



# Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan

## Local Access Forum Meeting

24<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Extraordinary  
LAF meeting  
was held on  
21<sup>st</sup> May

This meeting  
will explore two  
of the important  
discussion  
areas with the  
full LAF



Presented emerging results from  
stakeholder engagement phase



Examined three topic areas – promotion,  
maintenance and partnerships



Will seek views on two of these areas  
today – partnerships and maintenance



Will update LAF on progress and  
timetable for ROWIP 2

# Recap...

The ROWIP must contain an assessment of the following three areas

The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.

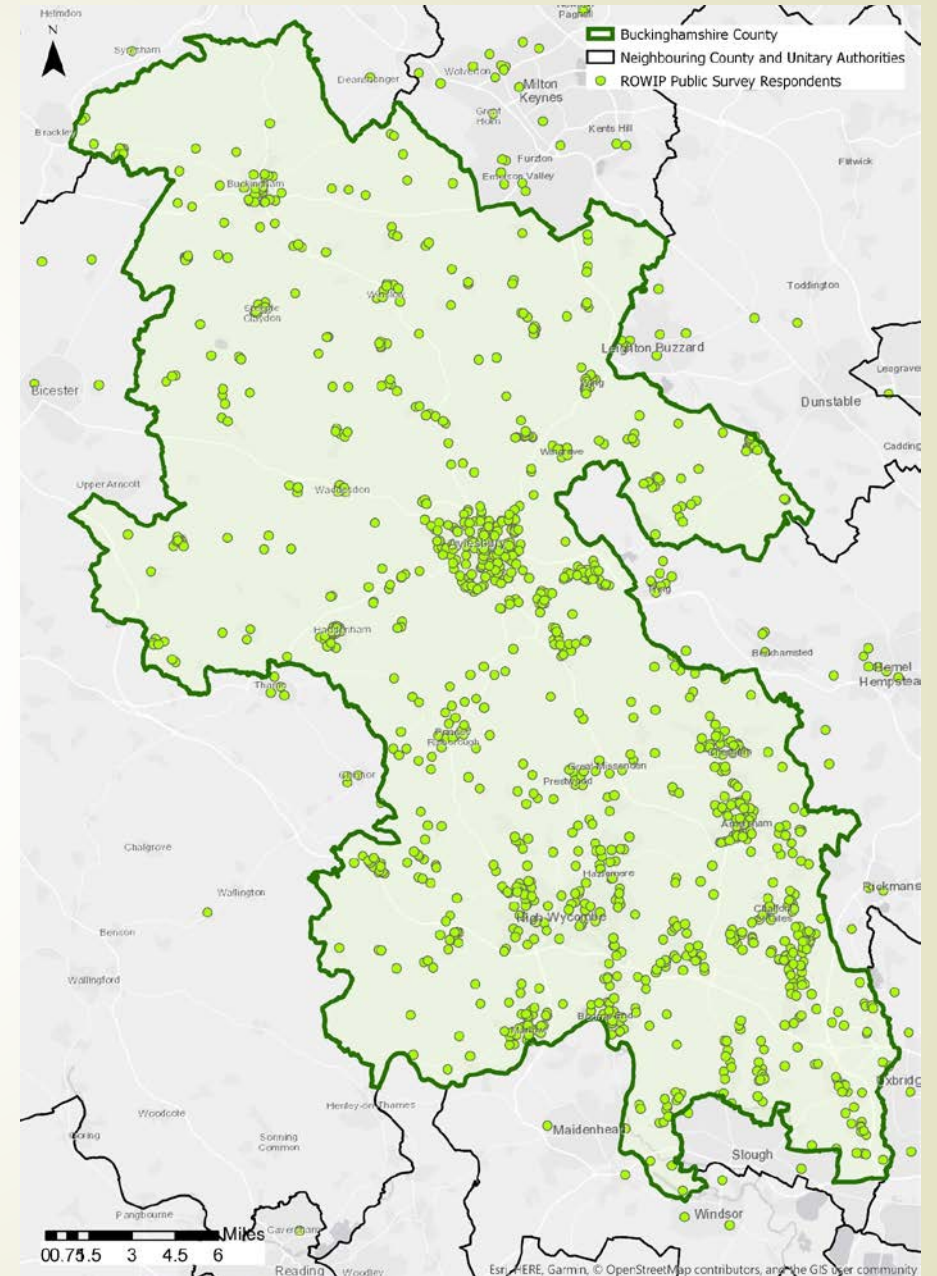
The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other recreation and enjoyment.

Accessibility of rights of way to blind, partially sighted and others with mobility problems.

# Public Survey

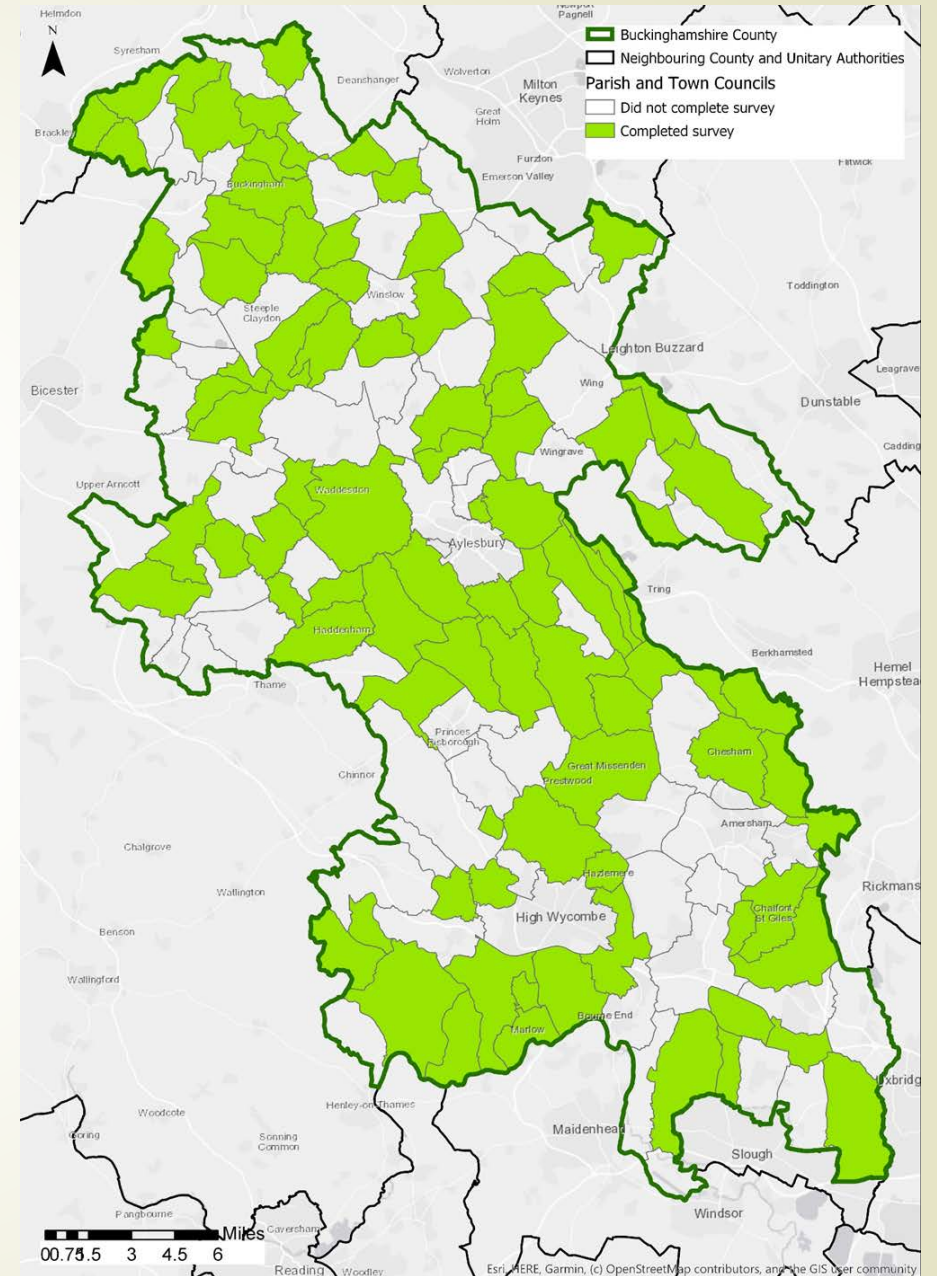
- 1489 usable responses
- High degree of statistical significance
- 91% of respondents lived in Buckinghamshire
- The survey was self-selecting and only 1% had not used a public right of way - survey provides comprehensive insight into the views of rights of way users but does not capture the views of non-users

District	Number	%
Aylesbury Vale	621	44%
Wycombe	281	20%
Chiltern	257	18%
South Bucks	130	9%



# Parish and Town Council Survey

- 96 councils responded (56%)
- Geographic spread across county
- 36% had devolved responsibilities
- 22% had a rights of way warden or similar



# Stakeholders

- ▶ 51 organisations contacted
- ▶ 20 organisations responded plus 2 individuals and Oxfordshire LAF
- ▶ Meetings or phone calls with:
  - ▶ Aylesbury Garden Town
  - ▶ Visit Buckinghamshire
  - ▶ Chilterns Conservation Board
  - ▶ Colne Valley Regional Park
  - ▶ Natural Environment Partnership Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes
  - ▶ Simply Walks participants
  - ▶ BCC Highways and Health teams
  - ▶ Chilterns MS Centre
  - ▶ Bucks Vision
  - ▶ Bucks Mind
  - ▶ Parkinson's UK Amersham and High Wycombe
  - ▶ LEAP

- British Driving Society, Beds, Bucks and Herts
- British Horse Society
- Chilterns Conservation Board
- Chiltern Society
- Colne Valley Regional Park
- Denham Parish Council (additional submission)
- Disabled Ramblers
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Historic England
- Iver and District Conservation Association
- London Borough of Hillingdon
- Marlow Society
- Northamptonshire County Council
- Off Road/Trail Riders - Trail Riders Fellowship
- Open Spaces Society
- Oxfordshire Local Access Forum
- Parkinson's UK Amersham and High Wycombe
- Phillippa Burton (response by an individual)
- Ramblers' Association
- Ridgeway National Trail
- Ted Howard Jones (response by an individual)
- Thames Path National Trail
- Tourism - Visit Buckinghamshire
- Trail Riders' Fellowship
- Transition Town Marlow
- Wokingham Borough Council
- Wycombe District Council

# Headline findings from public survey

Public rights of way are highly valued for the quality of life benefits they bring, including access to nature, relaxation and health and wellbeing.

Public rights of way users use the network frequently and it is part of their daily or weekly routine.

Most users had encountered an issue with a public right of way at some point, with overgrown paths the greatest concern.

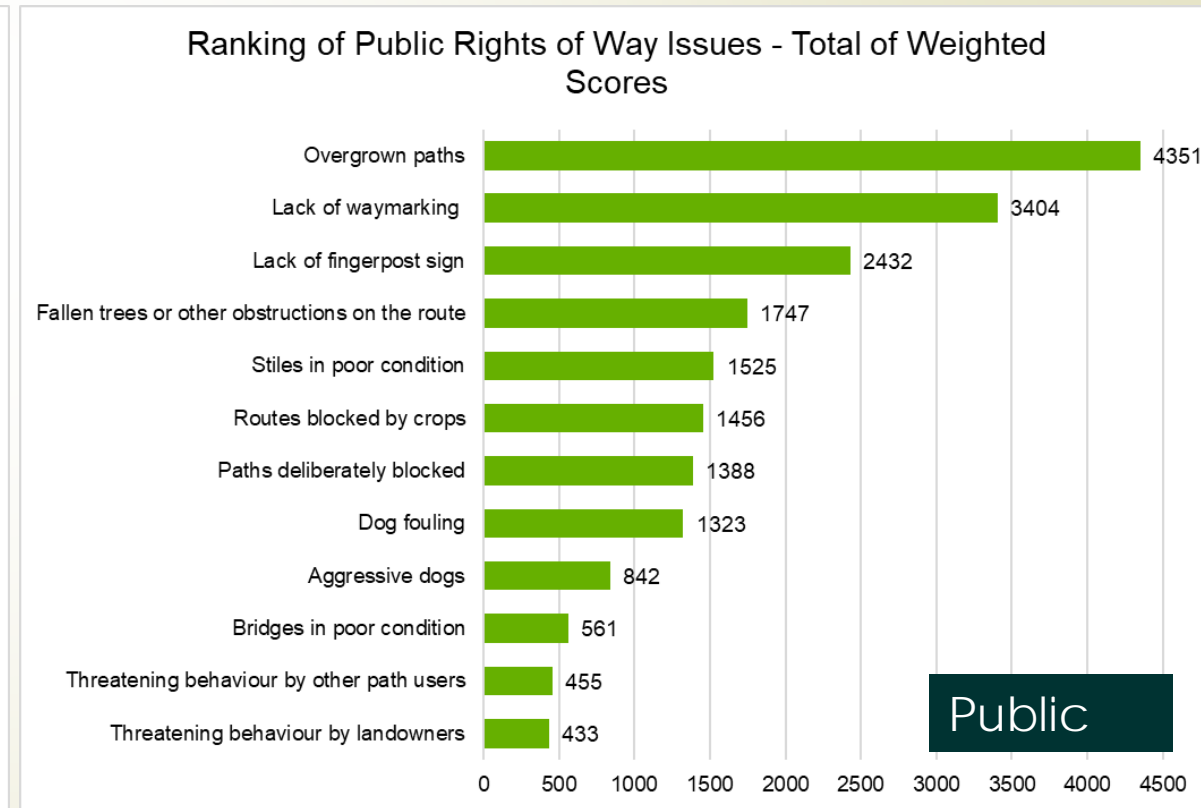
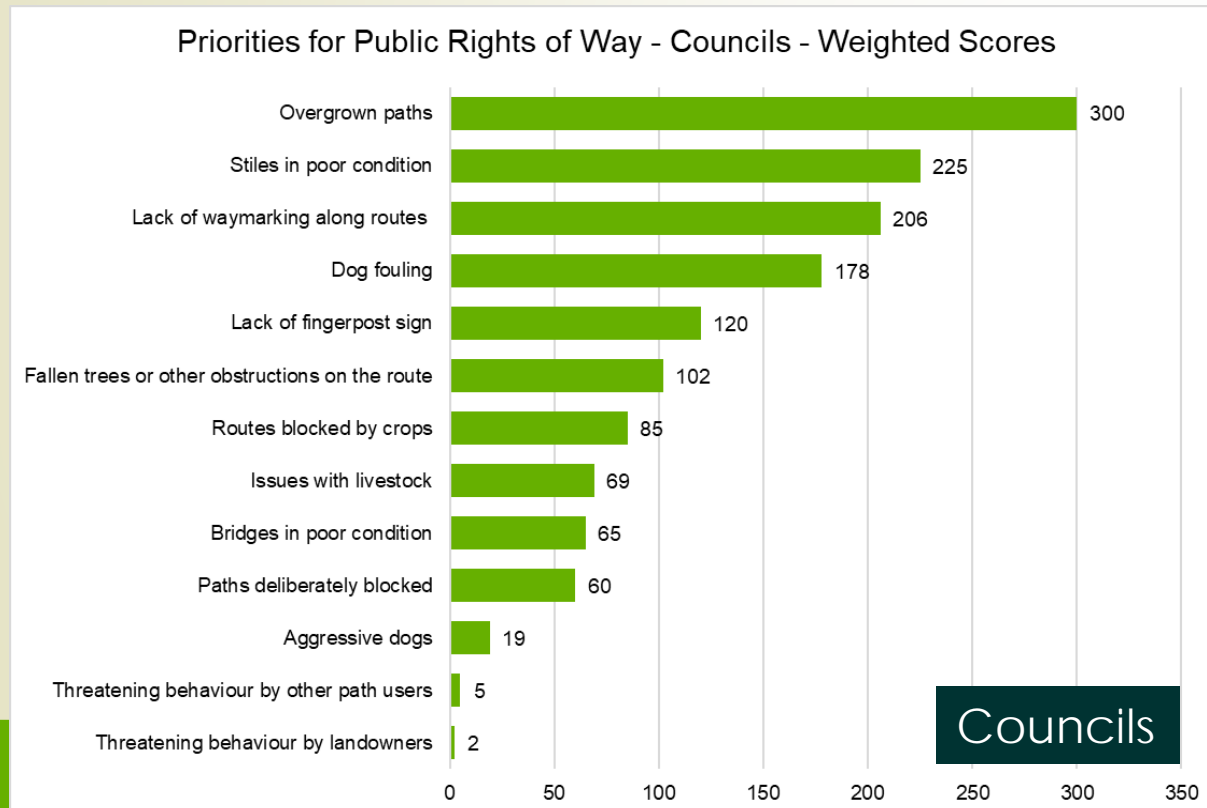
Respondents wanted work to be prioritised in routes affected by development and maintaining and investing in the current network.

There was a lack of awareness of the service and where to report problems.

People were almost equally positive and negative about how the Rights of Way Service had been delivered in the past ten years.

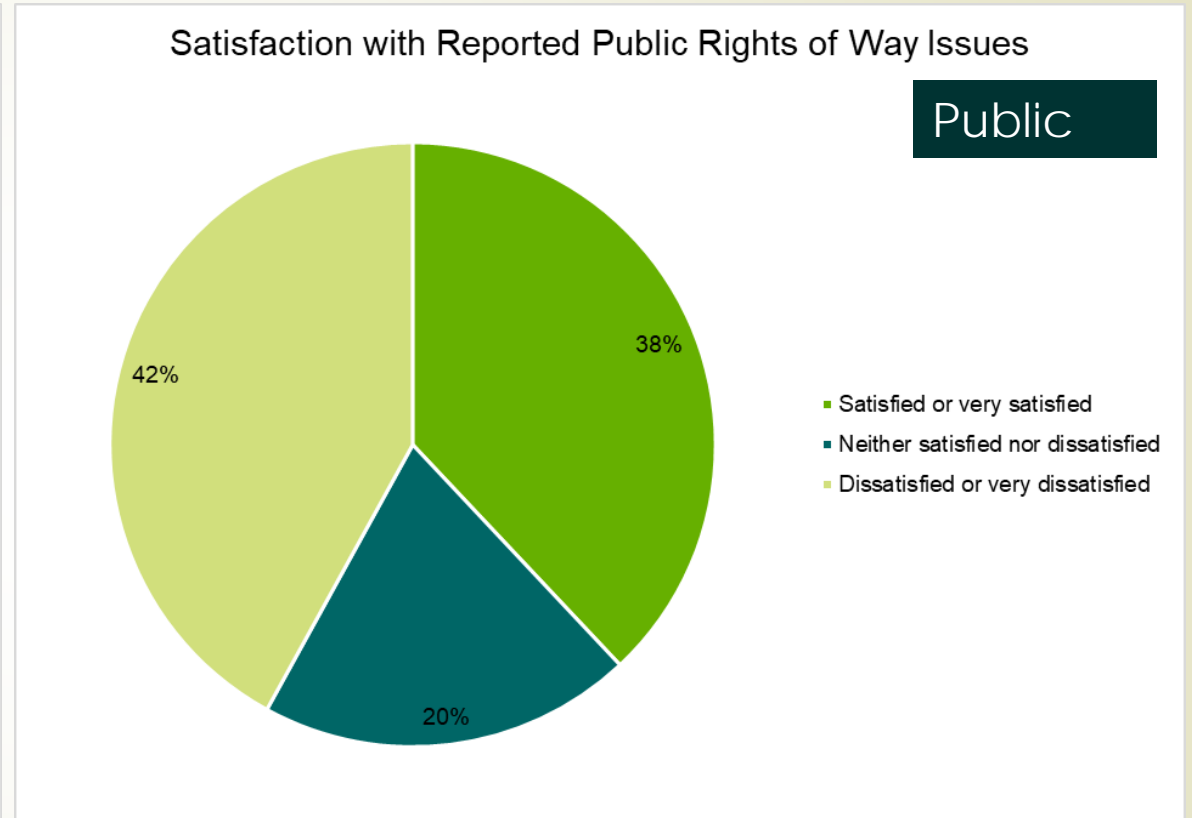
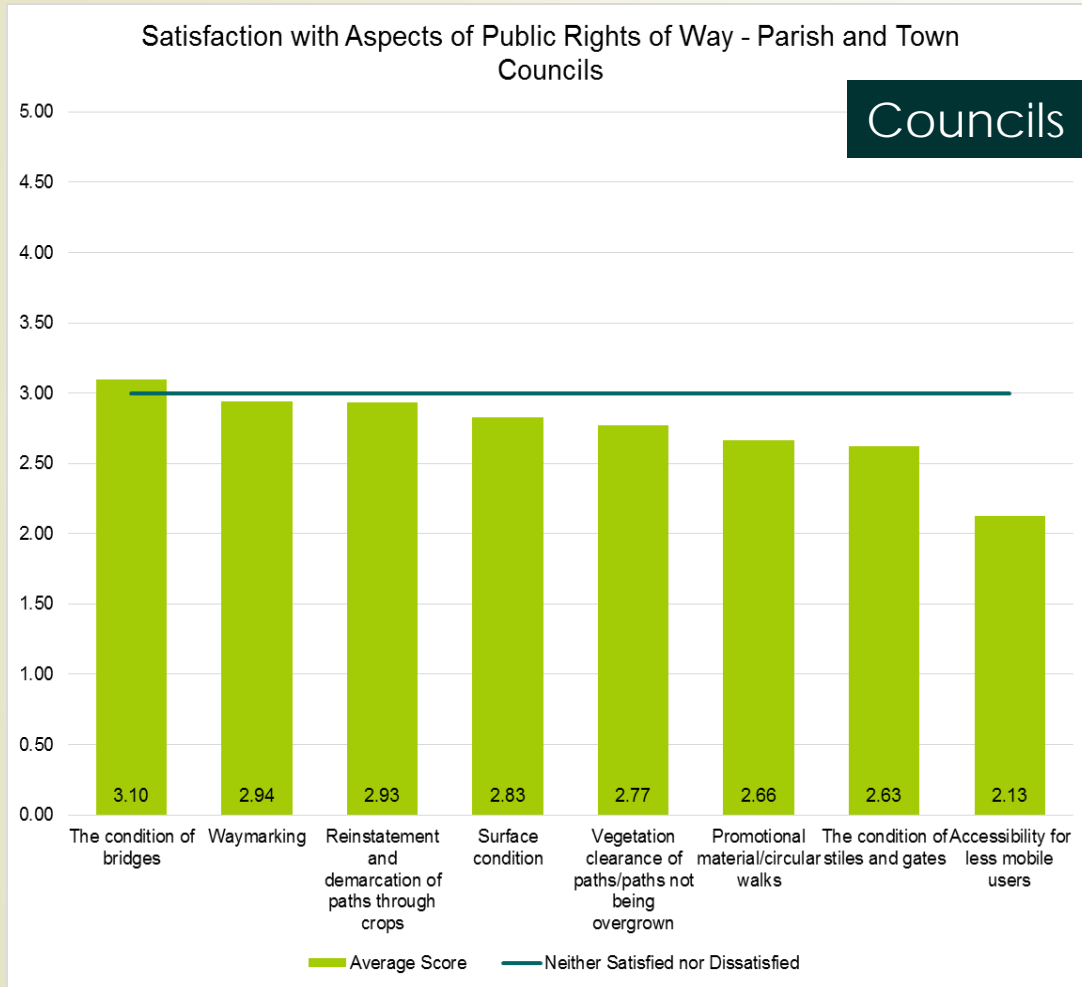
# Topic 2 – Addressing maintenance challenges

- Maintaining and investing in the current network a high priority for the public
- 97% of users had encountered an issue
- Overgrown paths were the highest concern and the priority area for maintenance – public and councils


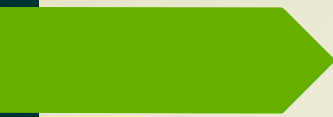




# Topic 2 - Addressing maintenance challenges



How service could be improved	Number of comments	%
Better communication - responses and feedback to reported problems, notification of outcome or problem resolved	147	45%
Fix the problem / fix more quickly	101	31%



Make it easier to report problems and provide feedback that can be responded to further when issues are not put right.

How can service be improved... "Continue to maintain the existing ROW and ensure that new developments include rights of way, which should include safe off road routes for horse riders as well as pedestrian and cyclists e.g. by making cycle paths bridleways."

Keep people updated as to progress and be honest about what you can or cannot achieve.

Deteriorated through lack of investment

I know the council are under resourced in following up complaints so get trained volunteers to check problems.



## Topic 2 - Addressing maintenance challenges

Potential areas for discussion:

- Improving responses to reported problems
- How to maintain the network with challenges in resources

## Topic 3 – Partnerships for delivery

- ▶ Two of three areas which must be addressed widen the scope of the ROWIP beyond statutory requirements
- ▶ Guidance expects consideration of wider remit of public rights of way:
  - ▶ *Opportunities to contribute to active travel objectives*
  - ▶ *Opportunities to contribute to well-being objectives*
  - ▶ *Opportunities to contribute to the delivery of other plans and priorities*

The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.

Accessibility of rights of way to blind, partially sighted and others with mobility problems.



## Topic 3 – Partnerships for delivery

- ▶ Definition of 'needs of the public' wider than existing users and user group
- ▶ Limited resources to deliver this role
- ▶ Partnerships – new and existing - may help to deliver wider requirements?

New ROWIPS should consider the needs of the wider public **including those who do not currently participate** in outdoor recreation on a regular basis. Authorities should be careful when using evidence to demonstrate public need that it is reasonably illustrative of the population and **does not over-represent particular interest groups**

# Topic 3 – Partnerships for delivery

- ▶ Some parishes deliver rights of way services under devolved arrangements
- ▶ Partnerships and devolved services need support – not a one-way street
- ▶ 46% of councils cleared vegetation from additional routes that were not listed on their schedule
- ▶ 46% of councils felt they needed more support or knowledge

*We inherited a very poor network upon entering into the devolved services contract. For the last three years we have invested at least twice the amount of the subsidy received. We anticipate that this will need to continue for at least another 3 to 4 years in order to get on top of the backlog.*

*The devolved services funding does not cover the cost of cutting the verges, which is our first priority. Therefore any works to RoW are essentially unfunded.*

*More money required!*

*The Chiltern Society Path Maintenance Volunteers ...do a good job. Encourage local parish's and community groups to look after their local paths. Public survey*

*Good in parts. There is a way to go. Devolve the responsibilities to CAPABLE Parish and Town Councils, but have a central team to ensure that (a) they push up precept monies to fund this at Parish and Town Council level, and (b) make sure they take actions to maintain existing pathways, improve access, and improve pathway surfaces. Public survey*

*Parish Councils need a point of contact at BCC to assist with rights of way issues and assist where necessary.*

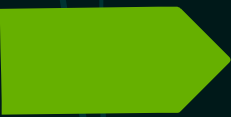


## Topic 3 – Partnerships for delivery

Potential areas for discussion:

- How can partnership working with existing partners be improved?
- Who are potential new partners?
- What role are we asking new partners to fulfil – what can we offer in return?

## Next steps ...



Work will continue to complete the 'assessment'

- ▶ Study the definitive map and statement
- ▶ Review applications for modifications to the map and statement
- ▶ Review requests for improvements to the network
- ▶ Consider information on the condition of the network
- ▶ Assess the nature and scale of the present and likely future needs of the public
- ▶ Review other relevant plans and strategies



# Timetable

## May – September

- Full review of engagement evidence
- Team discussions
- Complete 'assessment'
- Determine priorities and actions
- Internal drafts and amendments of ROWIP 2

## Autumn

- Consultation on consultation draft ROWIP 2 (12 weeks)

## Early 2020

- Review of comments and final document

## By April 2020

- Adoption of ROWIP 2

Report to LAF at July, November and January meetings