



Denbighshire CC

Rights of Way

Improvement Plan

2008-2018

Statement of Action

Prepared for Denbighshire County Council
by Public Rights of Way Services Ltd

Denbighshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan: Statement of Action

Introduction: The importance of Denbighshire's rights of way

The County of Denbighshire has over 1,300 kms of public rights of way; a dense network of paths that are variously classified as footpaths, bridleways, byways as well as unsurfaced public roads. The County also has some of the finest scenery, not just in Wales but in the whole of Britain. This includes the Clwydian Range – designated as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – together with Vale of Clwyd, the Berwyn Hills and the Hiraethog or Denbigh Moors.

Not surprisingly therefore, our rights of way network is highly valued and extensively used both by residents of Denbighshire and the many visitors to the area. It is the main way people have of getting into the heart of the countryside away from the hustle and bustle of everyday living and roads used by cars, to where they can relax, recharge their batteries, and explore and enjoy the peace, tranquillity and great beauty of this outstanding area.

The rights of way network, once the Cinderella of the County's total highway network, is now recognised as having an important new role, bringing considerable economic regeneration, social, community and health benefits to the whole of Denbighshire.

This plan – the Rights of Way Improvement Plan - is about how the County can carry out its important statutory duties towards rights of way more efficiently and effectively, so that all paths can be correctly recorded, are well maintained and are easy to find and to follow. It is also about how the network can be improved; to ensure that as many paths as possible are open to those with limited mobility or other special needs and that a good network of routes is also available to those who want to enjoy the countryside on horseback, by cycle or while driving a carriage, jeep or trail bike. And it is about ensuring that everyone who cares about Denbighshire's rights of way or wants to enjoy the beauty of our countryside has access to the information they need about the many opportunities that the network offers and how these can be used enjoyably, safely and responsibly.

Why prepare a rights of way improvement plan and what is it?

Denbighshire County Council, in common with other local highway authorities in England and Wales is required by the provisions of section 60, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and publish a rights of way improvement plan.

The legislation and related statutory guidance¹ make it clear that preparing an improvement plan should be carried out in two stages. In the first, the Authority is required to undertake a thorough assessment of a number of matters and to publish its findings for consultation. These matters include the extent to which rights of way in the area meet the current and likely future needs of the public, the opportunities the rights of way network provides for exercise, open air recreation and enjoyment of the Authority's area, and the accessibility of the network to those who are blind or partially sighted or who have restricted mobility.

¹ *Rights of Way Improvement Plans: Guidance to Local Highway Authorities in Wales* issued under section 61(4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 by Welsh Assembly Government.

In Denbighshire we took the opportunity to also thoroughly review our performance in the way we record and maintain the path network and in meeting our many other duties and responsibilities towards rights of way. At the same time we undertook valuable consultations to help us better understand the importance which people in Denbighshire attach to their local rights of way and the many different ways the network is used in practice. The ROWIP Assessment for Denbighshire was published in December 2007 and was widely circulated for comments. A summary of the main conclusions has been included in this report, at Appendix 3.

About the draft Statement of Action

This document – the draft Statement of Action – is the second part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. It is based on the assessment and should be read in conjunction with it, an electronic copy is available online at <http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en-gb/DNAP-7B7GNY>. Paper copies can be obtained from the Rights of Way Unit at a fee to cover production and postage.

It sets out how the rights of way network in Denbighshire and access to open country are to be managed and improved over the next 10 years through a series of rolling annual works programmes. These programmes will be drawn up on the basis of - and aim to achieve - the 51 individual action targets set out in section 5. A provisional draft of the first work programme has also been included for information, at appendix 1. In addition we have identified a further five special projects. These projects, which are also set out in section 5, would each significantly improve one or more aspects the path network, for example the proportion of the network that can used and enjoyed by horse riders and cyclists. But they will also require significant additional funds. They will therefore be undertaken only if, and when, those funds have been secured.

Commenting on this draft

This draft is also being widely circulated for consultation. If you wish to comment on it, you should make sure you do so by 31 August 2008 Please send your comments to:

Rights of Way Unit,
Caledfryn
Denbighshire County Council
Smithfield Road
Denbigh
LL16 3RJ

Or e-mail rightsofway@denbighshire.gov.uk

In partnership with the County's Local Access Forum we will carefully consider all the comments that are received before the Statement of Action is finalised. It will then be published and, together with the Assessment, will become the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the County.

Contents

Introduction: The importance of Denbighshire's rights of way.....	i
Why prepare a rights of way improvement plan and what is it?.....	i
About the draft Statement of Action	ii
Commenting on this draft.....	ii
Contents	iii
1. Developing the Statement of Action.....	1
1.1 Foundation of the Statement of Action – the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Assessment.....	1
1.2 Strategic themes and priorities.....	2
2. Priorities for the Statement of Action	4
2.1 Action targets and special projects.....	5
2.2 Annual work programmes	5
3. Implementing the Statement of Action to deliver the Rights of Way Improvement Plan	6
3.1 The annual programme cycle.....	6
3.2 Transitional arrangements	9
4. Budgets and resources.....	9
4.1 Comparison with neighbouring authorities	10
4.2 Need for additional resources	11
4.3 Cost of bringing the network up to standard.....	12
4.4 Potential additional resources from external sources	12
4.4.1 Welsh Assembly Government	12
4.4.2 Bids to TAITH.....	13
4.5 Need for additional resources from Denbighshire CC	13
4.6 Cooperative working within the Authority	13
4.7 Strategic context.....	14
4.8 Working with our access partners	14
4.8.1 Farmers and landowners.....	14
4.8.2 Local communities.....	15
4.8.3 Cooperation between authorities	15
4.9 The role of the Local Access Forum.....	15
4.10 Policy towards extending the path network.....	15
4.10.1 Permissive paths	16
4.11 Approach to the management of conflict	17

5.	The ROWIP action proposals and targets.....	18
	Group 1: The definitive map and statement and public path orders	19
	Key issues	19
	Group 2: Management and maintenance of the existing network.....	22
	Key issues	22
	Group 3: Network improvements	26
	Key issues	26
	Group 4: Access to Open Country and the Coast	29
	Key issue.....	29
	Group 5: Improving confidence, knowledge and opportunity.....	31
	Key issues	32
6.	Special projects	34
	Special project 1: Community Miles	34
	Special project 2: Moel Famau – Llandegla – Berwyn corridor improvement	34
	Special project 3: Corwen to Bala bridleway and cycle link.....	35
	Special project 4: Llanelidan to Llanfair Ridgeway Quiet Lanes Project	35
	Special project 5: Native Trails	35
7.	Monitoring implementation of the ROWIP	38
	Appendix 1: ROWIP work programme, September 2008 to March 2010 (Provisional draft)	39
	Appendix 2: Estimated cost per Community of restoring and maintaining whole ROW network	50
	Appendix 3: Rights of Way Improvement Plan Assessment: Executive summary	51
	Strategic context.....	51
	The County’s Public Rights of Way Network.....	51
	Organisation and staffing.....	51
	Promoted paths	52
	Budget.....	52
	The Definitive Map and Statement.....	52
	Condition of the path network and the maintenance backlog	52
	Community Councils and other players	53
	The public’s use of rights of way, and views on the ROW Improvement Plan	53
	Appendix 4: List of consultees.....	54
	Community Councils in Denbighshire	54
	Other local authorities & local access forums	55
	Government departments and agencies	55

Members of Parliament and the Welsh Assembly.....	55
Other bodies and organisations	55

1. Developing the Statement of Action

1.1 Foundation of the Statement of Action – the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Assessment

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan Assessment published in December 2007 provides a firm foundation for the Statement of Action.

The Assessment looked not only at those issues required by the legislation – the extent to which rights of way meet the current and future needs of the public, the opportunities they provide for exercise and enjoyment of the area, and their accessibility to those who are blind or partially sighted or who have mobility problems; it also went further in reviewing the allocation of responsibility for rights of way and countryside access work within the County, the strategic context of this work and the staff and financial resources deployed, and our performance in protecting, recording, maintaining and developing the path network. At the same time a valuable insight was gained from a questionnaire survey into the public's use of, and perceptions about, rights of way to add to the County's existing data about the extent and condition of the path network.

The Assessment therefore contains a wealth of detailed information that supports and justifies the proposed statement of action. The full text is available on line²: a copy of the Executive Summary highlighting some of the key findings has been included in this document at Appendix A.

We are grateful to the many different bodies and individuals who contributed to the Assessment or who took the trouble to let us have their comments on it. The comments received overwhelmingly endorse the picture that it paints as being accurate and as providing a firm foundation for the Statement of Action. A particular criticism, however, was that in reviewing the availability of rights of way to different types of path user, the Assessment under-estimated the importance of routes for carriage drivers and had failed to properly appreciate their needs. A further criticism is that, although Denbighshire has only a very short section of coast, we failed properly to take this into account, particularly in the light of the Welsh Assembly Government's proposal to extend a right of access to the coast by 2008/09 as set out in [Wales: A Better Country](#). We have endeavoured to address both of these criticisms in preparing this Statement of Action.

² At [http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/www/cms/live/content.nsf/lookupattachments/English~DNAP-7B7JWP/\\$File/DCC_RoWIP_AssessmentFinal.pdf](http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/www/cms/live/content.nsf/lookupattachments/English~DNAP-7B7JWP/$File/DCC_RoWIP_AssessmentFinal.pdf)

How the Statement of Action has been developed - An outline

Based on the ROWIP Assessment and following further discussions with members of the Local Access Forum, four primary and three secondary themes have been identified on which the Rights of Way Statement of Action should focus (Figure 1). Each one of these seven themes also embraces a number of the key issues identified in the Assessment and set out below in section 1.2. At the same time, the Assessment has shown there is a wide consensus on the respective priorities for the Improvement Plan, with again a distinction emerging between what should be regarded as the Authority's main priorities for action and those which are of secondary importance (Figure 2).

Identifying these themes and key issues has led in turn to the development of a long list of action proposals. Each of these proposals - expressed in the form of a target which the Improvement Plan should meet over the next 10 years - can be directly related to one or more of the ROWIP themes and also to one or more of the priorities. These targets therefore form a menu from which annual ROWIP works programmes can be developed. It is these ongoing programmes of work, which we propose to carry out in a three-year rolling cycle as set out in section 3 which will become the main way in which Improvement Plan can be implemented over the next ten years and through which progress can be monitored.

The list of action targets is set out and discussed in detail in section 5 while a provisional draft of the first work programme (covering the period to March 2010) derived from the list is outlined in Appendix 1. Collectively, these form the ROWIP's Statement of Action.

1.2 Strategic themes and priorities

Seven interrelated strategic themes stand out from the ROWIP Assessment as embracing all the main issues on which the Statement of Action should focus. The seven themes are:

Primary themes

- 1 Tackling the backlog of work to make sure the definitive map and statement are as accurate and comprehensive as possible
- 2 Improving the maintenance and management of the existing network
- 3 Reducing restrictive access to enable more people with limited mobility to use and enjoy rights of way
- 4 Extending the availability of the network to horse riders and cyclists

Secondary themes

- 5 Improving access to Open Country and Coast
- 6 Improving the provision of information, including promoting healthy walking initiatives
- 7 Improvements to access which will enhance tourism

Actions which contribute to the first two of these themes will help remove the uncertainty which can exist for both users and landowners about where a particular path runs or how it can be used, and will also ensure that as much of the network as possible is open and freely available for residents and visitors to the area to enjoy. At the same time, these two themes will ensure that the Authority is better able to meet its existing statutory duties and obligations towards the path network.

Similarly, in working towards meeting the third theme the Authority will be encouraging greater use of rights of way and enabling those who are elderly, have young children or who otherwise are restricted in their mobility to have access to, and be able to enjoy, many more paths than they can at present; while action relating to the fourth theme will help address the sharp imbalance between the proportion of the network available to walkers and the many fewer ways that are available to cyclists and equestrians. All four themes should therefore be regarded as defining the main priorities for the Statement of Action.

The remaining three themes, whilst also important, can nevertheless be regarded as secondary to the first four. They are concerned with ensuring that the access to open land that was established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and access to the coast when this is established can be fully integrated and (where appropriate) managed in conjunction with the rights of way network; with encouraging greater awareness of, and confidence in using, rights of rights of way and promoting the benefits of walking as an aid to improving community health; and improvements that would further enhance and support rural tourism throughout the County.

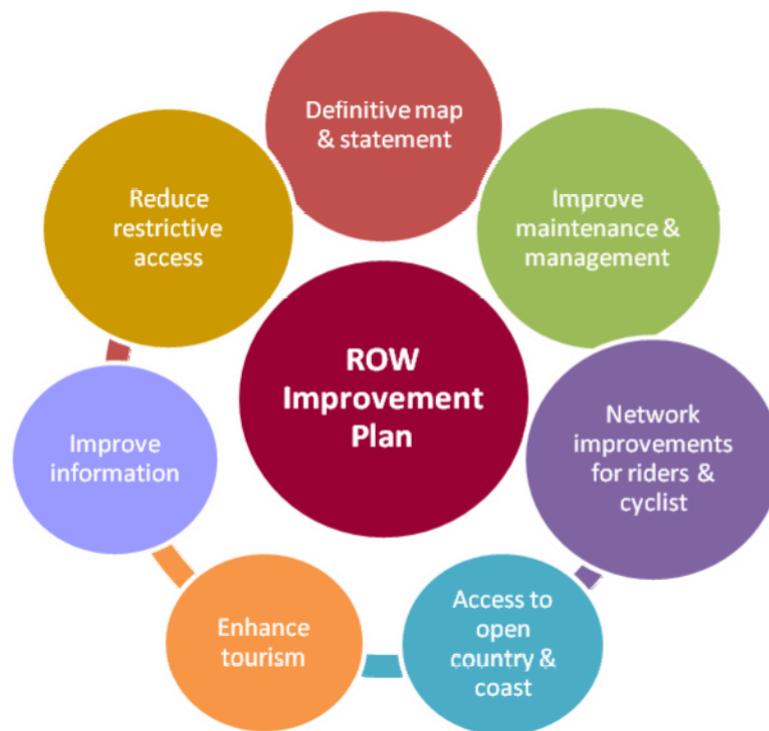


Figure 1: Rights of Way Improvement Plan; Primary and secondary strategic themes

The seven themes are closely interlinked and in practice the actions that are taken will often benefit several of these themes at the same time. Selecting those that do so will be one of the main ways of determining which proposals offer the best value for money and should therefore be given preference in the allocation of resources.

2. Priorities for the Statement of Action

The ROWIP Assessment process was also valuable in helping to identify the main priorities on which the Improvement Plan should focus. Nine priority areas have been identified as shown below in figure 2.

The first three priorities (a, b and c) are drawn directly from the questionnaire survey of local residents in Denbighshire; when members of the public were asked what they thought the Council's top priorities should be, these activities stood out head and shoulders above the rest. They are clearing paths and removing obstructions so that all paths can be used, consistent with their status, at a basic minimum level (even those little used paths in remote areas); putting up more signs so that paths are easier to find; and making paths easier for those who are elderly or who have limited mobility to use.

Members of the public also recognised the importance of completing the legal record of rights of way even though most people did not rank this as a top priority. However, discussions with the Local Access Forum (which accepted the top three priorities) highlighted the importance of ensuring the Definitive Map and Statement is as comprehensive and accurate as possible. It was recognised, for example, that this work would often underpin many of the other improvements that are needed to the path network.

Similarly, while most members of the public did not regard increasing the number of bridleways or byways as a priority, reflecting the fact that many fewer people use the path network to ride a horse or cycle than do so on foot, the network assessment that was carried out highlighted the paucity of routes available to these users as did the discussions within the Local Access Forum. In particular, the Forum recognised that there is an urgent need to link the isolated groups of bridleways and byways that exist in some parts of the County. At present, those wishing to journey from one area to another are often forced to ride or cycle some distance along busy and dangerous main roads to create long routes.

Priority g. 'Paths in urban areas' relates to the need to identify and formally record the many rights of way in urban areas which are an important part of the fabric of the many towns and villages but which, although shown on the Council's List of Streets as maintainable at public expense, are not shown on the Definitive Map and Statement. Under the provisions of the Countryside and Wildlife Act 2000, unless these paths are recorded by January 2026 they will cease to exist and the public's right to use them will be extinguished. If (as is possible) these provisions are repealed before the cut-off date, then the need to give priority to this work will also need to be reassessed.

The remaining two priorities (h and i) are both about the provision of information. The first recognises the need to encourage much greater awareness at the local community level of what rights of way are recorded, where they run and how they can be used in practice. This would help to develop the community's interest and a sense of 'ownership' and encourage them to become more involved in the maintenance of their local rights of way. Similarly, while there is a wealth of information about walking routes, it can be difficult for those with more specific needs to access the path network or to know which routes are available to them. This includes both those with mobility or other impairments and those wishing to use the network to cycle, ride a horse or for carriage driving. The priority therefore is to find ways of overcoming this deficiency and to build confidence whilst encouraging these users to seek out the opportunities available to them.

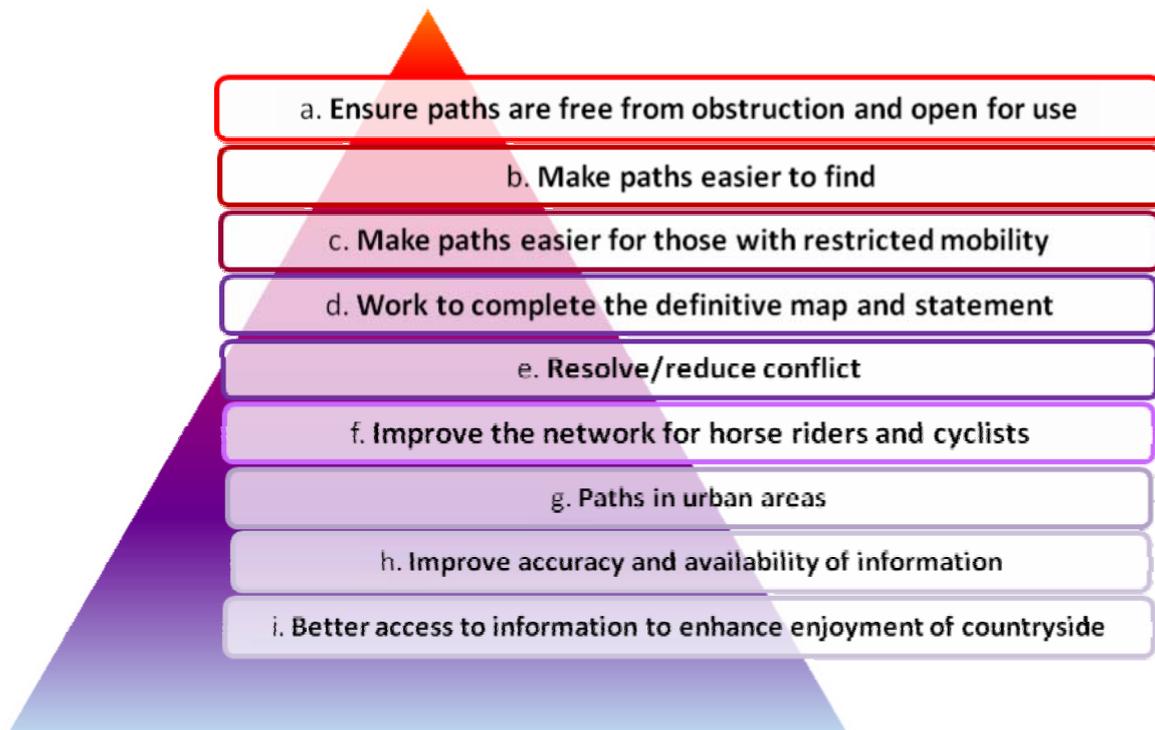


Figure 2: Respective priorities for the statement of action

2.1 Action targets and special projects

Within each of the seven themes, a large number of key issues can be identified. To address these a series of proposals have been developed, with each proposal being expressed in the form of a discrete Action Target. A total of 50 such targets have been identified, brigaded into five topic groups, along with a further five Special Projects.

These Action Targets are set out in detail in section 5. They range in scope from those which will simply ensure the Authority is fully able to meet its existing statutory duties to record, protect and maintain all rights of way and can do so as efficiently and effectively as possible – and thus maintain its position as one of the leading authorities on rights of way in Wales – to those which would further develop and greatly enhance the ROW network, thus increasing the benefits to Denbighshire’s residents and further enhancing rural tourism.

Each of the five Special Projects, which are also described in more detail in section 5, draws together a number of action proposals into a discrete project. The Projects all meet the Welsh Assembly Government’s stated objective of doing more for excluded groups or enabling a wider range of path users to benefit from rights of way. They would also ensure the most effective use of additional funds. However the projects are all ones that would need specific additional funding in order to be fully implemented. The Special Projects should therefore be regarded as an adjunct to the main statement of action and will only implemented if and when such additional funding can be secured.

2.2 Annual work programmes

The series of Action Targets and list of Special Projects provide a menu from which annual work programmes can be developed and implemented on a rolling basis, and through which

progress can be made in both delivering the ROWIP in practice and monitoring that progress.

This approach is designed to ensure that the Authority is able to maintain the impetus towards achieving the Improvement Plan throughout whole of the plan's 10 year life span, whilst also retaining flexibility and enabling it to adjust to changes in the factors on which the Improvement Plan is based and in the level of staff and financial resources that are available at any time. The approach will ensure, for example, that the Rights of Way Target can continue to take full advantage of any short-term 'windfall' funds that may arise during the course of the programme year, as it has in the past, and that any such funds can be directed towards meeting one or more of the plan's key objectives. Similarly, this approach will enable bids to be made to bodies such as CCW and WAG for any external funds, and for the ROW Unit to make the most effective use of any grant monies which are allocated to it, but will also mean that the programme as a whole is not unduly dependent on the success of such approaches.

It is at this stage, in the course of both reviewing the previous year's performance and drawing up the next year's programme, that the precise level of staff and financial resources that are required can be determined and matched to the resources that are available in practice, that specific performance indicators can be set or adjusted, and the allocation of responsibilities made for meeting each individual target. Again, this will ensure the Authority retains maximum flexibility in its approach whilst staying within the envelope of the Improvement Plan. The way in which it is proposed to develop these annual programmes working to a three-year rolling cycle is set out below in section 3.1.

3. Implementing the Statement of Action to deliver the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

3.1 The annual programme cycle

The action proposals and targets are intended to form a menu from which annual work programmes will be developed and implemented on an ongoing three year cycle as shown in below and in detail in figure 3. The annual cycle has been designed to coincide both with the County Council's budget arrangements and with those envisaged in the WAG's draft framework for funding. This proposes that all highway authorities will be asked by CCW to complete a standard form in May / early June each year setting out their priority aims and actions and their annual work programme, with a review taking place between WAG, CCW and the access authorities in December. However the timetable may need to be adjusted in the light of any changes to that framework.

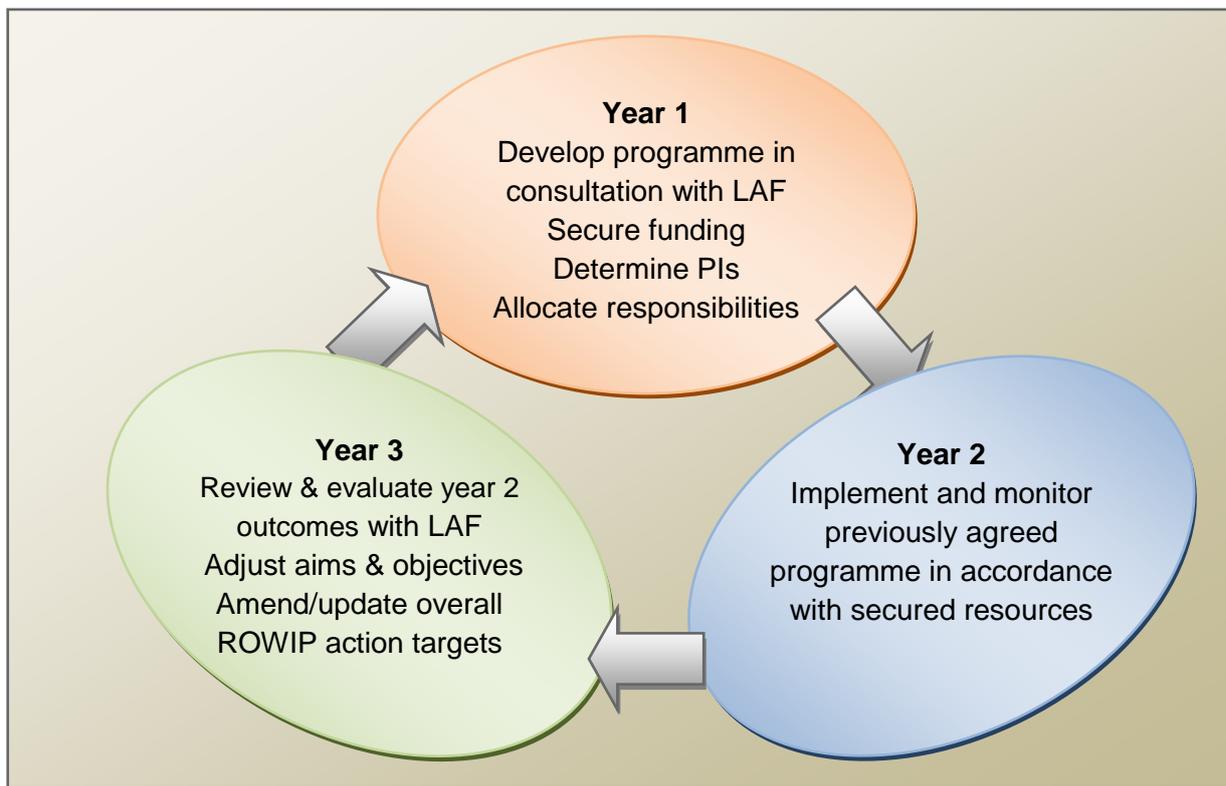


Figure 3: Three year programme cycle

At the start of the cycle, normally in April, a preliminary list will be drawn up from the ROWIP Action Targets menu of the new schemes which it is hoped can be implemented, or which can start to be implemented, in the subsequent year as part of that year's work programme. At the same time the LAF will be consulted and invited to agree the scope and focus of this new annual programme. These proposals can then continue to be worked up in detail, with those elements that are to be carried over from the current year being added to the new programme in September/October following a mid-year review of the work that is currently in progress.

Estimates of the staff and financial resources required to implement the proposed work should be made by November/December, and the programme as a whole finalised and agreed with the LAF in the period December-March once the level of resources that are to be made available in practice is known together with the outcome of bids made to WAG or other external sources. The current year's work programme should be also subject to an end of the year review in the period January-March, enabling the experience gained to be taken into account in the finalising the next year's work.

Finally, once the detailed annual work programme has been agreed, the specific allocation of responsibilities can take place. Performance indicators should also be set and monitoring arrangements put in place before work starts on implementing the programme at the beginning of the new financial year.

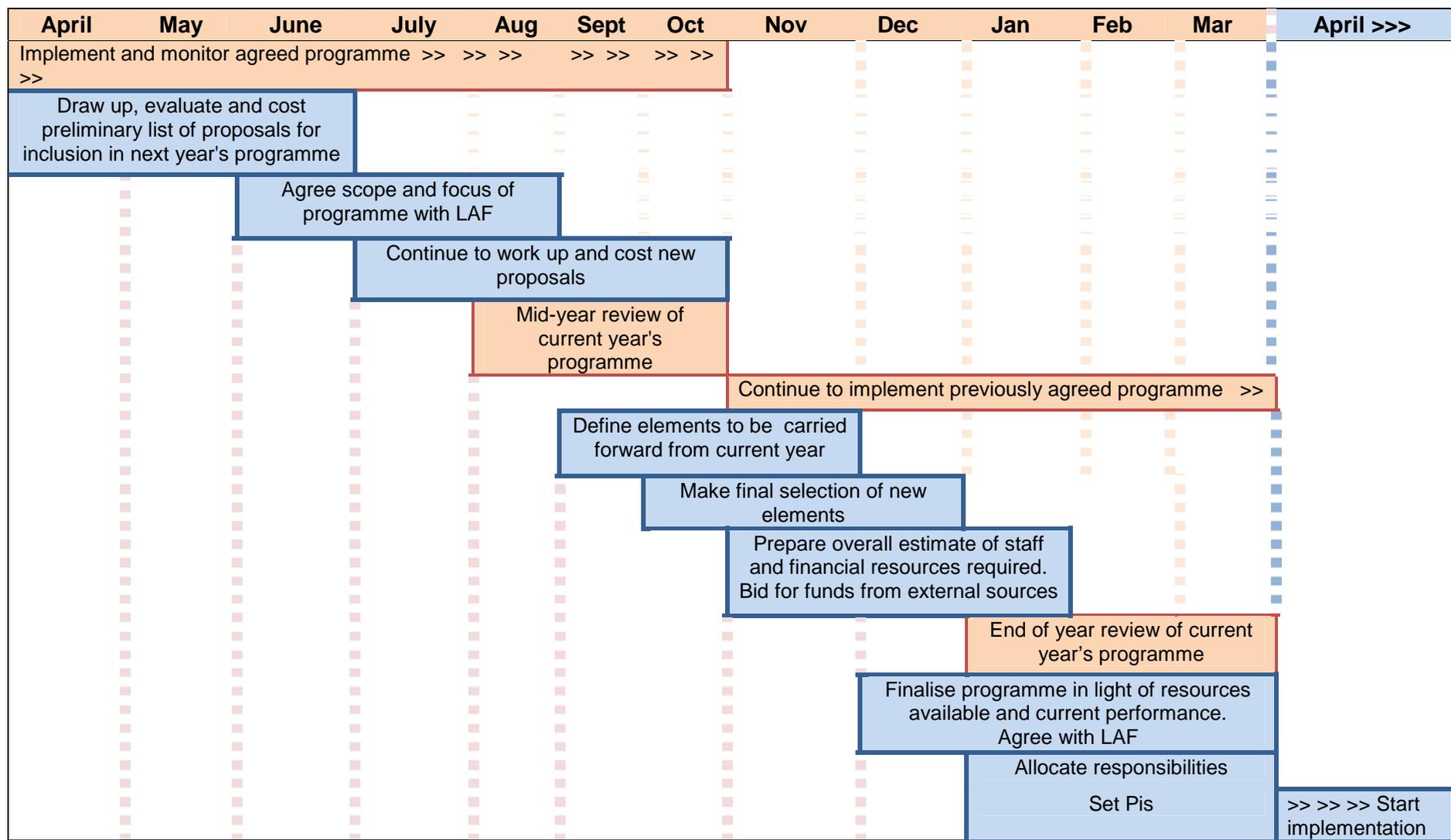


Figure 4: Annual Rolling Work Programme Cycle, years 1 and 2. (Year 3 omitted for clarity)

3.2 Transitional arrangements

To coincide with the Authority's budgetary and other grant-aid cycles, the annual ROWIP work programme will normally run from April to March. However, Welsh Assembly Government regards the first year of practical implementation of Improvement Plans as being the current financial year, 2008/9.

In order to take advantage of the funding being made available (as referred to in section 4.4.1) and assuming that the ROWIP meets WAG's deadline of being formally approved following an eight-week consultation by 15 September 2008, it is proposed that the first ROWIP work programme should be an interim programme covering the 19 month period from September 2008 to March 2010. This programme will be developed in two stages.

Appendix 1 is a preliminary list of the schemes and proposals from which a provisional programme of work will be drawn up in consultation with the LAF and put in place. The programme, which will draw on the preparatory work already undertaken following the ROWIP Assessment, will start to be implemented as soon as it is practical to do so once the ROWIP has been formally approved, thus enabling a start to be made towards implementing the ROWIP in the current financial year from September/October onwards. This provisional programme will be reviewed at the end of the financial year, in March 2009, at which time the preliminary list will be revised and a further, more comprehensive work programme – the interim programme - drawn up in discussion with the LAF.

It is this interim programme, which will incorporate the works already started, which is intended to cover the whole of the 19 month period to March 2010. In addition to the review in March 2009, therefore, a further 'mid-term' review should be carried out in the autumn of 2009 together with a final 'end of year' review in February/March 2010.

From the start of the new financial year in April 2009 onwards, work should also start on preparing the first 'standard' annual work programme, to be started in April 2010 following completion of the interim programme.

4. Budgets and resources

The County currently provides revenue and capital budgets for rights of way as part of the Council's highway's maintenance budget. In 2007/08 these sums were £107,710 and £50,000 respectively. This is a 50% increase on the previous financial year's budget, reflecting a reappraisal of the amount spent by the Authority on highway maintenance in general following pressure from elected members and the Local Access Forum. There is current no budgetary provision made for work associated with the Definitive Map and Statement, including the making and processing of Definitive Map Modification Orders.

The bulk of the revenue spending, around 60%, is allocated to footpaths. However, in relative terms, far more is spent per kilometre on byways (£296 per km) and bridleways (£108 per km) than on footpaths (53p per km).

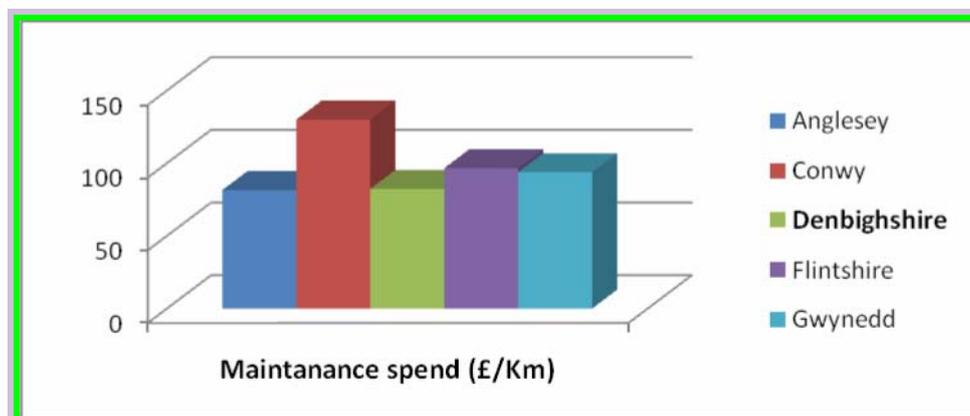
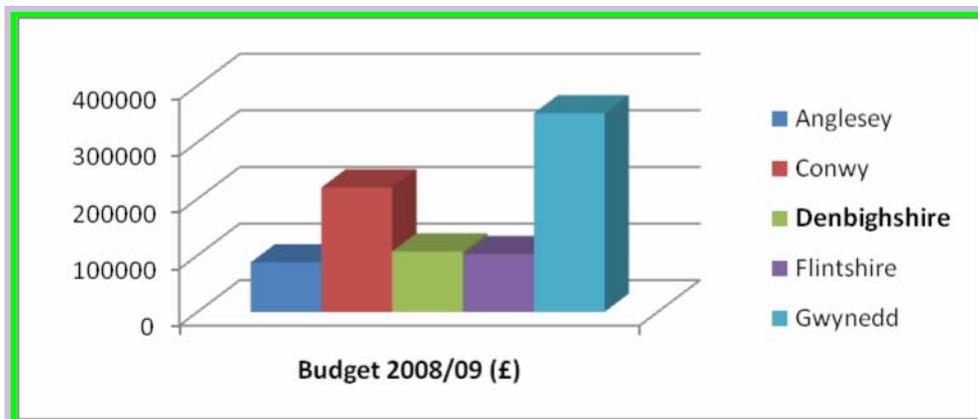
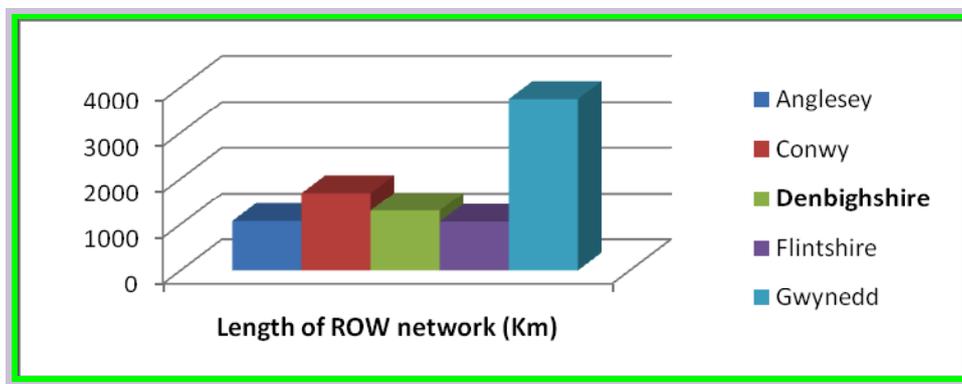
The Countryside Service does not have its own dedicated budget but is primarily dependent on grant aid, particularly that from Countryside Council for Wales. It also derives income from partnership working on a repayment basis. In relation to its work on rights of way, the

only assured income is currently that derived from CCW relating to the maintenance of the Offa's Dyke National Trail and which amounts to around £10,000 per annum.

4.1 Comparison with neighbouring authorities

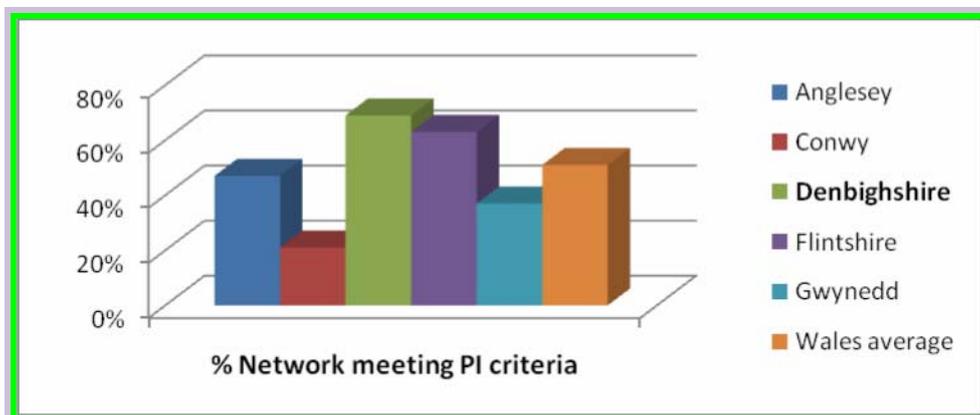
While Denbighshire's rights of way network is in a significantly better condition than that in our neighbouring authorities' areas, giving the County a strong competitive advantage as a location for activity holidays and day visits, revenue expenditure on maintaining the network is also lower than that of most of our neighbours as is the number of staff employed on rights of way work.

Denbighshire's maintenance spend per kilometre of right of way is just £82.30 for example, compared to a figure of £93.78 for Gwynedd, £96.59 for Flintshire and £130 for Conwy. Similarly, the rights of way unit in Denbighshire comprises only five officers, compared to seven officers in Conwy and eight in Flintshire which also has a smaller path network.





The standard Performance Indicator (PI) for rights of way demonstrates the superior condition of Denbighshire's path network, which is a measure of the proportion of the path network that can be identified on the ground and used without undue difficulty. Viewed nationally, over the past ten years Denbighshire's performance has consistently been within or above the upper quartile for all authorities in Wales. Similarly, since 2001 the County's rate of improvement has been consistently above that of the all-Wales average. Of the paths surveyed in 2006/07, 69% met the performance criteria (an increase of 5% over the previous year's figures) the highest proportion for any Authority in the North Wales area and well above the all-Wales average of 50.6%. In National terms Denbighshire came 6th out of 22 authorities, well ahead of Flintshire in 12th position, Anglesey (15th), Gwynedd (19th) and Conwy (22nd).



4.2 Need for additional resources

Despite the Right of Way Unit's excellent performance, the current level of expenditure on rights of way is only sufficient to hold the network at its current overall condition; it does not allow any inroads to be made into the backlog of maintenance issues which were shown to exist by the comprehensive survey of the whole network carried out in 2002. Nor does the current level of expenditure allow the change to be made from a purely reactive 'fire fighting' approach in which the Council can do no more than respond to complaints made to it, to working on a more effective and efficient planned maintenance basis. (See the ROWIP Assessment for a fuller discussion of these issues). It is this change to a proactive, structured regime, based on a path hierarchy and programme of regular path inspections, which is seen as a key component of the Improvement Plan in its own right and which is also

the key to realising many of the other improvements to the network that are proposed in this Statement of Action.

It is also likely that, without further resources, it will be difficult to improve much beyond the current Performance Indicator (PI) of around 69% of paths being open for use at a basic minimum level, and that it despite the initiative of the Improvement Plan there is a real danger that the condition of the network could begin to slip back. The 2002 survey found, for example, that the whole network was in need of a substantial overhaul, with many stiles, gates and other items of path furniture either missing (with the right of way obstructed), or dilapidated and in need of replacement. Further analysis of the survey findings has also shown that a growing number of bridges and other items of path furniture are nearing the end of their useful lives. The loss of a bridge, in particular, has the potential to affect a large part of the network. It may also give rise to Health and Safety issues or mean that the Authority is vulnerable to legal action being taken. Moreover, while the 69% Performance Indicator may be good in comparison to some other authorities, it still means in practice almost one-third of the network is currently obstructed or can be used only with difficulty.

4.3 Cost of bringing the network up to standard

Further analysis of the 2002 survey findings has shown that to resolve the backlog of maintenance work and bring the network fully up to standard would require a one-off additional expenditure of around £590,000. Spread over a 5 to 6 year period, this would equate to approximately £100,000 - £120,000 pa. Thereafter expenditure would need to increase by around £150,000 a year to hold the network at that level and to continue the replacement of path furniture as it reaches the end of its useful life. However these figures do not allow for on-going clearance of natural vegetation (currently costing around £12,000 a year) or any drainage or path surfacing works that may be needed from time to time.

It is notable that the expenditure required varies widely from community to community. Although the average cost per community of rectifying the backlog of repairs is £13,738 this ranges from less than £1,000 (for example in Rhyl and Cefn Meriadog) to more than £45,000 in both Llanellidan and Llandegla, over £72,000 in Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd and £73,000 in Llanarmon yn Lal. Similarly the annual cost of keeping the network in good condition, although averaging at £3,492 per community, ranges from less than £1,000 in a few communities to over £8,000 in Llanarmon yn Lal, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd and Denbigh and nearly £10,000 in Llanynys. A breakdown between communities is shown in Appendix 2.

4.4 Potential additional resources from external sources

Additional resources can be expected to be made available from time to time by Welsh Assembly Government and the Countryside Council for Wales towards the implementation of the ROWIP, in successful bids made to TAITH and in successful bids made for EU funding, especially if joint partnerships can be developed with other local authorities. Nevertheless, some increase in Denbighshire County Council's own spending on rights of way will be necessary to kick-start the ROWIP and particularly to make the transition to a planned maintenance approach based on a network hierarchy.

4.4.1 Welsh Assembly Government

In a memorandum to all authorities setting out the framework for funding for ROWIPs Welsh Assembly Government have indicated that, to ensure that ROWIPs are adequately funded from 2008/9 (the first year of practical implementation) additional resources of £1.7 million in

capital monies has been earmarked by the Countryside Access and National Parks Policy Team with similar sums provisionally allocated for the next two years, 2009/10 and 2010/11. Denbighshire's share of this sum in the current financial year is to be £69,375. The money is dependent on the Authority being able to complete and formally adopt its ROWIP (including eight weeks external consultation and consideration of the consultation responses) by 15 September 2008.

Additional resources of this order would be sufficient to employ an additional Footpath Inspector to develop a path hierarchy as the first stage of the proposed change to planned maintenance regime as set out in section 4.2 or to allow preliminary work on one or more of the Special Projects. But it would not be sufficient – nor is the money intended – to make up the shortfall in expenditure on maintaining the path network in order to meet the Authority's existing statutory duties.

4.4.2 Bids to TAITH

Provisional bids have been made to TAITH for funds to support the five schemes listed in section 5 as Special Projects. The sums being sought are:

Special Project	Total bid	Period
Community Miles	£700,000	Years 1-10
Moel Famau - Llandegla - Berwyn Access Project	£200,000	Years 1-10
Corwen to Bala Trail	£200,000	Years 5-10
Llanelidan and Llanfair DC Quiet Lanes project	£150,000	Years 1-5
Native Trails - Online Web Site	£75,000	Years 1-5

4.5 Need for additional resources from Denbighshire CC

Despite these additional resources, it is clear that significant progress towards meeting the objectives set by the Improvement Plan will only be possible if there can also be some increase in the County Council's own revenue spending, particularly in the amount directed towards the maintenance of the path network.

As noted above, to deal with current backlog of repairs would require additional funding of £100,000 per annum for a six year period. An increase which brought the revenue spending per km of rights of way to the same level as the average of the four other North Wales authorities – Anglesey, Conwy, Flintshire and Gwynedd – of £111.17 would go some way towards meeting this target, but would only increase the total budget by around £44,300 pa.

4.6 Cooperative working within the Authority

The division of responsibility within the County for public rights of way and countryside access, with the Rights of Way Unit being primarily responsible for the definitive map and maintenance and enforcement issues but with the Countryside Service taking the lead on promoted paths, was fully examined in the Assessment and found to work well. No change in this basic division of responsibility is proposed, therefore, and both sections will have a vital role to play in ensuring the successful implementation of the Statement of Action.

The delivery of the Improvement Plan is not just down to these two sections, however. As the Assessment made clear, it is important that the ROWIP is 'owned by' the whole Authority and that responsibility for implementing the ROWIP is also widely recognised and shared across the Authority. This includes recognising the contribution which implementing the

Improvement Plan will make to the Authority's objectives for economic regeneration, tourism and community health and well being.

4.7 Strategic context

The strategic context of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan is set out in detail in the ROWIP Assessment. This emphasises that the ROWIP should be seen as relating directly to broader national objectives for the countryside, sustainable tourism and community health, and that it should also be seen as one of the series of plans and strategies drawn up to help the Council meet the needs of residents and visitors to the area and to carry out its statutory responsibilities as efficiently and effectively as possible. The ROWIP must therefore both draw on, and contribute towards, these other strategic approaches while integrating the ROWIP into this wider strategic framework will be essential if the plan's proposals are to be fully realised.

Amongst the County's other strategic policy documents, eight have been identified that are particularly closely related to the Improvement Plan. They are:

- the *Vision for Denbighshire 2025* and the relevant key targets in the *Denbighshire Community Strategy*
- *Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan* and the *AONB Sustainable Tourism Action Plan (2008 – 2012)*
- The three *Visitor Economic Strategies* for the Dee Valley, Vale of Clywd and Hiraethog
- *Visit Wales Walking Tourism Strategy*
- *Denbighshire Health, Social Care and Well-Being Strategy 2008-2011*

At a Regional level, the *Regional Transport Plan for North Wales* developed by TAITH will also be important.

It will be essential therefore that the officers responsible for implementing these other strategies are fully aware of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the way that it is being implemented on a rolling cycle through annual work programmes, and that they contribute whenever possible to meeting these programme objectives. Similarly, the Rights of Way Unit must remain mindful of this wider family of plans and strategies and ensure that they too are able to contribute to these other objectives.

4.8 Working with our access partners

It is for the County Council, as the highway authority and the body with the statutory duty to record, protect and maintain all rights of way in its area, to take the lead on most of the proposals in this Statement of Action. However the Improvement Plan will only fully be realised if we are able to build successful partnerships with a wide range of organisations and individuals.

4.8.1 Farmers and landowners

Most rights of way are across land which is privately owned and is primarily used for farming, forestry or other important economic purposes. Extending and improving access opportunities in the way that we envisage will only come about therefore if we are able to build on the already sound working relationships established with many thousands of

individual landowners and managers throughout Denbighshire and by working in co-operation with the bodies that represent their interests; the FUW, NFU and CLBA.

4.8.2 Local communities

Local communities too have a vital role to play in improving and extending access opportunities. Not only are they often in the best position to know exactly how the existing rights of way are used and valued in their area and to spot the opportunities for improvements, but Community Councils have their own powers to take action; powers which we hope they will exercise to help the County Council. The 'Community Miles' Special Project in particular will rely on their willingness to do so.

4.8.3 Cooperation between authorities

The Authority already has a strong track record since reorganisation of working together co-operatively on rights of way and Countryside Service functions with neighbouring authorities, particularly with Conwy and Flintshire and including on work in the Clwydian Hills AONB, Denbigh Moors/Hiraethog and the Berwyns. This cooperative approach recognises both that the region's distinctive landscapes which attract many recreational users to the countryside run across authority boundaries, and that the way these landscapes and the recreation within them are managed requires a unified approach.

More generally, there is also an increasing tendency for the North Wales authorities to work together cooperatively to deliver a broad range of services and functions.

In relation to Improvement Plans, the underlying objectives and approach of the Denbighshire plan is similar or complementary to that of our neighbouring authorities' plans increasing the potential for cross-border working. These opportunities will be fully explored as individual proposals are worked-up and implemented. In addition schemes such as the proposed Community Miles project which extend the range of opportunities and enhance path users' enjoyment of the network may be eligible for (and dependent on) European Union Regional Development Funding. To qualify the scheme will need to be developed on a regional basis with a number of authorities working together to shared objectives.

4.9 The role of the Local Access Forum

The Local Access Forum has already played a vital role in advising on the ROWIP Assessment and in helping to draw up this Statement of Action. The LAF will continue to have an important role especially:

- In helping to determining the scope and focus of each year's annual work programme
- Working up proposals for inclusion in these programmes
- Advising on priorities
- Monitoring progress

To enable the LAF to fully realise this function, however, it will be necessary to ensure that it has its own independent Secretary to administer the business of the Forum and ensure that it can operate at arm's-length from the Authority.

4.10 Policy towards extending the path network

One of the key needs identified in the ROWIP assessment is to develop a much better, more integrated network of routes for horse riders and cyclists. At present, not only are far fewer

routes available to these users than to walkers, but many of the bridleways and byways that do exist are isolated, meaning they can only be used in combination with roads often subject to significant vehicular traffic. Where groups of bridleways and byways do exist, these too are isolated. There is therefore an urgent need for strategic links to be developed, allowing horse riders and cyclists to journey across the County without having to ride or cycle on busy and dangerous main roads. For example an access corridor is needed to link the southern Clwydian range with the Berwyns.

From time to time the need may also arise to create new sections of footpath. This might be, for example, to join together existing paths to create an attractive circular walk, or to avoid users having to walk along a busy main road.

Whenever the need for new or improved routes is identified, our first approach will be make sure that all the rights which legally exist in the area are identified and properly recorded. There are, for example, a number of old roads in the County which are not currently recorded at all on the definitive map and statement and others where it seems likely that the public's rights are under-recorded; for example where a way is recorded on the definitive map as a footpath but which is likely on investigation to be shown to carry higher rights.

In researching and recording these routes, we also strive to work in cooperation with the farming and landowning community. The County's long-term aim is to establish a sustainable network which can meet the recreational needs of today's path users without conflicting with farming, forestry and other primary land uses; not a network which slavishly adheres to the routes that were established in a bygone age. For this reason we will also give sympathetic consideration whenever possible to simultaneously diverting the line of a right of way to avoid such conflict, where this can be achieved within the legislation available to us.

Only where our investigations confirm that there are no suitable historic rights ways that can be adapted will we consider extending the network by creating entirely new rights of way. Again, our preferred approach will be to always proceed with the agreement and cooperation of the farming and landowning community (including over the payment of compensation) whenever it is possible to do so. However we are prepared where necessary to also use our powers to create new footpaths, bridleways or restricted byways by order, and recognise that this may sometimes be the quickest and fairest way of resolving the genuine differences of opinion that can arise over the need for a new path. In such cases, the final decision on whether an opposed order should be confirmed is taken not by the Council but by an independent inspector appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Before making such an order the Council has a statutory duty to consider the impact any such new way might have on the effective use of the land. We will also not wish to commence on such a course of action unless we are certain that adequate funds can be made available both to establish the path on the ground and to meet the landowners' entitlement to the payment of compensation.

4.10.1 Permissive paths

Opportunities also can arise to extend the path network through the negotiation of permissive paths, including through programmes such as Tir Gofal. Such paths are not public rights of way but exist only for the length of time agreed with the landowner and

subject to whatever conditions or restrictions are specified. Typically a path might be agreed, for example, subject to it being closed at night, or subject to the condition that it cannot be used by walkers with dogs, or that it can be closed or moved at certain times of the year to accord with agricultural practices.

The Council recognises that permissive paths can often be a useful adjunct to local path networks but considers that particularly because of their time-limited nature they will not normally be suitable to meet the long-term strategic need for an extended path network as identified in the ROWIP assessment. For this reason, while the Council welcomes any proposals by user or local community groups that may be willing to take the lead in creating suitable permissive routes through negotiation, we will only fund such proposals where we can be satisfied that such expenditure represents good value for money and would be protected should permission to use the path be withdrawn.

4.11 Approach to the management of conflict

The Council's primary responsibility as Highway Authority is to meet the needs of highway users. With increasing numbers of the public sharing a limited network, at times conflict between different types of users or between users and landowners can be expected to arise.

The Council's objective will always be to keep every right of way open to all those who are legally entitled to use it and not to discriminate against any one type of path user. The suspension or withdrawal of specific users' rights will therefore only be considered in extreme circumstances and as a last resort where no other alternative approaches remain to be explored. It will also take into account the impact that the withdrawal of those rights will have on the overall network available to those users.

5. The ROWIP action proposals and targets

Below are the key action proposals which it is intended to address during the life of the ROWIP, with each proposal being expressed, where possible, in the form of a discrete target. The themes and priorities shown are those identified in sections 1.2 and 2, while the leading bodies and other partners are those discussed in sections 4.6 and 4.8 respectively. In summary, these are:

Themes

- 1 Tacking the backlog to make the definitive map and statement as accurate and comprehensive as possible
- 2 Improving the maintenance and management of the existing network
- 3 Reducing restrictive access to enable more people to use and enjoy rights of way
- 4 Extending the availability of the network to horse riders and cyclists
- 5 Improving access to Open Country and Coast
- 6 Improving the provision of information, including promoting healthy walking initiatives
- 7 Improvements to access which will enhance tourism

Priorities

- a Ensure paths are free from obstruction and open for use
- b Make paths easier to find
- c Make paths easier for use by those with restricted mobility
- d Work to complete the definitive map and statement
- e Resolve/reduce conflict
- f Improve the network for horse riders and cyclists
- g Paths in urban areas
- h Improve accuracy and availability of information
- i Better access to information to enhance enjoyment of countryside

Leading bodies and other partners

- | | |
|------|--|
| DH | Denbighshire County Council, Highways |
| DC | Denbighshire County Council, Countryside Service |
| CoCo | Community Councils |
| LAF | Local Access Forum |
| CCW | Countryside Council for Wales |
| A | Anglesey CC |
| C | Conwy CBC |
| F | Flintshire CC |
| G | Gwynedd CC |
| P | Powys CC |
| W | Wrexham CC |
| UG | User Groups |
| LH | Land Holders |
| BP | Local Business Partnerships |

Group 1: The definitive map and statement and public path orders

The definitive map and statement is the foundation of all work on rights of way, providing conclusive evidence in law of the rights of way shown on it, where they run and how they can be used. It therefore underpins all of the Council's other work in protecting, maintaining developing and promoting the path network.

However the work involved in keeping the definitive map and statement up to date is technically and legally complex and often very time consuming. As most rights of way are over private land, the work can also be very sensitive, with an increasing proportion of cases giving rise to a local inquiry rather than being resolved through negotiations. It is the complex and time consuming nature of this work and the small number of specialist staff available that limit the progress that can be made.

Public path orders provide a vital mechanism for managing rights of way on the ground by diverting and extinguishing existing paths and creating new ones. The work is somewhat less complex than that involved in the definitive map. But it too requires a detailed knowledge of the legislation and procedures, can be equally time consuming and is often locally very sensitive. The same specialist officers deal with both the definitive map and public path orders and it is sensible that the two subjects be considered together in the Statement of Action.

Key issues

The key issues highlighted by the ROWIP Assessment include:

- Both definitive map issues and public path orders are dealt with by the Rights of Way Officer and one Access Officer. They draw on the assistance of Legal Services but there is, currently, no dedicated legal assistance.
- The County's existing definitive map is drawn on an OS base map that is over 30 years old. A small area, once part of Gwynedd, is shown on a separate map. A priority will be to consolidate these two maps whilst putting the information onto an up-to-date, digitised base map.
- Among the advantages of republishing the definitive map in this form is that it will enable the Authority to supply each community with an up-to-date map of all the recorded paths in its area drawn on the latest OS base map and to revise and republish the map at regular intervals.
- Digitisation of the definitive map was completed during the 1990s but the process brought to light a large number of existing errors and anomalies as well as creating new ones. Over 800 errors have been identified of which around a third will require detailed investigation and may also need definitive map modification orders to be made. It will only be possible to deal with these issues properly if additional staff resources can be made available.
- A preliminary assessment by the Rights of Way Unit has suggested there may be as many as 200 'lost ways' in Denbighshire – rights of way that are not recorded on the definitive map and statement. Some may be old highways that could potentially make a significant contribution to improving the network for equestrians and cyclists. It is important to investigate these as early as possible to identify where paths may be in order to avoid possibly abortive work in trying to establish alternative provision.

- The work involved in dealing with orders to divert or extinguish rights of way is also complex and time consuming. Orders to change paths to enable development for which planning permission has been granted to take place have proved in the past to be particularly controversial and disruptive of staff time. Because it is not possible to predict in advance the number of such cases or the workload they will generate, it is difficult to present a case for employing an additional member of staff. An alternative approach is therefore needed to prevent these orders from diverting staff time away from other priority tasks.
- Ideas that might be explored include putting the work out to contract with the costs being recharged to the applicant, or the viability of a group of authorities working together to create a dedicated team to handle all such orders across the partnership.

Action target	Themes	Priorities	Leading bodies / Partners
---------------	--------	------------	---------------------------

Group 1: Definitive map and statement and public path orders

1.1	Develop a programme to identify, define and prioritise the resolution of the current 800+ definitive map errors	1,6	d	DH
1.2	Prepare and republish a consolidated paper definitive map derived from digital information	1,2,6	d,i	DH
1.3	Prepare a strategy to update the definitive map on a rolling basis to record legal events and as errors are resolved	1	d,h,i	DH
1.4	Publish electronic copies of the definitive map over the Internet and through libraries / one-stop shops / Countryside Centres	1,2,6	d,h,i	DH
1.5	Develop a programme to resolve the backlog of definitive map modification orders	1,2,4,6	d,e,h	DH
1.6	Identify and prioritise the recording of rights of way that have been omitted from the definitive map by historical error	1,2,6	d,e,f,g,h	DH, LAF
1.7	Produce guidelines and policies for public path order applications. Explore alternative ways of handling orders to prevent disruption of definitive map work and other priority tasks	1,2,4,6	d,e,g	DH, LAF, BP
1.8	Develop a better awareness of the path order register and procedures available to landowners to prevent the deemed dedication of new ROWs.	1,6	h	DH, LAF, BP

Group 2: Management and maintenance of the existing network

With the exception of promoted paths that are maintained by the Countryside Service, the day-to-day maintenance and management of most rights of way is dealt with by a team of two Footpath Inspectors (one 80% f/t), working under the direction of an Access Assistant. Problems are dealt with on a direct, one-to-one, basis whenever it is possible to do so, with the Footpath Inspector normally approaching the landowner concerned. An annual strimming programme is also carried out under a countywide contract, with priority being given to paths in urban areas that serve community facilities. These arrangements were examined in the ROWIP assessment and were found to work well.

In 2007/08 the County's revenue and capital budgets for rights of way were £107,710 and £50,000 respectively, with around 60% of the former being allocated to footpaths. However, in relative terms, far more is spent per kilometre on byways (£296 per km) and bridleways (£108 per km) than on footpaths (53p per km). The ROW Unit benefits from being part of the Network Group of the Transport and Infrastructure Department that holds the Authority's budget for the maintenance of highways. This enables it to pool resources with complementary works in other sections and also to secure extra 'windfall' funding during the year if money becomes available.

The overall condition of the rights of way in Denbighshire is significantly better than in neighbouring authority's areas. This is a legacy of the focussed effort made in the 1990s to meet the Government's 'Year 2000' target for rights of way and gives Denbighshire a strong competitive advantage as an activity tourism and countryside day-trip destination.

The present level of staffing, however, means that the Council can only act on a 'fire fighting' basis, responding to issues brought to its attention by path users. Nor is it able to regularly inspect the path network or make inroads into the backlog of maintenance work that is known to exist. The Authority therefore remains vulnerable to action which any path user may take to force it to deal with a right of way that is obstructed or out of repair, including action through the Courts. The proposed change to a planned maintenance regime would help to provide an effective defence against any such action.

The key to making progress with this aspect of the Improvement Plan will be to secure the appointment of an additional Footpath Inspector. This would allow the ROW Unit first to implement the path hierarchy that was agreed in principle by the Local Access Forum and then progressively move to a more efficient and effective planned maintenance programme linked to a regular cycle of path inspections.

Key issues

The key issues highlighted by the ROWIP Assessment include:

- Denbighshire's performance in looking after its path network is consistently above average - a legacy of the focussed effort made in the 1990s to meet the Government's 'Year 2000' target for rights of way. Nevertheless, current expenditure does not allow the Council to make inroads into the backlog of maintenance issues that are known to exist.
- A comprehensive survey in 2002 confirmed that the whole ROW network was in need of a substantial overhaul, with many stiles, gates and other items of path

furniture either missing (with the right of way obstructed) or dilapidated and in need of replacement.

- Resolving this backlog would require a one-off expenditure of around £590,000, with an on-going expenditure of £100,000 - £150,000 per annum to then keep the network up to standard. Money would also be needed to deal with any drainage or path surface issues and keep paths clear of natural vegetation.
- The Council's approach to routine management and maintenance was reviewed and strengthened in 2002 but remains largely demand led. Nor is it possible to carry out anything more than sample annual surveys.
- The appointment of an additional Footpath Inspector would allow a progressive change to the situation in which 90% of the network was inspected on a 1-3 year cycle and the network as a whole proactively managed, with most work being carried out on a preventative basis before a path becomes obstructed or difficult to use.
- The key to making this change will be to introduce a path hierarchy, as proposed by the Local Access Forum in 2004. This would divide the network into four categories based on the importance of each individual path within the local community and wider County network. The Council's CAMS software has a built-in ability to classify paths according to such a hierarchy.
- The adoption of a hierarchy would not affect the legal status any path, nor affect the landowners' or Authority's statutory duties in any way. But it would greatly reduce the current uncertainty for path users and ensure Denbighshire maintains its strong competitive edge in attracting active holidaymakers and day trip visitors to use rights of way in the County.

Action target	Themes	Priorities	Leading bodies / Partners	
Group 2: Management and maintenance of the existing path network				
2.1	Produce a range of clear policies and procedures for the management of rights of way and unsurfaced roads	2,6	e,h	DH, DC, LAF
2.2	Develop and implement programme to change to a planned maintenance regime and away from being complaints driven	2	a,b,e	DH, DC, CoCo, LAF
2.3	Develop a programme of annual surveys to analyse network condition, path use and user satisfaction	2,4,6	h	DH, DC, LAF, CoCo, UG
2.4	Develop a strategy to ensure promoted paths can continue to be maintained to a high standard consistent with their status and to address the issue of funding	2,7	a,b,e	DC, DH, CoCo,
2.5	Develop a system using the CAMS package to record customer requests and to improve feedback	2,6	a,e,i	DH
2.6	Maintain the current maintenance and enforcement regime until superseded by target 2.2 whilst developing further opportunities for co-operative working with community councils, landowners and volunteers	2,4	a,b,c,e	DH, DC, CoCo, LAF, UG
2.7	Continue collection of infrastructure information and improving access to that information for path users	2,6	a,b,h	DH, DC, UG
2.8	Maintain an on-going programme of signposting improvements	2,6	b	DH
2.9	Furniture improvements 1 - 3	2	a,c	DH, DC

Action target		Themes	Priorities	Leading bodies / Partners
2.10	Furniture improvements 4 - 5	2	a,c	DH, DC
2.11	Surface improvements 1 - 3	2	c,f	DH, DC
2.12	Surface improvements 4 - 5	2	c,f	DH, DC
2.13	Identify and prioritise bridge repair and replacement 1 – 3	2	a	DH
2.14	Identify and prioritise bridge repair and replacement 4 – 5	2	a	DH
2.15	On Going Maintenance 1 - 3	2	a	DH, DC, CoCo, UG
2.16	On Going Maintenance 4 - 5	2	a	DH, DC, CoCo, UG

Group 3: Network improvements

The ROWIP Analysis shows clearly that while most of Denbighshire is well served by footpaths and offers a very wide range of walking opportunities, the network for horse riders and cyclists is much poorer with only a very limited number of bridleways and byways being available to them. The useable routes also tend to be concentrated in specific areas of the County with no access between them, forcing users to either cross, or to have to ride or cycle along, busy and dangerous main roads. There is almost a total absence of route suitable for carriage driving.

A further issue is the very limited number of paths that are open to, and easily accessible by, those who are elderly, have impaired mobility or other special needs. There is a dearth of such routes even in the most scenically attractive and popular parts of the County.

The need to make a much higher proportion of the network more easily accessible to those who are elderly or who otherwise limited mobility was seen as a key priority by members of the public. The Council's aim, therefore, will be to remove restrictions which limit access whenever it is possible to do so as a matter of good practice. This, and the need to provide strategic links for horse riders and cyclists, should jointly be the main focus of the improvements to the rights of way network that are made under the plan.

Key issues

- Over the whole County, walkers are generally well served by the current rights of way network as are cyclists when unclassified county roads are also taken into account.
- The condition of the network is also generally perceived to be good by most users.
- The distribution of the network is very uneven however, and there is scope for increasing provision in some areas particularly near to some of the County's larger areas of population. Users, for example, would welcome extra provision in the north west corner of Denbighshire.
- For equestrians, the existing network is much less satisfactory. Even in the few areas where there are relatively high numbers of bridleways and byways, the network is often disjointed, forcing users onto the heavily trafficked road network.
- There is also a lack of strategic connecting routes, preventing equestrians and cyclists from journeying from area to area.
- Between Loggerheads Country Park and the Llanbedr, for example, where the A494 divides the extensive network of the northern Clwydians from the southern Clwydian and Alyn Valley network, users are concerned about the very limited number of safe crossing points on this very busy and fast road. Similarly at Llandegla improving connections between routes would result in an improved network that users felt would increase use.
- There is strong public support for ensuring that as much of the network as possible is open to those who are elderly or who otherwise have restricted mobility. The Council's approach, therefore, will be to ensure that restrictions that limit access to such users are removed whenever it is possible to do so.

Action target	Themes	Priorities	Leading bodies / Partners	
Group 3: Network improvements				
3.1	Prioritise list of missing links the County believe would substantially improve the network	3,4,5,7	f	DH, DC,
3.2	Establish Community Council development and liaison meetings	4	a	DH
3.3	Establish Path/Access Co-ordinators for every Community and Town Council	4	a,e	DH
3.4	Working with LAF and landowners, improve path user understanding of land management issues	4,6	a,e	DH, DC, LH, LAF
3.5	Develop a programme for introducing least restrictive field crossings	3,7	a,c	DH, LH
3.6	Identify opportunities to work with Heather and Hillforts Project to promote permissive routes within project area for use by those with restricted mobility	3,5,6	a, c	DC, UG,
3.7	Surface improvement projects to improve all ability access	3,4	a,c	DH, DC,
3.8	Establish liaison group to identify and progress all-ability access improvements, working with representatives of disabled users' groups and through LAF and Council's Access Forum	3,4,6	a,c	DH, DC, LAF, UG
3.9	Improve urban paths and integration with Safe Routes to Schools and cycle paths	3,4,6	g	DH
3.10	Clwydian Range AONB path network improvement	4,7	a,b	DH, DC,

Action target	Themes	Priorities	Leading bodies / Partners
3.11 Improve access in and around Llangollen relating to World Heritage Status bid	3,4,7	a,b,c,g	DH, DC,
3.12 Identify and develop 'green corridors' linking residential areas, particularly areas of social deprivation, to local open spaces and green areas utilising existing rights of way where possible	3,4,5,6	a,b,c,g	DC,DH,CoCo
3.13 Maintain list of local improvements agreed and prioritised through the LAF and share with bodies able to deliver access improvements such as Tir Gofal	4,5	c,f	DH, LAF
3.14 Maintain details of free roadside parking facilities that could be used to benefit developing access for users in rural areas	4,5,6,7	c,i	DH
3.15 Help facilitate voluntary partnership between carriage drivers and the farming community to develop additional permissive driving routes	4,6,7	f,i	DH, UG, LH, LAF, BC
3.16 Public transport link promotion	4,5,6,7	i	DH

Group 4: Access to Open Country and the Coast

It is the Countryside Service rather than the ROW Unit that takes the lead on the issue of access to open country and will similarly progress the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative to develop improved access to a 2 km strip along the whole of the Welsh coast.

While Denbighshire has a significant amount of open access land (the sixth greatest area in Wales) the restrictions on the right of access means that it primarily benefits only walkers. The predominant areas are the central south Clwydian Range, Llandegla Moors, Llantisilio Mountain, the Berwyn, Clocaenog Forest and Denbigh Moors. There are also two large reservoirs, owned by Welsh Water and managed for recreation, at Brenig and Alwen. Similarly, Moel Famau Country Park lies within an area of open access and is proactively managed for recreation, as is the Forestry Commission's land in Clocaenog Forest and Moel Famau.

To a large extent, the open access land in the south of the county and on the Denbigh Moors compensates for the deficiencies in the rights of way network for walkers. There is also further provision, albeit limited, for horse riders and cyclists in the managed access provided on Forestry Commission land, to land owned by Welsh Water around Llyn Brenig and in the facilities provided privately by UPM Tillhill in Coed Llandegla.

Denbighshire has only a limited coastline and most of the coastal strip is urban in nature. There is already extensive coastal access, however, with the foreshore being open in its entirety for public access.

Key issue

- Denbighshire has a significant amount of open access land but the restrictions on the right of access means that it primarily benefits only walkers.
- The limited coastal strip is predominantly urban in nature but already has extensive public access, including to the whole of the foreshore.
- It is the Countryside Service rather than the ROW Unit that takes the lead on the issue of access to open country and coastal access
- The Service has prepared management plans for all the open access areas within Denbighshire and for coastal access

Action target	Themes	Priorities	Leading bodies / Partners
---------------	--------	------------	---------------------------

Group 4: Access to Open Country and the coast

4.1	Prioritise developing new links, where required, to improve access to open country and the coast	3,5,7	b,i	DC, DH,
4.2	Establish programme to develop walking on access land by establishing easy to follow linear routes	3,5,6,7	b,i	DC

Group 5: Improving confidence, knowledge and opportunity

It is the Countryside Service rather than the Rights of Way Unit that takes the lead in promoting rights of way and which also maintains promoted routes. Currently there are over 100 miles of promoted rights of way in the County or some 12% of the entire path network. These are targeted at a wide range of different audiences, ranging from long day and multi-day walks and mountain bike cycle routes through challenging areas aimed at the most experienced and enthusiastic users, to paths at honey pot sites and 'short walks for busy people' aimed at those with little or no experience of recreational walking. The emphasis on all of these routes is to manage them to a higher standard than would otherwise be possible, particularly to enhance visitors' enjoyment of the area. Initiatives are also underway as part of the *Healthy Denbighshire* strategy to encourage people to walk more as part of a healthy lifestyle.

The questionnaire survey carried out as part of the ROWIP Assessment showed that the residents of Denbighshire already have unusually high levels of awareness about, and confidence in using, the rights of way network in the County.

The promoted routes are recognised as bringing wide economic, community and social benefits to the County and as an important part of the County's tourism infrastructure. While a number of national studies have been carried out into these aspects, and there would be scope to conduct further local studies to identify the specific economic, social and other benefits accruing to Denbighshire and how these might be maximised.

Despite the commitment of the County Council in its Access Strategy, there are currently very few paths that are open to those who are disabled, are visually impaired or who have other special needs. The wide range of different personal needs and expectations on the one hand, and the nature of much of the path network on the other, makes it difficult to resolve this issue. Rather than developing 'token' paths for such users however, a new approach is needed.

As well as removing restrictions that limit access whenever it is possible to do so as a matter of good practice (as set out in Group 4), this approach should seek to identify all the paths that are available year-round to, and which are suitable for, a range of different special needs. By making sure that information about these paths is widely available, is accurate and is kept up to date, it would then be possible for such users to be aware of all the paths which are potentially open to them and to make their own choices about which specific paths meet their individual needs, interests and abilities.

The County's Local Access Forum was established under the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and acts as a statutory adviser to the Authority on both access to land and linear access, including on the needs of all sections of society. The Denbighshire Forum meets under the Chairmanship of John Hughes OBE and has 17 members. While the Forum has worked well it does not, at present, have an independent secretary but is dependent the ROW Officer to take that role. This is unsatisfactory in that it sometimes gives rise to a conflict of interests for the officer.

Key issues

- Some 12% of the entire path network is currently promoted in Denbighshire, targeted at a wide range of different audiences, abilities and interests. The emphasis with all these routes is to manage them to a higher standard than would otherwise be possible, particularly to enhance visitors' enjoyment of the area.
- While national studies have been carried out, the use being made of the promoted routes in Denbighshire or the information provided about them has not been specifically evaluated. There would, in particular, be scope to consider how the social and economic benefits accruing to the County might be maximised.
- Initiatives are also underway to promote walking as part of healthy lifestyle under the *Healthy Denbighshire* strategy.
- There is however a dearth of information about the routes and facilities available throughout the County for those who are disabled or who have other special interests, nor does the current information enable a user to judge whether a route is suitable for his or her own specific needs, interests and abilities.
- A new approach is needed therefore, to gather and publicise information about all the paths that are suitable for those with special needs. By making reliable and up-to-date information widely available, it would then be possible for such users to be aware of all the paths potentially open to them and to make their own choices about which ones meet their individual interests and abilities.
- An independent secretary is required to enable the Local Access Forum to properly discharge its statutory functions and to overcome the current conflict of interest with the role of the ROW Officer.

Action target	Themes	Priorities	Leading bodies / Partners
---------------	--------	------------	---------------------------

Group 5: Improving confidence, knowledge and opportunity

5.1	Develop provision of Community Information Points	3,5,6,7	h,i	DC, DH
5.2	Enhance signage and waymarking for promoted routes	3,5,6,7	b,h,i	DC, DH
5.3	Develop and promote specific routes that will help improve access for users with mobility or sensory impairment	3	c,i	DC, DH, LAF
5.4	Develop routes which deliver health and well being objectives for all residents of Denbighshire	3	c,i	DC, DH
5.5	Develop and promote specific routes that bring economic benefit to rural communities and towns integrating the path network to develop tourism opportunities	7	c,h i	DC, DH,CoCo, LAF
5.6	Raise the profile and capability of the Local Access Forum to provide advice on access in the county	6	h,i	DH, DC
5.7	Undertake a review of, and develop a strategy for the better management of, all printed and on-line publicity and promotional material relating to access in Denbighshire	6	h,i	DC, DH, LAF
5.8	Develop ways of gathering and promoting accurate and up to date information on all routes that are suitable for those with special needs to give such users an informed choice of the routes suitable for their specific needs and abilities.	3,6,7	h,i	DH, DC, LAF, UG
5.9	Horse and all level 1 routes / main road interface safety improvements	4	f	DH

6. Special projects

In addition to the groups of Action Targets set out above, five Special Projects are proposed. Each project, to be undertaken over a period of years, will draw together a number of threads and would aim to meet a range of Improvement Plan objectives. To undertake each of the projects, a dedicated project officer would be normally appointed with, in some cases, a small project team. All of the projects will require significant extra funding and, for this reason, will not normally be started unless and until these resources have been secured. An exception is the Community Miles project on which some preliminary work may be possible and which (depending on the success of that work) might be carried forward on a more limited basis.

Special project 1: Community Miles

The aim of this project will be for each of Denbighshire's 39 local community and town councils to develop a short (2-3 mile) circular walk or ride aimed at enhancing both local residents' and visitors' appreciation and enjoyment of the area. Wherever possible these should be all-ability paths, open to users at any time of the year (including some that may be available to horse riders and cyclists) and accessible by public transport. Each Community Path will be publicised through a village signboard and local leaflets, but the aim will be for paths to be sufficiently well waymarked, signed and used as to be capable of being followed without a guide. It is envisaged that the project would generate wide community, health, economic and social benefits.

The project would be undertaken over a 2 or 3 year period and may qualify for EU funding if carried out in partnership with a consortium of authorities (for example, with Gwynedd, Ynys Mon, and Conwy). The total project cost (carried out on this basis) would be approximately £2,500,000.

The project as a whole is dependent on funding from external sources and would require the appointment of a dedicated project team. It is possible however that some preliminary work could be undertaken to test and refine the concept; this would enable a Community Miles Path to be developed in up to five local communities each year using monies taken from the rights of way maintenance budget. If substantial external funding is not forthcoming and the pilot is successful, then this approach might be applied county-wide, with communities being invited to bid on an annual basis to nominate a local walk or ride for inclusion. Up to five paths a year could be supported in this way. This would enable the project to be progressively rolled-out to cover most of the County over a number of years. However this approach would still be likely to require the appointment of a project officer.

Special project 2: Moel Famau – Llandegla – Berwyn corridor improvement

The aim of this project would be appoint a project officer to research and establish a broad strategic access corridor for horse riders and cyclists from Moel Famau to the Horseshoe Pass and on to the Dee Valley. This would link the existing bridleway network crossing the sparse Alyn Ial Valley to Coed Llandegla, and create additional links from the forest to Llantysilio Mountain and across the Dee valley to the Berwyns on the Wrexham border. There are currently no convenient or safe routes available to riders or cyclists linking these locations. Instead users are forced to use long sections of the A494 trunk road and the

narrow A525 and A5104, often having no option but to ride on the tarmac carriageway where they are at significant risk from the high volume of fast moving traffic.

Denbighshire would primarily undertake the project but Wrexham County Borough Council may also wish to support the project.

Total project costs are provisionally estimated to be in the order of £200,000.

Special project 3: Corwen to Bala bridleway and cycle link

This project would aim to establish an attractive strategic multi-user route for walkers, horse riders and cycle users linking Corwen with Bala using the track bed of the disused railway, quiet lanes and existing bridleways. The route would make it possible to avoid using the heavily trafficked A494 or B4401 and would provide a valuable local facility in an area where there is currently very little bridleway provision as well as constituting a strategic gateway at Corwen for visitors to Bala and Gwynedd. Links may also be possible with the proposed extension to the national cycle network from Wrexham along the Dee valley, with the British Horse Society's *Sea Horse* ride from Prestatyn and, eventually, to a further strategic route leading westwards towards to the West Wales coast.

The project would be led by Denbighshire with Gwynedd County Council also being invited to participate.

Total project costs are provisionally estimated to be in the order of £200,000.

Special project 4: Llanellidan to Llanfair Ridgeway Quiet Lanes Project

The project would aim to create a network of routes managed and signed to facilitate use by horse riders, cyclists and carriage drivers in this very attractive but somewhat remote and little visited area of the County. The network would aim to take full advantage of the spectacular views across the County and be linked to the villages of Llandegla, Llanellidan and Llanfair DC. It would make use of the quiet, lightly trafficked lanes that exist in the area, many of which have wide grassed verges offering a refuge for users. These would be supplemented by existing rights of way (including the possible upgrade of some short sections to restricted byways status) and negotiated permissive routes.

A consortium of project partners would be established. In addition to the County's Rights of Way Unit and Countryside Service and the Community Councils, this could be expected to include the Local Health Partnership, North Wales Tourism Partnership and Countryside Council for Wales.

The estimated total project costs are approximately £150,000.

Special project 5: Native Trails

This is a web based project to develop an online facility bringing together information provided and managed by the Highway Authorities about all recorded bridleways, restricted byways, byways open to all traffic and unsurfaced roads as depicted on both the definitive map and the list of streets, together with other information relating to access and use of these routes by all users – walkers, equestrians, cyclists, carriage drivers and vehicular users. The system has the potential to be particularly valuable to wheelchair users and other special needs groups.

The information will be made available on-line through the Google Earth Platform allowing the public to utilise Google Earth or Google Maps to locate and choose suitable legal routes to enjoy access to the countryside. By linking the map-based data to on-line photographs, video clips and other information users will not only be made aware of the routes that are available but to see in advance the physical condition and other characteristics and therefore to judge a route's suitability for that person's specific needs and abilities. The system will also allow users to identify other permissive routes made available by private landowners and suggested routes provided by the councils.

A feature of the site will be the ability for users to add their own comments and feedback, providing up-to-date information both to other users and the councils about track conditions, features and points of interest.

It is proposed that the project be developed as a partnership with a university information technology business unit and funded by the project promoters. There may also be scope for tourism or other business sponsors. It is hoped the download of the application would be available, like the basic Google Earth, at no charge to users. It would be possible to carry advertising that might also help support the long-term development of the project.

Ideally the project should be carried out on a multi-authority basis, for example together with Conwy, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Ynys Mon

The estimated total project costs are £75,000.

Special projects	Themes	Priorities	Leading bodies / Partners
<p>1. Community Miles Village based circular walks that are enhanced to best possible least restrictive access, signposted and waymarked with supporting promotional material to be of specific value for both locals and tourists</p>	3,4,5,6,7	b,c,i	DC,DH, A, C, G
<p>2. Moel Famau – Llandegla – Berwyn Access Project To create along a corridor of land, improved links for cycling and horse riding and removing dangerous road crossings</p>	1,3,4,6,7	c,f,i	DH, DC, CoCo, UG, W, CCW
<p>3. Corwen - Bala Trail Strategic trail for horse riders and cyclists</p>	1,3,4,6,7	c,f,i	DH,DC, CoCo, CCW
<p>4. Llanelidan and Llanfair DC Quiet Lanes To identify, improve and promote lanes suitable for horse riding, cycling and carriage driving including through possible upgrades to bridleways</p>	1,3,4,6,7	b,c,f,i	DH,UG
<p>5. Native Trails Online website enhancing the existing work for Ride the Clwyds extending across the county and enabling inter-active user-generated information to be shared about the availability of bridleway, byway and unsurfaced roads utilising Google Earth / Maps technology.</p>	1,3,4,6,7	b,c,f,i	DH, DC, UG, CCW, A, C, F, G, P, W, BP

7. Monitoring implementation of the ROWIP

The implementation of the Improvement Plan will be monitored by the regular bi-annual reviews of the annual work programmes as set out in section 3.1. Annual reports will be made to the Local Access Forum and published on the Council's web site.

Appendix 1: ROWIP work programme, September 2008 to March 2010 (Provisional draft)

Set out below is a provisional draft of the first Rights of Way Improvement Plan work programme covering the period from formal adoption of the Improvement Plan in September 2008 to March 2010.

The programme is still being worked up and the final version can be expected to differ substantially from the draft. For example, not all of the specific tasks shown in respect of the Group 1, 2 or 3 Action Targets may be carried forward into the final programme. Similarly, no tasks have yet been determined in relation to Group 4 and very few in relation to Group 5. While all of the Action Targets for these two groups are currently listed it is likely that, in practice, only some of the targets will be addressed during this period in the final work programme.

The final work programme will be published on the County Council's website together with periodic reports of progress as they are made to the Local Access Forum.

ROWIP work programme, September 2008 – March 2010 (Provisional draft)

Action/ task No.	Action target and related programme tasks	Priority ³	Duration and resources			Notes
			Staff ⁴	Duration	Costs /pa ⁵	
1	Definitive map and statement and public path orders					
1.1	Develop programme to identify, define and prioritise the resolution of the current 800+ definitive map errors					
1.1a	Check and correct digital map to match existing paper definitive map	★★★★	e	-1yr	£	
1.1b	Examine all known errors with definitive map and current digital set and categorise into (a) minor graphic error (b) DMMO required (c) further research needed to investigate.	★★★	e + New	1yr	£	A
1.1c	Carry out corrections required to resolve group (a)	★★★	e + New	-1yr	£	A
1.1d	Prepare policy to prioritise the resolution of group (b) errors for which DMMOs required and agree with LAF	★★★	e (L) + New	-1yr	£	A

³ **Priority:** ★ = low, ★★★★★ = high.

⁴ **Staff:** e = existing, (L) with Legal Services, (CS) with Countryside Service.

⁵ **Costs:** £ = below £5,000, ££ = £5,000 - £15,000, £££ = over £15,000.

1.1e	Prepare and process DMMOs required to resolve group (b) errors	☆☆☆	e (L) + New	5yrs	£££	A
1.1f	Prepare policy for the ongoing updating of consolidated definitive maps to reflect ongoing changes caused by public path orders and agree with LAF	☆	e	-1yr	£	
1.3	Prepare strategy for rolling updating of maps to correct for legal events and error resolution					
1.3a	Identify and complete definitive map legal event orders and amend digital line work	☆☆☆☆	e	-1yr	£	
1.3b	When task 1.1b completed, review and amend digital line work for group (a)	☆☆☆	e	-1yr	£	
1.4	Publish electronic copies of the definitive map over the Internet and through libraries/ one-stop shops / countryside centres					
1.4a	Prepare A1 bilingual map templates and produce 54 paper consolidated definitive map sheets for Denbighshire derived from digital data at rate of 6 maps/year based on the previous maps of Clwyd and Gwynedd	☆☆☆☆	e	9yr	£	
1.4b	Prepare and publish electronic version of definitive map for distribution online and on CD Rom for use by public and partners in accordance with OS copyright and government guidance	☆	e	-1yr	£	
1.5	Develop programme to resolve backlog of definitive map modification orders					

1.5a	Prepare policy for the prioritisation of existing and future DMMO applications and agree with LAF	☆☆☆	e (L)	-1yr	£	B
1.5b	Prepare annual programme for making of definitive map orders	☆☆☆	e (L)	-1yr	££	
1.6	Identify and prioritise the recording of ways that have been omitted from records by historical error					
1.6a	In conjunction with LAF prepare event for path users with an interest in discovering 'lost ways' to define demand for appropriate training and services for examining old records.	☆	e (L)	-1yr	£	
1.6b	Prepare a statement of priorities for the handling of applications for the recording of lost ways.	☆	e (L)	-1yr	£	
1.7	Produce guidelines and policies for public path order applications. Explore alternative ways of handling orders to prevent disruption of definitive map work and other priority tasks					
1.7a	Prepare policy and procedures for PPO applications to create / divert / extinguish paths under Highways and T&CP Acts and charging for such orders	☆☆	e (L)	-1yr	£	
1.7b	Prepare a priority for the making of path orders and publish on the internet the list of the orders waiting to be made showing their priority	☆	e (L)	-1yr	£	
1.8	Developing awareness of the path order register and increasing awareness of procedure to prevent deemed dedication of new ROWs					

1.8a	Work with the bodies representing landowners to ensure all owners are aware procedures to confirm the extent of public rights of access on their land and give help if they wish be able to make the appropriate legal declaration should they not intend dedicating further rights of way across their land	☆☆	e	-1yr	£	
2	Management and maintenance of the existing path network					
2.1	Produce a range of clear policies & procedure guides for the management of rights of way and unsurfaced roads					
2.1a	In conjunction with LAF and User Groups identify areas of network management where specific policy or guidance would be beneficial for good management of access or to resolve issues of conflict and prepare such policies	☆☆	e	-3yr	£	
2.2	Develop and implement programme to change to a planned maintenance regime and away from being complaints					
2.2a	Develop a network hierarchy reflecting the importance of each path to the local community and wider network, and on which the frequency of inspections and standard of maintenance will be based	☆☆☆☆☆	New + e	-2yr	£££	C
2.2b	Devise and implement a 3 – 5 year rolling path inspection schedule for every path depending on its hierarchy.	☆☆☆☆	New + e	- 2yr	£	C
2.2c	On completion of tasks a and b, develop and implement changeover to a planned maintenance approach based on path inspection regime. Hierarchy officers post to be retained to become third ROW inspector	☆☆☆☆	New + e	2 yr then ongoing	£££	C

2.3	Develop programme of annual surveys to analyse network condition, path use and user satisfaction					
2.3a	In line with revised practise from the WLGA / WDU implement seasonal user satisfaction surveys to complement path condition surveys to measure the quality of the countryside access in the county and how it meets the expectation of able-bodied and disabled users	☆☆	New + e	-2yr	££	
2.4	Develop strategy to ensure promoted paths can continue to be maintained to high standard consistent with their status and to address the issue of funding					
2.4a	Develop strategy in consultation with LAF to meet above target and to secure the necessary resources	☆☆☆☆☆	e (CS)	2 yr	£	
2.4b	Seek appropriate long term funding packages from sponsor or other arrangements to ensure on-going maintenance of promoted paths	☆☆☆☆	e(CS)	1 yr	£	
2.5	Develop the recording of customer request to give improved feed back through the CAMS package					
2.5a	Develop the CAMS computer system to improve the feedback to the public and customer care centre with regards to the reporting of path problems and the resolution of those matters	☆☆☆	e	-1yr	£	
2.6	Maintain the current maintenance and enforcement regime until superseded by 2.2 whilst developing further opportunities for co-operative working with community councils, landowners and volunteers					

2.6a	Ensure existing management and maintenance regime continues and is effective whilst path hierarchy and future planned maintenance regime is being develop under 2.2	★★★★★	e	Ongoing until new policy introduced	£££	C
2.7	Continue collection of infrastructure information and improving access to that information for the path users					
2.7a	Increase PI condition surveys and routine path maintenance surveys to improve quality and accuracy of path condition and infrastructure data in CAMS and increase the involvement with path users providing path condition information	★★★	e	-1yr	£	
2.8	Maintain on-going programme of signposting improvements					
2.8a	Complete statutory duty under Countryside Act 1968 to signpost every path where it leaves a metalled road.	★★★★★	e	5yr	£3,750	D
2.8b	Improve signpost end destination and path information by adding destination information to new signs on paths that lead to an identifiable location, eg a settlement or local point of interest..	★★★	e	Ongoing	£1,500	E
2.8c	Apply end destination information to existing signs during routine inspection; (1500 signs at a cost of £70 / 100 signs)	★★★	e	Ongoing	£1,050	E
2.8d	Progressively add path identity and customer care number to existing signs using printed stickers to help users when reporting path problems (£100 / 1,000 stickers at £500 pa)	★★	e	Ongoing	£500	E
3	Network improvements					
3.1	Prioritise missing links the council believe would substantially improve the network					

3.1a	Develop and maintain an on-going list of possible missing links for subsequent investigation or negotiation as opportunities arise	★★★★★	e	Ongoing	£	
3.2	Community Council development and liaison meetings					
3.2a	Contact every Community Council. Review relationship with HA and investigate opportunities for partnership working to improve local path network	★★★	e	3 yrs	££	
3.3	Establish Path / Access Co-ordinators for every Community and Town Council					
3.3a	Ask each Community Council to appoint a Path Coordinator for their area and provide briefing	★★★	e	3 yrs	£	
3.8	Establish liaison group to identify and progress all-ability access improvements					
3.8a	Establish liaison group to identify and progress all-ability access improvements working with representatives of disabled users' groups and through LAF and Council's Access Forum	★★★★★	e	-1yr	£	
3.12	Identify and develop 'green corridors' linking residential areas, particularly areas of social deprivation, to local open spaces and green areas					
3.12a	Identify and develop 'green corridor' linking residential areas of social deprivation to local open spaces and green areas utilising existing rights of way where possible	★★★	e	3 yrs	£	
4	Access to open country and the coast					
4.1	Prioritise developing new links to improve access to Open Country and the Coast					

4.2	Establish programme to develop walking on access land by establishing easy to follow linear routes					
5	Improving confidence, knowledge and opportunity					
5.1	Provision of Community Information Points					
5.2	Enhanced signing and waymarking for promoted routes					
5.3	Develop and promote specific routes that will help improve access for users with mobility or sensory impairment					
5.4	Develop routes which deliver health and well being objectives for all residents of Denbighshire					
5.5	Develop and promote specific routes that bring economic benefit to rural communities and towns integrating the path network to develop tourism opportunities					
5.6	Raise the profile and capability of the Local Access Forum to provide advice on access in the county					

5.6a	Facilitate meeting between LAF, DC's lead member and senior management to help develop the role of the LAF through its annual report to authority and to promote best practice in access management		e	1 yr	£	
5.7	Review all printed and on-line promotional material relating to access in County and develop a strategy for its better management					
5.7						
5.8	Improve access to information on access suited to all abilities					
5.8a	Working through liaison group set up under task 3.7a, establish the type of information needed and preferred methods of delivery		e	-1 yr	£	
5.8b	Develop a strategy to gather, verify and deliver information		e	2 yrs	£	

Notes on tasks

Note A: Develop a programme to identify and resolve the current definitive map errors

Developing a programme to deal with the 800+ definitive map errors can be achieved with existing staff resources. However, to resolve the c.500 minor errors within a reasonable timescale and to investigate more significant errors and prepare DMMOs where required will only be possible with additional staff resources. The appointment of an additional definitive map officer for a period of 2 years is recommended. .

Note B: Prioritisation of DMMO applications

The aim of task 1.5a is to develop a system of prioritisation for existing and future DMMO applications that provides a coherent and justified ranking whilst ensuring all applications can be dealt with fairly.

Note B: Developing a path hierarchy

This work will require the appointment of an additional member of staff for up to 3 years tasked with developing a categorisation scheme and then implement the scheme in practice.

Paths should be divided into 5 categories based on their importance to the local community and wider network. Categorisations to be made on a community by community basis in consultation with local Members, Community/Town Councils and user groups and is expected to take up to 2 years..

On completion of this work there should be a progressive changeover to a planned maintenance regime with the new post retained to provide a third footpath inspector. The extent to which improved maintenance standards can be implemented in practice will also be dependent on the level of resources available for maintenance.

Note C: Complete duty to signpost all ROWs where they leave a metalled road.

The current PI is to erect 100 new signs a year a cost of £7,500 (£75 per sign). There are an estimate 800 signs still not in place (from a total of about 2,300) meaning that at the current rate of progress the task will take 8 years to complete. By increasing the target to 150 signs pa we aim to reduce that to 5 years at a cost of an extra £3,750 pa

Note D: Add destination and distance information to existing signposts

Destination and distance information is currently provided by countryside services only on promoted routes. Adding this to all new signs and to existing signs during the course of routine inspection would cost of £1,500 and £1,050 respectively. Doing so would greatly improve user awareness, increasing the use of the path network and reducing the use of roads either on foot or by car.

Also affixing a sticker showing the identity of each path and the customer care number will help users to report any problems they encounter. Spread over 5 years the cost would be £500 pa.

Appendix 2: Estimated cost per Community of restoring and maintaining whole ROW network

Community	ROW length per community Kms	Cost of rectifying backlog of repairs		Annual cost of maintaining network after upgrade	
		Total £	£/Km	Total £/pa	£/Km
Aberwheeler	23.14	2,115	91.41	2,680	115.83
Betws Gwerfil Goch	14.54	5,635	387.58	683	46.99
Bodelwyddan	10.79	5,185	480.68	1,212	112.38
Bodfari	13.49	3,210	238.03	2,059	152.68
Bryneglwys	41.44	12,645	305.14	1,780	42.96
Cefn Meriadog	3.62	880	242.91	151.83	41.91
Clocaenog	31.91	14,505	454.61	2,404	75.33
Corwen	65.06	4,885	75.08	4,682	71.96
Cwm	26.04	5,885	226.03	2,535	97.35
Cyffylliog	31.30	7,370	235.49	2,580	82.42
Denbigh	58.13	6,460	111.14	8,206	141.17
Derwen	29.58	20,300	686.39	3,708	125.36
Dyserth	15.81	1,865	117.99	4,080	258.13
Efenechtyd	5.06	4,505	889.45	299	58.94
Gwaenysgor(pt)	1.58	50	31.60	90	56.98
Gwyddelwern	30.97	19,020	614.16	2,917	94.18
Llanarmon yn Ial	84.84	73,455	865.80	8,093	95.39
Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd	40.84	2,530	61.94	4,142	101.42
Llandegla	56.19	45,730	813.83	7,251	129.05
Llandrillo	46.46	15,165	326.44	3,499	75.31
Llandyrnog	49.09	21,300	433.90	4,276	87.11
Llanelidan	50.22	45,020	896.45	5,008	99.72
Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd	58.86	72,085	1,224.77	8,204	139.39
Llanferres	48.86	9,085	185.94	7,044	144.16
Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr (pt)	2.42	885	365.09	134	55.35
Llanfwrog Rural	13.09	1,495	114.25	1,092	83.41
Llangar	27.34	9,655	353.14	2,475	90.52
Llangollen Rural	42.30	6,675	157.79	2,930	69.27
Llangollen Town	19.75	6,045	306.10	1,419	71.85
Llangynhafal	28.43	5,995	210.88	1,975	69.46
Llanrhaeadr yng Nghinmeirch	59.31	22,820	384.76	5,889	99.29
Llansantffraid Glyndyfrdwy	2.93	215	73.27	94	31.86
Llantysilio	57.58	12,015	208.66	2,704	46.96
Llanynys	34.63	33,685	972.68	9,772	282.18
Nantglyn	32.23	22,220	689.38	5,294	164.23
Prestatyn	21.06	1,440	68.38	6,069	288.19
Rhuddlan	23.61	22,760	963.82	3,314	140.32
Rhyl	6.84	350	51.17	978	142.97
Ruthin	16.03	4,755	296.72	4,506	281.16
St. Asaph	14.70	1,690	114.95	3,370	229.22
Trefnant	7.11	17,545	2,468.48	881	123.91
Tremeirchion	40.19	11,850	294.82	6,514	162.05
Waen	11.26	9,750	865.63	3,189	283.14
Totals	1298.62	590,730		150,178	
<i>Average</i>	<i>30.20</i>	<i>13,733</i>	<i>440.85</i>	<i>3,493</i>	<i>120.03</i>

Appendix 3: Rights of Way Improvement Plan Assessment: Executive summary

This Executive Summary sets out the main conclusions from the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Assessment that was undertaken by the County Council in 2007 in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Assembly Government.

The Assessment looked at all aspects of the Council's work on public rights of way, the context in which this work is carried out and the extent to which the rights of way network is able to meet the demands placed on it by a wide range of different users. It therefore forms the basis on which the Statement of Action has been prepared.

The full Assessment is available on-line at
[http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/www/cms/live/content.nsf/lookupattachments/English~DNAP-7B7JWP/\\$File/DCC_RoWIP_AssessmentFinal.pdf](http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/www/cms/live/content.nsf/lookupattachments/English~DNAP-7B7JWP/$File/DCC_RoWIP_AssessmentFinal.pdf)

Strategic context

The ROWIP must both draw on, and contribute toward, other local, regional and national plans and strategies, with the County Council's *Vision for Denbighshire*, the *Tourism Strategy for North Wales* and *Regional Transport Plan* being particularly important. It is also important that the ROWIP is seen as being 'owned by', and the responsibility of, the whole Authority, not just the Rights of Way Unit.

The County's Public Rights of Way Network

The County has a recorded network of 1,298 kms (809 miles) of public rights of way of which 84% (1,088 kms) are footpaths and available, as of right, only to walkers. Bridleways, which can also be used by horse riders and cyclists, make up 14% of the network (182 kms) and byways open to all traffic, which can also be used by vehicles, make up 2% (26 kms). Other rights of way are known to exist but are not currently recorded. The County also has a further 91 kms of unsurfaced public roads.

Organisation and staffing

It is the Rights of Way Unit that is responsible for discharging the County Council's duties towards public rights of way. As well as preparing a Rights of Way Improvement Plan these duties include keeping an up-to-date legal record of all rights of way, maintaining, signposting and waymark paths and dealing with paths that are obstructed. The Unit is part of the Environment Directorate and has a staff of 5; the Rights of Way Officer, two Access Assistants and two Footpaths Inspectors.

Whenever possible, problems are dealt with on a direct one-to-one basis with the Footpath Inspector normally approaching the landowner concerned. While generally successful, the present level of staffing means that the Council can only act on a 'fire fighting' basis, responding to issues brought to its attention by path users. The appointment of a third Footpaths Inspector would allow it to change over time to a more proactive way of working.

To advise the Council on its rights of way function, a statutory Local Access Forum was set up in 2002 and currently has 17 members. The Forum is serviced by the Authority (as required by the legislation) but it is not currently possible to provide an independent Secretary, with that role being undertaken instead by the Rights of Way Officer.

The ROW Unit also works closely with the Countryside Service, which (at the time of the Assessment) was part of the Lifelong Learning Department of the Education Directorate and has a full time staff of 26. The Service has no statutory functions towards rights of way but is responsible for promoting selected routes. It also maintains these paths to a higher standard than would otherwise be possible to enhance visitors' enjoyment of the area.

Promoted paths

More than 100 miles of rights of way are currently promoted by the County Council; around 12% of the path network. In addition to 70 kms (44 miles) of the Offa's Dyke National Trail, this includes three Regional Routes - The North Wales Path, Hiraethog Way and Dee Valley Way/North Berwyn Way - and several local 'honey pot' routes in popular tourist areas.

A long term aim, should the money become available, is for a fourth Regional Route running down the western side of the County. This would be based on existing rights of way and would link the three current Regional Routes to provide a wide choice of walking opportunities on high quality routes through attractive scenery.

Budget

As part of its highways maintenance budget, the Council has provided £107,710 for revenue spending and £50,000 for capital spending on public rights of way in 2007/08. This is a 50% increase on previous financial years and reflects a reappraisal of the amount spent on highway maintenance in general as a result of pressure on the Authority, including pressure from the Local Access Forum. The bulk of this revenue spending is allocated to footpaths. However, in relative terms, far more is spent on byways (£296 per km) and bridleways (£108 per km) than footpaths (£58 per km).

The Countryside Service does not have a dedicated budget but is largely dependent on grant aid, especially from the Countryside Council for Wales. This includes around £10,000 a year paid by CCW as reimbursement for three-quarters of the cost of maintaining the Offa's Dyke Path.

The Definitive Map and Statement

The Definitive Map and Statement - the formal, legal record of the line and status of all rights of way – is a highly technical and time consuming area of work but one which underpins the whole of the path network.

The Council does not have the large backlog of rights of way 'claims' waiting to be dealt with that are common to many other authorities. There are nonetheless more than 800 identified problems with the existing Definitive Map and Statement that need to be resolved of which around a third are likely to require formal Definitive Map Modification Orders to be made. Dealing with an issue of this scale and complexity is beyond the current capacity of the Rights of Way Unit.

Condition of the path network and the maintenance backlog

Over the last ten years the Council has consistently out-performed other highway authorities in Wales in the proportion of rights of way that are correctly signposted where they leave a metalled highway or which are easy to use. But a comprehensive survey carried out in 2002 found that, out of nearly 10,000 stiles, signposts and other items of path furniture on the ROW network, many were dilapidated or missing while other were nearing the end of their useful lives.

Dealing with this backlog of path maintenance will require one-off expenditure of around £590,000, together with a further £100-150,000 a year to ensure the network remains in good condition and stop another backlog developing. These figures do not take into account the cost of clearing vegetation, on which £12,000 a year is currently spent, or any work that may be needed to path surfaces or drainage.

Community Councils and other players

As well as the County Council, many other bodies and individuals have a direct interest in the rights of way network. The Council already works closely with many of these, including the farming community, and bodies representing the many different types of path users, but would welcome comments on the way these existing partnerships can be developed and new ones created.

It is particularly keen to work more closely with Denbighshire's 40 Community and Town Councils. One possibility which the County wishes to explore in more detail would be to set up a rolling programme in which groups of communities identify the most important paths in their areas, which can then be developed and promoted as easy-to-use village walks and rides. It is possible that EU funding for this might be available, given that the scheme could bring significant community and economic benefits. It might also be a quick way of making sure that a range of routes are available to people with restricted mobility or who have other special needs.

The public's use of rights of way, and views on the ROW Improvement Plan

A special survey was carried out, including through a questionnaire distributed with *County Voice*, to find out how much people in Denbighshire use their rights of way and their views on the Improvement Plan.

It found that over 70% of respondents use rights of way at least once a week for walking or running, with the most popular activity being a walk of 2 miles or more. Running or jogging to keep fit was also an important activity, rivalling the traditional use of 'walking the dog'. Almost 90% of those who responded agree or strongly agree with the statement that "spending money on footpaths and bridleways is good value compared to spending by the Council on other leisure activities".

Asked about priorities for the Improvement Plan, the survey shows a clear consensus of support for three main areas of work – putting up more signs to make paths easier to find, making paths easier to use for the elderly or disabled people, and ensuring all paths are clear of overgrowth or obstructions. There is also strong support for completing the legal record and changing the line of paths to overcome conflict.

Appendix 4: List of consultees

The following were consulted on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Assessment and have also been invited to comment on the draft Statement of Action. (The list excludes individual path users.)

Community Councils in Denbighshire

Aberwheeler Community Council
Betws Gwerfil Goch Community Council
Bodelwyddan Community Council
Bodfari Community Council
Bryneglwys Community Council
Cefn Meriadog Community Council
Clocaenog Community Council
Corwen Community Council
Cwm, Tremeirchion & Waen Community Council
Cyffylliog Community Council
Cynwyd Community Council
Derwen Community Council
Denbigh Community Council
Dyserth Community Council
Efenechtyd Community Council
Gwyddelwern Community Council
Henllan Community Council
Llanarmon yn Ial Community Council
Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd Community Council
Llandegla Community Council
Llandrillo Community Council
Llandyrnog Community Council
Llanelidan Community Council
Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd Community Council
Llanferres Community Council
Llangollen Town Council
Llangynhafal Community Council
Llanrhaeadr yng Nghinmerch Community Council
Llantysilio Community Council
Llanynys Community Council
Nantglyn Community Council
Prestatyn Town Council
Rhuddlan Town Council
Ruthin Town Council
Rhyl Town Council
St Asaph Town Council

Trefnant Community Council

Other local authorities & local access forums

Conwy County Council
Conwy East Local Access Forum
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire Local Access Forum
Gwynedd County Council
Gwynedd Local Access Forum
Powys County Council
Powys Local Access Forum
Wrexham County Council
Wrexham Local Access Forum

Government departments and agencies

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Forestry Commission Wales
Ministry of Defence (MOD)
Wales Tourist Board (WTB)
Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

Members of Parliament and the Welsh Assembly

Ann Jones AM
David Jones MP
Martyn Jones MP
Darren Millar AM
Chris Ruane MP
Janet Ryder AM
Karen Sinclair AM
Brynle Williams AM

Other bodies and organisations

ATC
Black Environmental Network
Bodryddan Estate
British Association for Shooting and Conservation
British Canoe Union (BCU)
British Driving Society (BDS)
British Horse Society (BHS)
British Motorcyclists Federation (BMF)
British Mountaineering Council (BMC)
British Mountain Guides
British Orienteering Federation (BOF)
Byways & Bridleways Trust (BBT)
Camping & Caravanning Club
Clwyd Special Riding Centre

Country Land & Business Association (CLBA)
Countryside Recreational Access Group (CRAG)
Cyclists Touring Club (CTC)
Ramblers Association - Denbighshire
Disability Rights Commission (DRC)
Disability Wales
Disabled Ramblers Association
Duke of Edinburgh Administrators
Farmers Union of Wales (FUW)
Fieldfare Trust
Forest Enterprise
Girl Guiding Cymru
Land and Recreation Association (LARA)
Mountaineering Club of North Wales
Nant Clwyd Estate
National Farmers Union (NFU)
The National Mountain Centre – Plas y Brenin
National Trust (NT)
North East Wales Outdoor Education Service
North Wales Tourism
Offa's Dyke National Trail Officer
Open Spaces Society (OSS)
Ordnance Survey
Ramblers association (RA)
Ramblers Wales
Rhug Estate
Riding for the Disabled (RDA)
Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)
Royal Society for the Promotion of Health
RSPB North Wales (RSPB)
Scout Association
Snowdonia National Park
Sustrans
Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF)
UPM Tilhill
Welsh Canoeing Association
Welsh Trail Riders Association
Woodland Trust
Wynnstay Estate
Youth Hostel Association (YHA)

