys</p> <p>8.1 Remove barriers to active travel and recreation and promote routes and opportunities.</p> <p>8.2 Work with Green Infrastructure and planning colleagues to ensure active travel routes are incorporated and link to PROW/cycle networks, transport hubs, greenspaces and countryside sites.</p> <p>8.3 Pursue the provision of motorised traffic free, safe walking, cycling and equestrian routes linking towns, villages and rural areas where possible.</p> <p>8.4 Support &amp; influence the authorities and other strategies &amp; policies to ensure that active travel is firmly integrated into work programmes.</p>	   	  	<p>Active Travel Steering Group, Developers/Planners, Highways, Disabled Ramblers, Monmouthshire Local Access Forum</p> <p>Local Schools/colleges, Community Councils, User &amp; Interest Groups,</p> <p>Canal &amp; Rivers Trust</p>

AHL3	Modal shift to walking & cycling	<p>9.0 Provide PROW routes that can provide realistic alternative to driving, especially for short journeys.</p> <p>9.1 Work with NRW to improve connectivity between the bridleway network and areas of Welsh Government woodland estate where permissive access by horse riders exists.</p> <p>9.2 Work with all landowners to create new and extend higher status routes (bridleway or restricted byway) to provide access for greatest range of people.</p> <p>9.3 Work with Planning and Green Infrastructure colleagues to secure PROW within green corridors and green space.</p> <p>9.4 Improve &amp; upgrade the PROW network where it links with amenities, public transport nodes, work and education to increase the attractiveness of walking, cycling and riding as an alternative to driving.</p> <p>9.5 Seek improved accommodation for vulnerable users where Rights of Way link via roads, for instance protecting and cutting verges to make horse riders and other users feel safer.</p> <p>9.6 Work with interest groups and partners to provide a network of county unclassified roads for vehicular and other users to prevent illegal use of non-vehicular paths and expand the network available to cyclists, walkers and riders.</p>	   	   	<p>Active Travel Steering Group</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>Highways, Planning, GI &amp; Countryside</p> <p>Monmouthshire Local Access Forum</p> <p>Local Schools</p> <p>Community Councils</p> <p>User &amp; Interest Groups</p>
AHL4	Tackling deprivation and	<p>10.0 Remove barriers for those economically disadvantaged by encouraging the use of countryside sites and prowl network as a free-</p>	  	 	<p>Monmouthshire Local Access Forum, Developers,</p>



	disadvantage	<p>at-the-point of-use resource for active travel, recreation &amp; leisure use</p> <p>10.1 Tackle health disadvantage by promoting access to the natural environment and green space, beyond urban areas, providing connectivity to nature and heritage.</p> <p>10.2 Encourage active travel to schools through promotion and enhancing PROW &amp; cycle networks.</p>	★	£ 😊 ✍️	Health Care Providers and Professionals. Wye Valley AONB Schools/colleges, Leisure Services, Community Councils, User & Interest groups
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## Knowing What's Out There





To achieve an up-to-date and accessible Definitive Map and Statement and to promote Countryside Sites and the PROW network

Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource	Key Partners
KWOT1	Maintain and make more accessible records	<p>11.0 Maintain and update the county's Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way &amp; Statement.</p> <p>11.1 Ensure the Definitive Map &amp; Statement is easily accessible</p> <p>11.2 Maintain public registers online and add list of all section 147 authorisations and legal orders (diversions/closures).</p> <p>11.3 Continue to process claims according to prioritisation and seek additional resources to clear backlog of applications.</p> <p>11.4 Seek to ensure Ordnance Survey Maps are corrected and updated.</p>	   	 	Ordnance Survey, Highways, Legal Services and SRS.
KWOT2	Provide advice on PROW network and	<p>12.0 Provide advice and guidance to landowners and users.</p> <p>12.1 Liaise with Planning and Development Management to</p>	  		Developers, NFU, Landowners, Land managers, Community Councils, User



	countryside sites	<p>provide advice on Local Development Plan and planning applications.</p> <p>12.2 Respond to and give appropriate advice to Land Charge Searches.</p> <p>12.3 Advise on and where appropriate, progress orders to amend the PROW network in the interest of the public and or the landowner.</p> <p>12.4 Provide advice and where appropriate progress orders for temporary closures but with conditions as per policy</p> <p>12.5 Consider developing policy for requests to plant trees, install seats/plaques etc. in country parks/sites.</p>			& Interest Groups. Legal Services, Planning, GI & Countryside Access
KWOT 3	Negotiate Improvements	<p>13.0 Work with landowners to deliver improvements to the PROW network and countryside sites, to increase accessibility and encourage active travel and recreation, leisure use and support local economy.</p> <p>13.1 Work with NRW to review access on their sites, reduce Modification claims and produce management plans that can help inform future tree clearance programmes, reducing access closures and assisting with aims in 13.0.</p> <p>13.2 Secure any opportunities that arise from changes to the regime of agricultural and land management subsidies.</p> <p>13.3 Consult on proposed improvements in management plans for countryside sites as they are developed.</p>	  ★	<p>£✓</p> <p>£+</p> <p>£😊</p>	<p>Landowners and agents, Welsh Government,</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales</p>

		13.4 Develop partnerships such as the "Friends of the 65 Bus" and work with Highways and other partners to develop and promote scheduled bus services to help people access the countryside, reducing traffic, benefiting people's health, local economy and the environment.			
KWOT 4	More accessible information /increasing Knowledge and confidence	<p>14.0 Working with key partners, increase the range of information on and about countryside access and its benefits. Consider using walking &amp; other organisations publications to do this and disseminating information through local publications.</p> <p>14.1 Tailor information to reach widest range of customers (online, phone apps, maps and guides), including specific groups, young to old age groups and visually impaired and disabled user groups.</p> <p>14.2 Target approach to reach PROW &amp; Countryside site non users, improving accessibility of information to spark interest in walking or cycling or horse riding, increase knowledge and confidence to encourage use.</p> <p>14.3 Seek to promote circular routes (as per walking development plan) with specific themes to improve benefits and target audiences better.</p> <p>14.4 Work with NRW &amp; other woodland partners to provide better information about what access is available in woodlands.</p> <p>14.5 To encourage NRW to provide and share an easily accessible map showing the extent of Welsh Government</p>	  £ ★	£✓ £+ £😊	Active Travel Strategy & cycling Steering Group, Countryside Access Officers, Health Care Providers and Professionals, MCC Highways Transportation and Waste, Monmouthshire Countryside Access Forum, Wye Valley AONB Libraries Local Schools Community and Town Councils User and Interest Groups Mon Life Leisure services Canal & Rivers Trust

		<p>woodland estate that is subject to permissive access by horse riders.</p> <p>14.6 Promote Bus Services where possible, to access promoted routes and the countryside.</p>			
KWOT 5	Promotion of Wales Coast Path, NT & promoted routes	<p>15.1 Maintain primary promoted routes to a high standard to safeguard economic benefits and tourism product.</p> <p>15.2 Help to keep spend by visitors (e.g. walkers and cyclists) in the local and rural areas through linkages with local businesses, thereby supporting Monmouthshire's small business sector.</p>	£ ♥	£✓	Tourism, Natural Resources Wales, Wales Coast Path Regional Management Group, ODPNT management Group, Other local authorities, Wye Valley AONB
KWOT 6	Sustainable Tourism	<p>16.0 Provide information to help support community led tourism.</p> <p>16.1 Increase length of stay through packaging, linking and developing new products (e.g. new routes or new promoted routes). Promote the resource.</p> <p>16.2 Refresh &amp; improve signage to and in countryside sites</p> <p>16.3 More guided walks &amp; events</p> <p>16.4 Utilise Ambassadors more so they can be the "go to people".</p>	 ♥ £ ★	£✓ £+ 	Tourism, MCC Countryside Access Forum, Local Businesses, Community Councils, GI & Countryside Access, Leisure Services, User & Interest Groups
KWOT7	Disability promotion improvements	<p>17.1 Engage with relevant organisations to ensure hard copy material is made available to meet the needs of those other minorities' e.g. visual impairment and those from ethnic groups.</p> <p>17.2 Better promotion of health walks, distributing to GP Surgeries/chemists etc.</p>	♥★ 	£✓  £+	<p>Health organisations and professionals</p> <p>Tourism, GI &amp; Countryside Access</p> <p>User Groups</p>

## Community Involvement

To support and enable volunteer groups, to be actively involved with countryside projects, contributing to wellbeing and creating sustainable and resilient communities.

Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource	Key Partners
Cl1	Volunteer Involvement	<p>18.0 Continue to develop volunteer programmes that support the delivery of the objectives of the RoWIP and seek funding to do so.</p> <p>18.1 Support existing groups and the development of new Community Groups to improve and maintain their local rights of way and countryside sites.</p> <p>18.2 Develop guidance, training and promotional material to help educate and attract volunteers.</p> <p>18.3 Develop focused paper &amp; other media promotional material with volunteer groups to help ensure material reaches intended client groups.</p> <p>18.4 Work with community &amp; town councils to deal with annual overgrowth &amp; identify funding/priorities for improvement schemes</p> <p>18.5 Signpost walkers/riders to local walking &amp; riding groups</p>	<p>★ ♥</p> <p>£ 🚲</p>	<p>£✓</p> <p>£+</p> <p>£😊</p>	<p>Mon Life (Leisure Services, Outdoor Education etc.)</p> <p>User &amp; Interest Groups</p> <p>Community &amp; Town Councils</p> <p>Canal &amp; Rivers Trust</p> <p>Keep Wales Tidy</p> <p>Ramblers Association, BHS</p> <p>BBNP Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>Appropriate Organisations</p>
Ci2	Assisting volunteers	<p>19.0 Improve information technology and mapping interface to be more useful for volunteer projects.</p> <p>19.1 Develop &amp; publish guidance on responsibilities for groups &amp; insurance requirements</p> <p>19.2 Identify method of collating &amp; giving information on grants to community and other groups.</p>	£ ★	£✓	<p>Mon Life, Ordnance Survey, GI &amp; Countryside Access</p>

		19.3 Develop and promote guidance to Community and Town Councils to identify their powers, responsibilities and duties regarding access and show how they can identify local needs and opportunities and be able to act upon them to best advantage in ways that mean most to their communities.			
Cl3	New volunteer programmes to improve health and well-being, improve environment /biodiversity and get young people volunteering .	<p>20.0 Identify route improvements &amp; new health walks</p> <p>20.1 Work in partnership with appropriate organisations and with volunteers to eradicate invasive species.</p> <p>20.2 Encourage local volunteer groups to provide information boards/events/information which increases the publics overall appreciation and connectivity to landscape &amp; nature.</p> <p>20.3 Investigate opportunities to encourage younger people to volunteer.</p> <p>20.4 With partners establish "Friends of "groups along regional routes to promote and look for funding opportunities along regional routes.</p>	<p>£</p> <p>★</p> <p>♥</p>	<p>£✓</p> <p>£+</p> <p>£😊</p>	<p>Volunteers and User Groups</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>Appropriate organisations like NRW, Wye Valley AONB, BBNP</p> <p>Tourism, Youth &amp; outdoor Education, Leisure Services</p> <p>Health care providers and professionals</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Community Councils</p> <p>Businesses</p>

## A prosperous Wales


To maximise the economic benefits of countryside access

Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource	Key Partners
PW1	Maximise economic benefits	21.0 Highlight the economic benefits of countryside access in Monmouthshire	★ £	£✓	All partners
	Improve product and	21.1 Continue to work in partnership with other coastal authorities, NRW, WG and others	♥		












	grow new markets	<p>to secure improvements to the Wales Coast Path and maintain it to Wales Quality Standard.</p> <p>2112 Maximise economic opportunities on regional routes by establishing Friends of Groups and working in partnership with other local authorities to promote and maintain routes to a high standard.</p> <p>20.3 Improve social media presence</p> <p>214 Work closely to develop walking/riding products with tourism officers</p> <p>21.5 Use ambassadors to promote countryside access provision and ensure they are kept up to date with improvements/projects in their area.</p> <p>21.6 Develop where possible long distance, multi-purpose routes, cycle or bridleway routes.</p> <p>21.7 Make use of partners/businesses and volunteers to promote targeted circular walks and events.</p> <p>21.7 Identify &amp; promote technology driven measures that would appeal to younger age groups</p>			
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### Future Focused







Working for a resilient and future focused service in partnership with others, to provide wider benefits to residents and visitors to Monmouthshire

Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource	Key Partners
FF1	Increase Awareness of ROWIP	22.0 Raise awareness of the ROWIP to customers, non-users of the network and stakeholders	 ★	£✓	All partners



FF2	<p>Links to other strategies &amp; plans</p> <p>To deliver objectives in plan</p> <p>Partnership Working</p>	<p>23.0 Promote the wider benefits of countryside access, improve and maintain partnerships to implement key aims of this plan.</p> <p>23.1 Promote the rights of way network as a mechanism for helping achieve other appropriate internal and external aims described in this plan.</p> <p>23.0 Strengthen partnership working with key Stakeholders to make better sense of the network and provide well-maintained safe attractive environments.</p>	  	  	All partners
FF4	Environmental Impact & Mitigation Measures	<p>24.0 To work with external partners to ensure the development of the rights of way network maximises its contribution to wider landscape, biodiversity, visitor interpretation and educational objectives.</p> <p>24.1 Update and continue to promote use of Countryside Access Biodiversity Technical guidance.</p> <p>24.2 Identify flood risk areas and likely impact on PROW. Put in place mitigation measures. Seek alternative routes for those parts of Offa's Dyke Path National Trail and regional routes prone to flooding.</p> <p>24.3 Undertake an assessment of those paths around villages which are not surfaced and could become dangerous in wet weather (to disabled/elderly) and seek resources &amp; materials to</p>	  	 	All Partners

		<p>improve them in conjunction with local communities.</p> <p>24.4 Explore natural flood management potential as part of wider landscape initiatives to address ROW issues and secure future access.</p>			
Ff5	Resourcing	<p>25.0 Ensure adequate resources for the implementation of this plan by securing additional resources from internal and external sources that help achieve the objectives within this plan.</p> <p>25.1 Continue to develop asset management approach, particularly with bridges, to inform costs of maintaining the network and to make improvements</p> <p>25.2 Establish research, with partners like BBNP, to establish true value of walking and riding product within Monmouthshire.</p> <p>25.3 Seek to maintain and improve the delivery of the countryside access service through charging for activity where admissible.</p>	<p>£ ★</p> <p>🚲</p> <p>♥</p>	<p>£+</p> <p>£😊</p>	<p>Active travel Group, Development Control</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>GI &amp; Countryside Access, Highways, Mon Life</p> <p>Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>Local Businesses</p> <p>Community Councils</p>
Ff6	Improved Customer Service	<p>26.0 Provide the customer with a range of methods of reporting an issue.</p> <p>26.1 Improve communications with service users, volunteers, community and Town Council's</p> <p>26.2 Provide updates about specific improvements to user groups.</p>	<p>😊</p> <p>♥</p>	<p>£✓</p>	<p>GI &amp; Countryside staff</p> <p>Monmouthshire LAF</p> <p>Community Councils User &amp; Interest Groups</p>

FF7	Legislative changes & operational management	<p>27.0 Looking at the available PROW network and the barriers preventing use, take a strategic overview to provide relevant shared use routes and better links and access facilities where needed.</p> <p>27.1 Review operational policies and priorities in light of the policies and objectives in this plan.</p> <p>27.2 Periodically review operational policies in response to legislative change</p> <p>27.3 Provide PROW officers and volunteers with the training necessary to ensure effective delivery of PROW operations.</p>	  	  	
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## 18 GLOSSARY

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AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BBNP	Brecon Beacons National Park
BHS	British Horse Society
BOAT	Byway Open to All Traffic
CAMS	Countryside Access Management System
GI	Green Infrastructure
LAF	Local Access Forum
MCC	Monmouthshire County Council
MCAIP	Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
OrVAL	Outdoor Recreation Valuation tool
PROW	Public Rights of Way
ROWIP	Rights of Way Improvement Plan
WG	Welsh Government

## 19 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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The preparation of the ROWIP falls within the scope of Article 2(a) of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. The Directive states that its objective is “to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”. The Directive recognises, however, that an SEA need only be undertaken if a plan is likely to lead to significant environmental effects. After screening the ROWIP using the information contained in “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” it is the Authority’s judgement that the actions and policies contained within the ROWIP are not likely to lead to any significant environmental effects and that a SEA is not required.

## 20 PHOTOS

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Front page photo courtesy of Chepstow Walkers Welcome  
Photos on pages 39 & 40 courtesy of Llanbadoc Path Care Group