**ANNEX 1**

A brief outline of the Assessments carried out into the previous ROWIP was given in Part 2 of the main document. A more comprehensive summary what was done and the conclusions reached can be found here.

**THE ROWIP ASSESSMENTS**

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is underpinned by a number of Assessments that have looked into Rights of Way and access in the County. The Assessments undertaken were:

• An overview of the achievements of the first ROWIP and how the matters considered in its assessment have progressed since it was published

• Evaluating the current condition of the network and its legal record

• Assessing the available evidence relating to current and likely future public need

• An overview of potential crossover between the ROWIP and other plans and priorities and potential partnerships that may arise from them to deliver maximum benefits to the public

• Meeting the Statutory Requirements

The assessments were considered by the Ceredigion Local Access Forum ROWIP subcommittee and their comments have helped shape the draft Plan. User groups also had the opportunity to input into the process.

The key findings of the assessments are outlined in the following sections (2.1 – 2.5)

**2.1 An overview of the achievements of the first ROWIP and how the matters considered in its Assessment have progressed since it was published.**

In accordance with the Welsh Government Guidance (4.9) this covered the key matters identified in the previous assessments, how the Statement of Action proposed to address them, the extent that those actions were met and any outstanding issues.

The ROWIP was underpinned by a number of Assessments that looked into Rights of Way and access in the county. The Assessments undertaken were:

The strategic context for the management of Rights of Way

The definitive map – the legal definition of public Rights of Way

The condition of the Rights of Way network

The management and protection of Rights of Way

Assessments of user needs

Publicity and promotion of Rights of way and Access

The Statement of Action addressed the matters raised in the Assessments; through the following themes:

Maintain the definitive map

Manage and protect the Right of Way network

Meet the needs of users, including those with visual impairment and mobility problems.

Working in partnership

Raising awareness about Rights of Way and access

2.1.1 Summary

The majority of the actions identified in the previous ROWIP were either fully or partially met, with those that were not met either being of a lower priority or identified in advance as needing additional resources to meet them.

The ROWIP itself has proved to be a useful tool for Authority staff in providing a structured and strategic method of managing and improving Rights of Way and access within the County. For example, the introduction of the Primary Path Network has provided a rationale for dealing with issues in the face of continued reductions in budgets, whilst the introduction of the Adopt a Path scheme provides a pointer to longer-term solutions and different ways of working to deal with reduced resources.

* + 1. Maintain the Definitive Map

There were seven direct actions under the theme “Maintain the definitive map”.

The highest priority action “*Determine Modification Orders within set timescales*” was met in full along with actions to “*Support the applications for the diversion of rights of way where the line of the amended route would be in the public interest*”, “*Prioritise the determination of orders for the creation and diversion of Rights of Way to reflect public benefits*”.

The actions not met were either of lower priority or had been identified as needing additional resources, which were not forthcoming, like“*Identify lost ways” and “Review the Definitive Map****”***

* + 1. Manage and protect the Right of Way network

There were thirteen direct actions under the theme “Manage and protect the right of way network”.

The majority of the highest priority actions were met fully, including:

*“Increase the proportion of Rights of Way that are easy to use and signed to 50% by 2010”, “Increase the number of Rights of Way that are signed from the metalled highway”, “* *Devise a path priority network to guide the allocation of resources” and “Develop IT systems to assist in path management”.*

Those actions not met were again of lower priority and/or identified as needing additional resources, such as:

*“Increase the proportion of Rights of Way that are included in annual brush cutting programme to 15% by 2018” and*“*Increase the proportion of Rights of Way that are easy to use and signed to 80% by 2018”.*

* + 1. Meet the needs of users, including those with visual impairment and mobility problems.

There were twenty six direct actions under this theme and most of the highest priority actions were met in full, including:

*“Implement least restrictive access principles in path management programmes”,*

*“Develop and maintain easy access routes for those with visual impairment and mobility problems”, “Improve, sign and maintain circular Rights of Way networks from selected settlements”, “Maintain a network of strategic recreational routes”, “Complete the development of the Ceredigion Coast Path” and “Contribute to the development of the All Wales Coast Path”.*

Those low priority actions or those needing more resources that were not met included:

*“Cylch Ceredigion (linking existing strategic routes to provide a round-Ceredigion Trail)” and “To develop additional walking opportunities through the development of the following recreational routes: Teifi Trail (Taith Teifi)”.*

* + 1. Working in partnership

There were eight direct actions under the theme “Working in partnership”.

The most of the highest priority actions were met fully, including:

*“Support and promote the work of the Ceredigion Local Access Forum”,* “*Effective liaison with user groups and landowners/land managers”, “ Support user group involvement in Rghts of Way maintenance and improvement” and “Re-introduction of the Adopt a Path scheme”.*

Actions not met were again either of lower priority or needing additional resources, including:

*“To develop liaison arrangements between Ceredigion County Council and Community Councils through the establishment of local forums” and “Re-introduce the walking your way to health scheme”.*

* + 1. Raising awareness about Rights of Way and access

All of the following actions were met in full:

“*Provide information about strategic linear recreational routes in Ceredigion”,*

 *“Provide information about other strategic recreational routes”, “Provide information*

 *about access opportunities at countryside sites”, “Provide information about open access opportunities in Ceredigion” and.”Provide information about access opportunities on Rights of Way near selected towns and villages”.*

The following item was only partially met due to the lack of resources**:**

*“Deliver an annual programme of guided walks in Ceredigion”.*

**2.2 Evaluating the current condition of the network and its legal record**

2.2.1 Introduction

The evaluation of the condition of the network showed that despite financial pressures there is much to celebrate, especially with regard to the length of routes that are included on the Primary Path Network that was establish and the introduction of the Countryside Access Management System has given much easier digital access to important information.

2.2.2 Condition of the network

The introduction of the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) is one of the successes of the previous ROWIP that make it much easier assess the condition of the network and to provides a far more accurate figure of routes that are open and available. The method used previously as part of the Performance Indicators system has relied on a 5% sample survey.

The total number of paths on the Primary Path Network (PPN) now stands at 60%. This is a very significant improvement on the previous sample surveys, which had averaged only 42% over the ten-year period between 2003/4 and 2013/14.

Some 50% of the total footpath length is included on the PPN. However, though the total length of multi-user routes (bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic) it is shorter, a higher proportion (78%) is open and included on the PPN. This illustrates the success the Ceredigion on Horseback project carried out during the period under review and of the general working practices following from from ROWIP Actions C.14 “*Improve, maintain and sign networks of horse-riding routes*”, and C.15 “*Improve connectivity of route networks for carriage drivers”* and C.16 “*Improve and maintain a network of cycleways and cycle routes*”

The number and variety of the infrastructure on the network gives an indication of the challenges faced by the Public Rights of Way team. However, the increased number of gates replacing stiles is a positive indication that the principles of least restrictive access are being applied, with gates now making up 81% of boundary crossings.

The increased number of signs is a positive indication that the Authority had sought to address issues raised in the assessments to the previous ROWIP, which had identified the lack of signposting and way marking as a major issue.

Of the Issues raised in complaints by members of the public about routes on the PPN, a total of 1059 (70%) were linked in some way linked to a lack of regular inspection and maintenance, with 588 (39%) about maintenance, 313 (21%) relating to vegetation and 158 (10%) terrain.

The assessment highlighted some shortcomings of CAMS when recording the condition of the network, For example, a key finding in the survey for the 2008 ROWIP had been that local routes, close to home were the highest priority (52%) for respondents, with about third (38%) of walks between 1 and 3 miles (38%). CAMS cannot yet be used to relate paths conditions directly to settlements indicating possible development areas that will have to be targeted over the next ROWIP period.

* + 1. Management Arrangements

*2.2.3.1 Staffing Structure*

There was a major restructuring of the Public Rights of Way team in 2015, resulting in the current structure that is shown in Figure 2. The Public Rights of Way team sits within the Coast and Countryside Section, which in turn is part of the Performance and Economy Service.

Figure 2

* + - 1. Ranger Areas

Currently there are three Area Rangers covering three geographical areas within the County (see Figure 3 with each Ranger managing about 800km of public Rights of Way.

Figure 3



* + - 1. *Public Path Order Working Practice*

A Public Path Order Working Practice was introduced in 2015 that provides a pragmatic approach to dealing with long-standing and historical issues on the network, like buildings erected across paths, excavations, etc, that are unlikely to be resolved through enforcement action. It has also allowed for the Authority to pursue diversions, where the public and the Authority interests are both served by, for example, giving an alternative route with fewer maintenance liabilities.

* + - 1. *Rights of Way Operational Handbook*

The Rights of Way Operational Handbook is intended to provide guidance for the purpose of managing rights of way in a manner which takes account of any potential hazards/issues that might be encountered and provides that the standard with regards to maintenance/path infrastructure follows established guidance and good practice.

The document is intended as a guide to management, it does not impart any additional liability onto the Local Authority for the safety of users. It is a “live document” that reflects changes to working practices, national guidance, case law etc. with amendments made following discussion within the Rights of Way. It is not a published document .

* + - 1. Primary Path Network

The Primary Path Network (PPN) was established following a review into the resources, workload and working practices required for the delivery of Rights of Way work. It was recognised that adequate resources were not likely to be made available. In consequence, a framework of priorities was devised, leading to a categorisation of the network, in accordance with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This network of paths, known as the Primary Path Network (PPN) was identified and the aim is to ensure that it is “open and available” for public use. This approach was considered and approved by the Local Access Forum.

While total of 1765 problems were reported on the whole network, 1523 (86%) were recorded against Category 1 & 2 paths that are contained on the PPN. In contrast, the Category 0 routes that make up same 40% of the network had only 14% of the issues logged against them. These numbers provides some justification for the PPN and the concentration of resources on it.

* + - 1. Enforcement

In recognition that Ceredigion is a rural stock-rearing county, the Council seeks to work in cooperation with landowners and sees enforcement as very much a final option. It may be necessary to highlight the prospect of legal action in certain circumstances, though this is a ‘last resort’, bearing in mind that legal action can be a resource-intensive process.

* + 1. Resource implications

The Authority continues to look at alternative ways of working to maintain and improve services in the face of reduced budgets and resources. The Ceredigion Rights of Way team has a long record of working closely with local volunteers to maintain and improve the network and has been well placed to deal with reduced resources. The long-established collaborations with the Ceredigion Rights of Way Volunteers in heavy maintenance by the footpath working parties has been augmented in recent years by the introduction of the Adopt a Path scheme and the use of office volunteers.

A Countryside Council for Wales study, albeit carried out in 2002, is still a useful barometer for the resources required to maintain Rights of Way. The cost of bringing the whole network in Wales into a satisfactory condition was then estimated to be approximately £26M, with a subsequent annual maintenance cost of about £8.4M.

With upgrade costs distributed over a 5-year period and added to the maintenance costs, the annual investment was estimated at £13.6M per year or approximately £390 per km per year. It should be noted that these figures excludes provision for the additional staff resources that would be required to deliver such an improvement in condition.

When these calculations are applied to Ceredigion on a pro-rata basis proportional to the share of Rights of Way provide a measure can be estimated of the investment required to improve the condition of our Rights of Way. In 2002 it was estimated that the cost of maintaining the network was approximately £620,000 (£247 per km); in 2017 that equates to £925,000 (£368 per km)

A more up-to-date assessment was undertaken, by reviewing information available through CAMS and using current costs for relevant types of works and of resolving issues. The assessment of the maintenance costs of infrastructure; vegetation management, surface management and cost of resolving issues gave a comparable annual figure of about £945,000 or £378 per km.

In contrast, during the 10 years since the production of the first ROWIP the annual County Council budget for works to public Rights of Way has been approximately £130,000 per year, which equates to £52 per km. The sum excludes path projects like the Ystwyth Trail, Coast Path and the ROWIP grant and the additional staff to support them.

However, a commendable 60% of the Rights of Way network in Ceredigion is currently open and available. Considering that the maintenance costs are estimated at approximately £378 per km while recent actual expenditure has equated to £52 per km, the pressures that the Authority faces in managing the network are clearly evident. The rationale of establishing the Primary Path Network and targeting resources to the areas of most need is vital.

2.2.5 Promoted Routes

Much work has been undertaken in recent years to augment the number of promoted route. Initiatives like Paths for People, Ceredigion on Horseback and the development of the Coast Path have all resulted in greater awareness of the opportunities available for outdoor recreation.

However, there is a general lack of promotional material available in the majority of settlements across the County. Only one third of the settlements have access to a promoted walk, with only 16% having access to promoted routes for cyclists and horse riders. For the larger “Urban and Rural Service Centres” 62% have access to a promoted walk, while 24% have access to promoted routes for cyclists and horse riders.

The promotional material available for cyclists does not make distinction between cycling abilities; indeed much of the material was originally prepared with horse riders. Most of the routes on the Council’s “Walks and Rides” page would only be suitable for more advanced or fitter off -road riders on mountain bikes. The Council Tourism website “Discover Ceredigion” provides information on cycling opportunities and includes links to the Sustrans website, which identifies off-road, easy-gradient, family-friendly cycle provision. Projects like the Ystwyth Trail have been important in such provision as have the improvements to multi-user paths in the service centres like Aberystwyth and Cardigan. However there is a general lack of provision across the County.

There is also a lack of provision of promotional material for less-abled users, carriage drivers and those in mechanically propelled vehicles. Greater partnership working with internal and external stakeholders is needed, both to identify the provision and to prepare new promotional material. It is not that accessible routes do not exist; indeed, the assessment indicated that there were many opportunities for access to all, at least in the urban centres. However, there is a lack of promotional material and information on the Council interactive map.

There are a number of stakeholders who provide some form of access throughout the County. More partnership working (especially with NRW) is essential in providing more information on the access opportunities that are available. There is potential to create a single coherent contact point for access provision in the County; both internally and externally; with greater linkages between various stakeholders.

There are some inconsistencies with regards to design of the promotional material available on the Council “Walks and Rides” website. A more consistent approach needs to be adopted, though a great deal of work is required to bring current promotional material up to date.

There is a lack of clarity on the type and length of routes provided on the “Walks and Rides” page. There is need for a more consistent “grouping” of routes based on their suitability for different users, length, difficulty and geographical location.

More information is also needed on the interactive map about the suitability of routes, like path surfacing and potential barriers.

2.2.6 Legal Record

2.2.6.1 *The Definitive Map and Statement*

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 required County Councils in England and Wales to produce a Definitive Map and Statement for their area. Initially, a draft Definitive Map was produced (in consultation with Parish Councils) following which there was a period for objections and representations to be made.

The Definitive Map was finally confirmed on 18th March 1966. The Definitive Map was produced at a scale of 21/2 inches to the mile (1:25,000). The Definitive Map and Statement is held at the County Council offices at Penmorfa, Aberaeron.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 introduced the approach that replaced the review by providing for the continuous review of the Map. More recently, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 has introduced further changes in respect of the closure of the Definitive Map to certain types of applications from 2026.

The Definitive Map and Statement is the legal record of public rights of way (public footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. If a way is shown on the Map, then that is conclusive evidence that the public had those rights along the way at the relevant date of the Map (18th March 1966), and continue to have those rights, unless there has been a legally authorised change.

However, rights may exist over a way not shown on the Map at all, or additional rights may exist over a recorded route. One of the effects of the Definitive Map is that it is conclusive as to what is recorded, but not as to what is not recorded. The CROW Act 2000 has dealt with this issue by setting a cut-off date of 2026 by which claims that are made to recorded historical rights that existed before 1st January 1949 may be added to the Definitive Map.

Whereas the CROW Act 2000 provided for the automatic re-designation of ‘Roads Used as Public Paths’ as Restricted Byways, there is a legacy that still requires resolution. Because reclassification orders were made by Dyfed County Council, the Council is still required to conclude the process of reclassification.

The former Dyfed County Council commenced the reclassification process in the early 1990s - orders were made for the reclassification of some 697 RUPPs and unopposed orders were duly confirmed. However, where objections were made the remaining reclassification orders could not be confirmed and the County Council inherited an outstanding 349 RUPPs.

Progress has been made since the preparation of the previous ROWIP in 2008 resulting in 173 routes left to be confirmed.

A list of the key rights of way processes undertaken by the County Council are

Listed in Table 3 below.

*Table 3.*



Outstanding legal orders; Public Path Orders, Definitive Map Modification Orders, Roads Used as Public Paths, Legal Event Modification Orders

1. Public Path Orders

There are currently 12 Public Path Order awaiting confirmation; 11 of which are under the Highways Act 1980 and the remaining one under the Town and Country Planning Act.

1. Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO)

There are 7 DMMO applications currently outstanding.

BW 65/37 is an application to add a new bridleway. This is based entirely on documentary evidence. A substantial amount of time and resources is required to bring this to a close.

Tregaron Bridleways. An application to add 3 new bridleways. An order has been made; however the landowner has objected to this. The case is now awaiting submission to the Planning Inspectorate for decision.

A claimed cut through footpath in Pencarreg Aberaeron has been on hold since 2009 due to issues relating to the validity of the application; this is now being looked at again by the applicants.

Similarly a short cut through footpath on the St Gogmaels Road Cardigan has been on hold since 2010 again due to issues relating to the validity of the application; this is now being looked at again by the applicants.

The other 3 applications are where applicants have either moved, passed away or there are issues relating to the completeness of the applications; these are mostly considered a low priority, with the possibility of some of them being resolved through other means, such as creation agreements/orders or diversion orders.

\*\*Much work is needed to update CAMS with regards to Legal records with some outdated information requiring removal.

1. Roads Used as Public Paths

In January 2017 173 routes remain to be confirmed; all of the 173 remaining cases are either ready to be confirmed or in need of advertising for minor modifications prior to confirmation. There are no cases left to be referred to the Planning Inspectorate.

1. Legal Event Modification Orders’

There are currently a number of LEMOS to be completed; these are done as near as possible to the date that the legal order took effect as to avoid future backlogs. It is unknown how many LEMO’s have been made since the definitive map was published in 1966; eventually, when resources allow, these will have to be reflected in a new consolidated definitive map. There is an element of uncertainty as to the future of the Definitive Map and Statement as a means of recording access rights; the Welsh Government are currently consulting on a proposal to prepare one statutory map covering all access opportunities in Wales.

1. 2026 Cut Off

Provisions under the CROW Act to implement a cut-off date in 2026 for recording highway rights over paths that existed prior to 1949 have not yet been commenced in Wales. Some initial research was undertaken into lost ways in Ceredigion; however this was side-tracked due to a lack of resources.

There is a question over the strategic value of recording some of these lost ways, as quite often they will simply duplicate current provision. There may be greater opportunities in creating new, higher value routes in cooperation with landowners rather than pursuing the registration of “lost” routes which is likely to be controversial and resource intensive.

1. Limitations and conditions

Without a thorough review of the entire network and cross referencing with the definitive statement it would be impossible to comment on the completeness of our record of limitations and conditions. The Public Rights of Way Operational Handbook provides the Authorities working practice in respects to the location and recording of limitations on the network

As part of the review a 5% survey of the furniture installed on public rights of way included on the Primary Path Network was undertaken in 2017; the survey used information on the number and location of gates and stiles contained within CAMS and cross referenced this against information within the Definitive Map and Statement. This survey indicated that approximately 59% of all the structures currently in place on the network are not included in the Definitive Map and Statement; 62% of the gates and 52% of stiles currently located on the network not being included in the Definitive map and Statement.

1. Accuracy of the Definitive Map

Definitive map and statement can be something of a misnomer; in that they are not completely definitive. They are documents that are often open to mistakes/anomalies providing plenty of room for individual interpretation.

The definitive map in Ceredigion was prepared at the smallest allowable scale of 1;25,000, which proves problematic in providing definitive locations, widths and alignments of routes on the ground.

Likewise the quality and contents of definitive statements differ greatly from one community council area to the next; some include a great deal of details including all limitations, widths and names of the witnesses who walked them and on what date; others provide nothing but a start/end point and status of the routes

There are often cases where the statement and map are in direct conflict with each other. In these instances other sources of information such as 1905 maps, drafting maps, physical ground features etc. are inspected in order to ascertain the correct alignment. Occasionally the only way to resolve such issues is via a definitive map modification order, which can be time consuming and bureaucratic.

There are a number of cases where routes change status on the county boundary; unfortunately there is little that can be done with such routes without the full cooperation of neighbouring Authorities and landowners. Fortunately these anomalies mainly exist in quite remote and inaccessible parts of the county where their impact on the public are negligible.

There have been no resources set aside to undertake a full and thorough review of the definitive map and statement during the previous ROWIP period; consequently it is updated on a continual basis when anomalies are identified. Current working practice is for Area Rangers to note anomalies when and where they arise, which are placed on a list to be dealt with via Public Path Orders.

The Welsh Government proposals for one statutory map covering all access opportunities if brought into fruition will undoubtedly have an impact on the definitive map and the procedures that surround it. Until these proposals are completely known and understood it would be prudent to continue the status quo of identifying and dealing with anomalies on a continual basis rather than

**2.3 Assessing the available evidence relating to current and likely future public need**

This assessment explored the views of the public on Rights of Way and access to the countryside. It looked at the way in which the Rights of Way network is used, the views and aspirations of the local community and visitors, and the factors that currently discourage or prevent use of public paths and the countryside in general.

The assessment was divided into two distinct parts. The first was a review of a number of studies and surveys into Rights of Way and access, visitor satisfaction surveys, Coast Path user surveys and strategies. The studies and surveys used in the assessment were as follows:

*Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey 2014*

*Access and Outdoor Recreation Green Paper 2015*

*Wales Coast Path 2015 Ceredigion Data*

*National Assembly for Wales Key Statistics for Ceredigion*

*National Equestrian Surveys*

*Saddling up for Success – a Riding Tourism Strategy for Wales’ WTB (2003)*

*ROWIP meeting with local horse riders (2007)*

*Cycling UK Survey*

*Ceredigion Coast Path counter data*

*Cambrian Mountain Exemplar Project*

*Report on Motorcycle Tourism in West Wales*

*Ceredigion Assessment of local Wellbeing*

The first part of the Assessment concluded with the production of set of draft Themes and Actions. The second part of the Assessment , with a more local focus, took the form of a consultation. The draft Themes and Actions resulting from the earlier work were made available to the public, disseminated to the statutory consultees identified in the Countryside & Rights of Way Act ( 2000) and sent to targeted stakeholders, including user groups, local clubs/societies and service users. Public events were held across the county and social media messages posted to raise awareness of the consultation and the review in general.

The information available from the national surveys and studies proved very useful in providing an evidence-based series of themes and actions, which the public and stakeholder groups could then view and comment upon. The general content of the responses from this consultation exercise confirmed the relevance of the themes and actions and assessment on which they had been based.

Additional, local information was gleaned from the public consultations, which not only reaffirmed the information identified in the national surveys but also proved useful in providing possible solutions on how issues and barriers could be overcome on a local level. For example, the finding of a lack of information on public access opportunities was confirmed on a local level by members of Llais Rhieni, a group representing parents, grandparents and guardians, who had little awareness of the opportunities that existed in their local area. Having identified the issues and barriers they also provided useful feedback on how these could be improved to raise participation levels with. targeted consultations on new promoted routes, including e-mails to schools, greater level of detail on the condition of routes and the possible p0hysical barrier on particular paths.

The comments on the all ability path at Aberporth augmented the evidence available from the counters. It showed that where investment was made to improve surfaces and gradients, the paths will prove popular with all types of users. This type of access is vitally important in meeting health, economic and active travel objectives and in removing some of the current barriers to participation.

Acting responsibly whilst in the countryside was also deemed to be important both nationally and locally through the comments received. Landowners are an important partner in managing and improving access opportunities and it is vital that we educate the public to be respectful and responsible whilst enjoying the countryside.

2.3.1 Summary

The assessment found that some 85% of people accessing the countryside do so on foot, with about 39% of visits to the outdoors made by people with dogs. Short walks are important, with 85% being less than 3 hours and the average distance walked on the Coast Path being 3.3 miles.

Path counter data shows that good quality, all-weather and all-ability routes are important and popular and could lead to reducing barriers to participation by those with physical disability (29%), health problems (21%) and old age (14%).

Money spent on food and drink whilst accessing the countryside makes an important contribution to the local economy, with more than 40% of visitors spending during money during the visit.

Over two thirds of cyclists access routes directly from home. Over half made use of public footpaths; many stating it was to avoid traffic and that it was difficult to put together a “legal route”.

Local rides were important to horse riders with many being undertaken without the need to use transport. Most horse riders would prefer to use Public Rights of Way and avoid traffic on roads, with rides varying generally between 5 miles to 15 miles.

The connectivity of the network is an issue for cyclists and horse riders.

The connectivity of the wider access network is also important. Apart from walking the most popular activities undertaken were sightseeing/visiting attractions (70%), visiting children’s playgrounds (46%) picnicking (44%), informal games (34%) and wildlife watching (34%). Identifying these access opportunities is important, as is providing good quality, car free access to these sites.

It was also found that there is a need for greater information on opportunities on access across a range of activities.

Some 10% of respondents to the Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey had accessed the countryside in motorised vehicles. However, there is a lack of information on legally accessible routes for this type of user in the County.

According to the British Horse Society, carriage driving is of particular importance to less-abled users. It is evident from the number and length of restricted byways, coupled with other public land, that there is an adequate resource for this type of use, though it might not be well-known or exploited.

Ceredigion has a diverse landscape with the fourth largest land area of the Welsh local authorities and the second lowest population density (41.8 people per square km). Having a large, sparsely populated and topographically diverse County raises particular challenges when attempting to improve connectivity and achieve economic, health and active travel benefits. The opportunities will differ depending on location so that a locally-driven, targeted and long-term approach is needed to ensure the objectives of the Council are met on a County-wide basis.

2.3.2 Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey 2014

* Walking is the dominant activity (85%) mostly for health and exercise
* Apart from walking the most popular activities undertaken were sightseeing/visiting attractions (70%), visiting childrens playgrounds (46%) picnicking (44%), informal games (34%) and wildlife watching (34%)
* 39% of visits to the outdoors are made by people with dogs and dog walkers were almost twice as likely to participate in frequent visits as those without
* Paths near sightseeing attractions and children’s playgrounds are important
* About 35% of visits last 1 to 2 hours
* 85% of walks are less than 3 hours
* More than half of the walkers use pavements and tracks
* Money is spent on food and drink on more than 40% of visits
* The main barriers to participation in outdoor activities were physical disability (29%), other health reasons (21%) and old age (14%)
* Older people and those with long-term illness were least likely to visit outdoors
* There is likely to be future demand with increased interest in walking, off-road cycling, horse riding and sightseeing for the disabled
* The survey identified beaches (28%), mountains (16%) and the coast (14%) as the areas people would most like to go to in the future

2.3.3 Access and Outdoor Recreation Green Paper (2015)

* Make more varied use of existing paths with wider range of activities
* Need for better promotion of existing opportunities
* Allow flexibility by, for example, making it easier to replace stiles with gate

2.3.4 Wales Coast Path 2015 Ceredigion Data

* There were an estimated 43M visits to the Welsh coast for walking in 2014 with direct expenditure by adult visitors on these trips was estimated at £540M.
* On the Coast Path about ¾ of walkers double back for return
* Average distance walked on the Coast Path is 3.3 miles
* There is need for better promotion of existing opportunities

2.3.5 National Assembly for Wales Key Statistics for Ceredigion

* Population estimates show that around 77,800 people live in Ceredigion.
* With 43 people per square km the area is less-densely populated than Wales as a whole.
* A marginally higher share of the population in the area (23%) is of retirement than in Wales as a whole (21%)
* More than a quarter of the population (27%) have a limiting long-term illness

 2.3.6 National Equestrian Surveys

* Riding for pleasure was the most popular equestrian activity, with 59% of riders taking part in non-affiliated competition
* Estimated that 3M people have taken a riding holiday in the past 12 months
* An estimated £3,600 was spent on each horse in 2015.

2.3.7 Saddling up for Success – a Riding Tourism Strategy for Wales’

* Priority to develop better maintained network of routes and trails and
* Create marketing links between routes and products to provide a holistic and co-ordinated service to the riding tourist
* Importance of post-arrival information with improved waymarking of trails and routes, production of route trails and maps, development of guided trails and information on rider support facilities

2.3.8 ROWIP meeting with Local Horse Riders

* Most horse riders prefer to use Public Rights of Way.
* Local rides were undertaken without the need to use transport.
* Longer rides required a horse box and parking facilities
* Local rides from home tended to be around 5 miles or 1 to 1.5hours duration
* Longer day rides were considered to be 10 to 15 miles and more
* It was considered that there was not enough information about horse riding opportunities in Ceredigion.
* Limited connectivity of bridleways, including issues of traffic and safety when using roads as a means of connecting Rights of Way

2.3.9 Cycling UK Survey

* 65% of cyclists ride on footpaths and undesignated trails of which 52% did so to avoid traffic danger
* 49% of cyclists stated that the existing Public Rights of Way network made it difficult to put together a "legal" route.
* 68% accessed Rights of Way directly from home, though only 10% accessed trail centres and bike parks directly from home without driving
* For 60% off-road cycling was their primary form of exercise with the same number saying that it was very important for their physical health, mental health and wellbeing

2.3.10 Coast Path Counter Data

* The most popular section of the Coast Path in Ceredigion, where it coincides with Public Rights of Way, is Aberporth. The highest total reached was 103,533 in 2014, with a five-year average of 96,799. This section of path was greatly improved in 2010 when a tarmac path was installed for a length of approximately 1 mile.
* The second most popular length is in Aberaeron. The 2015 total of 19,142 was the highest since the installation of the counter in 2012
* The importance of good-quality, all-weather, easy-gradient and stock -free paths can be seen. The average number of users of the improved path in Aberporth was some 7 times greater than that on the next most popular, though unimproved, part of the path at Aberaeron

2.3.11 Cambrian Mountains Pilot Project

* Digitise managed routes and make GPS tracks available as a download for use with satellite navigators
* Monitoring regime including consideration of ‘Adopt a Path’ approach for allocating routes to volunteers
* Sign routes without vehicular rights where continuous use is a problem
* Continue to develop approaches for education and enforcement that encourage the responsible use of motor propelled vehicles

2.3.12 Motorcycle Tourism in Ceredigion

* Wales has strengths in providing guided motorcycle tourism for both overseas and domestic visitors. A variety of businesses and organisations promote and encourage considerate trail biking in Mid-Wales and provide a unique tourism product
* Average daily expenditure on meals was £2, travel £30 and accommodation was £48 per night. A conservative estimate of motorcycle related tourism expenditure is £975.30 per motorcyclist per year. Direct expenditure on motorcycle tourism (without multipliers) is estimated to be worth a minimum of £70M to the Welsh economy per year.

2.3.13 Ceredigion Assessment of Local Well-being

* Many people responding to the Well-being survey identified features such as ‘landscape and views’ (49%), ‘Clean air’ (37%) and ‘Places to walk/cycle’ (35%) as what they valued most in the Ceredigion environment.
* Path networks, urban woodlands and other green infrastructure aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of the local environment can all play an important role in improving the health and well-being of people in Wales.
* Youth responders rated the landscape and views most important to their well-being (48%), with clean air (39%) and places to walk/cycle and beaches (both 32%) also important.
* The cost of physical inactivityto Wales is estimated to be £650M per year. It is widely recognised that several of the key health issues faced by Wales (and other countries) are considered to be preventable
* Ceredigion has a great advantage in its natural environment with its potential for preventing chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and arthritis, and generally restoring physical and mental health through outdoor recreation. Even so, those benefits could be realised better by encouraging people to make the most of this free health resource and improving access.

2.3.14 Sample comments received during the Public Consultations

*“Parents don’t really know where all the paths are over the County and did not know the ‘Walks and Rides’ web page existed”.*

*“Parents want to be able to have access to a map that would show what paths are accessible with prams. Being able to identify barriers to access such as stiles, path surface and gradient would be beneficial.”*

*“I think you need to be more specific about paths for disabled people. The experience for physically disabled people in Aberporth is excellent and there are many people with electric wheelchairs that I have seen using it. It`s marvellous, but more paths like these are needed at geographically/ topographically suitable selected areas.”*

*“Important to educate the public about being responsible whilst in the countryside and being respectful of landowners including wildlife/biodiversity and dog fouling.”*

*“Mainly around linking-up with the Council’s duties under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 and possibly a more general working relationship between respective services where there are clear shared purposes and objectives.“*

*“The themes and actions demonstrate a balanced approach to future work and take on board a modern approach to the needs of all sectors of society in relation to access to the countryside.”*

*“Having information on suitability of routes for horse riders would be beneficial; i.e. if there is some wet ground that some inexperienced riders would find difficult to negotiate it would be good to have this noted in promoted literature etc”.*

*“Concern over paths crossing agricultural land, when people bring dogs with them. Quite often dogs are not under control and can cause harm to farm animals“.*

**2.4 An overview of potential crossover between the ROWIP and other plans and priorities and potential partnerships that may arise from them to deliver maximum benefits to the public**

Rights of Way are part of the fabric of our towns, villages and countryside and the planning for the network needs to take account of a number of policy areas including, but not limited to, the following:

Sustainable development

Planning and environment

Economic regeneration and tourism

Transport/Active Travel

Active recreation

Health and well-being

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan does not stand alone but sits alongside a large number of strategies and plans produced at national, regional and local levels. It is essential that these plans and strategies are known and clear linkages can be shown to meet the aims and objectives of cross-cutting themes.

* + 1. Summary

From a policy context the objectives are as follows:

* To ensure that the ROWIP translates national and local policies into effective action.
* To ensure that the ROWIP recognises the importance of Rights of Way and access for recreation, tourism development, sustainable transport and health.
* To seek a high profile for ROWIP actions within other corporate plans and strategies
* To ensure that ROWIP policies are effectively integrated with other relevant local plans and strategies.
* To ensure effective joint working within the Authority and with partner organisations.
* To seek to ensure that the development of ROWIP policies and actions maximises opportunities for securing additional funding for access initiatives
	+ 1. National Policies and Strategies

2.4.2.1 *A Walking and Cycling Action Plan for Wales (2009-2013)*

The Action Plan (published in 2008) collated all of the key initiatives which the Welsh Government and its key partners were undertaking (or planning) to support walking and cycling in Wales for the period 2009-2013. A key aim of the Action Plan was to help achieve a change in behaviour, so that people make the choice to walk or cycle.

2.4.2.2 *Wales Spatial Plan (updated 2008)*

The Central Wales Spatial Plan developed for Central Wales clearly reflects the objectives and aspirations of the Trafinidaieth Canolbarth Cymru (TraCC) region. The Central Wales vision was for *‘high quality living and working in smaller-scale settlements set* *within a superb environment, providing dynamic models of rural sustainable development, moving all sectors to higher value added activities’.*

2.4.2.3 *The Wales Transport Strategy (2008)*

The Wales Transport Strategy (WTS) sought to provide a stable, long-term framework for the development of all modes of transport. It specified the outcomes and strategic priorities that link the Wales Spatial Plan, the Welsh Government’s wider strategies and the development of plans at the local level. The strategy encourages sustainable access, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling.

2.4.2.4 *National Transport Plan (2009)*

The Wales Transport Strategy established the framework for the creation of an integrated transport system to deliver One Wales. It set out that joint proposals for road, rail and public transport to enable people and freight to travel more efficiently and sustainably, whilst being able to access the goods, markets, services, facilities and places they need.

The National Transport Plan aimed to take forward the process of delivering this integration. It built on previous plans, adding and integrating public and community transport, walking and cycling. The National Transport Plan sits alongside the Regional Transport Plans in delivering the Wales Transport Strategy.

2.4.2.5 *Creating an Active Wales (2011)*

The Welsh Government has produced a strategy aiming at improving health through activity. The document builds on the original vision of the Climbing Higher strategy of 2005:

The focus of the plan was to encourage increased levels of physical activity and deliver improvements in health and well-being. Evidence indicates that significant health benefits are achieved through moderate increases in physical activity for the least-active people. A key aim for the Welsh Government will be to focus on encouraging and supporting people in Wales to build some activity into their everyday lives.

2.4.2.6 *Climate Strategy for Wales (2010)*

The Climate Strategy for Wales is a key tenet of Welsh Government policy, becoming of increasing importance in the development and evaluation of national projects. The Strategy and delivery plans confirm the areas where the Welsh Government will act to reduce emissions and enable effective adaptation in Wales.

The strategy identifies that promoting sustainable transport options like walking and cycling offer major health and environmental benefits, as well as helping to tackle traffic congestion.

* + 1. Regional Policies and Plans

2.4.3.1 *TraCC Regional Transport Plan (2009)*

The Regional Transport Plan involved an analysis of movement problems in Mid- Wales and identified a vision for the region, with a set of objectives and transport policies to address theproblems and to build on opportunities.

Issues relating to walking and cycling in the region were identified as:

* A lack of dedicated facilities for cyclists,
* In many small communities, there is a lack of a connected footway network, which discourages walking trips
* Providing improved and safe walking and cycling routes to key service and employment centres.

2.4.3.2 *Mid-Wales Regional Tourism Strategy (2011)*

The Mid-Wales region is significant in attracting tourism to Wales, accounting for 18% of all tourism spending, 20% of holiday visitor nights and 25% of business nights. A short-term objective is to encourage visitors to move around their destination by sustainable forms of transport. The strategy focuses more on public transport rather than encouraging walking and cycling, although there is scope for better information provision on the sustainable transport options that are available.

2.4.3.3 *Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru (TraCC) Walking and Cycling Strategy (2012)*

The Walking and Cycling Strategy has been produced for the Regional Transport Consortium for the Mid-Wales region, made up of the Counties of Ceredigion, Powys and part of Gwynedd.

This strategy aimed to identify opportunities to raise the level of walking and cycling and thus contribute to meeting the following objectives:

* Minimise the impact of movement on the global and local environment
* Improve safety and security for all transport users
* Improve travel accessibility to services, jobs and facilities for all sectors of society
* Provide, promote and improve sustainable forms of travel
	+ 1. Local Policies and Plans

2.4.4.1 *Single Integrated Plan*

The Plan sets out an overarching long-term vision with key issues and actions for Ceredigion citizens.

* + - 1. *Corporate Strategy*

The Strategy identifies and explains how the Council intends to deliver its main Strategic Objectives likemaking sure the Council is an organisation fit-for-purpose to deliver improving services to meet the needs of our citizens and that conditions and opportunities in Ceredigion allow the economy and local business to develop and prosper.

* + - 1. *Active Travel*

To meet their duties under the Active Travel (Wales) Act (2013) Local Authorities must publish Existing Routes Maps that show routes which are suitable for walking or cycling.

* + - 1. *Health & Well-being*

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It requires public sector bodies to come together through a Public Services Board (PSB) for their local areas and to produce Local Well-being Plans.

* + - 1. *Destination Management Plan*

A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, with aims like developing a high-quality, viable and sustainable, all-year visitor economy and maximising the value of tourism to the local economy

* + - 1. *Local Development Plan*

Local Authorities in Wales have a statutory duty to prepare a Local Development Plan (LDP) for their County. It sets out polices and specific proposals for the development and use of land in Ceredigion for the 15-year period up to 31 March 2022.

* + - 1. *Place Plans*

A Place Plan **i**s the opportunity for a community to come together and talk about what needs to happen to make the place the best it can possibly be. The purpose of **a** Place Planis to gather evidence about the area to understand what issues the community is facing and what opportunities exist.

**2.5 Meeting the statutory requirements**

Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act (2000) established the statutory requirements that Local Authorities nee to meet when preparing ROWIPs.

It states that every Local Highway Authority shall prepare and publish a plan, to be known as a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, containing the Authority’s assessment of the following matters:

The opportunities provided by local Rights of Way for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the Authority’s area

The accessibility of local Rights of Way to blind or partially-sighted people and others with mobility problems

The extent to which local Rights of Way meet the present and future needs of the public

The Local Authority seeks to answer these statutory requirements through the information and evidence collated in the assessments undertaken as part of the review.

* + 1. **The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the authority’s area**

2.5.1.1 *Public Rights of Way*

With over 2500km of Rights of Way in the County, the network provides the most important opportunities for the public to gain access the countryside.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category  | Rights of Way by length |
|  | km | Miles  | % |  |
| Footpath | 1663 | 1039 | 66% |  |
| Bridleway  | 522 | 326 | 21% |  |
| Restricted Byway  | 308 | 193 | 12% |  |
| Byway Open to All Traffic | 13 | 8 | 1% |  |
| Totals:  | 2506 | 1566 | 100% |  |

Currently 60% of the Rights of Way in the County are included in the Primary Path Network (PPN), which means that some 1500km are open and available. Only about 14% of all the problems reported by the public have related to routes not on the PPN indicating that this strategic approach to managing the network and allocating resources to where they are most needed is working.

There are some 660km (78%) of multi-user routes (bridleways, restricted byways, etc) in the PPN. However in comparison, only about 50% of footpaths are included in the PPN.

Approximately 200km of Rights of Way in the County are designated as Category 1 routes on the PPN. Category 1 are the highest profile long-distance routes; Ceredigion and All Wales Coast Path, the Borth to Pontrhydyfendigaid route and the Aberaeron to Lampeter route.

2.5.1.2 *Other Access Opportunities*

It is clearly evident from the assessment is that there is a wide range of other access opportunities available to the public across the County on both a formal and informal basis from a diverse range of providers. Some of these are “traditional” access providers including the Local Authority, Natural Resources Wales and Charities. There are however less -formal providers, who may not necessarily see themselves as access providers but who nevertheless play an important part in the access provision.

*Schools*

There are 48 schools in Ceredigion. The green spaces provided by schools can be important areas for informal recreation out of school hours, particularly in rural areas where there is often a lack of alternative quality, public green space for access and recreation.

*Universities and Colleges*

There are two Universities in Ceredigion at Aberystwyth and Lampeter, with campuses that provide important access opportunities used by members of the public.

*Private Landowners, through Agri-Environment Schemes*

Schemes like Glastir Advanced provide linear and open access to land for a set period of years, for which the landowner receives a payment. There are examples of this type of access being very popular and useful in communities across the County. However, the schemes do suffer from a lack of information as to the whereabouts of the access opportunities.

*Community Groups / Land*

Coed y Bobl in Devils Bridge and Coed y Bont in Pontrydyfeindgaid are two good local examples of people and groups coming together to create access resources for local people and visitors, while counters on paths in the Parc Natur Penglais Local Nature Reserve in Aberystwyth record some 80,000 registrations per annum.

*Town & Village Greens / Common Land*

There are 17 Town and Village Greens that play an important role as part of the access network. For example, the greens in Cardigan and Aberaeron are important recreational resources for locals and visitors alike.

There are 11,000 ha of Common Land in the County, most of which is in the middle and north of the County. Such land could have the potential to play a more important role in providing access to quality green space, especially in rural areas.

*Access Land*

Access to mountains was identified as one area of future demand in the Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey*.* Ceredigion is well placed to take advantage of this, with open access land amounting to 25,993 ha, some 14.2% of the total land area.

*Roads, Tracks, Pavements, etc*

There are approximately 2000km of roads in the County and between 200 and 250km pavements.

The Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey found that more half the people who walk for recreation do so using tracks and pavements. Ceredigion has a relatively low volume of traffic so that minor roads within the County are often used by residents and visitors as means of accessing the countryside.

There are other areas providing outdoor access in the County for which we currently have no information, like parks/gardens, play areas, green areas within housing estates, highway verges, land owned by utility companies and businesses, etc that all play an informal role in providing some level of access. The Wales Outdoor Recreation found that 46% of respondents had visited children’s play areas in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Public Rights of Way on their own provide a great opportunity for open air exercise and recreation. However, they should not be viewed as “stand alone”, but rather taken to sit alongside a whole myriad of other access opportunities, managed by an array of different authorities and organisations.

With such a diverse range of “access providers”, one of the biggest challenges is making the public aware of all the opportunities that exist. The responses to the Welsh Government Green Paper on Outdoor Recreation and local responses to the ROWIP consultation showed that the public are not fully aware of the local walking and riding opportunities. It must be concluded that, given the number and range of the access opportunities available, the Rights of Way network is not used to full potential and improvements need to be made to the way that information is publicised.

* + 1. **The accessibility of local Rights of Way to blind or partially-sighted people and others with physical impairments**.

The assessments found that relatively few rural Rights of Way are suitable for use by people with acute mobility problems. The nature of the rural terrain will always be a barrier to some users, with the topography of Ceredigion being a fundamental constraint. However, it should be possible to raise the profile of the current opportunities in addition to identifying where physical improvements may be possible. .

*Table of known accessible paths*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Coincident with public Rights of Way**  | **Promotional literature** |
| Aberporth -1.5km section of Wales Coast Path | Yes – on Ceredigion Coast Path website |
| Aberystwyth -Rheidol Trail  | Not specifically for less-abled users  |
| Cenarth - 0.75km route from Sawmill down to fishing platform on the river Teifi | No  |
| Tre Taliesin - 1km section of Wales Coast Path | No  |
| Aberaeron –-riverside paths alongside the river Aeron  | No |
| Bontgoch –-short section of improved path alongside the Water Treatment Works | No  |
| Llanybydder - short circular route on the outskirts of the village  | No  |
| **Other opportunities (not including pavements**)  | **Promotional literature** |
| Aberystwyth - Ystwyth Trail, Plascrug Avenue, Llety Park - Blaendolau, Promenade | Not specifically for less-abled users |
| Borth Promenade  | No  |
| Cardigan - Riverside walk | No  |
| Llandysul - Riverside walk | No |
| Ystrad Meurig - Ystwyth Trail  | No |
| Treagaron - Ystwyth Trail and Cors Caron Boardwalks  | Yes – NRW website  |
| Llanilar - Ystwyth Trail  | Not specifically for less-abled users |
| Rhydyfelin | Not specifically for less-abled users |
| Llanfarian | Not specifically for less -bled users |
| Aberaeron - Harbour and sea front | No |

There are some “quick win” improvements that could be made without the need for substantial additional resources such as:

* Promoting the opportunities that currently exist (identified in the table above) through the production of “in-house” material
* Making information on potential barriers (like stile, gradients, etc) available on promotional material and the Council interactive map

However, longer-term improvements need to be made through working in partnership with groups with mobility problems and in identifying opportunities to augment “access for all” routes.

The creation of routes with characteristics suitable for those with mobility problems is recognised as being a major constraint that will continue into the future as resources become even more scarce. One of challenges will be the building up of community resilience so that local residents can take ownership of improvements and developments. The production of Local Access Plans is seen as means of moving towards this end.

* + 1. **The extent to which local Rights of Way meet the present and future needs of the public**

2.5.3.1 *Walkers*

* Walkers can use the entire Primary Path Network, which is open and usable and amounts about 1500km of linear access on some 60% of the Rights of Way in the County.
* The CROW Act (2000) introduced a new right of access to ‘open access land’ which amounts to 25,993 ha or about 14.2% of the land area.
* The average walking distance appears to be relatively short. Evidence from the Coast Path Survey quotes it at about 3 miles on the Coast Path. In response, in recent years the Authority has placed greater emphasis on including routes close to settlements on the Primary Path Network. The information found in the assessments has supported this approach, with even short walks being important for health reasons; The Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey identified that health benefits are particularly associated with frequent participation in doorstep activities.
* Connectivity of the network is important for walkers and the importance of pavements has been identified. Close working with internal stakeholders in the Authority is therefore important to safeguard and promote future use.
* The Paths for People project proved popular and was useful in identifying opportunities for circular routes near settlements. However the review of promotional literature identified a lack of provision in many settlements in the County with only 45 out 135 settlements served by a promoted route, and only 5 of 21 larger service centres having close access to a promoted route.

In summary, there seems to be a more than adequate level of provision for walkers to meet the present and likely future need. However, more needs to be done to raise awareness of the opportunities that are available, especially for those individuals exhibiting protected characteristics under the Equalities Act..

2.5.3.2 *Cyclists*

* The popularity of cycling is on the increase. Based on a review of promoted literature and responses from local cycling groups there appears to be a lack of safe off-road cycling provision in the County. Anecdotally, there also appears to be an opportunity for better promotion of the provisions that exist, especially in larger service centres, like Aberystwyth. Welsh Government proposals for possible increased access by cyclists to footpaths and access land may also assist in addressing this issue in the future.
* 78% of multi-user routes (i.e. bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic) in the County are included in the PPN. Provision for cyclists is also augmented through the road network and land holdings belonging to Natural Resources Wales.
* Recent initiatives to improve access for horse riders have also had the effect of providing greater opportunities for off -road cycling / mountain biking. However the review of promotional literature again identified that cyclists, like the walkers already discussed, lacked such provision for route near most settlements and service centres in the County.
* Natural Resources Wales open access policy for cyclists is a valuable asset, with the Nant yr Arian visitor centre providing world-class, mountain-biking provision and easy-gradient access for children and beginners.
* There is currently no distinction between different cycling abilities when it comes to the production of promotional material. It must be concluded that most of the routes currently promoted on the Council’s “Walks and Rides” page would only be suitable for more advanced or fitter riders. The Council Tourism website “Discover Ceredigion” provides some information on cycling opportunities within the County and also includes links to the Sustrans website, which does identify off-road, easy-gradient, family-friendly cycle provision. Projects like the Ystwyth Trail have been important in this respect as have the improvements to multi-user paths in Aberystwyth and Cardigan. However there is a general lack of provision across the County.

In summary, the adequacy of the network in meeting the present and likely future needs depends on the type of cycling activity in question. For more advanced riders this need seems to be largely satisfied through current provision, though more could be done to ensure connectivity of the network and to raise awareness of the provision that is currently available. However, there is currently a lack of provision of easy-gradient, family -friendly cycle opportunities with only a limited number of suitable routes in the County. It can again be noted that this type of use is particularly important for health reasons.

More could be done to promote the opportunities that exist, though greater investment in new provision would need to be prioritised. Greater community involvement is needed both in identifying new opportunities and in sourcing the funds to realise future ambitions.

2.5.3.3 *Horse Riders*

* Horse riding is an important contributor to the Ceredigion economy and its popularity is set to increase. Connectivity of the multi-user network has been identified as an issue that needs to be investigated and improved. Proposals by the Welsh Government for possible increased access to footpaths and access land may address this issue.
* It has previously been noted that 78% of the multi-user routes (bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic) are included in the Primary Path Network, so that more than 600km of accessible routes are available to horse riders. In addition, there is further provision through the road network and land holdings belonging to Natural Resources Wales.
* The Local Authority seeks to improve the multi-user network as much as possible for the benefit of horse riders, by installing easy-latch handles and ensuring that gates open and close easily to allow easy access on horseback. Much of this work is dependent on partnership working with landowners, who may have differing aims and objectives, so finding a balance can often be difficult in a stock-rearing County like Ceredigion.
* The Ceredigion on Horseback project opened up much of the bridleway network with a significant number of promoted routes. However, the review of available promotional literature again identifies a lack of provision in many settlements in the County.
* Improvements that have been suggested are path surfacing, improved connectivity network, removal of obstructions and padlocks from gates

and more information about riding opportunities

In summary there seems to be a much provision for horse riders, though more needs to be done to ensure connectivity of the network and to raise awareness of the opportunities that are currently available both using Rights of Way and other sources. This is especially true in relation to external providers like Natural Resources Wales who, due to their land holding, could contribute more fully.

The topography of Ceredigion as a County can form a natural constraint , which is difficult to overcome, when considering surface improvements and their sustainability. Much work has been done to improve the accessibility of the network for horse riders, but there is still a long way to go, so that installing more easy-latch handles and partnership working with landowners and users is essential into the future.

Greater community involvement is needed both in identifying new opportunities and in sourcing the funding to realise future ambitions

2.5.3.4 *Blind or partially-sighted people and others with mobility problems*

* The popularity of easy gradient access suitable for all ages/abilities is highlighted by the Coast Path counters at Aberporth which identify that between 90,000 – 100,000 members of the public use this route annually.
* The review of promotional literature identifies that there is a lack of promoted material on routes for less-abled users
* Not enough is known about the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted people and others with mobility problems**.** There was a lack of responses from less-abled users to the review process; this may be for a number of reasons, however it suggests that the Authority could work closer with user groups and forums to better understand the needs and desires of such users
* The nature of the rural terrain will always be a barrier to some users – the topography of Ceredigion being a considerable constraint. There are however opportunities to raise the profile of the current opportunities, whilst also looking to identify physical improvements where possible.
* The Council applies least restrictive access principles to all works, which assists with the accessibility of the network - working to the hierarchy of gaps/gates/stiles.
* The CAMS system does not provide information on the location of easily accessible routes or how many exist – this makes it difficult to ascertain what length of rights of way are accessible to all.
* Development work on is needed on CAMS to enable recording of information relating to path surfaces
* Provide information on barriers to access and suitability of surface both on promotional literature and through Council interactive map – requires resources to undertake development work to CAMS.

In summary there seems to be a lack of provision for blind or partially sighted people and others with mobility problems throughout the county. Opportunities do exist; some of which are on public rights of way, however most of these are not currently publicised. Despite least restrictive access principles being applied the physical characteristics of the right of way network is a considerable constraint.

Improvements could be made in the way information is recorded on public rights of way via the CAMS system; for example the ability to record surface information for parts of routes that could be considered as access for all would be beneficial; this would require some development work to CAMS for which additional resources would be required.

Minor improvements can be made in making information more readily available to the public in order that they can make informed decisions on where to go; for example making limitations such as gates/stiles available via the public website.

A closer working relationship with groups of people with vulnerable characteristics would be beneficial to identify any improvements that can be made and to investigate partnership working.

Greater community involvement is needed both in identifying new opportunities and in sourcing the funding to realise future ambitions.

2.5.3.5 *Mechanically Propelled Vehicles*

* Research undertaken for Tourism Society Wales estimated that motorcycle tourism alone is worth at least £70M to the Welsh economy per year.
* The review of promotional literature found that there is a lack of promoted material for mechanically propelled vehicles.
* The number and length of Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs), Unclassified Roads/Green Lanes in the County do provide a resource for this type of use, especially in the Cambrian Mountains. However, the length of routes having the characteristics that are enjoyed by most off-road drivers is fairly short in the County, with BOAT’s, for example, only totalling 14km.
* The lack of provision does cause pressure on the network that is available.
* There are opportunities for landowners such as Natural Resources Wales to get involved in the amount of provision available; thereby possibly reducing the pressure on the highway network.

In summary there is a lack of information available to be able to answer whether the network adequately meets the current and likely future needs of mechanically propelled vehicles. Anecdotally, it has been said that the NERC Act (2006) has had an effect on the level of illegal use and the Public Rights of Way team have been made aware of fewer incidences of illegal use.

The relatively few and short total length of such routes available in the County does suggests that there is a lack of adequate provision..

There are economic benefits to be realised through this use and more could be done to promote the legal opportunities that exist.

Greater partnership working is required both internally and externally to ensure that safe responsible use is promoted. In addition, more needs to be done to investigate opportunities for cooperative working with groups such as Treadlightly who may be able to provide volunteer labour to maintain some rural roads.

2.5.3.6 *Carriage Drivers*

* There appears to be a lack of available data on the benefits of carriage driving to the economy, to health and active travel, and the extent to which carriage drivers make use of the Right of Way network. Anecdotal information suggests that there may be a perception that path surfaces and limitations like gates provide insurmountable barriers to such use. In such circumstances, it may be necessary to create a demand through working with groups such as the British Driving Association to identify and promote opportunities.

The number and length of routes in County suggests that there is ample provision for this type of use, which could possibly be augmented through the use of Natural Resources Wales land. There may be potential economic benefits to be realised through this use and more could be done to promote the opportunities that do exist.