

ROWIP Mid Term Review (2019 – 2023)



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document describes the findings of the review of the Delivery Plan that has been undertaken mid-term for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) in 2022/2023, as part of the ongoing monitoring of delivery and progress. It should be read in conjunction with the Carmarthenshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2019-2029.

The ROWIP Delivery Plan comprises of the Aims, Policies and Action Plan. There are a total of 47 Actions (including their sub-actions) detailed in the 2019-2029 ROWIP Delivery Plan. For the purpose of this mid-term review, the Actions have been divided into three categories that reflect where there have been successes and shortcomings in their implementation to date.

Where issues have been identified during the review, recommendations have been made with respect to supporting implementation of the Actions for consideration by CCC, with particular focus on the high priority Actions.

THE RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)

Each local highway authority is required under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 to publish and undertake decennial reviews of Right of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs) for their area.

The first ROWIP for Carmarthenshire was published in 2007 covering the ten-year period up to 2017. A second revised ROWIP for Carmarthenshire was published in 2019 (1), covering the period up to 2029, following research and consultation with stakeholders, to take into account the successes and shortcoming of the first plan.

The ROWIP incorporates a Delivery Plan, which comprises of the Aims, Policies and Action Plan. This can be found in Section 11 of the Carmarthenshire 2019-2029 ROWIP.

The following themes and aims form the basis for the ROWIP Delivery Plan:

Aim 1: Ensure that the Rights of Way network is easy to use and enjoyable.

Aim 2: Provide a reliable, accurate, up to date and widely available digital Definitive Map & Statement.

Aim 3: Ensure the opportunities for countryside access are easy to use and enjoyable.

Aim 4: Continue to work in partnership with all relevant, interested parties to achieve improved facilities for Countryside Access.

Aim 5: Promotion – maintain and improve the range and quality of public information on access and PROW, as well as make it more widely available in appropriate formats.

REVIEW OF DELIVERY PLANS

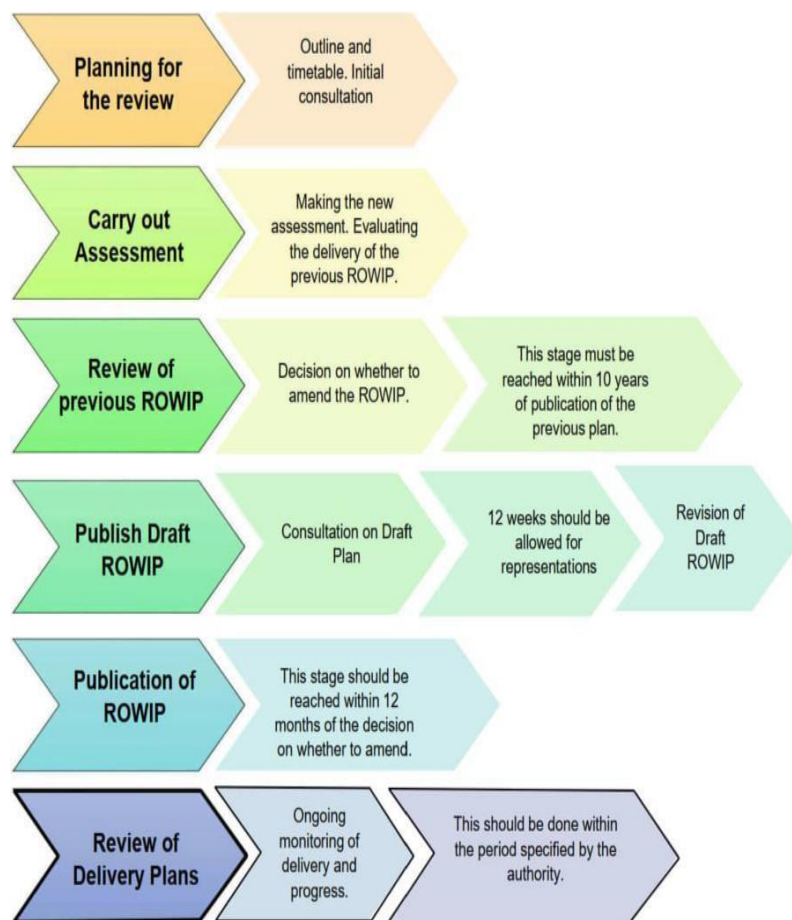


Figure 1-1 Reproduction of WG ROWIP Guidance

As described in the Welsh Government (WG) Guidance for Local Authorities on Rights of Way Improvement Plans (2) published in 2016, the Delivery Plans can be renewed periodically without the need to review the entire ROWIP.

Originally it had been CCC's ambition to review the Delivery Plan on a two-yearly basis. However, this review was delayed due to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic alongside staff shortages in Countryside Access.

Subsequently in 2022, WSP Consultants were commissioned by CCC to undertake a mid-term review of the Carmarthenshire ROWIP Delivery Plan.

WSP developed a review methodology, completed a baseline Policy review, collected and analysed all review data and wrote up their review. Using the information compiled by WSP, CCC then completed the final review document.

This document describes the findings of the review of the Delivery Plan that has been undertaken mid-term for the ROWIP (in 2022/2023), as part of the ongoing monitoring of delivery and progress. It should be read in conjunction with the Carmarthenshire ROWIP 2019-2029.

BASELINE POLICY REVIEW

A baseline policy review has been undertaken to understand how changes in policy and legislation related to Rights of Way since the publication of the ROWIP may impact on the Aims, Policies and Action Plan (that make up the Delivery Plan) which is presented in detail in Section 11 of the 2019-2029 ROWIP.

The baseline date used for the review was 1 January 2019.

The policy review considered national policy covering Wales, such as the Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 (3), as well as regional policy and local policy to Carmarthenshire. The baseline policy review also considered the potential impact of emerging policy, including those being examined by the Access Reform Advisory Group.

Overall, the Aims, Policies and Actions Plans contained within the 2019-2029 ROWIP, are still relevant. Consequently, no changes to the overall themes in ROWIP Policies, Aims or Action plan are necessary.

The review has identified a small number of Policies and Actions where it may be appropriate to amend the priority and / or the wording to make them more relevant to current circumstances (such as where roles have moved between organisations). Instances where this might be appropriate are highlighted in the following section, that summarises the mid-term progress in implementation of the Action Plan.

The findings from the baseline policy review and a copy of the ROWIP Baseline Policy Review Technical Note can be found in Appendix A.

METHODOLOGY

The mid-term review of the ROWIP Delivery Plan has been undertaken collaboratively with WSP and the CCC Countryside Access team, with input from the Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum (LAF).

As part of the review, information that is pertinent to the implementation of the ROWIP Delivery Plan was collated by WSP for the period from 2019 to 2022, CCC updated the information to include 2023 taking the review to 5 years; halfway through the term of the plan.

This information included:

- Outputs from Countryside Access Mapping System (CAMS) Desktop GIS mapping system
- Overall Public Rights of Way and Access Spend, comprising of the revenue spend (excluding staff costs), capital spend including the Access Improvement Grant from April 2020, and the Wales Coast Path Spend which included the respective revenue grant.
- Records of Public Rights of Way closures and diversions
- Promotional activities and public surveys
- Complaints and freedom of information requests
- Volunteer recruitment and achievements of the volunteer workforce

Additionally, two separate WSP led workshops were held with CCC and the Carmarthenshire LAF. These involved discussion as to the best ways to measure success and allowed CCC and the LAF to provide feedback about the implementation of the current ROWIP to 2022.

CCC ROWIP Review Workshop:

A WSP led workshop with CCC was held on the 28 September 2022. It was attended by CCC Countryside Access Manager, a representative from the Countryside Access maintenance team and the WSP Consultant leading the midterm review.

Carmarthenshire LAF ROWIP Review Workshop:

The workshop with the Carmarthenshire LAF, held on 15 November 2022, was attended by members of Carmarthenshire LAF, the CCC Countryside Access Manager in their remit as secretary, plus the WSP Consultant who chaired the meeting.

The LAF has a broad spectrum of membership, with representation provided by members with interests such as tourism, walking, motorised access, equestrian access, cycling, farming, countryside management, and the environment. Additionally, there is representation from less able users.

The RAG (Red/Amber/Green) SYSTEM

The progress in implementation of the ROWIP Delivery Plan has been presented in a way that highlights successes and shortcomings under each of the 5 main aims, using the Red / Amber / Green (RAG) system.

This system aims to flag up the Actions in the Delivery Plan, where additional work and/or resources are required to match the current aspirations and priorities of the Authority.

The RAG system divides success of implementation into the following three categories:



RED: High priority Delivery Plan Actions, which have had insufficient progress in their implementation.



AMBER: Other Delivery Plan Actions which have been implemented with varying levels of success.



GREEN: Delivery Plan Actions where good progress has been made and they are being implemented satisfactorily.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ROWIP DELIVERY PLAN

Using the RAG categorisation system, the information below provides details of each action, their priority status, and their success in implementation.

Further details on how progress has been made by the Carmarthenshire Countryside Access team, and partners, in delivering the ROWIP between 2019 to 2022 is also provided, with any key tasks to better deliver the ROWIP and any proposed changes to the delivery plan listed.

AIM 1: ENSURE THAT THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK IS EASY TO USE AND ENJOYABLE.

A. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT

Of the 7 published actions under Aim 1A, 2 have been delivered satisfactorily, 3 have seen varying success and two have seen insufficient progress.

G	G	A	A	A	R	R
ACTION 2: HIGH Seek to maintain 2017 Countryside Access budget allocation plus inflation over the 10-year period of this Strategy.	ACTION 5: NO PRIORITY STATUS Rights of Way that could be used to gain recreational access to waterways for canoes and similar waterborne craft should maintained to allow for this purpose.	ACTION 1B: LOW To increase the proportion of PROW that are open, easy to use and well signed by reopening and improving a minimum of 200km p. a.	ACTION 3: HIGH Ensure that the Wales Coastal Path is maintained to highest possible standard in conjunction with Powys and Ceredigion utilising the Coast Path Officer jointly appointed for the role and utilising WG funding for the purpose. Look to improve appropriate sections to provide access for all.	ACTION 4B: MED Explore opportunities to develop regional Equestrian Trails and additional equestrian routes within Carmarthenshire as more money is made available.	ACTION 1A: HIGH To increase the proportion of PROW that are open, easy to use and well signed by reopening and improving a minimum of 100km p.a (4.6% of network)	ACTION 4A: HIGH Bridleways, Byways & Green Roads (U/C roads) – work with Byway User Group, BHS and other user groups to improve selected highways, byways, bridleways and other suitable access land for equestrian users.

Under Aim 1A, Carmarthenshire has performed satisfactorily in respect of actions 2 and 5.

Action 2

Success in delivering action 2 was ensured through the early identification of a budget pressure within the service was identified in 2018 and a successful bid made for additional funding. Additional revenue was awarded to the Countryside Access budget in 2019 and further additional budget was allocated in 2020. This has, year on year, effectively maintained the 2017 allocation to date.

This calculation has been verified by finance following the LAF workshop where it was suggested the whole working budget should be included not just the maintenance budget and that inflation should be taken into account.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	None

Action 5

There is a commitment to embed the principles of action 5 as part of Carmarthenshire's Access Improvement Grant (AIG) Schemes¹, enhancing access to water where rights are agreed. However, given the lack of clarity in respect of the rights of passage with waterborne craft, revised guidance following ARAG FAR recommendations on rights of access to water would enable more certainty in project planning and negotiations that could better deliver this action.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Priority status of Medium should be awarded to action, subject to review in line with any new guidance.
	The wording of action 5 should be amended with the inclusion of some measurable targets when revised guidance is published.

Under Aim 1A, performance in delivering actions 1B, 3 and 4B has seen varying degrees of success.

Action 1B

There has been partial success in delivering action 1B with 89km of public right of way re-opened and/or improved in the 3 years from 2019 to 2022. Whilst a 3.6% enhancement of the PROW network is a positive step it is significantly below the published target which was a highly aspirational target based on increased available funding.

Despite successfully maintaining the 2017 budget allocation and receiving Access Improvement Grant (AIG) funding there is still a shortfall in funding for such an aspirational target.

The proposed 100% network survey will provide a complete record of PROW condition in the County will provide an accurate baseline from which we can more accurately measure performance however, current resource levels are not adequate to achieve the target set for action 1B.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Action 1B should be removed leaving a single aspirational action across the term of the ROWIP which seeks to secure a realistic target of increased PROWS easy to use and well signed. Little value found in publishing a 'B' action so dependent on a significant funding increase, unrealistic in the current economic climate.

Action 3

This action is ongoing with a Wales Coast Path stile replacement programme underway to enhance accessibility for pedestrian users. The topography of land crossed by the WCP creates logistical difficulties in delivering improvements. Continuous review of the WCP within Carmarthenshire seeks improvements as opportunities arise, this will continue throughout the term of the ROWIP.

Opportunities for higher rights along the WCP for cycling and horse riding are not being actively sought,

Wording 'ensure' and 'highest possible standard' flagged in LAF workshop as unrealistic and unclear. LAF members also expressed concern in respect of provision for equestrian access to date and requested increased communication with WCP Officer.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Increase engagement between WCP officer and LAF	Action 3 to be reworded to "Maintain the Wales Coastal Path to the highest practicable standard, in conjunction with Powys and Ceredigion utilising the Coast Path Officer jointly appointed for the role and utilising WG funding for the purpose. Look to improve appropriate sections to provide access for all." (or similar).

Action 4B

A North Carmarthenshire multi-user trail is in under development. With no specific funding for such developments, this and other potential opportunities, are long term aspirations that will run throughout the term of the current ROWIP.

The proposed Equestrian Strategy is required to move this action forward in a structured and supported way.

LAF suggested the action should read 'new' or 'existing' Regional Equestrian Trails. In the absence of any defined regional equestrian trails currently Action 3 could be reworded to'develop new' regional equestrian trails....however this is not considered a key change required during the term of this ROWIP so will be something to consider and the end of the term of the plan.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Action 4B wording and target(s) to be reviewed and revised as necessary when the Equestrian Strategy is published.	Target date for action to be revised to 2029.

Under Aim 1A, Carmarthenshire has made insufficient progress in respect of actions 1A and 4A.

Action 1A (High priority)

This action has not been achieved in full. Loss of dedicated ROWIP funding has continued to have an impact on delivering certain ROWIP objectives.

A improvement of 3.6% of the network has been achieved. Whilst enhancing 89km of the PROW network is a positive step it is significantly below the published target which was aspirational based on securing increased funding.

Despite successfully maintaining the 2017 budget allocation and receiving Access Improvement Grant (AIG) funding there is still a shortfall in funding to deliver this target when all other duties, roles and responsibilities are taken into account.

The proposed 100% network survey will provide a complete record of PROW condition in the County will provide an accurate baseline from which we can more accurately measure performance however, current resource levels alone are not adequate to reliably achieve the target set for action 1A.

LAF members highlighted the importance of CAMS in monitoring the progress/success of this action.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Seek additional funding streams to deliver this high priority action.	Combine actions 1A and 1B to provide a single aspirational but realistic action. Amend the wording of the Action to read “To increase the proportion of PROW that are open, easy to use and well signed by reopening and improving a minimum of 200km over the term of the ROWIP.” (or similar).
	Amend the target date to 2029.

Action 4A (High Priority)

With a £16,000 byways budget dedicated to delivery of action 4A, there is a significant shortfall in the estimated funding required.

Despite a 4% increase in mapped Byways the various bodies are not considered to have adequately been working together during the term of the ROWIP so far. Differing priorities within the relevant services has contributed to this weakness.

LAF comments highlight a lack of maintenance of routes that may have been subject to improvement and that the current selection process for improving routes is not transparent. Additionally, concerns were raised from LAF members over the Byway User Group (BUG) no longer meeting.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Reinstate Byway User Group or alternative forum to address concerns of the LAF	None
Develop transparent route selection process for improvement, involving all partners/bodies.	

AIM 1: ENSURE THAT THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK IS EASY TO USE AND ENJOYABLE.

B. RIGHTS OF WAY MAINTENANCE

Of the 7 published actions under Aim 1B, 4 have been delivered satisfactorily, 3 have seen varying levels of success.

G	G	G	G	A	A	A
ACTION 6:HIGH Improve performance on signposting to increase use of rights of way "Easy to Use".	ACTION 7: HIGH Annual Community Maintenance will be prioritised by the Countryside Access team. Town/Community Councils will be approached by the Countryside Access unit requesting that they to exercise their powers of PRow maintenance within their council area.	ACTION 9: HIGH To ensure that all existing promoted Strategic Trails and County Walks are open, available, well maintained, signed and waymarked. Subject all walks and trails to annual review taking account of quality, suitability, popularity and resources available.	ACTION 11: HIGH Continue to work towards a target of 100% open and easy to use network of bridleways in the County.	ACTION 8: HIGH Seek additional maintenance funding to enable a long term, sustainable, high quality access network, in conjunction with neighbouring Welsh authorities.	ACTION 10: MED In conjunction with the Carmarthenshire Byways User Group and other relevant user groups, work to ensure that all Byways & U/C Highways where vehicular rights have been permanently restricted continue to be maintained and are kept open and available for remaining lawful users within resources available.	ACTION 12: MED Clearance and improvement of suitable, selected byways/"green roads" in consultation with user groups subject to ongoing funding.

Action 6

Good progress has been made in respect of action 6 by prioritising signposting projects in 2019 and 2020. With low levels of investment in signposting prior to 2019 the ongoing signposting programme has notably improved performance.

A portion of the 3 year Access Improvement Grant (AIG) award has been allocated to the continuation of the signposting programme until 2025 which will continue the trend of improved performance.

It is anticipated that the established annual signposting programme will continue for the remaining term of the ROWIP.

LAF members noted it would be desirable to see more route waymarking as well as roadside signposts.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Define the 'easy to use' baseline, include LAF in discussion.	Update estimated cost per annum to £7k to reflect actual anticipated costs.
When opportunities arise, as part of signposting programme or as part of wider projects, work with landowners to improve waymarking along routes.	Amend target date to 2029

Action 7

Delivery of action 7 is ongoing and will continue for the remaining term of the ROWIP.

There is an open dialogue with all Town and Community Councils to encourage use of their statutory powers to maintain PROWs.

Since the creation of the Network Hierarchy, Town and Community Councils have been asked to provide a 5% selection of routes in their area that they would like to see prioritised.

With the introduction of the Network Hierarchy the wording of the action requires update.

LAF members suggested an information leaflet for Town and Community Councils for them to better understand their powers and the changing approach of the Authority to PROW maintenance and enforcement.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Review content of letters and information provided to Community Councils. Produce information document to see that there is sufficient advice on their powers/funding/ways of working.	Reword action to read “The maintenance of PROWs is prioritised by the Countryside Access team using the Network Hierarchy, in consultation with the Town/Community Councils. Town/Community Councils will be approached by the Countryside Access unit encouraging use their powers of PROW maintenance within their council area.”
When opportunities arise, as part of signposting programme or as part of wider projects, work with landowners to improve waymarking along routes.	Amend target date to 2029

Action 9

The development of the PROW network hierarchy has supported the success of action 9 which is ongoing.

The hierarchy mandates regular maintenance and inspection of high priority routes such as those along our County Walks and National Trails.

Once the 100% network survey has been completed, quantitative (measurable) data from CAMS, could be supplemented with more subjective qualitative (descriptive) survey and complaints data to review the network and determine suitability for promotion.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2029

Action 11

As a continuing action, action 11 is being implemented satisfactorily and is ongoing.

The PROW network hierarchy prioritises multi-user routes, including bridleways, assisting in the delivery of this action.

The £10k estimated cost per annum published is inaccurate, actual spend per annum to date has been in the region of £40k.

LAF noted that the 100% target in this action is not realistic given legal issues that affect certain routes.

The Equestrian Strategy will introduce new actions and targets, action 11 will require review to ensure ROWIP actions align with the Equestrian Strategy and vice versa.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Consider & review ROWIP actions as necessary when Equestrian Strategy is implemented	Amend target date to 2029
	Update Estimated costs per annum to £40k

Action 8

This is considered an ongoing objective however, grant funding cannot be used for maintaining the PROW network; a key question raised is therefore, where is funding being sought from?

Opportunities to commit additional eligible resources for maintenance will be taken up as and when they arise.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2029

Action 10

With the £16k Highways contribution to the Countryside access team, action 10 has been implemented within available resources during each year of the term of the ROWIP so far. This action will continue throughout the remaining term of the ROWIP.

There are a number of ROWIP actions resourced from this budget, not all can be delivered for this amount, it is estimated that £50k per annum is required to fully deliver this action.

A knowledge of vehicular routes legally restricted or under consideration for future restriction is essential for successful implementation of this action. Ensuring the Countryside Access team have an up to date record of restricted routes and are consulted on restriction proposals will enable this action to be delivered as far as resources presently allow.

The LAF expressed significant concern in respect of restricted Byways and UCRs that are not being adequately maintained for lower status users. It is considered by LAF members that the success of this action is dependant on the reinstatement of the BUG.

LAF members also consider that Byways and U/C Highways should have increased priority within the network hierarchy. Byways are already High priority routes within the PROW network hierarchy, U/C Highways are not included in the PROW hierarchy as they are not PROWs.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Proactive liaison within the Highways and Planning team with respect to proposed traffic restriction on Byways and U/C Highways.	Amend estimated cost per annum to £50k
Obtain and maintain an up to date list of restricted Byways and U/C Highways	Amend target date to 2029
Reinstate BUG	
LAF to continue to raise the issue of maintenance priority within CCC at a Cabinet level.	

Action 12

The £16k funding allocation from CCC Highways has been received annually through the term of the ROWIP so far and it is anticipated it will continue until at least 2029, the action will therefore be implemented to the end of the ROWIP term.

A number of actions are resourced from this budget, overlaps between this action and actions 4 and 10. Amending estimated cost of overlapping actions would remove pressure on £16k required to implement action 12.

Consideration should be given to rationalising overlapping actions and a review of associated costs in any future ROWIP.

In the absence of BUG meetings, consultation with user groups has been inconsistent. Successful implementation would be supported if the BUG was reinstated to assist in transparent selection of routes for maintenance and improvement.

Given the High priority of Byways within the network hierarchy this action should be amended to High priority.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Reinstate Byways User Group (BUG)	Amend target date to 2029
	Amend to High priority action

AIM 1: ENSURE THAT THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK IS EASY TO USE AND ENJOYABLE.

C. RIGHTS OF WAY ENFORCEMENT

Of the 2 published actions under Aim 1C, 1 has seen varying levels of success, 1 has seen insufficient progress.

A	R
ACTION 14: MED Use approved scoring matrix to define enforcement priorities such as Health & Safety considerations, to ensure issues are dealt with fairly and in a timely manner in accordance with agreed criteria.	ACTION 13: HIGH Define an Enforcement Protocol for policies/procedures to assert and protect the rights of the public where discussion, negotiation, goodwill and cooperation have failed by 2020..

Action 14

There has been partial implementation of action 14 with the development of the network hierarchy that is used as a scoring matrix for prioritising all aspects of the PROW network, including enforcement.

Satisfactory implementation of this action requires completion of action 13 that will define the agreed criteria.

The term 'ensure' can be an unrealistic goal, to 'aim' is a more achievable objective.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2025 - to align with delivering Action 13

Action 13

The output of this action has not been achieved by the target date, there has been a significant pressure on available staff resource within the Countryside Access team since the publication of the current ROWIP.

As the target date has lapsed it requires revision, given pressures of producing several other strategic documents for the service in the near future, the target date should be updated to 2025.

The LAF suggested a more immediate date for completion however, enforcement is supported by statutory provisions that govern enforcement procedures and WG guidance has been published to govern best practice so the service is not without well supported procedures.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2025

AIM 1: ENSURE THAT THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK IS EASY TO USE AND ENJOYABLE.

D. ACCESS FOR ALL

Of the 3 published actions under Aim 1D, 2 have seen varying levels of success, 1 has been delivered satisfactorily.

G	A	A
ACTION 15: HIGH Adopt the policy of Least Restrictive Access and follow the principles of "By All Reasonable Means" using appropriate advice and guidance to improve the accessibility of all countryside access schemes.	ACTION 16: MED Engage with established relevant advisory groups such as the Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition on opportunities to upgrade the network for people with disabilities and less able users. Also, take active steps to identify and appoint a LAF member to represent the interests and needs of disabled, elderly and less abled users.	ACTION 17: HIGH Develop an Equestrian Policy in line with Policy 6 to promote and develop an accessible network for equestrian use..

Action 15

Delivery of action 15 has been successful thanks to working practices and new CCC policy which has supported the ethos of least restrictive access.

Working with landowners as partners in this objective has driven positive changes. Diversion applications and applications for new furniture have been processed with least restrictive access principles underpinning CCC decisions.

Improvement project planning incorporates least restrictive access aspirations and they have been delivered in the majority of cases.

The introduction of the PROW Furniture Charging Policy incentivises least restrictive access furniture options with subsidies offered for the most accessible access options. This policy encourages landowners to work with CCC and adopt access solutions that provide the least restrictive access option.

Guidance on this policy has been circulated to the three main Farming Unions and all Councillors and the LAF.

The provisions of the charging policy have standardized furniture provision which has simplified furniture supply management and introduced savings in annual costs for the service. Actual costs per annum have been in the region of £8k.

LAF suggested 'all Countryside Access Schemes' might not be attainable, perhaps a lesser commitment would be reasonable.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Consider representation of landowners and user groups affected by decisions about access and accessibility on the PROW network. Make efforts to achieve equality of representation where it is considered necessary.	Reword the Action to read "Adopt the policy of Least Restrictive Access and follow the principles of "By All Reasonable Means" using appropriate advice and guidance to improve the accessibility of countryside access schemes <u>wherever practicable</u> ."
	Update estimated cost per annum to £8k
	Add Landowners as partners to this Action

Action 16

Although there is not as much engagement with Disabled / Limited Mobility Groups as hoped when the ROWIP was published, there is an open invitation to a representative from the Disability Coalition and this will continue throughout the term of the ROWIP.

The Carmarthenshire LAF would benefit from a forum member specifically knowledgeable in matters of access affecting those with disabilities or limited mobility. This would enable regular open dialogue with the Countryside Access team so opportunities can be properly explored,

An open invitation for new LAF members with an interest in public access and recreation, including people who can represent those with disabilities, was included on the website in 2021, see [Local Access Forum \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/local-access-forum).

Following delivery of an All Ability scheme the actual costs of infrastructure have now been evidenced. The estimated cost per annum of this action requires update to £40k which will enable delivery of one All Ability scheme per year.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Further measures to promote more proactive engagement with Disability Groups with an interest in Countryside Access, including potentially encouraging greater representation at LAF	Amend target date to 2029
Give consideration to requesting a guest invitation for LAF member to attend the Disability Coalition meeting to brief them on current key accessibility issues that are relevant to Countryside Access provision.	Update estimated cost per annum to £40k
	Add Disabled/Limited Mobility groups as partners to this Action

Action 17

This action has been partially implemented with the initial stages of developing an Equestrian Strategy completed.

A mixed method consultation exercise has been undertaken to steer and inform the strategy.

The first chapters of the strategy are in draft.

Given the implications of ARAG FAR the Equestrian Strategy needs to take account of potential legislative change in the future and be open to review in the event that new legislation is enacted.

A lack of staff resource has not allowed for completion of the strategy to date, current capacity should see it completed by the end of 2024.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2024

**AIM 2: PROVIDE A RELIABLE, ACCURATE, UP TO DATE AND WIDELY AVAILABLE DEFINITIVE
MAP & STATEMENT**

A. MAINTAIN PROGRESS IN UPDATING THE DEFINITIVE MAP

Of the 3 published actions under Aim 2A, 1 has been delivered satisfactorily and 2 has seen insufficient progress.

G	A	R
ACTION 19: MED Improve 2007-2017 performance by processing total 40 orders p.a. to Order making stage (to include both Public Path Orders [diversions, creations, extinguishments] & Modification Orders [claims, route anomalies, deletions])	ACTION 18B: MED Improve annual Order making performance to 45-50 Orders pa with those Orders being predominantly outstanding DMMO's	ACTION 18A: HIGH Improve 2007-2017 performance by processing total 40 orders p.a. to Order making stage (to include both Public Path Orders [diversions, creations, extinguishments] & Modification Orders [claims, route anomalies, deletions])

Action 19

This action has been implemented satisfactorily with an annual review of charges being undertaken as part of the corporate charging digest review.

The estimated cost is in excess of the actual costs incurred which are in the region of £500.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend estimated cost per annum to £500

Action 18B

The implementation of this action is ongoing but 40-45 Orders per annum is considered unrealistic without increased resources.

Between the commencement of the ROWIP and the commencement of data collection for this review 18 Orders have been Confirmed and there are 13 in progress. This is a positive figure for the service given the availability of staff resource during this period however it is significantly short of the target set.

In the event the principles of ARAG FAR are adopted the Order process will become more streamlined and incur less expense so the target in this action might become more achievable.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2029
	Combine actions 18B with 18A to a single Action 18. No identifiable value to publishing two aspirational actions with similar key outputs.

Action 18A

The implementation of this action is ongoing but 40 Orders per annum is considered unrealistic without increased resources.

Between the commencement of the ROWIP and the commencement of data collection for this review 14 Orders have been made and there are 13 in progress. This is a positive figure for the service given the availability of staff resource during this period however it is significantly short of the target set.

In the event the principles of ARAG FAR are adopted the Order process will become more streamlined and incur less expense so the target in this action might become more achievable.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2029
	Combine actions 18B with 18A to a single Action 18. No identifiable value to publishing two aspirational actions with similar key outputs.

**AIM 2: PROVIDE A RELIABLE, ACCURATE, UP TO DATE AND WIDELY AVAILABLE DEFINITIVE
MAP & STATEMENT**

B. PRODUCE A DIGITAL DEFINITIVE MAP

The single published action under Aim 2B has been delivered satisfactorily.

G
ACTION 20: MED Continue to work towards 100% audit of digital map of PRow (CAMS) though ongoing continuous review of digital PRow layer.

Action 20

Work to audit the digital map of PRow for Carmarthenshire is ongoing, correcting the digital map against the definitive map and flagging mapping anomalies for future consideration.

In addition to the audit, the CAMS system has numerous layers of data to help efficiently manage the PRow network and this information is also continuously added/amended and improved.

If the provisions of ARAG Far are adopted there would be an increase in focus on digital mapping of access and may require a revision of this action to include a completion target and increased priority.

Action should be a high priority. Notwithstanding this, the reference to 100% should be removed as this is impossible to achieve given the duty of continuous review of the Definitive Map.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend priority to High
	Amend target date to 2029

AIM 2: PROVIDE A RELIABLE, ACCURATE, UP TO DATE AND WIDELY AVAILABLE DEFINITIVE

MAP & STATEMENT

C. LOST WAYS

The single published action under Aim 2C has been delivered satisfactorily.

G

ACTION 21: HIGH

Consider evidence received for Modification Orders to add unregistered historic Rights of Way to the Definitive Map and Statement as a matter of priority.

Action 21

Implementation of this action has been successful, where evidence has been received.

Both CCC and LAF propose the target date for this action be amended to 2029.

The 2026 cut-off date for registering historic PROWs not currently recorded imposed by the CROW Act 2000 has not been enacted in Wales and presently it is considered unlikely that it will be.

A high priority was set for Action 21 in anticipation of the volume of evidence that might need to be processed so that Definitive Map Modification Orders could be made in a timely fashion taking account of 2026 cut-off. If the current view that 2026 will not be enacted in Wales, the priority of this action could be reduced to Medium.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Review the priority of action 21 subject to a definite decision from WG in respect of 2026 cut-off.	None

AIM 3: ENSURE THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS ARE EASY TO USE AND ENJOYABLE

A. COUNTRYSIDE PARKS

The single published action under Aim 3A has been delivered satisfactorily.

G

ACTION 22: HIGH

CCC will continue to promote the Council's Country Parks as facilities for the public to access.

Action 22

CCC's Country Parks are promoted via the Discover Carmarthenshire website:

<https://www.discovercarmarthenshire.com/>

LAF have identified where the Discover Carmarthenshire website would benefit from improvement, as previously destinations such as Mynydd Mawr Woodland Park have not been promoted.

LAF have also noted that promotion of access should include all modes of transport and not just walking and cycling.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
CCC to review promotional material and facilities provided, to check that they consider the needs of all users and all modes of transport used to access Carmarthenshire's Country Parks.	None
LAF to consider collaborative working with the NRW and the National Trust to promote publicly accessible access land and routes	

**AIM 3: ENSURE THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS ARE
EASY TO USE AND ENJOYABLE**

B. OPEN COUNTRY

The single published action under Aim 3B has been delivered to a varying degree.

A
ACTION 23: LOW To ensure all maintained or improved points of public access to blocks of access land are signed appropriately with the national access symbols.

Action 23

CCC are responsible for public access to Open Access Land, and have various associated powers to create, maintain and improve access routes.

The Countryside Access team see very little demand for the objectives contained in this action however CCC strive to achieve a new or enhanced access points to OA land when a request is received or an opportunity arises.

'Ensure' is an unrealistic term for this action, an appropriate amendment to wording required.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend action wording to read “To work with landowners, NRW and User Groups, so that locations of maintained or improved points of public access to blocks of access land are signed appropriately with the national access symbols where opportunities arise.”

**AIM 3: ENSURE THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS ARE
EASY TO USE AND ENJOYABLE**

C. PICNIC AREAS & NATURE RESERVES

The single published action under Aim 3C has been satisfactorily implemented.

G
ACTION 24: MED Maintain existing picnic sites and nature reserves remaining under the care of the local authority / countryside access care team and ensure that robust maintenance arrangements are put in place to ensure all sites remain in good order.

Action 24

This is an ongoing action that is delivered by the Countryside Access team and the Leisure Service jointly. It is an action that will continue to the end of the ROWIP term.

A schedule of regular maintenance of picnic sites by the Countryside Access team is in place.

There are robust management plans in place for the Nature Reserve sites, developed and implemented by the Leisure division.

No need to name Local Authority and Countryside Access, Local Authority captures all services responsible for implementing action.

LAF commented on the goal of 'ensuring' something will happen being unrealistic.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2029
	Reword action to read “Maintain existing picnic sites and nature reserves remaining under the care of the local authority, developing and delivering robust maintenance arrangements to keep all sites in good order.

**AIM 3: ENSURE THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS ARE
EASY TO USE AND ENJOYABLE**

D. ACTIVE TRAVEL

Of the 2 published actions under Aim 3D, both have been satisfactorily implemented.

G	G
ACTION 25: MED Assist the Transport Strategy & Infrastructure team in developing and maintaining cycleways in accordance with Carmarthenshire Cycle Strategy and the Active Travel Act.	ACTION 26: MED Provide regular advice the Transport Strategy and Infrastructure team in schemes being developed under Active Travel and/or the Walking and Cycling Strategy.

Action 25

This is an ongoing action that has been implemented successfully to date.

Development of Active Travel infrastructure is led by Transport and Infrastructure team.

The importance of Active Travel initiatives should prompt a higher priority for this action.

Excluding those routes maintained by Sustrans, Highways maintain the majority of routes, the Countryside Access team taking care of only those routes that exist over PROWs.

It is anticipated that CCC will be taking exclusive responsibility for maintenance of off road AT routes, supporting the Carmarthenshire Cycle Strategy. The budget for this additional maintenance will transfer to Countryside Access.

This action will continue to the end of the ROWIP term.

LAF members commented of low level of engagement between forum and Transport and Infrastructure team.

If adopted, the ARAG FAR would increase the focus on cycling and Active Travel and consequently the priority of this Action.

Actual costs in region of £60k.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Increase engagement between the LAF and the Transport and Infrastructure team.	Amend target date to 2029
Monitor ARAG FAR implementation and consider necessary changes to ROWIP action in accordance with revised legislation/guidance.	Amend estimated cost per annum to £60k
	Increase priority of action from Med to High.

Action 25

This is an ongoing action that has been implemented successfully to date.

Advice is provided to Transport and Infrastructure team to help successfully deliver initiatives whilst safeguarding the legal record of public rights .

The importance of Active Travel initiatives should prompt a higher priority for this action.

LAF members commented of low level of engagement between forum and Transport and Infrastructure team.

If adopted, the ARAG FAR would increase the focus on cycling and Active Travel and consequently the priority of this Action.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Invite a representative of the Transport and Infrastructure team to attend LAF meetings to provide updates on schemes being developed, providing an opportunity for LAF to issue advice.	Amend target date to 2029
Monitor ARAG FAR implementation and consider necessary changes to ROWIP action in accordance with revised legislation/guidance.	Increase priority of action from Med to High.

**AIM 3: ENSURE THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS ARE EASY TO USE
AND ENJOYABLE**

E. COAST AND FORESTRY

Of the 2 published actions under Aim 3E, 1 has been satisfactorily implemented, 1 has been implemented to a varying degree.

A	A
ACTION 27: HIGH Work with partner organisations and relevant stakeholders to maximise access to coast and forestry for as many user groups as possible, making efforts to improve access to all those underrepresented in other areas of the access network.	ACTION 28: MED Incorporate in publicity which areas of open access forestry and coastline are available to which user groups.

[Action 27](#)

This is an ongoing action that has been implemented successfully where opportunities have arisen.

CCC does not maintain or promote access to WG Forestry estate, this is undertaken by NRW. CCC's role is to assist in promoting access to as many users as possible and this is primarily implemented through the Discover Carmarthenshire webpages.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target to 2029

Action 28

This is an ongoing action that has been implemented in part through the Discover Carmarthenshire website where walking and cycling are promoted including information on individual locations such as accessibility for wheelchairs.

There are no specific pages on Discover Carmarthenshire for other users, such as horse riders

NRW website grades routes across the WG estate for difficulty, provides details of available facilities such as picnic site and suitability for camping. This information is presented with clear icons.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Review information on Discover Carmarthenshire and identify where improvements can be made in access promotion.	Amend target to 2029

**AIM 4: WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ALL RELEVANT INTERESTED PARTIES TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED FACILITIES FOR
COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS**

A. PROMOTE PARTNERSHIPS

Of the 6 published actions under Aim 4A, 1 has been delivered satisfactorily and 5 have seen varying success.

G	A	A	A	A	A
ACTION 33: MED Continue to work jointly to promote a more sustainable use of the PRow network through links with public transport providers e.g. development of train and/or bus walks.	ACTION 29: MED Continue to carry out surveys of the access network on a community basis in conjunction with local councils and volunteer groups.	ACTION 30: HIGH Continue to promote partnerships with community councils, landowners/occupiers and other public and private organisations, to maximise resources available for improved countryside access.	ACTION 31: HIGH Secure s.106 funding for improvements to Rights of Way and for the development of wider access opportunities for all, to meet the needs generated by new development.	ACTION 32: MED Continue to work in conjunction with agri-environment schemes to achieve long term improvements and carry out enforcement on the access network.	ACTION 34: HIGH Continue to liaise with BHS and other horse-riding groups to improve equine provision, maintaining a working knowledge of the NRW-BHS Concordat and working jointly with off road driving organisations such as the TRF and Tread Lightly to identify off road driving opportunities in the County.

Under Aim 4A, Carmarthenshire has performed satisfactorily in respect of action 33.

Action 33

CCC has been successful in the implementation of this Action. The involvement of the Rights of Way teams with the Heart of Wales Line Trail is a good example of such joint working.

This action is ongoing and will continue to the end of the term of the ROWIP.

Actual annual costs have been in the region of £5k.

The Llwybr Newydd, Wales Transport Strategy 2021 aim to encourage model shift to more sustainable transport and an increased focus on integrated transport will assist in the continued implementation of this Action.

CCC supports external project leads in this action and will strive to continue to do so for the remaining term of the ROWIP.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2029
	Amend estimated cost per annum to £5k

Under Aim 4A, Carmarthenshire has performed with varying degrees of success in respect of actions 29, 30, 31, 32 and 34..

Action 29

There have been community PROW surveys in the past. However, more recently they are usually project specific.

A network survey has been planned, but not yet delivered.

Funding secured in 2023 has enabled the appointment of Project Officer whose role is coordinate volunteers to undertake the 100% network survey.

It is intended that surveys will commence 2024, be completed by 2026 and will provide condition data for the whole PROW network.

The Well-Being of Future Generation (Wales) Act, which has been incorporated into the Cabinet Vision, highlights the importance of engagement and working collaboratively; by listening to communities and understanding what their access needs and opinions are we can better identify opportunities for all users.

Funding secured to finance year one of survey project £45k.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2026
	Amend estimated cost per annum to £45k

Action 30

The promotion of partnerships is ongoing. However, it is not known how successful the partnerships have been in maximising resources at this time.

To measure success requires a baseline and information with respect to how resources for improved countryside access have been maximised. This information is not readily available.

It is suggested that the success of this action could be measured subjectively by identifying network improvement projects that have been delivered as a consequence of these partnerships.

User groups should be added to the action as a partner in implementing this action

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Use case studies to illustrate how partnerships might have contributed to maximising available resources for improved access; resources should include voluntary labour and materials.	Amend target date to 2029
	Add user groups as a partner.

Action 31

A Project Officer role has been created which, once filled will assist with this Action which will be ongoing until the end of the term of the ROWIP and likely beyond.

The creation of this role take this action forward by introducing a dedicated person to seek funding opportunities such as s106.

To secure s106 funding for PROW improvements, timely applications need to be submitted.

A dedicated officer should lead to increased funding opportunities for eligible access improvement work, including s106 money.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Direct new project officer (once appointed) to seek s106 funding.	Amend target date to 2029

Action 32

Agri-Environment schemes have typically been under resourced and therefore there is not much scope to include access improvements within the schemes.

There is minimal consultation regarding Agri-Environment funding applications, which means that CCC rarely receives notification of schemes however, where consultation takes place CCC endeavor to maximise positive outcomes for access.

Minimal spend in delivering this action due to minimal consultation. Action will be ongoing to the end of the ROWIP term.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Discuss the difficulties in implementing positive access change through Agri-environment schemes at the LAF chairs meeting.	Amend target date to 2029
Continue to encourage Glastir (and other relevant bodies) to consult with Carmarthenshire Council, with respect to Agri-Environmental scheme applications	Amend estimated cost per annum to £5k

Action 34

There is ongoing liaison between horse riding and off-road driving organisations via the LAF

There have been improvements in equine provision with 2 new Bridleways created between 2018 and 2022.

Few enhancements to off road driving have been identified in this period.

LAF members suggested the success of this action is reliant on the Equestrian Strategy

The BHS concordat with NRW is to promote responsible equestrian access to the WG woodland estate.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Consider the outcomes of the equestrian strategy (once published) in delivering this action.	Amend target date to 2029

AIM 4: WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ALL RELEVANT INTERESTED PARTIES TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED FACILITIES FOR COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

B. VOLUNTEERS

The single published action under Aim 4B has been partially implemented.

A
ACTION 35: HIGH Maximise use of local organised voluntary groups and volunteers for the preparation for and provision of improvement and maintenance programmes on the PRow network.

Action 35

This action is underway with considerable positive steps taken during 2022 and 2023.

During the early part of the ROWIP term there has been use of local community councils and groups such as the Llanelli Ramblers & the Betws Wanderers volunteering on the PRow network doing small maintenance jobs which made positive changes in return for very little financial investment.

Thanks to £45k of SPF funding secured in 2023 a grant funded Volunteer Project Officer has now been appointed for Carmarthenshire.

The initial volunteer project led by the grant funded post is the 100% network survey. The data gathered from the survey will then inform improvement projects across the County.

We anticipate the survey commencing early in 2024 and will take approximately 2 years.

Looking forward the newly appointed volunteer workforce will also engage in physical works on the network and we hope to see this type of work completed annually for the rest of the term of the ROWIP and beyond..

LAF commented on the importance of using volunteers with shortfalls in available funding.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Continue to support Volunteer Project Officer and seek funding to retain the post longer term.	Amend target date to 2029

**AIM 5: PROMOTION – MAINTAINND IMPROVE THE RANGE AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC INFORMATION, WIDELY
AVAILABLE IN APPROPRIATE FORMATS**

A. GENERAL

The single published action under Aim 5A has been partially implemented.

A
ACTION 36: HIGH Work with relevant departments and agencies to improve opportunities for countryside access for people living in areas of deprivation.

Action 36

Progress has been made with this action given access opportunities have been improved overall but it remains ongoing to allow for further improvements that might more specifically address areas of deprivation.

To more accurately measure success a baseline needs to be set to determine criteria for a deprived community.

Work with teams that deal with areas of deprivation might be beneficial to better understand opportunities to make improvements.

LAF questioned whether there is sufficient consideration given to whether the Action Plan addresses the needs of people who are deprived with respect to being able to access the countryside.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Confirm to LAF who leads within CCC, with respect to deprivation and invite a representative to a LAF meeting to explain what criteria should be used	Amend target date to 2029
Better understand needs of people living in deprived areas to recognise opportunities more readily.	
Consider revising the wording of the action as necessary following the outcome of the tasks identified.	

**AIM 5: PROMOTION – MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE RANGE AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC INFORMATION, WIDELY
AVAILABLE IN APPROPRIATE FORMATS**

B. PUBLICITY MATERIAL

Of the 6 published actions under Aim 5B, 3 have been delivered satisfactorily, 3 have seen varying success and 2 have seen inadequate implementation.

	G		A	A	R	A	R
ACTION 37: HIGH Provide up to date promotional material for promoted Rights of Way.	ACTION 38: HIGH Alongside NRW guidebooks and online promotion of the WCP, ensure the information on the CCC website for the Carmarthenshire section of the WCP is up to date and accurate.	ACTION 39 HIGH Ensure that all promotional material relating to current County Walks are kept up to date by ongoing review.	Action 40 LOW Consider creating new County Walks or reintroducing previously promoted walks where a need is identified by local people or user groups and when sufficient resource to create, improve, maintain and promote additional routes is available. In doing so consider the availability of public transport connections.	ACTION 41: MED Further, improve the County Council website by providing information on countryside access opportunities and for all users, including: a. Improved general information for public and landowners. b. Application packs for DMMO's (claims) and PPO's (diversions, extinguishments etc.) c. Online complaints forms. d. Online register of DMMO & PPO applications and s31(6) deposits. e. Operational status of PRoW network. Also, work to improve information relating to the Carmarthenshire LAF by: a. Adding more general information. b. Publication of meeting minutes. c. Providing updates of meetings and venues.	ACTION 42: HIGH Supply regular information regarding improved horse riding, equestrian and tourism opportunities in the County to local BHS representative s, Carmarthenshire Riders and other similar groups to be included in their promotional materials. Encourage wide circulation of promotional materials.	ACTION 44 HIGH Promote the social, health and economic benefits of walking, riding, and cycling through events, programmes within country parks, the CCC walking and cycling strategy and forthcoming CC equestrian strategy.	ACTION 43 HIGH Provide information regarding opportunities for those with limited mobility and other impairments to groups such as the Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition to be included in their promotional materials. Encourage wide circulation of promotional materials.

Action 37

To implement this action a LAF sub-group has been created. The good work undertaken by the sub-group with assistance from the CCC Marketing team and contributions from the Countryside Access team through 2022 and 2023 has seen a complete review of promotional material for all County Walks.

The revised material has been published on the Discover Carmarthenshire web pages and any out of date, duplicated or inaccurate material has been removed. The formatting and layout of material has also been reviewed and useful links added.

Continuous review of information is ongoing and further work is planned to deliver additional online material that will better inform both residents and tourists of the access opportunities offered by Carmarthenshire's promoted PROW network. Some printed material is also under consideration.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Continue to work with subgroup to enhance promotional material.	Amend target date to 2029

Action 38

Up to date promotional material on the Carmarthenshire stretch of the WCP has been added to the Discover Carmarthenshire website, providing a link to the Wales Coast Path. Continuous review of information is ongoing.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	Amend target date to 2029

Action 39

Following the identification of gaps and inaccuracies in promotional information by the LAF a sub-group was created to update/correct information and that promotional material is under continuous review, more details under Action 37 above.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
None	None

Action 40

A low priority action with no available financial resource to increase the County Walk portfolio.

Consideration has been given to additional County Walks where they are proposed but no additional walks have been introduced as more would be unsustainable at this time.

As action aligns in with a number of existing national and regional policies such as Llwybr Newydd and the Cabinet Vision Statement, priority should be increased.

Action collaboration with local communities and other organisations might introduce additional resources to enable further implementation, sustainability of Walks to the expected standard would still be challenging for Countryside Access team.

LAF raised a query regarding the interchangeable use of the terms 'County Walks' and 'promoted walks'. It was suggested that the use of the terms should be reviewed.

Costs to reintroduce a Walk needs to be reviewed to more accurately reflect initial resource required.

Funding and/or resource availability through collaborative working is under continuous review.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Review the use of the terms County Walk and/or promoted walk, to make sure that they are being used consistently.	Amend priority to Medium
Seek collaborative working opportunities that will increase potential resources for this action.	Amend costs according to outcome of review
Review actual costs	

Action 41

Action is ongoing,

Countryside Access team have delivered improvements to LAF web pages by posting details of future meetings and minutes more promptly.

Online register of DMMOs and s31(6) Deposits has been published online.

Improvement of general online information and development of application forms to enable publication online is underway, a dedicated officer for website improvements would support quicker implementation of this action.

Project Officer post which includes website management has been approved, appointment pending.

During the LAF workshop members noted that information regarding the operational status of the PRow network is not currently available online (item e). It was considered that this situation should be reviewed following completion of the 100% route survey.

A practical measure to measure website improvement could be to monitor how many people are using the website to engage with the Countryside Access team, instead of submitting applications or complaints via other means.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Appoint Countryside Access Project Officer	Amend target date to 2029
Monitor website use	
Seek feedback on website on qualities such as ease of use, availability of information	

Action 42

Some promotion of Equestrian access has been discussed at LAF promotion subgroup meetings.

Efforts have been made by the Tourism team to engage with equestrian venues/charities/organisations to post promotional material on Discover Carmarthenshire free of charge.

Action remains ongoing, equestrian promotion featuring regularly in subgroup agenda. Tourism team are aiming to produce a leaflet showing routes where equestrians can ride, within the wider index map of promoted walking routes.

Equestrian strategy will provide direction and will steer implementation of this action for remainder of the ROWIP term.

It was noted that the Action wording needs to be updated as the Carmarthenshire Riders no longer exist.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Continue to work with LAF sub-group and Tourism team to promote any equestrian access opportunities	Amend target date to 2029
Prioritise completion of the Equestrian Strategy (see action 17)	Reword action to read "Supply regular information regarding improved horse riding, equestrian and tourism opportunities in the County to local BHS representatives and other similar groups to be included in their promotional materials. Encourage wide circulation of promotional materials"

Action 44

An ongoing action throughout the term of the ROWIP.

A high priority by virtue of Equestrian Strategy inclusion, action otherwise considered a medium priority for Right of Way Improvement at the present time.

Available funding falls short of full scope of the action.

LAF members commented on understanding CCC divisional roles within this action; a lead CCC department needs to be identified.

This action has not been fully implemented, primarily due to the resources required for CCC to organise and host events themselves.

It is not realistic to organise 'events' or 'activity programmes' with the limited resources.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
Identify a lead division/service for this action, notify LAF	Amend target date to 2029
	Reword to read "Promote the social, health and economic benefits of walking, riding, and cycling, for example by working with other bodies organising related events or activities, and by providing information online about the Cycling Strategy and the Equestrian Strategy (once published)."

Action 43

Countryside Access team consider the CCC Disability Coalition should be a partner organisation this action.

Additional engagement with the Disability Coalition and other representative groups required to identify appropriate routes.

The Action is at an early stage of development and is ongoing.

TASK(S)	PROPOSED CHANGE(S)
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Engage with disability groups to identify routes applicable to this action.	Amend target date to 2029
	Add Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition as Partner Organisation

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A mid-term review has been undertaken in 2022/2023 of the Carmarthenshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2019-2029 Delivery Plan. This review forms part of the ongoing monitoring of delivery and progress halfway through the term of the ROWIP..

The mid-term review has been undertaken in accordance with the 2016 WG Guidance for Local Authorities on Rights of Way Improvement Plans. It has incorporated a Baseline Policy Review and a review of the progress of implementation of the Delivery Plan Actions to date. The mid-term review of the ROWIP Delivery Plan has been undertaken collaboratively with the CCC Countryside Access team, with input from the Carmarthenshire LAF.

There are a total of 47 Actions and sub-actions detailed in the 2019-2029 ROWIP Delivery Plan.

For the purpose of this Mid Term Review, the Actions have been divided into three categories that reflect where there have been successes and shortcomings in their implementation to date.

RED: High priority Delivery Plan Actions, which have had insufficient progress in their implementation.

AMBER: Other Delivery Plan Actions (not listed in the other categories) which have been implemented with varying levels of success.

GREEN: Delivery Plan Actions where good progress has been made and they are being implemented satisfactorily.

The review has identified that a number of the Actions in the ROWIP 2019-2029 Delivery Plan were worded in such a way, that has meant that it is difficult to make an assessment with respect to the progress of their implementation.

It is recommended that goals associated with the Action should be agreed that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely. These should be designed so that there is a clear baseline against which they can be compared and measured.

It is suggested that more attention should be given to reviewing and updating those Actions that have been identified as having a high priority with respect to delivery. During this process, given the challenging economic climate, the costs should also be reviewed and updated so the estimates are realistic and sustainable (especially from the perspective of inflation).

HIGH PRIORITY DELIVERY PLAN ACTIONS WITH INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION (RED)

This review has identified several high priority Delivery Plan Actions where there has been insufficient progress in their implementation to date. Where there have been significant shortcomings in the progress of implementation, they have been rated (using the RAG system) as Red. In many instances, this is due to a shortfall in funding or appropriate resources not being available. Also, the measures put in place to achieve the Actions may have not been effective.

The review has found that after 5 years, 5 of the 47 Actions (approximately 11%) have had insufficient progress made in their implementation. The Actions that fall into this category, primarily cover themes relating to:

Shortfalls in funding for capital and revenue schemes, to make improvements to increase the proportion of PROW that are open, "easy to use" and well-sign posted.

Shortfalls in revenue funding to cover staffing resources required.

The shortfall in capital and revenue funding has meant that the Countryside Access Team has had insufficient resources required to make sufficient progress in implementing all of the high priority Actions in the ROWIP.

Specific areas where a shortfall has been identified has impacted on the work required, include establishing enforcement protocols and improving the performance in processing Orders. The shortfall will have also impacted on their ability to bid for additional funding (where available) for improvement projects.

An increased focus on the high priority Delivery Plan Actions, where there has been insufficient progress in implementation, will be needed throughout the remainder of the ROWIP term.

OTHER DELIVERY PLAN ACTIONS WITH VARYING PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION (AMBER)

The Actions not falling into the other two categories, RED and GREEN, have been rated (using the RAG system) as Amber. These include high and medium priority Actions which have been partially implemented, plus medium and low priority Actions where there has been no or limited progress in implementation. In many instances, this is due to shortfall in funding or appropriate resources not being available. Also, the measures put in place to achieve the Actions may not have always been fully effective.

The review has found that at the halfway point in the term of the plan, 23 of the 47 Actions (approximately 49%) have had varying levels of progress in their implementation.

High priority Actions falling into this category, include:

Aspirational Actions where the wording is not realistic or achievable, or a clear baseline has not been defined. For example: “Ensuring that the Wales Coast Path is maintained to the highest possible standard...” or “maximising resources available...”.

Those impacted by the need to prioritise staff resources elsewhere, such as opportunities to secure additional maintenance funding or s.106 developer funding.

Those related to (or are reliant on) the publication of the equestrian policy, which is currently on hold until 2024.

The promotion of opportunities and access improvements for people with limited mobility or other impairments.

It should be noted that the recent investment in activities that promote volunteering will provide added value through the remainder of the term, since it would support the successful implementation of Actions within the first two themes, potentially releasing resources for other work.

The recently re-purposed post will create capacity for securing funding opportunities and delivering improvement projects that target areas such as all ability and multi

user routes. Filling this post as soon as reasonably possible will also potentially releasing resources for other work.

An increased focus will be needed throughout the remainder of the ROWIP term, where there has been insufficient progress in implementation on the high priority Delivery Plan Actions. It should be noted that there should be more focus on the high priority (Amber) Actions as well as the high priority (Red) Actions.

DELIVERY PLAN ACTIONS BEING IMPLEMENTED SATISFACTORILY (GREEN)

There are a number of Delivery Plan Actions where there has been good progress and that have been assessed as having, to date, been implemented satisfactorily. These have been rated (using the RAG system) as Green. This indicates that the Actions have either have been implemented successfully or where there has only been a partial success in their implementation, they are of low priority.

The review has found that up to the end of 2023 (5 years), 19 of the 47 Actions (approximately 40%) are being implemented satisfactorily, including:

Improvements in performance with respect to “easy to use” routes and signposting.

Adopting and communicating the principles of Least Restrictive Access.

Undertaking audits and reviews of access and rights of way related data.

Collaborating and working with other organisations.

Promotion of county walks and access.

It is a positive sign that at this halfway stage in the term of the ROWIP, 40% of the actions which make up the Delivery Plan are being satisfactorily implemented, almost half (49%) have been partially delivered and only 11% have seen inadequate implementation.

The 5 actions that have not be implemented, although low in number, cannot be disregarded. By outlining positive steps that can be taken to steer the Authority towards successful implementation we will expect to see positive change in the Authority’s delivery of those actions through the remainder of the ROWIP term.

FURTHER REVIEW

With this Mid-Term review falling halfway through the term of the 2019-2029 Carmarthenshire ROWIP we will now review the current ROWIP again at the end of its term when it is likely the Authority will be required to conduct a full review of the entire ROWIP and the Delivery Plan therein.

The current ROWIP, its successes and shortfalls will be key information in developing the next plan.

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APPENDIX A

BASELINE POLICY REVIEW FINDINGS

The Baseline Policy Review concluded that the changes in “Policy” (including Legislation, Policy and Guidance) listed in the table below, tend to support and be aligned with the Aims, Policies and Action Plan described in Section 11 of the 2019-2029 Carmarthenshire ROWIP.

Policy, legislation and guidance identified as potentially impacting on the ROWIP Delivery Plan

Legislation / Statute
The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (Schedule 3)
The Restricted Roads (20mph speed limit) (Wales) Order 2022 SI 880 (W 177)
The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (Meaning of Public Body) (Wales) Regulations 2021 SI 1355 (W 353)
National Policy
Llysofr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 (3)
Active Travel Act Guidance, July 2021 (4)
The Highway Code 2022 (5)
Regional Policy
None-Relevant
Local Policy
Carmarthenshire County Council Corporate Strategy 2018-2023 (Updated 2021) (6)
Cabinet Vision Statement 2022-2027 (7)
Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward (8)
Emerging Policy
Carmarthenshire County Council Draft Equestrian Strategy (not published)
Access Reform Programme, Access Reform Advisory Group Final Advice Report (9)
National Access Forum, Welsh Government Outline Policy Intent Paper (10)

The Llwybr Newydd : The Wales Transport Strategy 2021, The Active Travel Act Guidance 2021, The Corporate Strategy, Vision for the Future and Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward documents all have a common theme of aiming to promote more sustainable methods of transport, use of existing Public Rights of Ways and Active Travel Routes. They also promote collaboration between CCC, special interest groups, stakeholders, landowners and members of the public, in the development and rolling out of new routes.

At a legislative level, changes such as the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (Schedule 3) have placed statutory requirements on all developments over 100m² (which it is assumed would be the majority of new route/facility developments) to provide sustainable drainage systems in accordance with national standards and seek Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB) approval prior to construction. Whilst this does not make any of the aims, policies and action plans redundant it does place a greater level of complexity on any new development with likely greater planning, design and construction cost as well as more onerous ongoing maintenance liabilities for the local authority.

Similarly, changes to the Active Travel Act Guidance published in 2021 places a duty on the County Council to develop and publish Active Travel Route Mapping information which reinforces the aims, policies and action plan of the ROWIP.

Furthermore, the Access Reform Advisory Group Final Advice Report (ARAG FAR) recommendations could, if implemented, create a range of opportunities that support and reinforce the ROWIP Policies and Actions including:

- The potential for increased access for additional recreational activities on current CRoW access land for all users and to extend CRoW access land to include coastal land.
- The potential to apply higher rights (for example to benefit cyclists and horse riders) to Public Footpaths.
- The production of definitive (digital) maps and either statutory or non-statutory guidance, encouraging responsible recreation, and improving communication and effective enforcement of access rights.
- The reform of Integrated Plans which would support integration of other related responsibilities such as green infrastructures assessments and duties under the Active Travel Act 2014.
- Plus, other opportunities such as the reform of local plans, improving links with planning authority duties and integration with Community Infrastructure Levy and mitigation measures through s106 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990; or the potential for Agri-environment funding to be made available for access enhancements and supporting infrastructure.