

Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Supporting Document 1
Public, Parish and Town Council and Landowner Surveys
and Stakeholder Responses
FINAL January 2020



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Introduction

This report sets out the results of the public and stakeholder surveys and other engagement activities carried out prior to the drafting of Buckinghamshire County Council's replacement Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The results of this engagement have informed the actions in the ROWIP and this report forms part of the evidence base supporting the new ROWIP.

Several activities were undertaken to gather evidence on the views and needs of the public and stakeholders:

- **Online public survey** – a public survey was posted online on Buckinghamshire County Council's website between 19th January 2019 and 31st March 2019. The survey was promoted on Buckinghamshire County Council's social media feeds and website. Stakeholder organisations were also encouraged to circulate the survey. The survey received 1489 usable responses, giving a high degree of statistical significance to the results;
- **Parish and town council survey** – all parish and town councils were contacted and invited to complete a parish and town council survey between early January and 15th April 2019. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils also helped to encourage councils to respond. 56% of councils responded, from across the county. Revision of the ROWIP was also raised at Local Area Forums between February and April 2019;
- **Landowner survey** – the CLA circulated a landowner survey to its members in April and May 2019;
- **Engagement with stakeholders** – 51 stakeholder organisations were contacted to encourage them to comment prior to the drafting of the ROWIP. These included neighbouring highway authorities, district authorities within Buckinghamshire county, user and interest groups and community organisations. Meetings or telephone calls were held 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

Focus groups were held with residents at Berryfields (new community on the outskirts of Aylesbury), Buckinghamshire Mind, a Simply Walks group. Stakeholders were engaged between January and May 2019.

Online Public Survey

Summary of Key Findings

The survey was of high statistical significance and accurately represents the profile and views of public rights of way users.

- The survey received 1489 usable responses. This provides a high degree of statistical significance, with a confidence interval of 2.6% at a confidence level of 95%, based on the population of Buckinghamshire. 91% of respondents lived in Buckinghamshire;
- The survey was self-selecting (i.e. people chose to take part) and only 1% of respondents had not used a public right of way. The survey therefore records and provides comprehensive insight into the views of rights of way users. However, it does not capture the views of non-users;
- The typical respondent to the survey was white, over 45 and did not have a disability or long-term illness. Those of black, Asian or other ethnic minority group were under-represented. The proportion of people with a disability or health issue was in line with the Buckinghamshire population.

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

- The public rights of way network is highly valued by users for the 'quality of life' benefits they gain. The top reasons for using public rights of way were 'to enjoy the landscape/countryside', 'to improve my health', 'for relaxation and peace and quiet' and 'to enjoy a view'. Spending time with family and friends was 6th. 96% thought it was important for enjoying nature, and 84% that it was important for improving health and wellbeing;
- 97% of people regarded public rights of way as an important asset for Buckinghamshire;
- The most popular activity was walking (with or without a dog).

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

- The public rights of way network is used very frequently, with 87% of people saying they used it once a week or more. That equates to 300,000 annual visits by survey respondents alone, and is likely to be higher as many will use the network with others.

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

- 81% of people had encountered an overgrown path, and this was the highest priority area for improvement;
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) had encountered problems with waymarking, and 47% had encountered a missing fingerpost at the start of a public right of way;
- Improved condition of public rights of way would encourage greater use and nearly two-thirds of people said they would use the network more if it was in better condition.

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

- The highest scoring priority (due to more people strongly agreeing) was to make sure public rights of way were protected and new routes created through development sites and in response to national infrastructure projects, with 91% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
- Also with an average of 4.5 was maintaining and investing in the current network and 94% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
- Connecting missing links in public rights of way, supporting parish councils and other community organisations to take a more active role in maintaining local public rights of way and improving accessibility so that more people can use public rights of way also scored highly;
- Maintaining the current network and keeping paths open were the highest scoring area when asked how the service could be improved in the future.

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

- Only 21% of respondents stated they would report public rights of way issues specifically to Buckinghamshire County Council;
- When asked how well the service had performed in the previous 10 years, 6% were unaware of the service.

Overall, those who had reported rights of way issues, scored the service slightly below 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'.

- 37% were either satisfied or very satisfied, 42% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and 20% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
- The improvement the greatest number of people wished to see was improved communication and response to problems. The second highest response was simply to 'fix the problem'.

There was low awareness of the promoted routes provided by Buckinghamshire County Council.

- Only 12% of people would use the Buckinghamshire County Council website to find out about public rights of way routes;
- 70% of people were not aware there was an online map showing promoted routes;
- One quarter of those who were aware of the online map had not used any of the listed circular routes.

Long-distance routes and those with higher levels of publicity were the most popular.

- The Ridgeway National Trail, the Chiltern Way, the Grand Union Canal, the Icknield Way and the Aylesbury Ring were the most popular promoted routes, having been used in full or in part.

Many users wanted more information on where to go, but this wasn't necessarily considered the highest priority for the service.

- People said they would use the network more if there was more information to do so;
- Although 68% of people thought providing promotional material was a priority area, this was lower than other priorities;
- Most people used Ordnance Survey maps (63%), local knowledge (61%) or word of mouth (38%).

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

- 48% of comments expressed an overall positive perception of the service, 46% of comments were overall negative of the service or of particular aspects of public rights of way and 6% of comments expressed a neutral or mixed sentiment;
- 8% of those expressing a positive or negative opinion comments noted that the resources of the service had been reduced or expressed a perception that the service was under-resourced and 6% that the service had deteriorated over the 10 year period (often also noting that funding had been reduced during this period);

Demographic Profile and Location of Respondents

Age

More older people responded to the survey, with the highest number of respondents in each of the age groups 45-54, 55-64 and 65+, see Table 1 and Figure 1.

Figure 1: Age profile of survey responses and Buckinghamshire

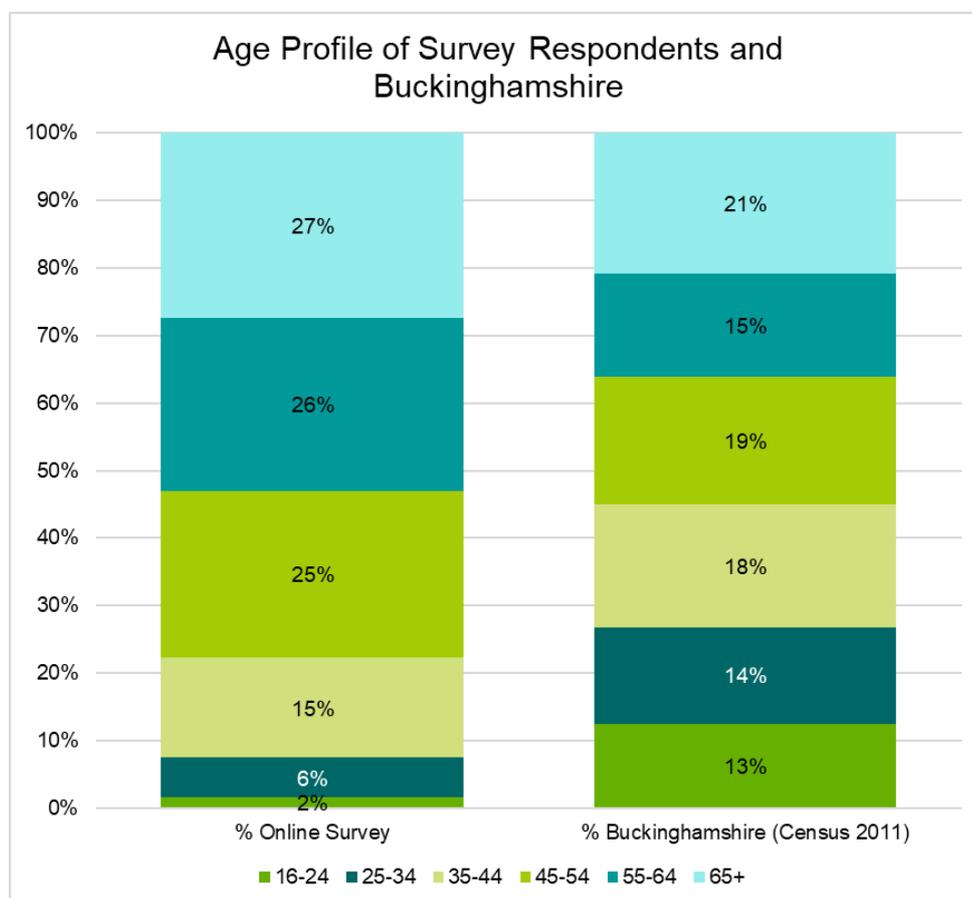


Table 1: Age of respondents

	Number	%	% Buckinghamshire (Census 2011)
16– 24	22	2%	13%
25 – 34	84	6%	14%
35 – 44	210	15%	18%
45 – 54	351	25%	19%
55 – 64	363	26%	15%
65+	390	27%	21%
I would prefer not to say	56		
n	1476		

Gender

More females than males responded to the survey.

Table 2: Gender of respondents

	Number	%
Female	848	58%
Male	583	40%
I would prefer not to say	42	3%
n	1473	

Ethnicity

The ethnic profile of respondents is shown in Table 3. There were fewer non-white respondents than the profile of the population of Buckinghamshire as a whole.

Table 3: Ethnicity

	Number	%	Buckinghamshire (Census 2011)
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	1284	94.1%	81.1%
White: Other European	42	3.1%	5.3%
Asian or Asian British	11	0.8%	8.6%
Other ethnic group (please specify)	19	1.4%	0.5%
Black or Black British	3	0.2%	2.1%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	6	0.4%	2%
I would prefer not to say	96		
n	1461		

Disability or Long-Term Illness

Respondents were asked if they had a disability or health issue which had affected their day-to-day living for at least 12 months. 11% (154) did have a long-term illness or disability and 86% (1251) did not. 3% (57) preferred not to say (1462 answered this question). This is comparable to the profile of Buckinghamshire's population, 86.6% of which report a limiting long-term illness and 13.4% of which do not.¹ The breakdown of types of disability or health issue is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Disability or health issue

	Number	% of respondents giving this as one of their answers
Physical impairment	74	48%
Long standing illness or health condition	75	49%
Sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both)	16	10%
Mental health condition	19	12%
Learning disability	2	1%
Other	7	5%
n	154	

¹ Census 2011.

Other responses given were:

- COPD (2) plus 1 person needing ambulatory oxygen
- Back injury with nerve pain
- Autism (2)
- Back injury exacerbated by lack of exercise
- ME/CFS
- No cartilage in talo-navicular joint of left foot and knee replacement
- Mild arthritis
- Osteoarthritis
- Hip and knee replacement
- Sensory impairment i.e. anosmia
- Breathing problems due to far too much smoking when young
- Simply getting older and less agile; just when I need to get easy access!
- Prolapsed spinal disk.
- Dyslexic
- I have back problems and associated walking problems which mean I can only do shorter walks e.g. half an hour or so.
- Less active following hip replacement surgery
- Mobility issues

Deprivation

The full postcodes of respondents were collected which enabled further analysis of demographic information based on their location of residence.

- The origin of 43 respondents could not be coded due to invalid postcodes or respondent preferring not to give location;
- 37 respondents gave partial postcodes which could not be located to Lower Super Output Area or Ward;
- 1412 responses (95%) could be located and coded to Lower Super Output Area or Ward.

The origin of visitor groups was analysed against Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data (2015). The Indices of Deprivation are the official measure of relative deprivation for England, ranking every Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in England from 1 (most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived). The overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines information from seven domains² to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation.

6% of respondents originated from the most deprived areas (IMD national deciles 1 to 5) and 93% from the least deprived areas national (IMD national deciles 6 to 10). However, this is in line with the population of Buckinghamshire as a whole, which overall has low levels of deprivation, see Table 5.

² The domains are combined using the following weights: Income Deprivation (22.5%), Employment Deprivation (22.5%), Education, Skills and Training Deprivation (13.5%), Health Deprivation and Disability (13.5%), Crime (9.3%), Barriers to Housing and Services (9.3%), Living Environment Deprivation (9.3%).

Table 5: Indices of deprivation – survey respondents

Indices of Deprivation - National Decile	Number of Respondents Living in IMD decile	% of Survey Respondents	% of Buckinghamshire Residents
1 (most deprived)	2	0%	0%
2	2	0%	0%
3	15	1%	0%
4	27	2%	1%
5	46	3%	4%
6	100	7%	7%
7	153	11%	8%
8	237	17%	12%
9	322	23%	15%
10 (least deprived)	508	36%	51%
n	1412		

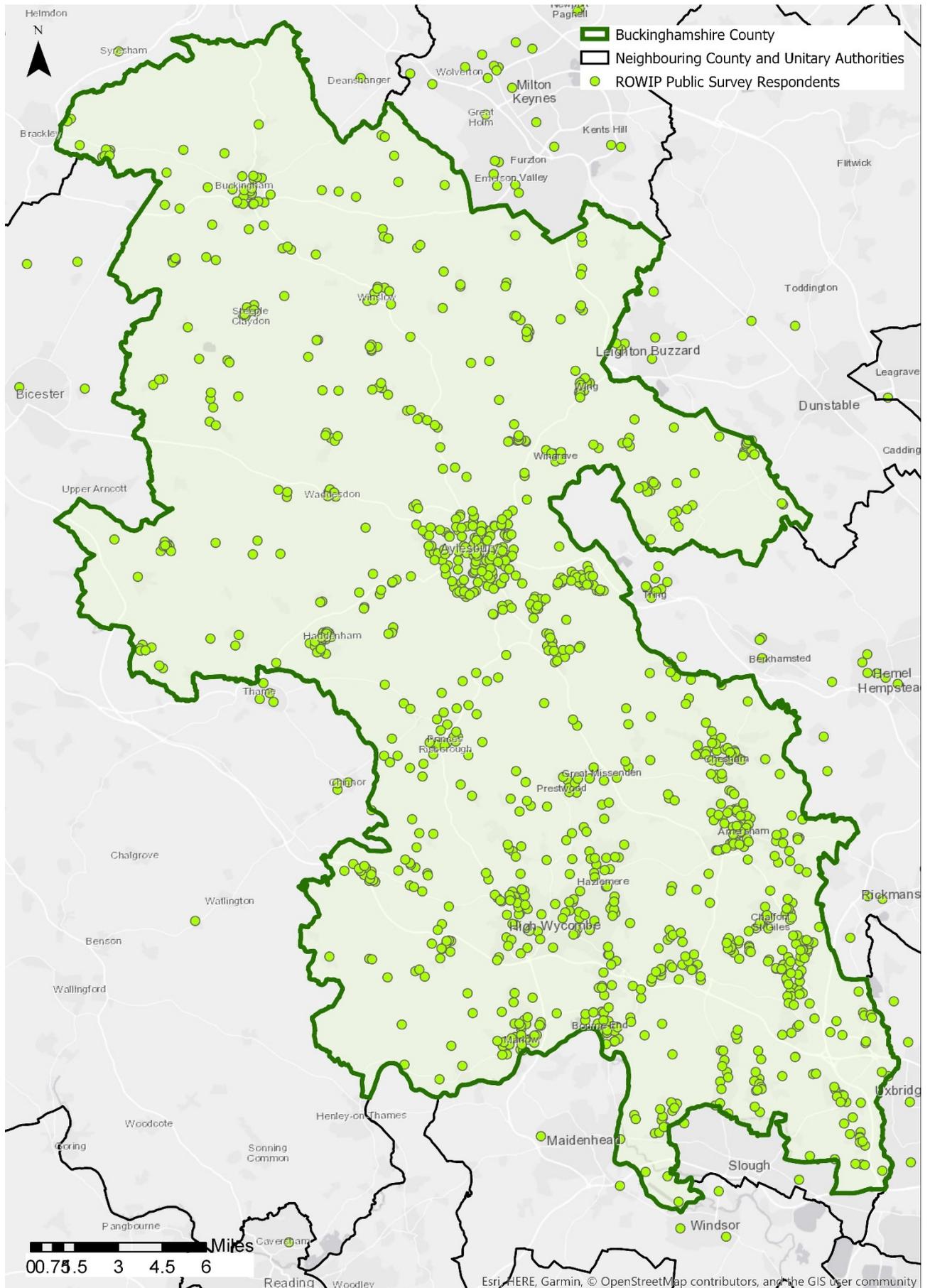
Origin of Respondents

The origin of respondents is shown in Plans 1 and 2 and Table 6. Most respondents (91%) resided in Buckinghamshire, with 44% residing in Aylesbury Vale District. Most other respondents lived close to Buckinghamshire, see Plan 2.

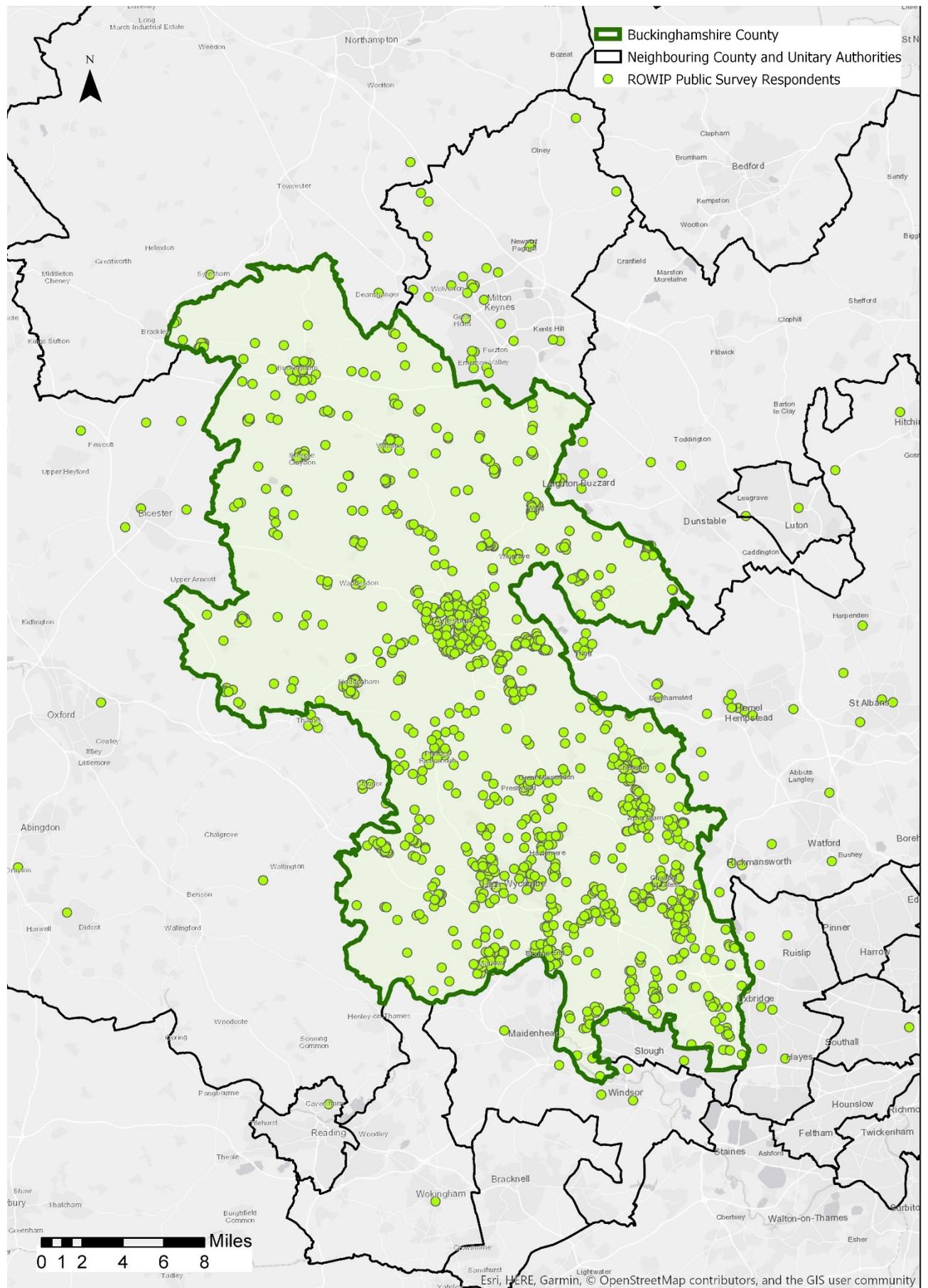
Table 6: Origin of respondents - online public survey

District	Number	%
Aylesbury Vale	621	44%
Wycombe	281	20%
Chiltern	257	18%
South Bucks	130	9%
Milton Keynes	30	2%
Dacorum	22	2%
South Oxfordshire	10	1%
Central Bedfordshire	9	1%
Cherwell	7	0%
Hillingdon	7	0%
Windsor and Maidenhead	5	0%
St Albans	4	0%
Three Rivers	4	0%
South Northamptonshire	3	0%
Luton	2	0%
North Hertfordshire	2	0%
Watford	2	0%
Basingstoke and Deane	1	0%
Ealing	1	0%
East Devon	1	0%
East Hertfordshire	1	0%
Haringey	1	0%
Leeds	1	0%
Lincoln	1	0%
North Norfolk	1	0%
Oxford	1	0%
Reading	1	0%
Slough	1	0%
Staffordshire Moorlands	1	0%
Test Valley	1	0%
Vale of White Horse	1	0%
West Oxfordshire	1	0%
Wokingham	1	0%
n	1412	

Plan 1: Origin of public survey respondents - Buckinghamshire County Council area



Plan 2: Origin of public survey respondents - wider catchment



Use of Public Rights of Way

Reasons for Using Public Rights of Way

Respondents were asked why they used public rights of way. More than one answer could be chosen.

- 'Quality of life' reasons featured highly in the responses, with the top four responses being 'to enjoy the landscape/countryside', 'to improve my health', 'for relaxation and peace and quiet' and 'to enjoy a view'. Spending time with family and friends was 6th;
- Walking with a dog was the fifth most popular reason and walking without a dog was 7th;
- 21% of respondents used public rights of way for travel to work or shops;
- Only 1% of respondents had not used a public right of way, indicating that the survey reached core users.

Figure 2: Reasons for using public rights of way

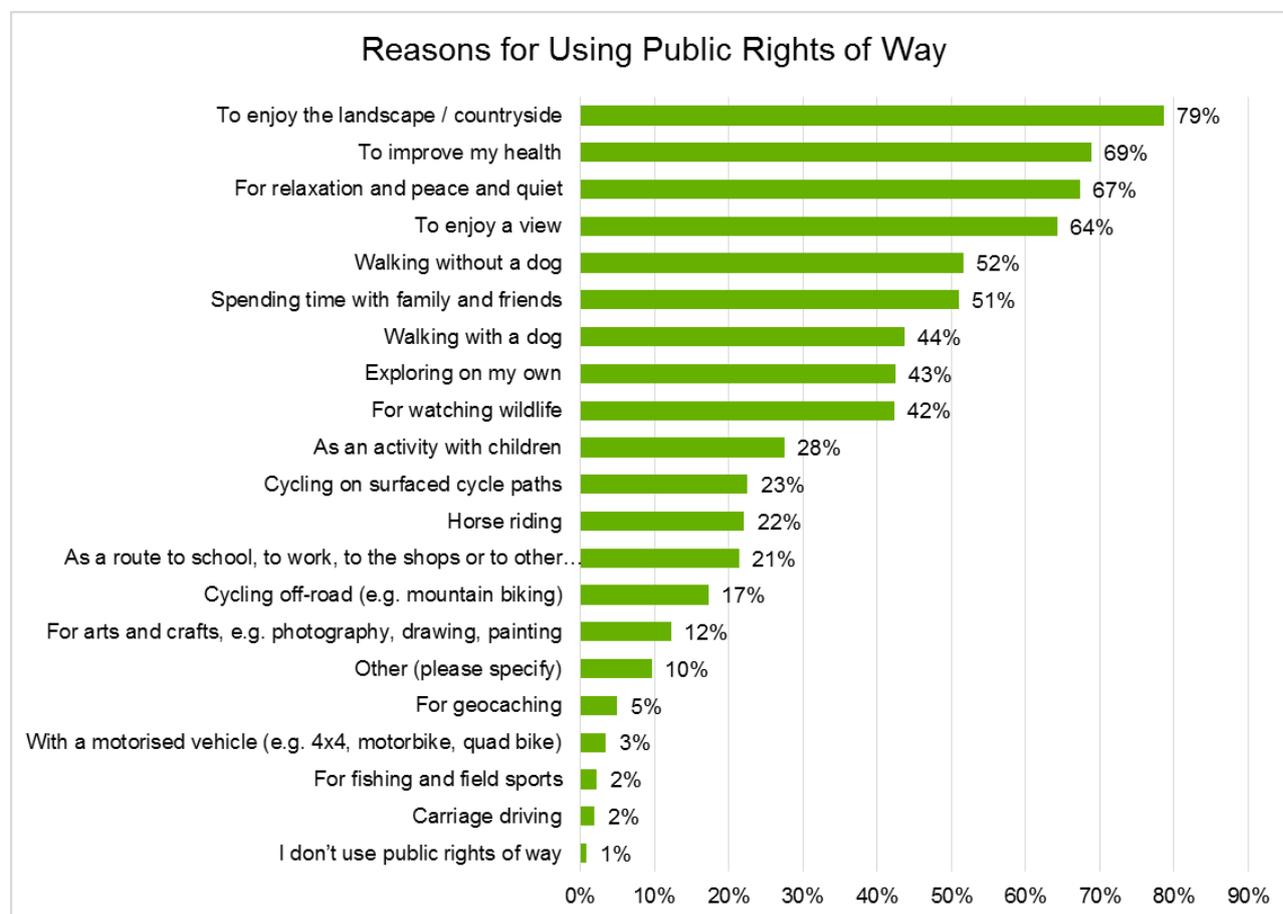


Table 7: Reasons for using public rights of way

Reason for using public rights of way	Number	% of respondents giving this as one of their answers
To enjoy the landscape / countryside	1170	79%
To improve my health	1026	69%
For relaxation and peace and quiet	1003	67%
To enjoy a view	957	64%
Walking without a dog	768	52%
Spending time with family and friends	759	51%
Walking with a dog	651	44%
Exploring on my own	633	43%
For watching wildlife	631	42%
As an activity with children	410	28%
Cycling on surfaced cycle paths	336	23%
Horse riding	329	22%
As a route to school, to work, to the shops or to other facilities (e.g. station)	318	21%
Cycling off-road (e.g. mountain biking)	257	17%
For arts and crafts, e.g. photography, drawing, painting	182	12%
Other (please specify)	144	10%
For geocaching	73	5%
With a motorised vehicle (e.g. 4x4, motorbike, quad bike)	51	3%
For fishing and field sports	33	2%
Carriage driving	29	2%
I don't use public rights of way	12	1%
n	1489	

Other responses

Several other responses were given (Table 8), the most popular of these was running or jogging. Other uses included walking with organised groups, maintaining or checking public rights of way and visiting historic or archaeological sites. Some respondents used public rights of way for training, including in map reading, 4x4 rescue training or training in off-road wheelchair use.

Table 8: Other reasons for using public rights of way

Other reason	Number
Running	60
With organised groups	17
Maintaining or checking footpaths	7
To visit historic or archaeological sites	7
With a horse	5
Learn about wildlife/ nature/ flora	5
To visit pubs	5
Training	5
To avoid roads	4
Nordic walking	2
Long distance hiking	2
Exercise	2
Photography	1
Scouting	1

Frequency of Public Rights of Way Use

Respondents could only give one answer to this question.

- 87% of respondents used the public rights of way network once a week or more frequently.

Table 9: Frequency of public rights of way use

Frequency of use	Number	%
Every day	485	33%
More than once a week	610	41%
Once a week	188	13%
Once or twice a month	144	10%
Once every 2-3 months	29	2%
Once or twice a year	9	1%
Other (please specify)	13	1%
n	1478	

Other responses

- 13 respondents gave a variety of other, more personal, accounts of their use of public rights of way.

Encouraging Greater Use of Public Rights of Way

Respondents were asked if there was anything which would lead to them increasing their use of public rights of way. Respondents could give more than one answer.

- Nearly two-thirds of people indicated that they would use the network more if public rights of way were in better condition;
- More information to enable people to explore the network independently could encourage greater use – 45% said online guides would encourage them, 42% said information on local rights of way and 32% said information on places they could visit;
- Organised groups and walks were less popular (10% for walking groups and 8% for guided walks).

Figure 3: Factors which would encourage greater use of public rights of way

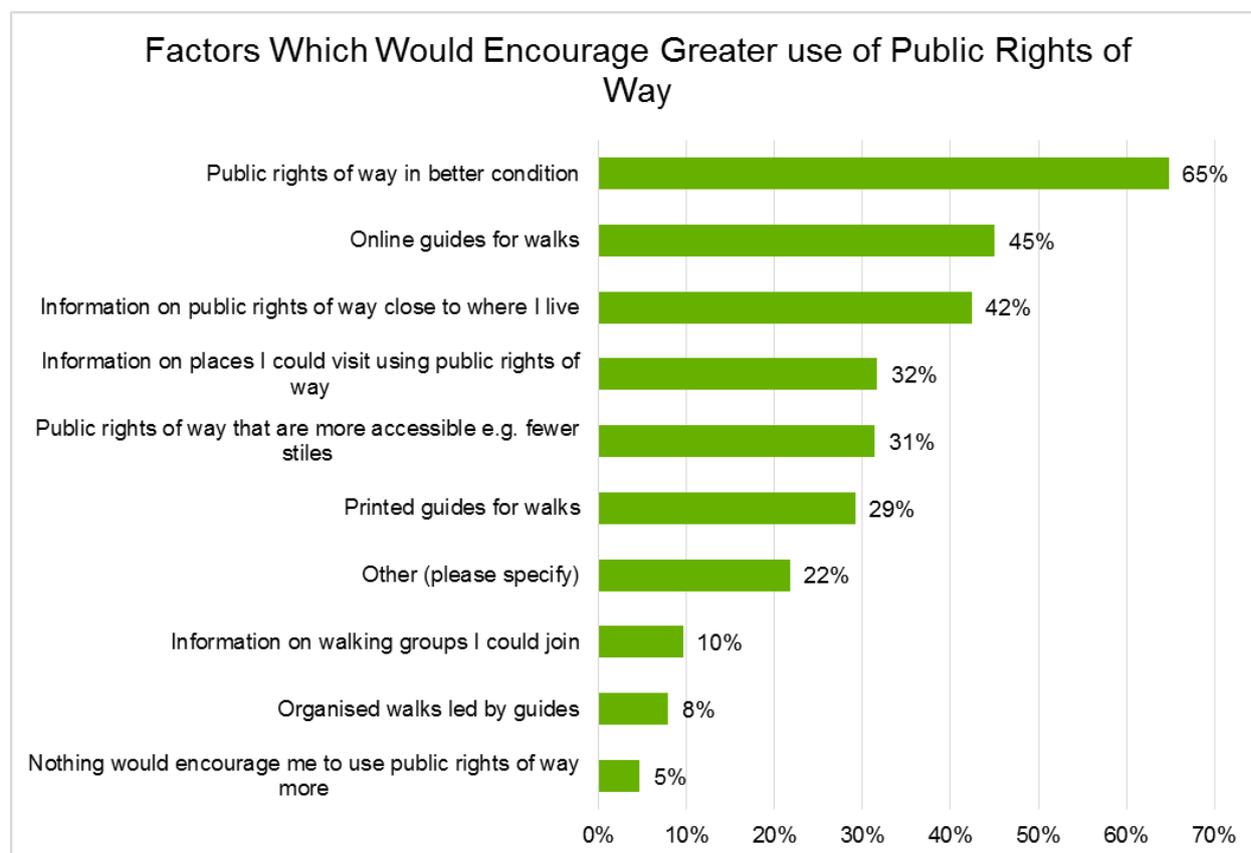


Table 10: Factors which would encourage greater use of public rights of way

Factors which would encourage greater use of public rights of way	Number	% of respondents giving this as one of their answers
Public rights of way in better condition	966	65%
Online guides for walks	671	45%
Information on public rights of way close to where I live	632	42%
Information on places I could visit using public rights of way	472	32%
Public rights of way that are more accessible e.g. fewer stiles	468	31%
Printed guides for walks	434	29%
Other (please specify)	324	22%
Information on walking groups I could join	143	10%
Organised walks led by guides	117	8%
Nothing would encourage me to use public rights of way more	70	5%
n	1489	

Other responses

Several other comments were given by respondents, see Table 11.

Table 11: Factors which would encourage greater use of public rights of way – other responses

Factors which would encourage greater use of public rights of way	Number of comments	%
More / improved higher status routes	96	37%
More information / circular walks	31	12%
Clearing overgrown paths / improved maintenance / not blocked by crops or other obstructions	31	12%
Improved signage	30	11%
Better connected routes / more routes	17	7%
Other	16	6%
Fewer horse riders / cyclists / higher status users / less misuse of footpath by higher status route users / greater respect by higher status route users	9	3%
Better surfacing	7	3%
More time	7	3%
Less dog fouling / more responsible dog owners	7	3%
More gates / fewer stiles	5	2%
Less intimidating cattle or livestock	5	2%
n	261	

Non-Users

12 respondents indicated that they did not use public rights of way. The reasons for not using public rights of way are shown in Table 12. The two highest responses indicated not know where to find information, followed by poor terrain and slippery paths.

Table 12: Reasons for not using public rights of way - non-users

Reason	Number	% of respondents giving this as one of their answers
I don't know where to go	5	42%
I don't know where to find information	4	33%
Difficult terrain e.g. muddy or slippery paths	4	33%
I worry about getting lost	3	25%
I don't feel safe	3	25%
I'm in poor health	3	25%
I'm not interested	3	25%
The paths are overgrown	2	17%
There are obstructions on the route/s	2	17%
Poor cleanliness / unpleasant environment	2	17%
I'm not fit enough	2	17%
My physical disability prevents me	2	17%
I'm not confident to use them	2	17%
I'm too busy	2	17%
I don't feel welcome / I feel out of place	2	17%
There is livestock in the fields which deters me	1	8%
The paths are not accessible enough	1	8%
I'm too old	1	8%
I don't have access to a car to get to them	1	8%
There is a lack of public transport to get to them	1	8%
It's too expensive to get to them	1	8%
I prefer to do other leisure activities	1	8%
Other (please specify)	1	8%
n	12	

When asked what would encourage them to use public rights of way, more information on public rights of way had the highest number of responses (one third of respondents indicated information on paths close to where they live and printed and online guides). One third of respondents also indicated public rights of way in better condition and 'nothing would encourage me', see Table 13.

Table 13: Factors which could encourage greater use by non-users

Factor which could encourage greater use	Number	% of respondents giving this as one of their answers
Public rights of way in better condition	4	33%
Information on public rights of way close to where I live	4	33%
Printed guides for walks	4	33%
Online guides for walks	4	33%
Nothing would encourage me to use public rights of way	4	33%
Organised walks led by guides	3	25%
Information on places I could visit using public rights of way	3	25%
Information on walking groups I could join	2	17%
Public rights of way that are more accessible e.g. fewer stiles	1	8%
Other (please specify)	1	8%
n	12	

Views on the Importance of Public Rights of Way

Respondents were asked a series of questions to gain their views on the importance of the public rights of way network to Buckinghamshire residents.

Respondents could choose from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (strongly disagree – 1, disagree – 2, neither agree nor disagree – 3, agree – 4, strongly agree – 5). A score over 3 indicates that on average respondents agreed with the statement and the closer the value to 5, the higher the level of agreement with the statement.

- The results indicate that the public rights of way network is regarded as an important asset for Buckinghamshire, with an overall average of 4.75 and 97% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
- Respondents also highly valued public rights of way for 'quality of life' aspects of enjoying nature (average 4.71, 96% agree or strongly agree) and improving health and wellbeing (average 4.69, 84% agree or strongly agree);
- Public rights of way were regarded as being less important for travel than the other areas, although 59% of respondent agreed or strongly agreed, with an overall average of 3.71.

Figure 4: Perceptions of the value of public rights of way to Buckinghamshire residents

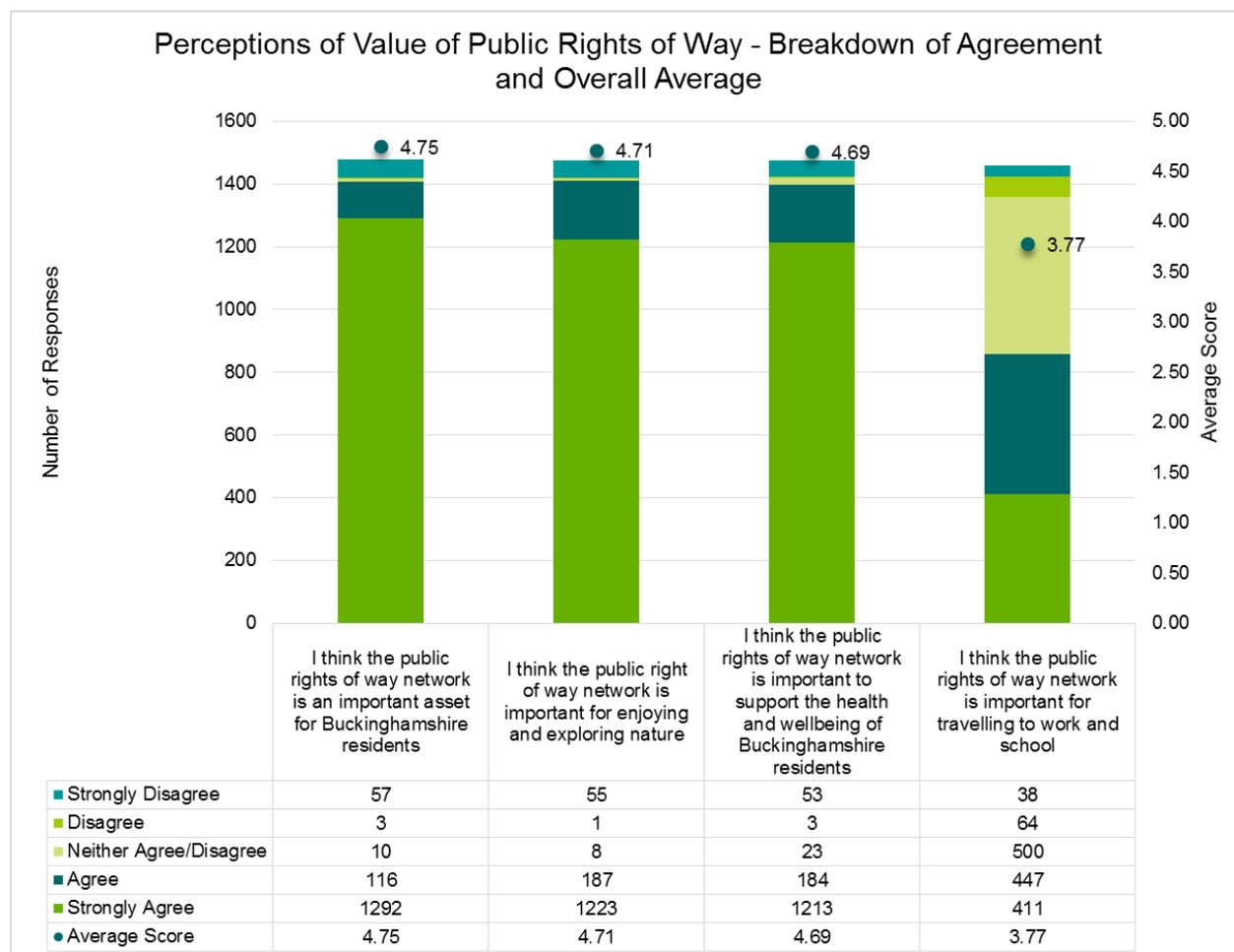


Table 14: Perceptions of the value of public rights of way to Buckinghamshire residents

	I think the public rights of way network is an important asset for Buckinghamshire residents		I think the public rights of way network is important to support the health and wellbeing of Buckinghamshire residents		I think the public rights of way network is important for travelling to work and school		I think the public right of way network is important for enjoying and exploring nature	
Strongly agree	1292	87%	1213	82%	411	28%	1223	83%
Agree	116	8%	184	12%	447	31%	187	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	10	1%	23	2%	500	34%	8	1%
Disagree	3	0%	3	0%	64	4%	1	0%
Strongly disagree	57	4%	53	4%	38	3%	55	4%
Average score	4.75		4.69		3.77		4.71	

Maintenance and Issues with Public Rights of Way

Issues with Public Rights of Way

Respondents were asked if they had come across a range of issues. More than one answer could be given.

- Overgrown paths were the biggest concern, with 81% of respondents having encountered this, the highest scoring category;
- Signage - Nearly two-thirds (63%) had encountered problems with waymarking, and 47% had encountered a missing fingerpost at the start of a public right of way;
- Furniture - 46% had encountered stiles in poor condition, but only 20% had encountered bridges in poor condition;
- Obstructions - Just over a third had encountered routes blocked by crops (35%) and 28% encountered paths which had been deliberately blocked;
- Less than one in ten people had encountered threatening behaviour by landowners (9%) or other users (7).

Figure 5: Issues encountered on public rights of way

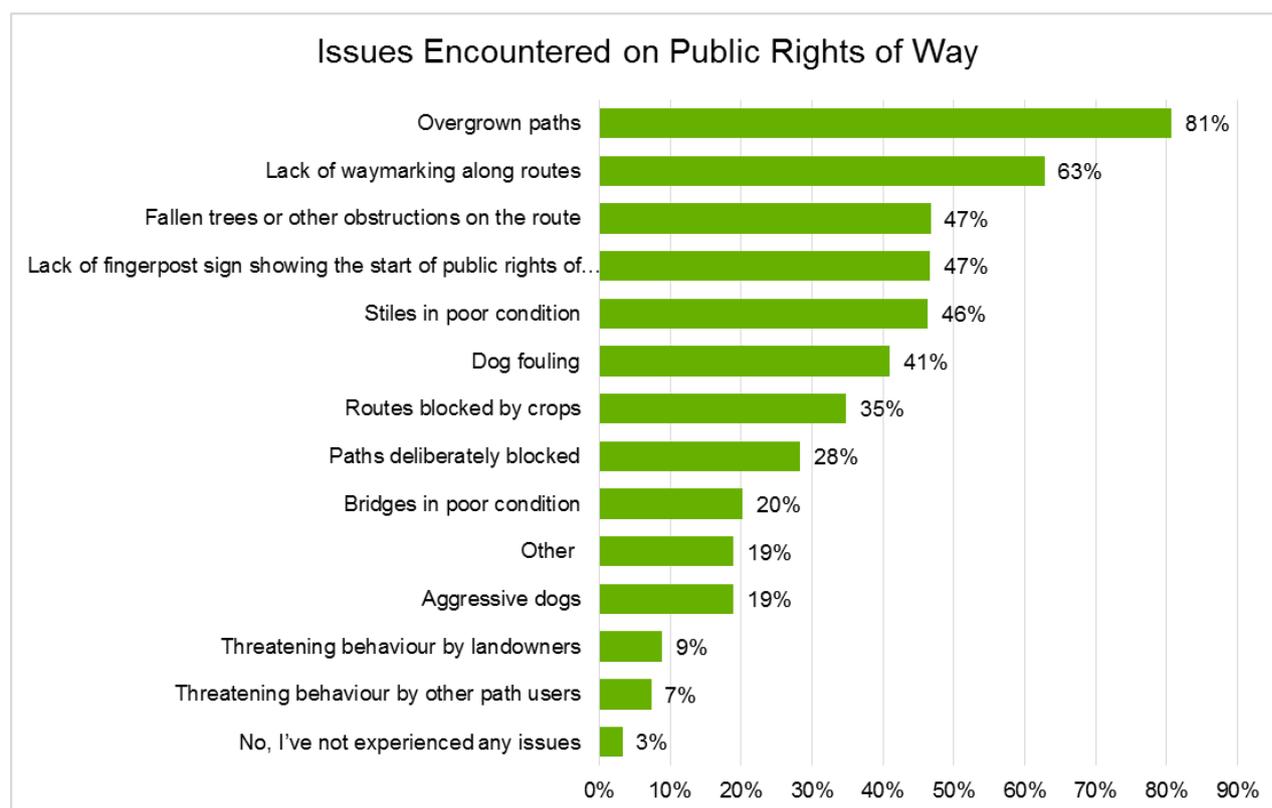


Table 15: Issues encountered on public rights of way

Issue encountered	Number	% of respondents giving this as one of their answers
Overgrown paths	1192	81%
Lack of waymarking along routes	935	63%
Fallen trees or other obstructions on the route	696	47%
Lack of fingerpost sign	694	47%
Stiles in poor condition	690	46%
Dog fouling	611	41%
Routes blocked by crops	518	35%
Paths deliberately blocked	421	28%
Bridges in poor condition	302	20%
Aggressive dogs	282	19%
Other	282	19%
Threatening behaviour by landowners	132	9%
Threatening behaviour by other path users	109	7%
No, I've not experienced any issues	49	3%
	n	1477

Other responses

Several other comments were given by respondents, see Table 16.

Table 16: Issues encountered on public rights of way - other responses

Issue encountered	Number of comments	%
Aggressive livestock	29	13%
Bikes / horses /motorised vehicles on footpaths / or poor surface due to these users	28	13%
Mud / poor surface	27	12%
Flytipping / litter / dog fouling	23	11%
Other	18	8%
Poor / inaccessible gates on bridleways	18	8%
Intimidation from other users / dogs / misuse	15	7%
Stiles in poor condition / no dog access	15	7%
Overgrown paths / blocked by crops	9	4%
Not enough routes	8	4%
Barbed wire / fencing	7	3%
Blocked / obstructed routes	7	3%
Poor signage	6	3%
Unauthorised diversions /closures	4	2%
Blocked by development	4	2%
n	218	

Ranking of Public Rights of Way Issues

Respondents were then asked to rank their top 5 issues. Many respondents ranked more than five issues, but only the top five were analysed. The ranking was scored in reverse order, with rank 1 (highest priority) scoring 5, rank 2 scoring 4, rank 3 scoring 3, rank 4 scoring 2 and rank 5 scoring 1. Therefore the highest scoring issue was the highest priority overall.

The ranking reflected how often the issues had been encountered (see previous question), with overgrown path being the highest priority in volume of responses and average ranking score, followed by waymarking and fingerposts and clearing obstructions.

Figure 6: Ranking of Public Rights of Way Issues - Total Weighted Scores

Ranking of Public Rights of Way Issues - Total of Weighted Scores

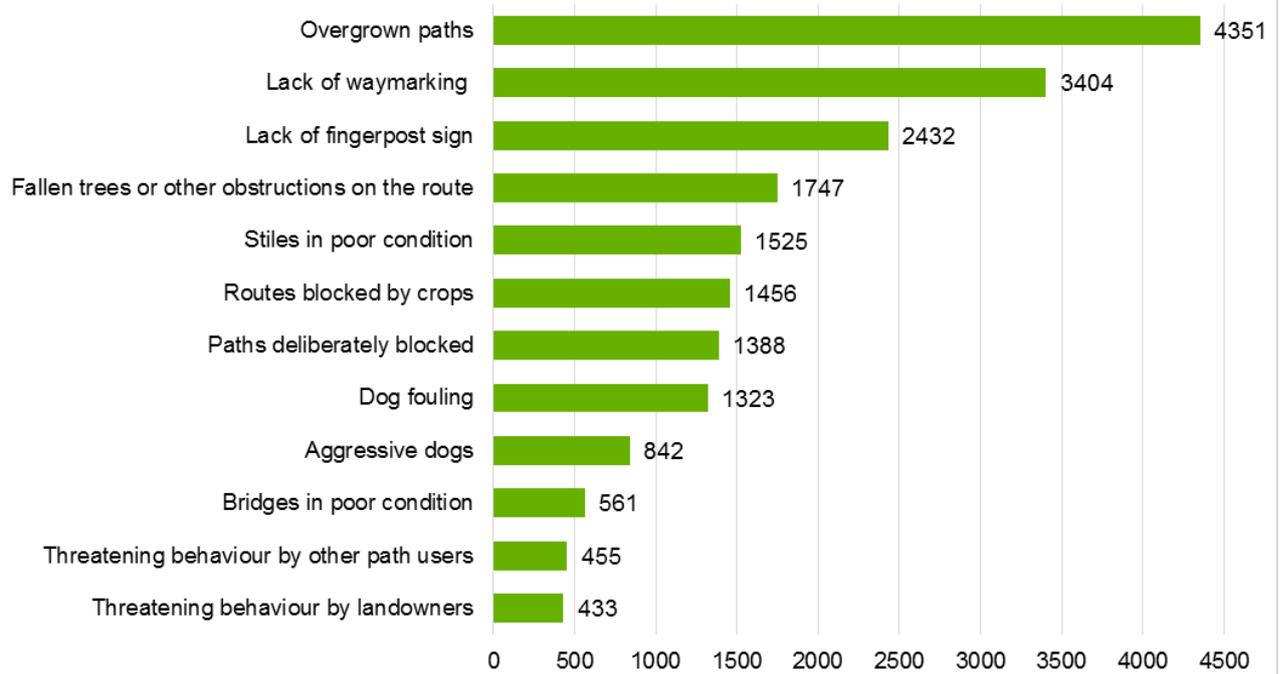
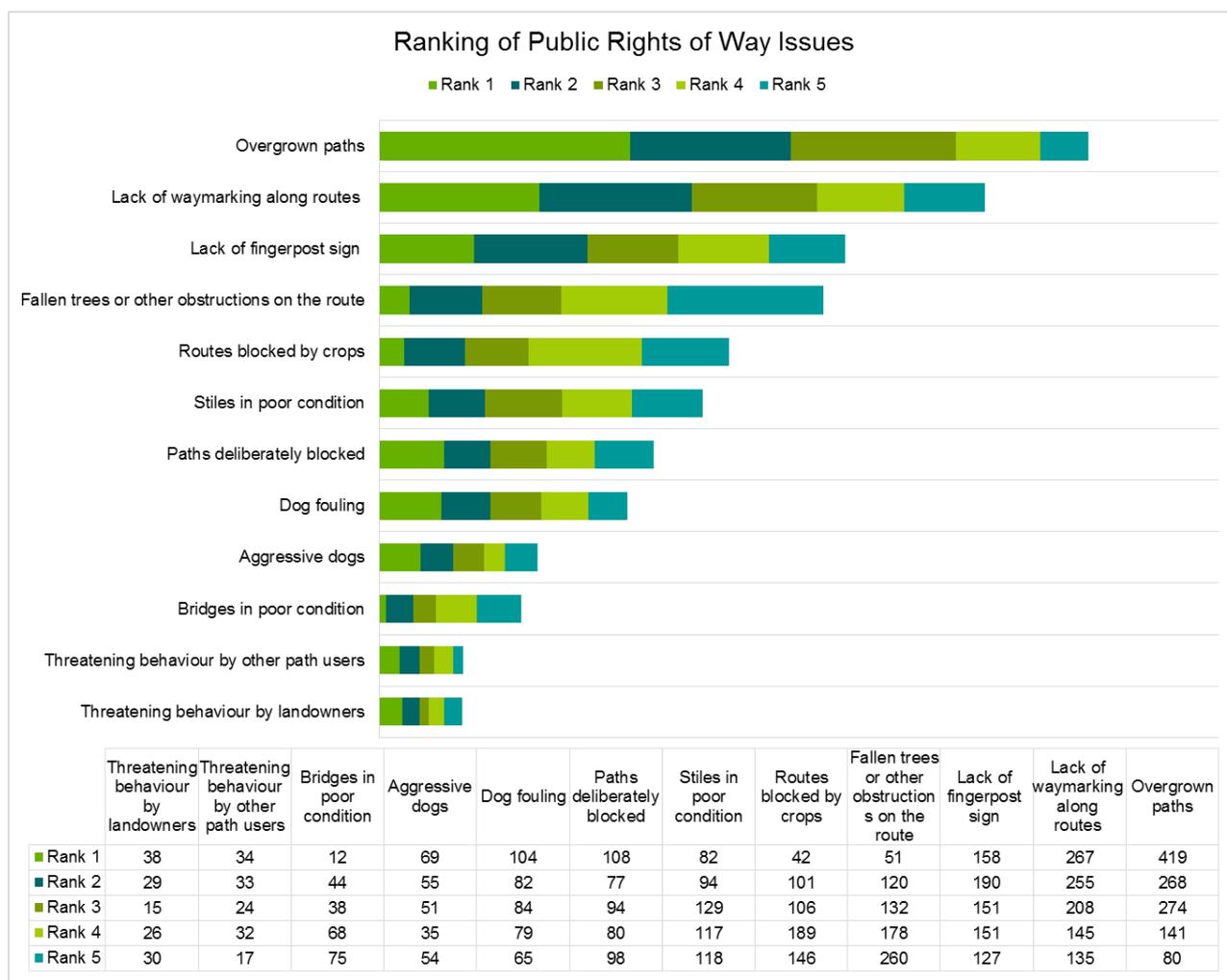


Table 17: Ranking of public rights of way issues

Issue	Total weighted score	Number of respondents	Average per respondent giving this as one of their answers
Overgrown paths	4351	1182	3.68
Lack of waymarking along routes	3404	1010	3.37
Lack of fingerpost sign	2432	777	3.13
Fallen trees or other obstructions on the route	1747	741	2.36
Stiles in poor condition	1525	540	2.82
Routes blocked by crops	1456	584	2.49
Paths deliberately blocked	1388	457	3.04
Dog fouling	1323	414	3.20
Aggressive dogs	842	264	3.19
Bridges in poor condition	561	237	2.37
Threatening behaviour by other path users	455	140	3.25
Threatening behaviour by landowners	433	138	3.14
n	1401		

Figure 7: Ranking of public rights of way issues - total per rank



Priorities for Public Rights of Way Service Delivery

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a range of possible ways in which the public rights of way service could be prioritised.

Respondents could choose from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (strongly disagree – 1, disagree – 2, neither agree nor disagree – 3, agree – 4, strongly agree – 5). A score over 3 indicates that on average respondents agreed with the statement and the closer the value to 5, the higher the level of agreement with the statement (Figure 8 and Table 18).

- The highest scoring priority (due to more people strongly agreeing) was to make sure public rights of way were protected and new routes created through development sites and in response to national infrastructure projects, scoring an average of 4.5, with 91% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
- Also with an average of 4.5 was maintaining and investing in the current network and 94% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
- Connecting missing links in public rights of way, supporting parish councils and other community organisations to take a more active role in maintaining local public rights of way and improving accessibility so that more people can use public rights of way all scored an average of above 4;
- Providing promotional information was a lower priority with an average of 3.9, although 68% still agreed or strongly agreed it should be a priority;
- Processing applications to make changes to the network was the lowest priority, with an average of 3.6. 35% neither agreed nor disagreed, perhaps indicating that more people did not have a view, or did not understand this area of work sufficiently to comment.

Figure 8: Priorities for Rights of Way Service Delivery

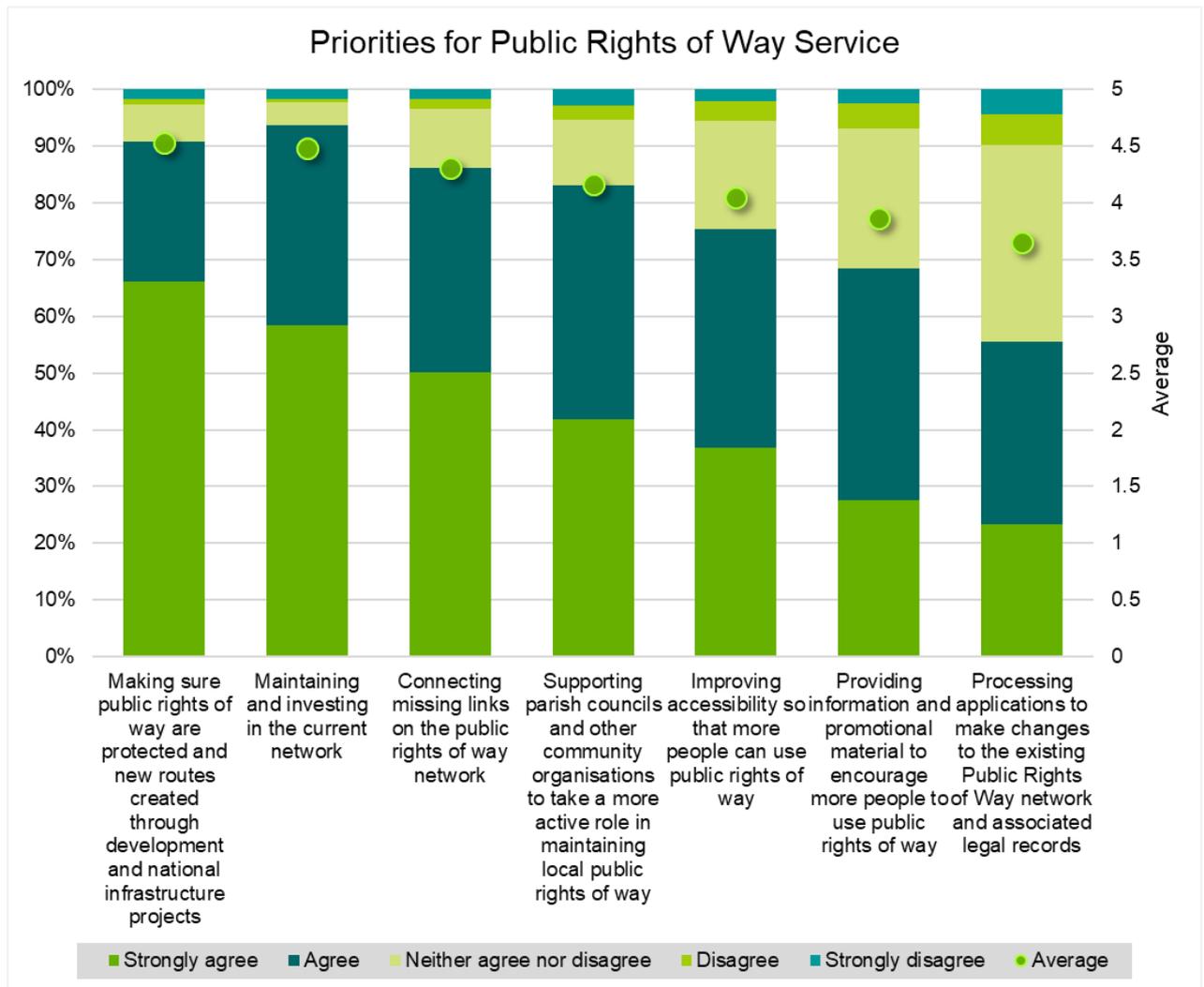


Table 18: Priorities for Public Rights of Way Service Delivery

Potential Priority	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average
Making sure public rights of way are protected and new routes created through development and national infrastructure projects	979	365	96	15	25	4.5
Maintaining and investing in the current network	865	520	62	6	27	4.5
Connecting missing links on the public rights of way network	741	534	155	23	27	4.3
Supporting parish councils and other community organisations to take a more active role in maintaining local public rights of way	619	609	172	37	43	4.2
Improving accessibility so that more people can use public rights of way	544	572	281	51	32	4.0
Providing information and promotional material to encourage more people to use public rights of way	409	604	364	65	38	3.9
Processing applications to make changes to the existing Public Rights of Way network and associated legal records	347	475	512	81	65	3.6

Reporting Public Rights of Way Issues and Service Provision

Reporting Public Rights of Way Issues

Respondents were asked how they would report public rights of way issues. This question did not supply any options in order that it was possible to gauge better of the knowledge of respondents.

- Just over a quarter of respondents (26%) stated they didn't know where to report public rights of way issues;
- 21% specified Buckinghamshire County Council (through website, telephone, email or through a Rights of Way Officer);
- Several respondents stated that they would report a problem to a 'Council' but either did not specify which one (16%) or specified a parish/town council (7%) or a district council (1%);
- A minority of respondents stated they would report problems to local organisations and interest groups – 2% to the Chiltern Society and Ramblers' Association and 1% to the British Horse Society or riding group.

Table 19: How respondents would report problems

	Number	% of responses
Don't know	382	26%
Buckinghamshire County Council	309	21%
Council (not specified which one)	227	16%
Parish or town council	103	7%
Online or internet search (not specified as BCC)	70	5%
Website/web forms (not specified as BCC)	50	3%
ROW Officer/ ROW department (no council specified)	45	3%
Wouldn't report a problem / haven't reported a problem	38	3%
Chiltern Society	33	2%
Email (recipient not specified)	33	2%
Ramblers' Association	30	2%
Fix My Street	28	2%
Highways Department	21	1%
Landowner	21	1%
Aylesbury Vale District Council/ Wycombe District Council	16	1%
Police	13	1%
Telephone (not specified)	12	1%
British Horse Society or riding group	11	1%
Social media/app	7	0%
n	1449	

Respondents were then asked if they had ever reported a public rights of way issue to Buckinghamshire County Council.

- 386 (26%) said they had;
- 1025 (69%) said they had not;
- 67 (5%) were not sure.

Satisfaction with Service

Those who had reporting problems were then asked how satisfied they were with the service provided by Buckinghamshire County Council. Respondents could choose from very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, satisfied or very satisfied. The responses were then scored, with very dissatisfied scoring 1, dissatisfied scoring 2, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied scoring 3, satisfied scoring 4 and very satisfied scoring 5. The higher the average score the more satisfied respondents were with the service. A score over 3 indicates that on average respondents were satisfied, or under 3 that they were dissatisfied. Results are shown in Table 20.

- Overall, respondents scored slightly below 3 (2.8), meaning that overall respondents scored the service slightly below 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied';
- 37% were either satisfied or very satisfied;
- 42% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied;
- 20% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Table 20: Satisfaction with service – public rights of way issues

Response	Number	%
Very satisfied	37	10%
Satisfied	106	27%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	79	20%
Very dissatisfied	70	18%
Dissatisfied	94	24%
Average	2.80	
n	386	

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on how the service in relation to rights of way problems could be improved, see Table 21. These were provided as free text answers. The responses were categorised.

Table 21: Summary of comments - how response to reported problems could be improved

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%
Online reporting / improvements to online reporting / advertising online reporting better	21	6%
Better co-ordination and communications between organisations	14	4%
More money / staff / resources	9	3%
Service good already	9	3%
More inspections / look at the problem	8	2%
Other	8	2%
Ensuring landowners resolve issues which are their responsibility	6	2%
Better information on where to report problems	5	2%

Most comments related to improvements to communication. The main areas of improvement were keeping the person reporting the problem informed about the process - acknowledging the issue had been logged, indicating the length of time it is likely to take to resolve the issue and stating when the issue has been resolved. Some indicated that would like the 'personal touch' of a named officer or less automation (e.g. automated web replies). The survey was conducted prior to the operation of the new CAMS system, which it is hoped will resolved some of the issues stated. The previous system notified the member of the public that the issue was 'closed' when it had not been and was simply being transferred onto another system.

The second highest number of responses on ways to improve the service were around resolving the problem reported or resolving the issue more quickly. Some respondents felt that their problem was not resolved after it had been reported.

6% of responses related to the need for better online reporting or to advertising that online reporting was available. Again, many of these issues should be resolved through the implementation of the new online CAMS system

A smaller number of comments (4%) related to better communication between organisations, including better joined-up working with parish councils, Transport for Bucks and Highways.

Information Provision

Respondents were asked how they would find out about public rights of way. Respondents could give more than one answer.

- Most people used Ordnance Survey maps (63%), local knowledge (61%) or word of mouth (38%);
- Only 12% of respondents used the Buckinghamshire County Council website to find information about public rights of way routes;
- 106 people (7%) did not know where to find information.

Figure 9: Sources of information about public rights of way

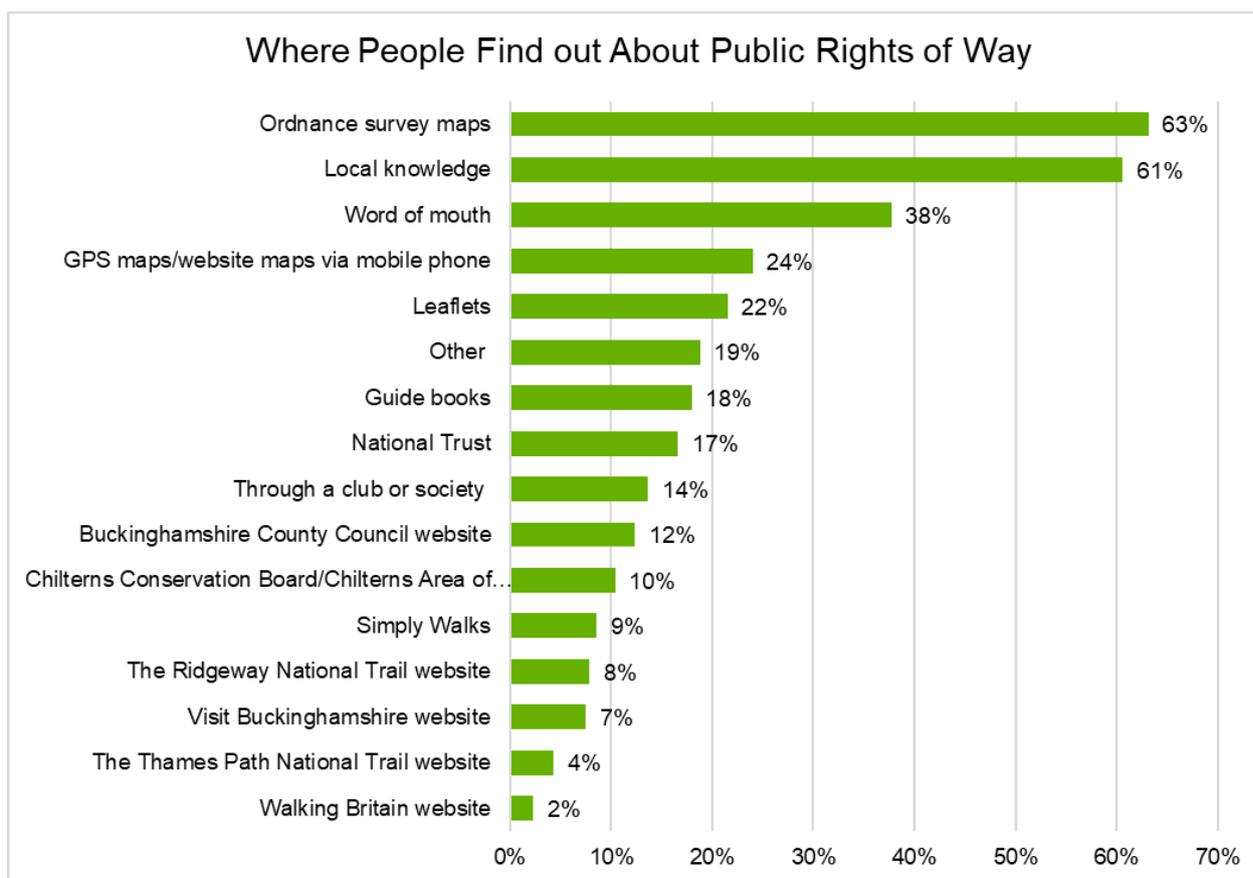


Table 22: Sources of information about public rights of way

Source of information	Number (excluding those who 'did not know')	% of respondents giving this as one of their answers
Ordnance survey maps	933	63%
Local knowledge	896	61%
Word of mouth	558	38%
GPS maps/website maps via mobile phone	355	24%
Leaflets	319	22%
Other	278	19%
Guide books	266	18%
National Trust	246	17%
Through a club or society	202	14%
Buckinghamshire County Council website	183	12%
Chilterns Conservation Board/Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	154	10%
Simply Walks	127	9%
The Ridgeway National Trail website	116	8%
Visit Buckinghamshire website	110	7%
The Thames Path National Trail website	64	4%
Walking Britain website	33	2%
n	1478	

The most popular source of information given under 'other' responses was through groups or clubs, with 174 people giving these as sources of information. A range of organisations were listed:

- Chiltern Society (43)
- Ramblers' Association (34)
- U3a (25)
- Respondents mentioned other clubs totalling 72 responses, including Long Distance Walkers Association, Trail Riders' Fellowship, Stewkley Walkers Group, Chiltern Weekend Walkers, Hodgemoor Riding Association, British Horse Society, Green Lane Association (GLASS), Scouts, running clubs and the Single File Walking Club
- 19 people indicated they found public rights of way by exploring or finding signposts
- 18 people indicated they searched the internet (but did not specify websites)

Awareness of Buckinghamshire County Council Online Promoted Routes Maps

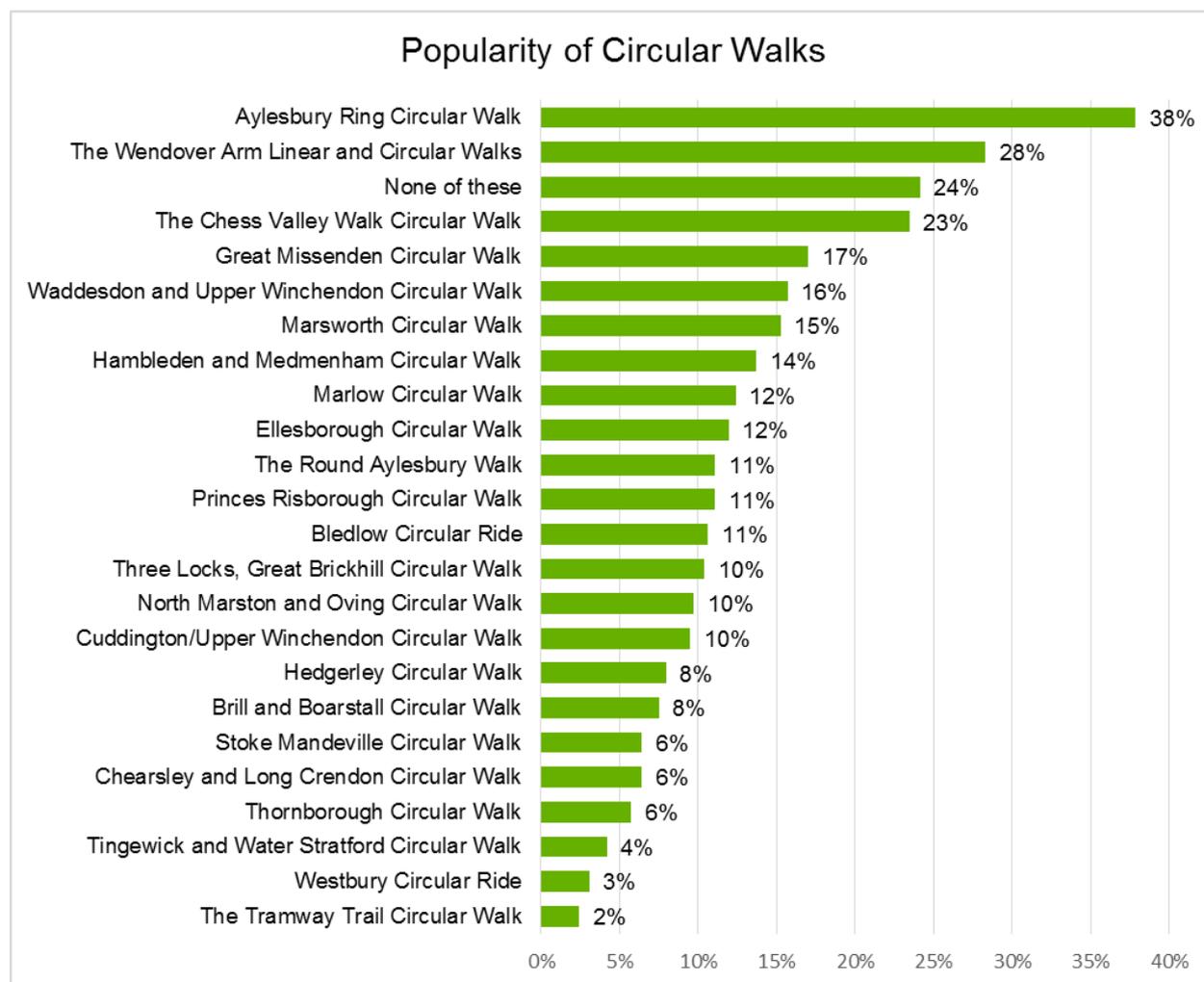
Respondents were asked if they were aware of Buckinghamshire County Council's online promoted routes map.

- 69.5% of respondents were not aware of the online map (1028);
- 30.5% were aware of the online map (452).

Those who were aware of the online map were asked which routes they had followed. Respondents could give more than one answer. They were asked which circular routes they had followed, which linear routes and which long-distance routes.

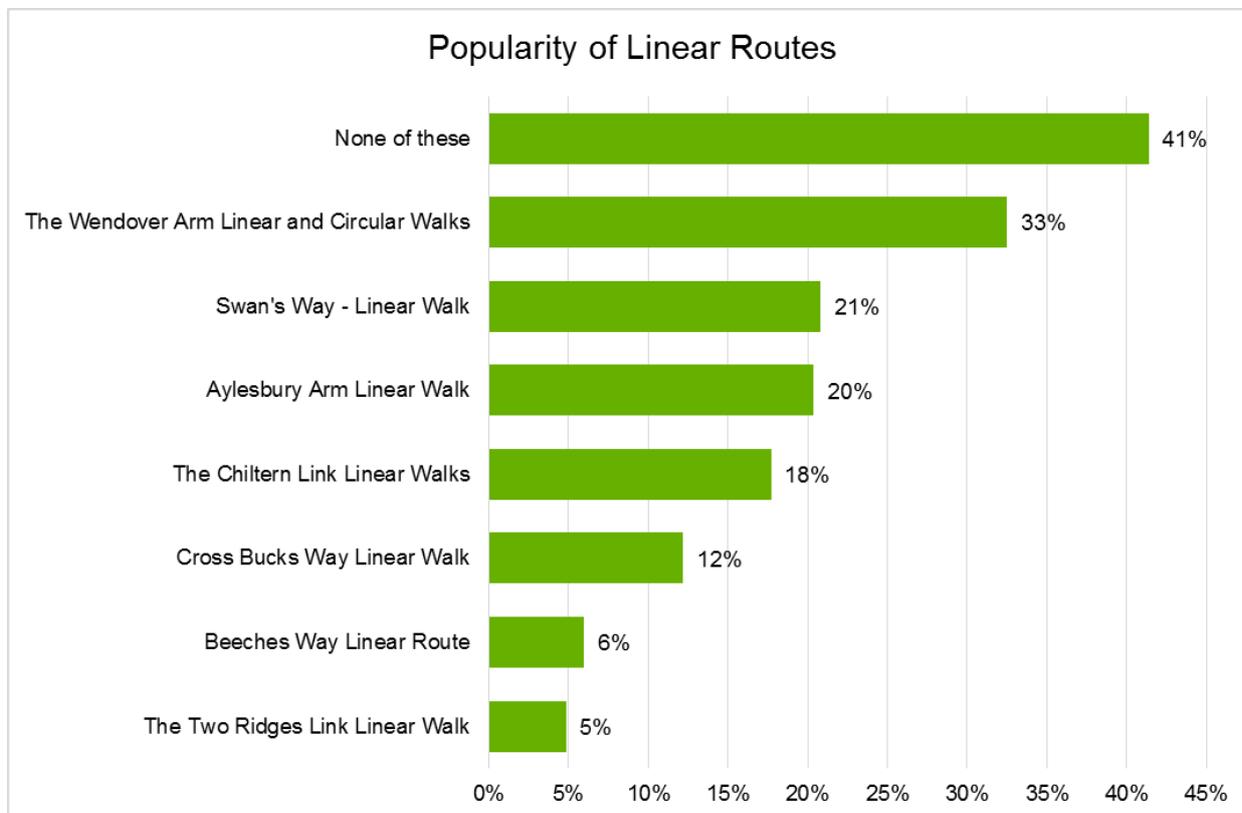
- 24% of people had not followed any of the circular routes;
- The most popular circular route was the Aylesbury Ring, with 38% of people having following this. This could be due to the higher number of respondents living in and around Aylesbury;
- The second most popular was the Wendover Arm, with 24% of people having followed this.

Figure 10: Popularity of circular walks – % of respondents who had followed each route (n.452)



The number following linear routes (either in full or in part) was lower, with 41% saying they had not followed any of the routes). 33% had followed the Wendover Arm, 21% the Swan's Way and 20% the Aylesbury Arm (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Popularity of linear routes - % of respondents who had followed each route in full or in part (n.452)



Most of the respondents had followed one of the long-distance routes either in full or in part, see Figure 12. Of these:

- The Ridgeway National Trail was the most popular, with 63% having followed the route;
- Around half of respondents had followed the Chiltern Way (50%), the Grand Union Canal Walk (49%) or the Icknield Way (48%);
- 15% had not followed any of these routes.

The popularity of all the routes (circular, linear and long-distance) is shown in Table 23.

Figure 12: Popularity of long-distance routes - % of respondents who had followed each route in full or in part (n.452)

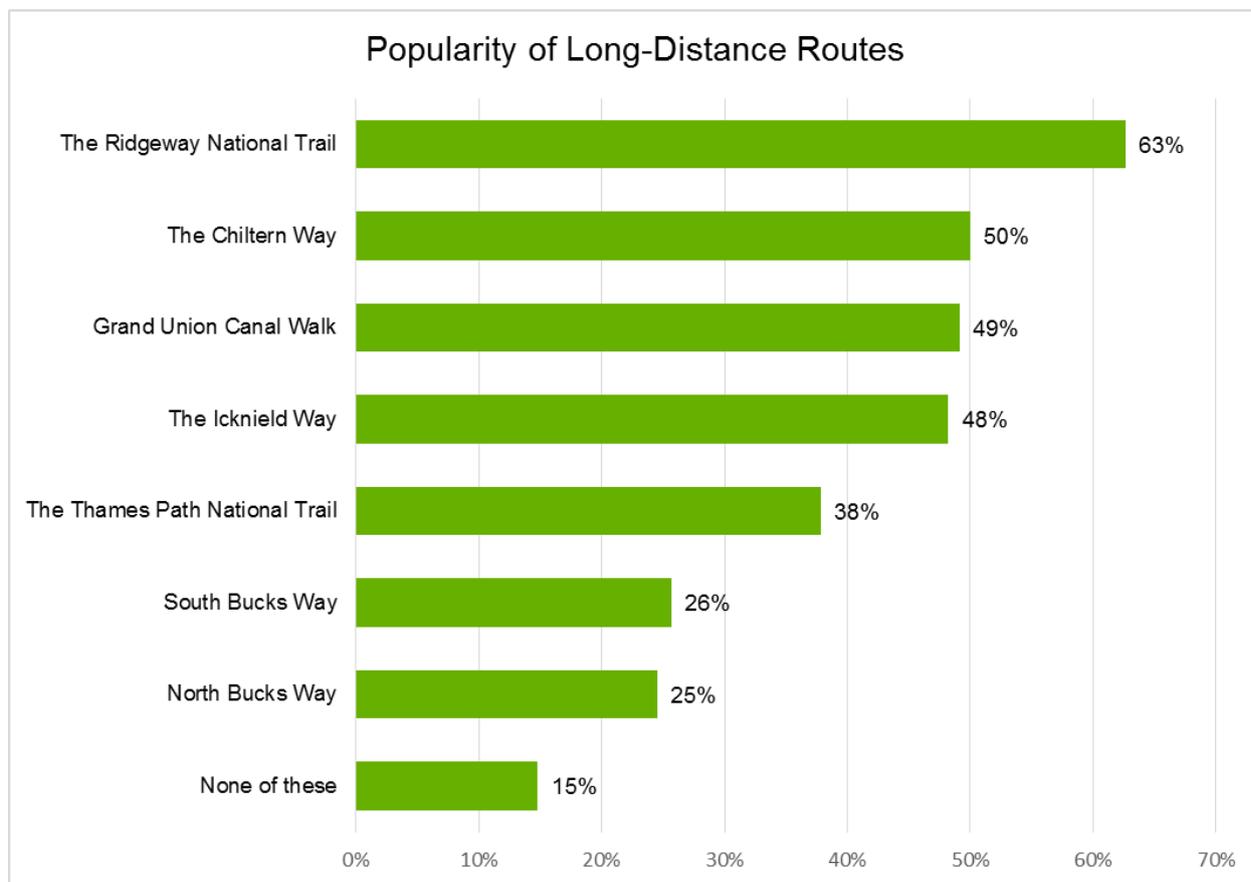


Table 23: Popularity of all routes (circular routes, linear routes and long-distance routes)

Promoted route	Number	% of respondents who had followed route
The Ridgeway National Trail	283	63%
The Chiltern Way	226	50%
Grand Union Canal Walk	222	49%
The Icknield Way	218	48%
Aylesbury Ring Circular Walk	171	38%
The Thames Path National Trail	171	38%
The Wendover Arm Linear Route	147	33%
The Wendover Arm Circular Route	128	28%
South Bucks Way	116	26%
North Bucks Way	111	25%
The Chess Valley Walk Circular Walk	106	23%
Swan's Way - Linear Walk	94	21%
Aylesbury Arm Linear Walk	92	20%
The Chiltern Link Linear Walks	80	18%
Great Missenden Circular Walk	77	17%
Waddesdon and Upper Winchendon Circular Walk	71	16%
Marsworth Circular Walk	69	15%
Hambleden and Medmenham Circular Walk	62	14%
Marlow Circular Walk	56	12%
Cross Bucks Way Linear Walk	55	12%
Ellesborough Circular Walk	54	12%
Princes Risborough Circular Walk	50	11%
The Round Aylesbury Walk	50	11%
Bledlow Circular Ride	48	11%
Three Locks, Great Brickhill Circular Walk	47	10%
North Marston and Oving Circular Walk	44	10%
Cuddington/Upper Winchendon Circular Walk	43	10%
Hedgerley Circular Walk	36	8%
Brill and Boarstall Circular Walk	34	8%
Chearsley and Long Crendon Circular Walk	29	6%
Stoke Mandeville Circular Walk	29	6%
Beeches Way Linear Route	27	6%
Thornborough Circular Walk	26	6%
The Two Ridges Link Linear Walk	22	5%
Tingewick and Water Stratford Circular Walk	19	4%
Westbury Circular Ride	14	3%
The Tramway Trail Circular Walk	11	2%
n	452	

Delivery of the Service over the Previous 10 Years

Respondents were asked 'Please tell us your views on how the Rights of Way Service has been delivered in the last 10 years' in a free text question. The responses were grouped according to the overall sentiment of the response see Table 24. 84% of responses could be grouped in this way, with 16% raising other issues or specific issues regarding a locality.

Of those expressing an opinion which was positive or negative:

- 46% of those expressing a positive or negative opinion were overall negative of the service or of particular aspects of public rights of way;
- 48% of those expressing a positive or negative opinion expressed an overall positive perception of the service;
- 6% of those expressing a positive or negative opinion expressed a neutral or mixed sentiment.

Of those expressing a negative sentiment:

- 9% of those expressing a positive or negative opinion were from those wishing to see more higher status rights;
- 8% of those expressing a positive or negative opinion noted that the resources of the service had been reduced or expressed a perception that the service was under-resourced;
- 6% a positive or negative opinion expressed the view that the service had deteriorated over the 10 year period (often also noting that funding had been reduced during this period).

Of those expressing a positive sentiment:

- Almost equal numbers thought the service was 'OK' or good (40% in total);
- 5% a positive or negative opinion expressed that they had seen some improvements.

Those giving 'other' comments:

- 6% of all comments noted that the respondent was not aware of the service, or had not been aware until taking part in the survey, and had not appreciated how rights of way were maintained;
- 3% of all comments expressed opinions around the use of volunteers, mainly around how important they were to the maintenance of the network;
- 1% of all comments related to negative impacts of development and the loss of routes or missed opportunities to create more routes;
- 7% of all comments were around specific rights of way or comments which could not easily be categorised.

Table 24: Views on the delivery of the public rights of way service over previous 10 years

	% of +ve or -ve comments	Sentiment regarding delivery of the service	Number of comments expressing this sentiment	% of +ve or -ve comments	% of all comments
Negative	46%	Poor / badly	82	12%	10%
		Poor re. higher status routes	76	11%	9%
		Has been under-resourced / funding reduced / not a priority for BCC	51	8%	6%
		Paths overgrown / more maintenance required	49	7%	6%
		Has declined or deteriorated	41	6%	5%
		Slow / bureaucratic / not proactive	11	2%	1%
n 310					
Neutral		Not seen any improvement	19	3%	2%
n 41	6%	Patchy / erratic / some good some bad	22	3%	3%
Positive	48%	OK / adequate / satisfactory / OK but room for improvement	132	20%	16%
		Good / happy with service	134	20%	16%
		Have seen some improvements	36	5%	4%
n 325		Very good / delivered very well	23	3%	3%
Total comments expressing negative or positive sentiments			676		84%
Other comments		Wasn't aware of the service	52	-	6%
		Other - general	47	-	6%
		Good due to volunteers / having to rely on volunteers	24	-	3%
		Development has been negative / impacts from development	12	-	1%
n 129	-	Other - specific issues	6	-	1%
Total of all comments			817		100%

Improvements to the Service

Respondents were asked 'Please tell us how the Rights of Way Service could be improved in the future' in a free text question. The responses were categorised where possible and where similar points were made by respondents, see Table 25. Many of the responses did not fall into categories or related to specific issues. Maintaining the network and keeping the paths open to use was the most important priority.

Table 25: Areas of improvement to the service

Area of improvement	Number	%
Maintenance / keeping paths open	227	23%
More publicity / information	168	17%
Other	133	13%
More higher status routes	130	13%
Better signage	97	10%
More resources / investment	49	5%
Working with other organisations and volunteers	38	4%
Improved response to issues and complaints / improved reporting systems	37	4%
Improved accessibility / stile replaced with gates	35	3%
Better connections / more ROW	34	3%
Respond to / mitigate impact of development	27	3%
Improved communication	22	2%
Enforcement against obstructions	6	1%
n	1003	

Parish and Town Council Survey

Summary of Key Findings

The survey represents the views of just over half of Buckinghamshire's parish and town councils (56%), with a geographic spread across the county.

Councils highly valued public rights of way for their importance for residents.

- Councils viewed public rights of way as important assets for residents, for enjoying and exploring nature, supporting the visitor economy and to support health and wellbeing;
- They viewed them as being less important for travelling to work and school, largely due to the rural nature of the parishes.

Councils were, overall, less than satisfied with most aspects of public rights of way in their area.

- The area councils were the least dissatisfied with was bridges, with an overall score just reaching 'satisfied';
- Councils were dissatisfied with waymarking, reinstatement and demarcation of paths through crops, surface condition, vegetation clearance of paths, promotion material, the condition of stiles and gates and accessibility for less mobile users.

Clearing overgrown paths was the highest priority for councils.

- Addressing stiles in poor condition, lack of waymarking and dog fouling were the 2nd, 3rd and 4th priorities.

Councils thought that replacing stiles with gates was the highest priority for improving public rights of way for health and wellbeing and those with visual or mobility impairments.

Councils thought that more information on public rights of way was the highest priority to support the visitor economy, followed by improved signs or waymarking.

Councils thought that more information was the most important action to encourage more people to use the public rights of way network.

- 82% of councils thought information on public rights of way in the parish would encourage more people;
- 73% of councils thought online guides would encourage more people, and 72% thought printed guides and public rights of way in better condition would encourage more people.

Nearly half of councils with devolved responsibilities (46%) cleared vegetation from more routes than were listed on their schedule and nearly half (46%) said they needed more knowledge or support.

Councils were dissatisfied with the response to public rights of way issues reported to Buckinghamshire County Council.

- Councils were slightly dissatisfied with issues reported through the internet, response to maintenance issues and response to enforcement issues;
- The most common issues were around communication and 63% of councils highlighted this as an area of service improvement;
- Councils also wanted the reported issues resolved or resolved more quickly.

Councils thought that better maintained paths and connected new developments to the countryside and ensuring no loss of routes were the most important actions to accommodate growth in the county.

Councils Responding

Of the 173 parish and town councils in Buckinghamshire, 96 responded (56%). There were 108 responses in total as some councils submitted more than one response. Unless the duplicate response was identical all versions were retained as it was not possible to determine which response constituted the 'official' response of the council. The councils who responded are shown in Table 26 and Plan 3. Figures in brackets indicate the number of responses where there were duplicates.

Involvement in Public Rights of Way

Council Rights of Way Warden

Of the councils responding, 22% (of 93 councils) (21) had a rights of way warden and 76% did not (73). Two councils did not know.

Devolved Services

- 35 councils (36%) had devolved responsibilities.

These councils were asked whether all of the routes on their schedule required clearance:

- 54% of councils (19) found all the routes listed on their schedules required clearance and 19% of councils (6) found that they did not;
- 10 councils did not provide an answer (28%).

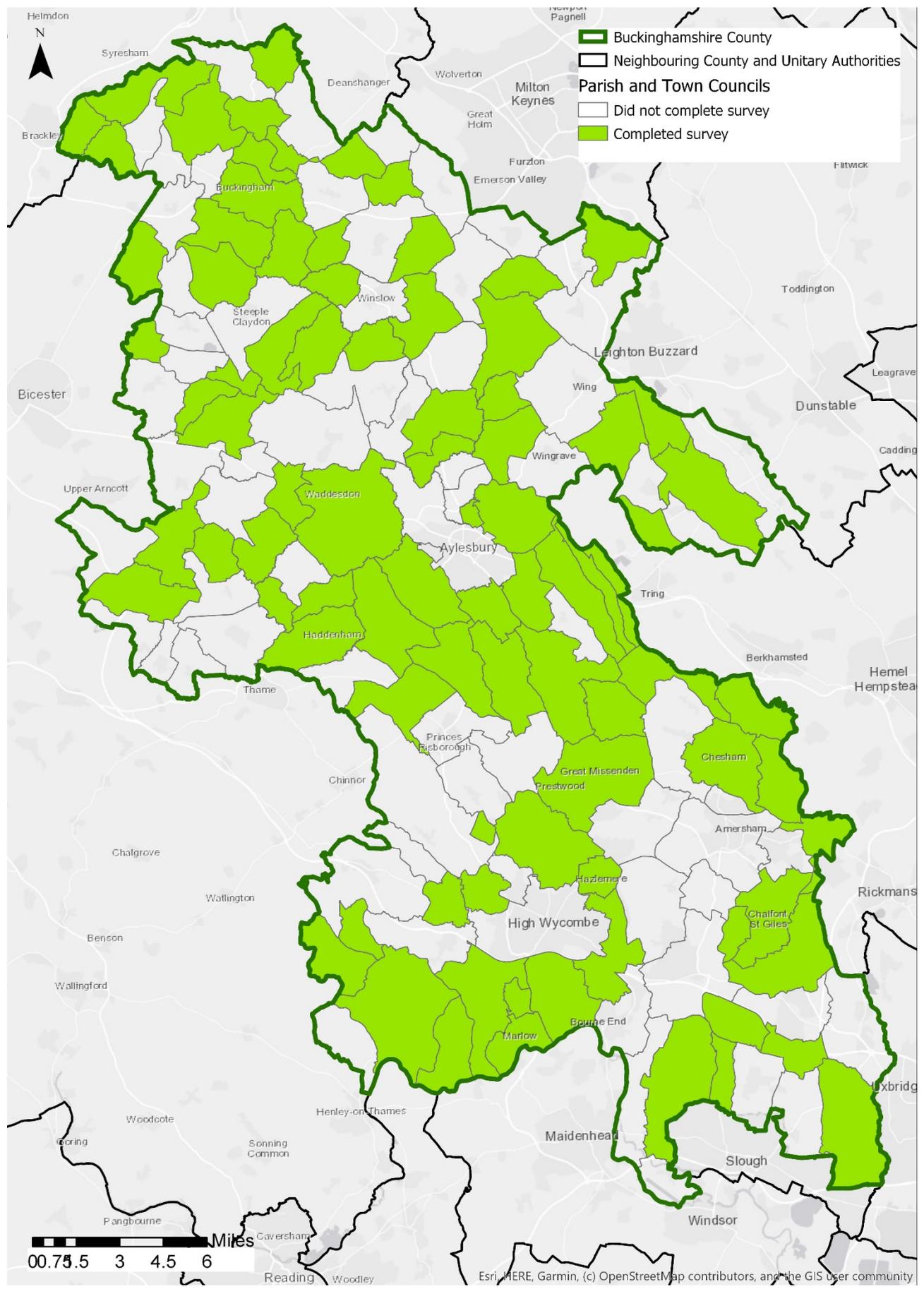
Other comments were:

- *All the rights of way in our parish are on National Trust land*
- *Some do*
- *We have them done regardless*
- *Only certain footpaths are managed under the devolved services contract*
- *A few sometimes may need attention*
- *Some do require work*
- *Some do, mainly overgrown brambles.*
- *Not sure what you are asking, the Parish Council clears areas as they need to be cleared, it cleared 1 area last year. Therefore no there isn't any to be cleared at the present or yes all the routes probably need some clearing at some time.*
- *Some paths only*
- *We clear 4000 linear metres of paths every year*

Table 26: Parish and town councils responding to survey

Addington Parish Meeting	Ellesborough Parish Council	Medmenham Parish Council
Adstock Parish Council (2)	Farnham Royal Parish Council (3)	Mentmore Parish Council
Akeley Parish Council	Foscote Parish Meeting	Middle Claydon Parish Council
Ashendon Parish Council	Fulmer Parish Council	Nash Parish Council
Ashley Green Parish Council	Gawcott with Lenborough Parish Council	Oakley Parish Council
Aston Abbotts Parish Council	Granborough Parish Council	Padbury Parish Council
Aston Clinton Parish Council	Great & Little Kimble cum Marsh Parish Council (4)	Piddington and Wheeler End
Biddlesden Parish Council	Great Brickhill Parish Council	Poundon Parish Council
Bierton with Broughton Parish Council	Great Marlow Parish Council	Seer Green Parish Council
Bradenham Parish Council	Great Missenden (response as individual Councillor) ¹	Slapton Parish Council
Brill Parish Council	Great Missenden Parish Council (2)	Stewkley Parish Council
Buckingham Town Council	Grendon Underwood Parish Council	Stoke Mandeville Parish Council (2)
Buckland Parish Council (2)	Haddenham Parish Council	Stone with Bishopstone and Hartwell Parish Council
Burnham Parish Council	Hambleden Parish Council	Stowe Parish Council
Calvert Green Parish Council	Hardwick Parish Council	Swanbourne Parish Council
Chalfont St Giles Parish Council	Hazlemere Parish Council	The Ivers Parish Council
Chalfont St Peter Parish Council	Hedgerley Parish Council	The Lee Parish Council
Chearsley Parish Council	Hillesden Parish Council	Turville Parish Council
Chenies Parish Parish Council	Hughenden Parish Council (2)	Turweston Parish Council
Chepping Wycombe Parish Council	Hulcott Parish Council	Waddesdon Parish Council
Chesham Town Council	Ibstone Parish Council	Watermead Parish Council
Chetwode Parish Meeting	Ickford Parish Council	Wendover Parish Council
Cholesbury cum St Leonards Parish Council	Ivinghoe Parish Council	West Wycombe Parish Council
Creslow Parish Council	Latimer and Ley Hill Parish Council (2)	Westbury Parish Council
Cublington Parish Council	Lillingstone Lovell Parish Council	Westcott Parish Council
Cuddington Parish Council	Little Horwood Parish Council	Weston Turville Parish Council
Dinton with Ford and Upton Parish Council	Little Marlow Parish Council	Whitchurch Parish Council
Dorton Parish Council	Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council	Wingrave with Rowsham Parish Council (2)
Drayton Beauchamp Parish Council	Maids Moreton Parish Parish Council	Winslow Town Council
Drayton Parslow Parish Council	Marlow Bottom Parish Council	Wooburn and Bourne End Parish Council
East and Botolph Claydon Parish Council	Marlow Town Council	Woodham Parish Council
Edgcott Parish Council	Marsworth Parish Council	Worminghall Parish Council

Plan 3: Councils responding to survey



The councils were asked if they cleared vegetation from additional routes which were not listed on their schedules:

- 46% of councils (16) cleared vegetation from additional routes that were not listed on their schedule and 43% of councils (15) did not;
- One council indicated both that they did and they didn't clear additional routes in duplicate responses (3%).

Other comments were:

- *Some*
- *On an occasional basis*
- *Yes - grass on road vision splays*
- *The Parish Council continually checks the footpaths and if areas need to be cleared, they are*
- *If we receive a complaint from a resident, and it's within our capability, we will remove the vegetation*
- *We also clear parts of the following footpaths: 5, 14, 23, 24, 30*
- *Only if requested by the public*

Councils were asked if they needed more support or knowledge to carry out their devolved duties:

- 46% of councils (16) felt they needed more support or knowledge and 43% of councils (15) did not. Three councils did not know.

Other comments were:

- *Need to know what options are available.*
- *More resources*
- *Yes - more info is always useful*
- *All help and support will be gratefully received*
- *Land ownership not always easy to determine. Also responsibility where stiles are on boundaries of different landowners*
- *Help when contacting landowners*
- *Identifying and corresponding with landowners responsible for overgrowing hedges is an unrealistic expectation of a parish council. In practice we end up cutting the overhanging hedges; it's a simpler option*

Other general comments about devolved services were:

- *BCC switchboard have no idea who looks after which paths so transfer all calls to the Parish Council as we have agreed to the devolved services contract. However we are only responsible for the paths on the maps provided. We also have no information about landowners so we cannot send out letters regarding cutting back hedges etc.*
- *Additional funding is required from BCC (or new unitary)*
- *It would be useful to have access to specialist equipment such as a flail when needed.*
- *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.*

- *We took them over in the knowledge that works hadn't been undertaken for a number of years and we are therefore working through a programme for improvement over the next few years.*
- *Parish Councils need a point of contact at BCC to assist with rights of way issues and assist where necessary.*
- *It would be helpful if there was greater clarity about the future direction of these arrangements since the contract renewal is only for one year*
- *Assistance always appreciated*
- *We get no help / support in getting repairs done by the people responsible, we have no authority.*
- *More money required!*
- *We have always been responsible for our footpaths and used the Parish Paths Scheme before it was devolved.*
- *Clearer explanation of our rights in connection with adjacent landowners*
- *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.*
- *It's a small aspect of the devolved arrangement for Buckingham.*
- *The parish council could maintain all the public footpaths, BUT ONLY with funding.*
- *Improved transparency of what are the requirements.*

Views on Public Rights of Way in their Area

Satisfaction with Public Rights of Way

Councils were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with a range of aspects of public rights of way in their area. Councils could choose from very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, satisfied or very satisfied. The responses were then scored, with very dissatisfied scoring 1, dissatisfied scoring 2, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied scoring 3, satisfied scoring 4 and very satisfied scoring 5. The higher the average score the more satisfied respondents were with the service. A score over 3 indicates that on average respondents were satisfied, or under 3 that they were dissatisfied. Results are shown in Figure 13 and Table 27.

- Overall, councils were just lower than 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' for all aspects of public rights of way;
- Overall, for all aspects, 24% of responses were satisfied or very satisfied, 38% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 38% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied;
- The area councils were most satisfied with was the condition of bridges and reinstatement of paths through crops. These were the only areas which scored on average above 3;
- Councils were least satisfied with promotional material and accessibility for less mobile users.

Figure 13: Satisfaction with aspects of public rights of way

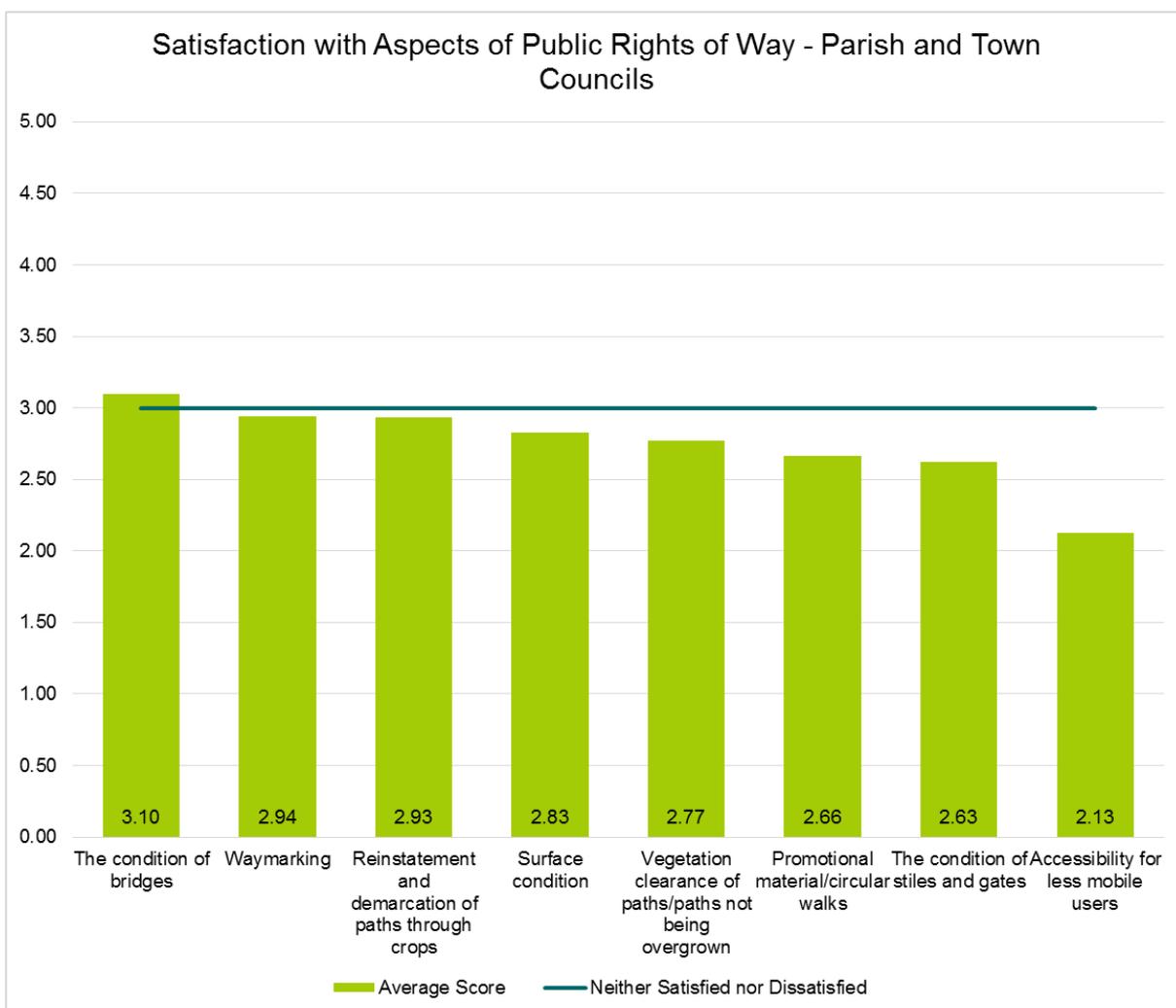


Table 27: Satisfaction with aspects of public rights of way

	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied		Average
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
The condition of bridges	0	0%	30	30%	53	53%	14	14%	3	3%	3.10
Waymarking	1	1%	34	32%	33	31%	32	30%	5	5%	3.01
Reinstatement and demarcation of paths through crops	3	3%	27	26%	41	39%	26	25%	7	7%	2.96
Surface condition	0	0%	24	23%	47	45%	26	25%	8	8%	2.88
Vegetation clearance of paths/paths not being overgrown	2	2%	26	25%	33	32%	32	31%	11	11%	2.77
Promotional material/circular walks	1	1%	12	12%	47	47%	34	34%	7	7%	2.67
The condition of stiles and gates	2	2%	20	19%	31	30%	39	38%	12	12%	2.66
Accessibility for less mobile users	0	0%	4	4%	33	33%	36	36%	28	28%	2.15

Priorities for Public Rights of Way

Councils were asked to rank their top 5 priorities for public rights of way. Some councils ranked more than five issues, but only the top five were analysed. The ranking was scored in reverse order, with rank 1 (highest priority) scoring 5, rank 2 scoring 4, rank 3 scoring 3, rank 4 scoring 2 and rank 5 scoring 1. Therefore the highest scoring issue was the highest priority overall. The order of priority changed slightly when weighted scores were used, see Figures 14 and 15 and Table 28.

- Overgrown paths were the highest priority for councils, followed by stiles in poor condition, lack of waymarking and dog fouling;
- Bridges, paths being deliberately blocked and aggressive behaviour by landowners or other path users were the lowest priorities, possibly indicating a lower incidence of these issues.

Figure 14: Council priorities for public rights of way – weighted scores

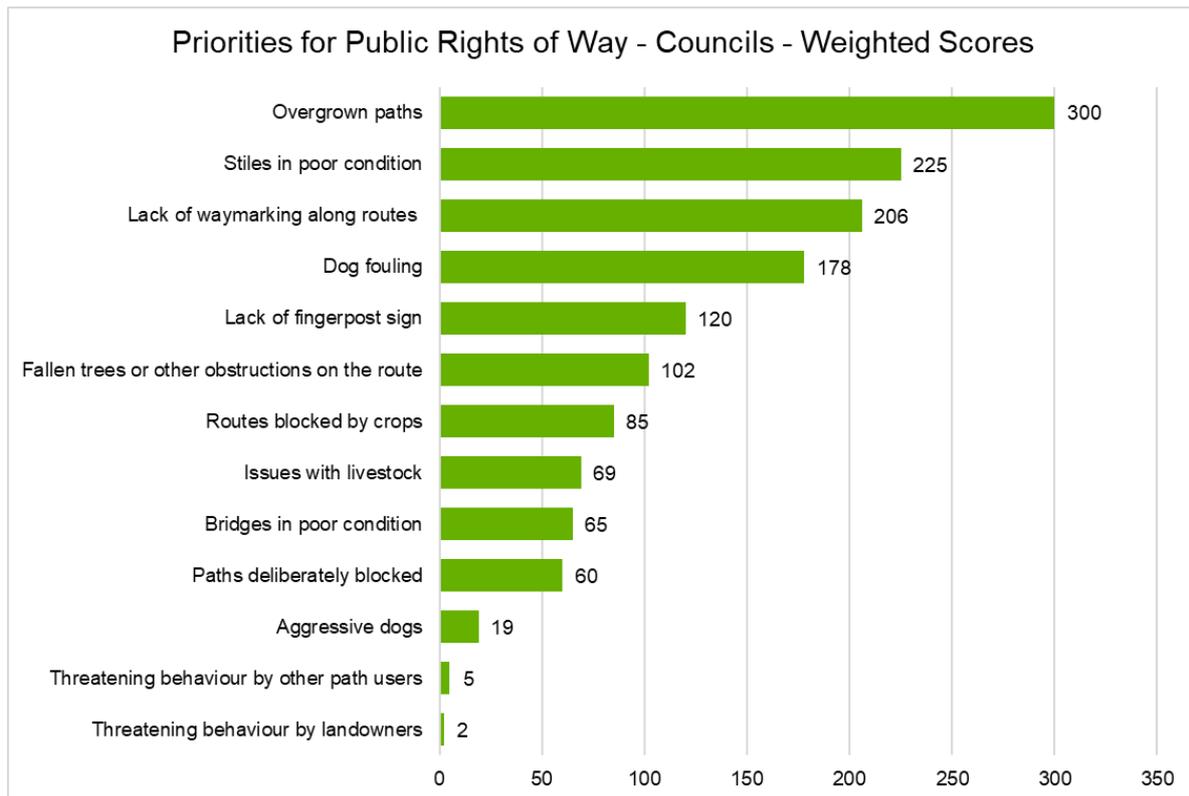


Figure 15: Council priorities for public rights of way by rank - unweighted scores

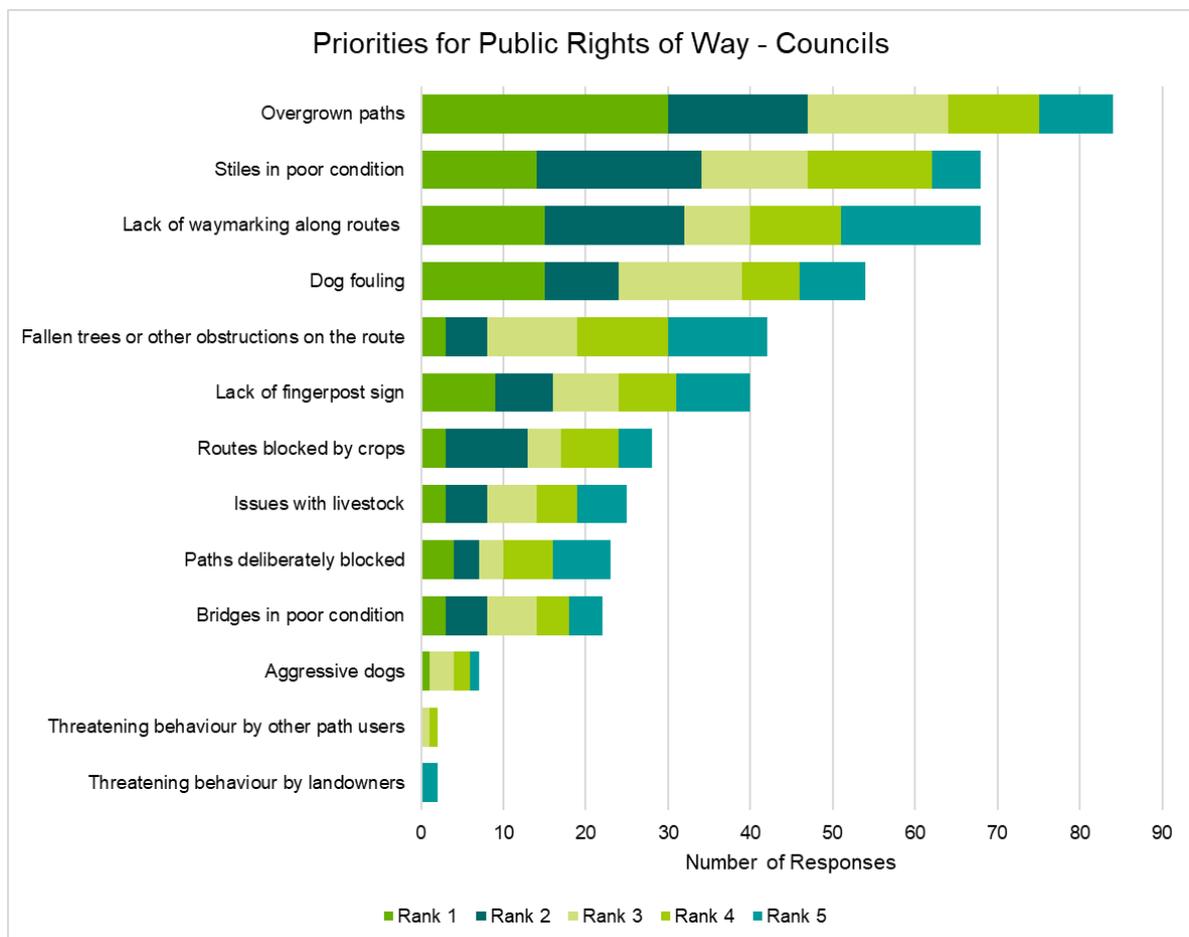


Table 28: Council priorities for public rights of way

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Total 1 - 5 Rank	Total Weighted Score
Overgrown paths	30	17	17	11	9	84	300
Stiles in poor condition	14	20	13	15	6	68	225
Lack of waymarking along routes	15	17	8	11	17	68	206
Dog fouling	15	9	15	7	8	54	178
Lack of fingerpost sign	9	7	8	7	9	40	120
Fallen trees or other obstructions on the route	3	5	11	11	12	42	102
Routes blocked by crops	3	10	4	7	4	28	85
Issues with livestock	3	5	6	5	6	25	69
Bridges in poor condition	3	5	6	4	4	22	65
Paths deliberately blocked	4	3	3	6	7	23	60
Aggressive dogs	1	0	3	2	1	7	19
Threatening behaviour by other path users	0	0	1	1	0	2	5
Threatening behaviour by landowners	0	0	0	0	2	2	2

Importance of Public Rights of Way

Councils were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements around the value of the public rights of way network in their area. Councils could choose from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree. Answers were weighted to determine the level of agreement or disagreement (strongly disagree – 1, disagree – 2, neither agree nor disagree – 3, agree – 4, strongly agree – 5). A score over 3 indicates that on average responds agreed with the statement and the closer the value to 5, the higher the level of agreement with the statement.

- Overall, there was agreement that all aspects were important, and all aspects scored on average over 3;
- 98% of responses agreed or strongly agreed that the public rights of way network was important for residents, the highest scoring category by average score (due to a high number of 'strongly agree' responses);
- There were high levels of agreement that the public rights of way network was important for enjoying and exploring nature (98% agree or strongly agree responses) and for the health and wellbeing of residents (94% agree or strongly agree responses);
- Whilst councils considered that public rights of way were important for the visitor economy and for travelling to work and school, these scored lower than the other categories.

Figure 16: Council views on the importance of public rights of way for residents - average weighted score

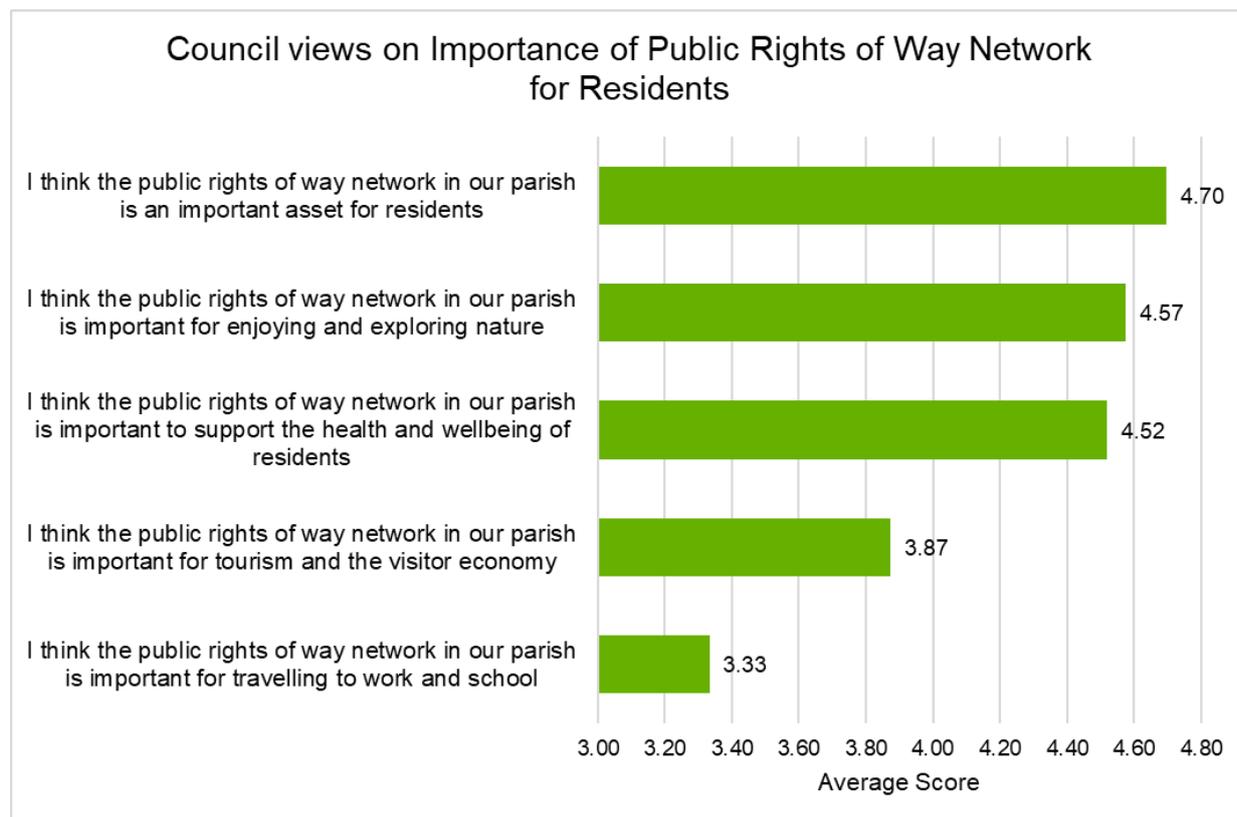


Table 29: Council views on the importance of public rights of way

	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Average
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
I think the public rights of way network in our parish is an important asset for residents	73	72%	27	26%	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%	4.70
I think the public rights of way network in our parish is important for enjoying and exploring nature	60	59%	39	39%	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%	4.57
I think the public rights of way network in our parish is important to support the health and wellbeing of residents	59	58%	37	36%	6	6%	0	0%	0	0%	4.52
I think the public rights of way network in our parish is important for tourism and the visitor economy	28	27%	45	44%	19	19%	8	8%	2	2%	3.87
I think the public rights of way network in our parish is important for travelling to work and school	20	20%	24	24%	34	33%	18	18%	6	6%	3.33

Improving Public Rights of Way and Encouraging Greater Use

Improving Public Rights of Way for Health and Wellbeing

Councils were asked ‘How could the public rights of way network in your parish be improved to support the health and wellbeing of residents?’. The free text answers were grouped, see Table 30.

- Replacing stiles with gates had the highest number of responses, stated by one quarter of councils;
- Better signage and waymarking was the second highest, with 22% of councils giving this as a response;
- Included in other responses were: routes separated from livestock, not upgrading paths to bridleways or byways (2), more parking and enforcing landowners’ responsibilities, as well as comments relating specifically to their parish.

Table 30: Councils' views on improving public rights of way for health and wellbeing

Action	Number	% of councils including this as one of their responses
Replacing stiles with gates	21	25%
Signs / waymarking	18	22%
Other	18	22%
Keep paths clear / maintained	12	14%
Publicity / more information	12	14%
Surface improvements	10	12%
Links between paths	2	2%
Councils responding to this question	83	

Improving Public Rights of Way for Travel

Councils were asked ‘How could the public rights of way network in your parish be improved for travelling to work and school?’. The free text answers were grouped, see Table 31.

- 42% of the councils did not think that there was an opportunity to improve public rights of way in their area or that it was not particularly applicable due to the absence of schools;
- Of the responses giving a suggestion for improvement, improving surfacing and keeping paths clear or maintained had the highest number of responses (13% suggesting these actions);
- Other responses included: better signs, connectivity between estates, lighting, making schools aware and safe routes to the bus stop, as well as comments relating specifically to their parish.

Table 31: Councils' views on improving public rights of way for travel

Action	Number	% of councils including this as one of their responses
Not applicable to parish / no school / no opportunity to improve	33	42%
Other	20	25%
Improved surfacing	10	13%
Keep paths clear / maintained	10	13%
Cycle paths	4	5%
Replace stiles with gates	3	4%
Publicity / more information	3	4%
Councils responding to this question	79	

Improving Public Rights of Way to Support the Visitor Economy

Councils were asked 'How could the public rights of way network in your parish be improved for tourism and the visitor economy?'. The free text answers were grouped, see Table 32.

- Providing more information or publicity had the highest number of responses, stated by 37% of councils;
- Better signs and waymarkers were stated by one quarter of the councils;
- 16% thought that supporting the visitor economy was not applicable or relevant to their area;
- Other comments related specifically to their parish.

Table 32: Councils' views on improving public rights of way for the visitor economy

Action	Number	% of councils including this as one of their responses
More publicity / information	30	37%
Better signs / waymarkers	20	25%
Not applicable / not relevant to parish	13	16%
Keep paths clear / maintained	8	10%
Other	5	6%
Replace stiles with gates / stiles in better condition	5	6%
Connecting paths / making circular routes	3	4%
Improved surfacing	3	4%
More parking	2	2%
Councils responding to this question	81	

Improving Public Rights of Way for People with Visual Impairments or Mobility Difficulties

Councils were asked 'How could access to the public rights of way network in your parish be improved for people with visual impairments or those with mobility difficulties?'. The free text answers were grouped, see Table 33.

- Replacing stiles with gates had the highest number of responses, stated by 46% of councils;
- 21% of councils thought that this was not applicable to their area, or that the network could not be improved for these users groups;
- Other responses included: Radar keys available from libraries or other locations, Braille on signs, using the phone network to provide guides for visually impaired people and increasing the size of gates to accommodate mobility scooters.

Table 33: Councils' views on improving public rights of way for people with visual or mobility impairments

Action	Number	% of councils including this as one of their responses
Replace stiles with gates	38	46%
Not applicable /not possible to improve	17	21%
Keep paths clear / maintained	11	13%
Improved surfacing	6	7%
Other	6	7%
Information / publicity	3	4%
Councils responding to this question	82	

Encouraging Greater Use of Public Rights of Way

Councils were asked if there was anything from a list of possible actions which would encourage their residents to use the public rights of way network more, see Table 34. Councils could choose more than one answer.

- 82% of councils indicated that more information on public rights of way in their parish would encourage greater user;
- 73% thought that online walking guides and 72% that public rights of way in better condition and printed walking guides would encourage greater use.

Table 34: Councils' views on actions which could encourage greater use of public rights of way

	Number	% of councils giving this as one of their responses
Information on public rights of way in the parish	73	82%
Online guides for walks	65	73%
Public rights of way in better condition	64	72%
Printed guides for walks	64	72%
Public rights of way which are more accessible e.g. fewer stiles	58	65%
Information on places that can be visited using public rights of way	53	60%
Information on walking groups in the area	51	57%
Organised walks led by guides	27	30%
Other (please specify)	11	12%
Nothing would encourage residents to use public rights of way more	4	4%
n	89	

Other responses given were:

- *We have some maps...need updating and publicising*
- *Buckland is a rural community, the majority of residents have chosen to live there and use the footpaths and RoW*
- *Some of the above may be available but information about their being available should be more prominent.*
- *FOS/5 ends at the A422 and there is no connection to FOS/6 or FOS/7 other than by walking on the verge of this very busy road. FOS/1 is very badly signposted.*
- *Improved signage.*
- *Our rights of way are very well used. I see no need for any more encouragement.*
- *Introduction of cycle lanes and cycle friendly surfaces, together with a cycle friendly ROW end-to-end route between towns and villages.*
- *There is printed and online information but unless people are inspired to look for it this information is not accessed.*
- *Replacement of stiles with gates will improve access for dog walkers and items 1 and 2 above.*
- *We have printed guides for walks and a group of walkers meet weekly for organised walks. The paths are widely used by local residents and visitors*
- *We have become a commuter community who tend not to involve themselves in the community very much. In some ways we could tick the Nothing box but we would like to encourage more community involvement - we are having a 'Welcome' coffee morning where we hope to encourage more involvement.*

Reporting Problems on Public Rights of Way

Councils were asked if they had reported a problem on a public right of way to Buckinghamshire County Council:

- 78% had reported a problem and 22% had not.

Councils were then asked how satisfied they had been with the response. Councils could choose from very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, satisfied or very satisfied. The responses were then scored, with very dissatisfied scoring 1, dissatisfied scoring 2, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied scoring 3, satisfied scoring 4 and very satisfied scoring 5. The higher the average score the more satisfied respondents were with the service. A score over 3 indicates that on average respondents were satisfied, or under 3 that they were dissatisfied. Results are shown in Figure 17 and Table 35.

- All areas scored slightly below 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied';
- Councils were most satisfied with 'issues reported through the internet'.

Figure 17: Satisfaction with response to reported problems

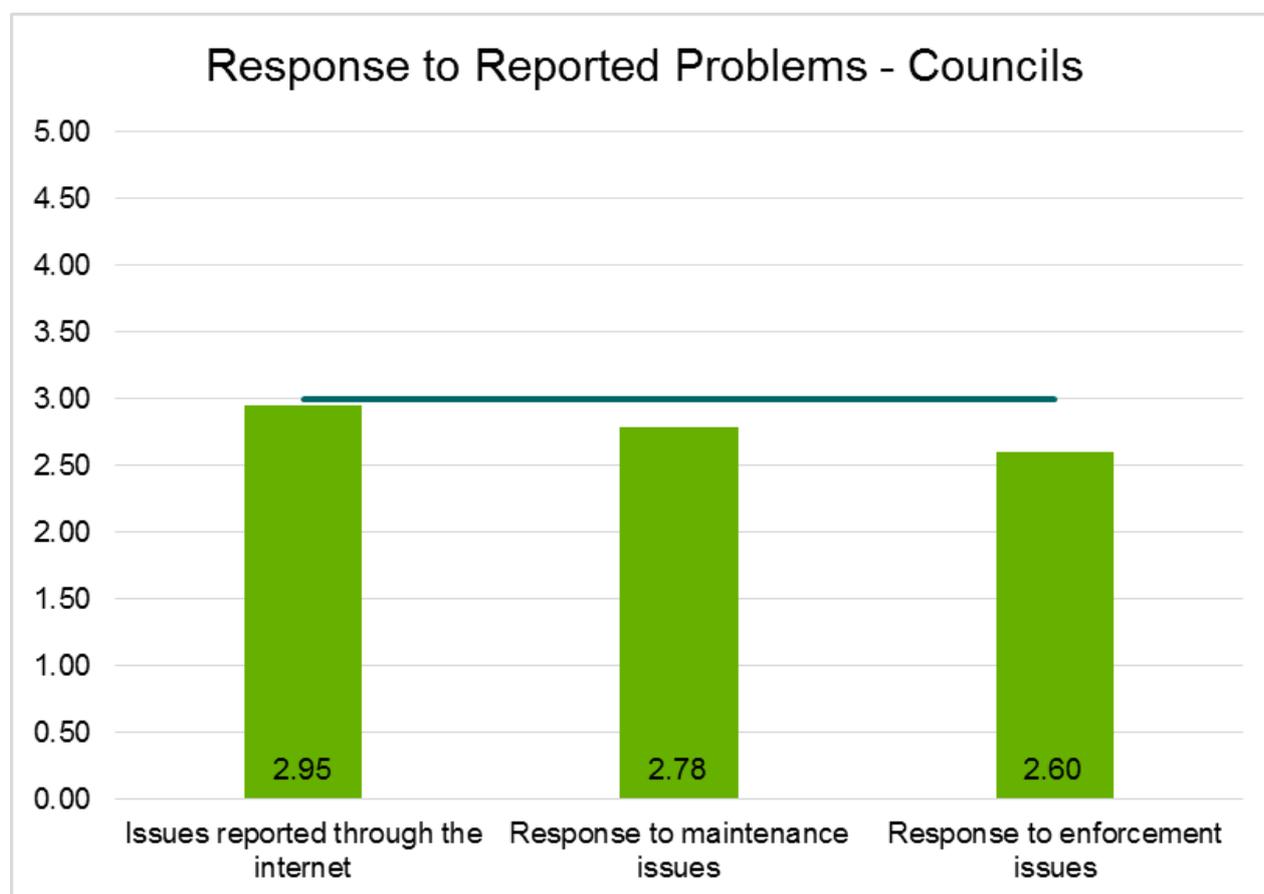


Table 35: Satisfaction with responses to reported problems

Service area	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Very dissatisfied		Average
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Issues reported through the internet	6	9%	17	26%	20	30%	14	21%	9	14%	2.95
Response to maintenance issues	4	5%	23	31%	16	22%	15	20%	16	22%	2.78
Response to enforcement issues	3	4%	9	13%	26	39%	16	24%	13	19%	2.60

Councils were then asked how the service could be improved. Responses are shown in Figure 18 and Table 36.

Figure 18: Area of service improvement

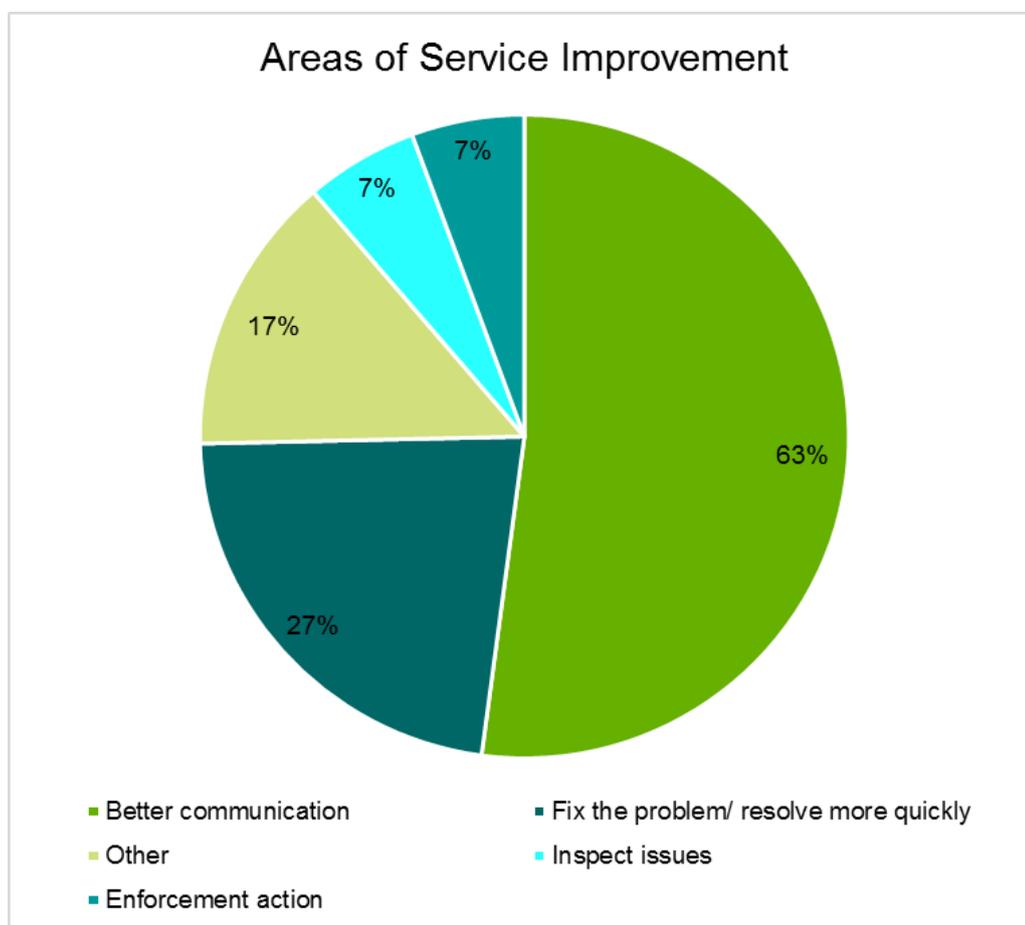


Table 36: Areas of service improvement

Area of service improvement	Number of responses	% of councils giving this as comment
Better communication	37	63%
Resolve reported issues / resolve more quickly	16	27%
Other	10	17%
Inspect issues	4	7%
Enforcement action	4	7%
Number of councils answering question	59	

Accommodating Population Growth

Councils were asked 'Given that the population of Buckinghamshire will grow considerably in future years, what improvements do you think need to be made to improve the public rights of way to accommodate future needs?'. Responses were analysed and collated into similar responses, see Table 37.

Table 37: Accommodating future population growth

Response	Number of comments	% of councils giving this as comment
Better maintenance	32	39%
Connect new development into network / good links from urban to countryside / new links / no loss of routes through development	21	25%
Improved accessibility	20	24%
More publicity / information	19	23%
Better signage	17	20%
Other	9	11%
Cycle links / paths	8	10%
More resources / staff	5	6%
Number of councils answering question	83	

Other Comments

Councils were asked to provide any further comments which could be helpful in developing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, see below:

- *A contact number displayed in the village hall*
- *A dedicated ROW Officer with a contact number which can be displayed in local village halls*
- *A dedicated team for people to contact would be useful and a response via email or a telephone call to acknowledge what the response will be if a report is made and the timescale involved. Also ensure the contact details are easy to find!*
- *An absolute key issue for us is the implementation of planning requirements for new ROW.*
- *As already mentioned connecting existing rights of way to avoid roads and making better circular walks. A path / cycle way to Haddenham train station.*
- *Closer liaison with parish councils with local knowledge.*
- *Consultation with users is good, however, consultation with those who don't use the rights of way might also help.*
- *Ensure the plan is not just put on the shelf, is given meaningful budget and there is adequate resource to oversee the implementation of the Plan and its execution.*
- *Ensuring landowners are enabling access on footpaths. Ensure that bridleways are cleared enough to be used.*
- *Footpaths must be made safe for users.*
- *Given that our villages are near saturated with housing development we cannot see where new public rights of way could be accommodated. However, we are always open to new suggestions but not on green belt land.*
- *Grading of rights of way on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is very easy and 5 is rough terrain, route finding is difficult etc so potential users can determine if a particular route is suitable for them.*
- *Great concern about the effect of HS2 on public rights of way*
- *I would love to be more involved as I am disabled and hence unable to take advantage of the footpaths myself and very keen to see that the existing network is maintained properly*
- *If BCC could enforce landowners to address issues such as broken gates or stiles to improve access for all. Additional (AONB sympathetic) signage to distinguish bridleways and footpaths to stop cyclists using the incorrect ones.*
- *Improved way-marking and improving public knowledge of the information that is available on public rights of way whether on-line or printed material.*
- *Increase the number of officers and train parish councils on their powers.*
- *It would be great to have a county full of accessible paths. To be the first county which is stile free and buggy/wheelchair friendly and accessible for people with mobility issues. It would be great to have walks which are more sensory - maybe with scented plants.*
- *Iver is likely to have significant housing development during the term of the Emerging Local Plan. Pinewood expansion is in Phase 2, and two concrete batching plants are proposed, one with permission. There are also infrastructure projects, WRLtH, Heathrow expansion. Every opportunity should be taken to re-instate (eg IVE/15A/1), and create ROW. Liaison with neighbouring authorities will be necessary. LBH for new permissive ROW connecting IVE/21/3 into West Drayton, under consideration.*
- *Make paths passable for less able and older users*
- *make the public aware of its existence*
- *More gates. Fewer stiles. Bridges maintained...some dreadful ones locally*

- *More mobile apps to encourage younger walkers. Encourage geocaching on the ROW network to encourage people to use the paths more for recreation*
- *No plan will have an effect without a budget to enable it to be delivered.*
- *Our paths are more regularly used than ever before, and more people have dogs than before. It does concern me the quantity of bags full of dog poo filling our bins, surely there is a more sustainable/green option. Walking and health is so important, and so many people regard walking and the walks in our village as essential to both their physical and mental well-being. So encouraging access that leaves both users and landowners happy is essential.*
- *Please give a service standard to manage expectations*
- *See answers above where I have cited FOS footpath numbers. Fingerposts and lack of waymarking FOS/6 and FOS/7, bridge in poor condition FOS//4. Fosote Parish Meeting does not believe that the Improvement Plan fulfils its ambitions without a significant injection of cash which, given the current financial constraints, does not seem likely!*
- *See previous comment about need in Cuddington to link with A418*
- *Sometimes when there is an issue it is difficult for the Parish to identify/contact the landowner and we rely on the busy ROW Team to contact them on our behalf - this takes time and the urgency of a potential safety issue is lost.*
- *The threat of HS2 has caused many Chetwode residents to leave the parish. Houses are either empty or have short term tenants who do not appear to make use of the rights of way. We do have walkers from Preston Bissett and Barton Hartshorn.*
- *Very content with the walkways in and around Wendover*
- *We have excellent rights of way, well used, but where can people leave their cars?*

Landowner Survey

An online survey was circulated through the Country and Business Landowners' Association. Five responses were received.

- All landowners had public rights of way crossing their land.

Benefits of Public Rights of Way

Public rights of way benefit tourism e.g. campsite, farm shop or B&B:

- Yes – one landowner
- No – two landowners
- Not sure – one landowner

Public rights of way benefit awareness and knowledge of the countryside:

- Yes – two landowners
- No – two landowners

People report problems on my land (e.g. in regard to animals):

- No – four landowners

Public rights of way on my land don't make a positive contribution:

- Yes – two landowners
- No – one landowner

Problems with Public Rights of Way

Landowners were asked if they had experienced a range of issues:

- People getting lost – four landowners had experienced this, one landowner had not;
- Dogs not on the lead and bothering stock – three landowners had experience this, one landowner had not;
- People not closing gates behind them – four landowners had experienced this, one landowner had not;
- Crime and security issues – all five landowners had experienced this;
- Trespassing – all five landowners had experienced this;
- Littering – all five landowners had experienced this;
- Damage to path surfaces from overuse/misuse – two landowners had experienced this, three had not;
- Illegal public use e.g. public footpath used by motorbikes - two landowners had experienced this, three had not.

Knowledge of Public Rights of Way Responsibilities

Landowners were asked about their level of knowledge about their responsibilities in regard to public rights of way (Table 38):

Table 38: Landowner knowledge of responsibilities

	I Do Not Know About This Duty	I Have Some Knowledge About This Duty	I Have Good Knowledge About This Duty	I Have Excellent Knowledge About This Duty
Ploughing and crop reinstatement	0	1	2	2
Vegetation clearance	0	1	2	2
Stiles and gates	0	2	0	3
Keeping routes clear of obstructions, and what constitutes an obstruction	0	2	0	3
Livestock	0	2	0	3

Three landowners thought Buckinghamshire County Council should provide more information on landowner responsibilities, one did not and one was not sure.

Satisfaction with Buckinghamshire County Council Rights of Way Service

Landowners were asked how satisfied they were if they had been in touch with Buckinghamshire County Council regarding public rights of way in the past two years:

- Two landowners were very dissatisfied;
- Two landowners were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
- One landowner had not been in contact with Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Service.

Public Rights of Way Priorities

Landowners were asked to rank their priorities for public rights of way, with rank 1 being the highest priority, see Table 39.

Table 39: Public rights of way priorities - landowners

	Rank 1 (scores 5)	Rank 2 (scores 4)	Rank 3 (scores 3)	Rank 4 (scores 2)	Rank 5 (scores 1)	Total Weighted Score
Educating the public around the Countryside Code and their responsibilities while in the countryside	2	4	0	0	0	26
Waymarking and signage	4	0	0	0	0	20
Maintaining that vegetation on the public rights of way network which is the responsibility of Buckinghamshire Council	0	1	1	0	3	10
Improving the public rights of way network for those with mobility problems or other disabilities	0	0	1	1	0	5
Maintaining bridges	0	0	1	1	0	5
Updating and improving the definitive map	0	0	1	0	0	3
Upgrading and promoting routes (e.g. circular walks) to support rural tourism	0	0	0	1	0	2
Resolving anomalies such as cul-de-sac routes or other route anomalies	0	0	0	1	0	2
Providing or upgrading routes so that they can be used for day-to-day travel (e.g. to work or school)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Providing or upgrading routes so that they can be used for day-to-day travel (e.g. to work or school)	0	0	0	0	0	0

Helping Landowners Manage Public Rights of Way

Landowners were asked how Buckinghamshire County Council could help them to manage public rights of way on their land:

- BCC has moved in the last 35 years from working with landowners to working against them. There needs to be better dialogue, understanding and appreciation of things on the ground. At a time when landowners incomes are stretched to breaking point that input for increasing upkeep of paths is almost impossible to obtain. Unfortunately BCC increasingly operate a policy whereby they comply with their responsibilities as and when they deem fit but write demands to landowners with deadlines and threats. This does little to promote a good working relationship with the core people BCC needs to help them.
- Clear signage.
- Help educate the general public as to why they should stay on rights of way for their own safety and to avoid trespassing.
- Instruct the public to keep to defined rights of way and remove litter and animal excrement
- Improve signage.
- Have a confidential advice line.

Other Comments

- Please review the procedures and needs of the network that exists before considering other projects from those who whilst having worthwhile ideas, have no responsibility or funding to offer.
- Repair styles and gateways broken by public use.
- Suggest a user friendly definitive map system is made available.
- Provide signage when requested and work with landowners on " permitted routes", these are usually implemented to improve public safety.

Stakeholder Responses

Introduction

51 stakeholder organisations were contacted to seek views prior to drafting the ROWIP. Responses were received from the organisations shown to the right (20 organisations responded plus 2 individuals and Oxfordshire LAF).

In addition, telephone conversations or meetings were held 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

Neighbouring Highway Authorities

Responses were received from The London Borough of Hillingdon, Hertfordshire County Council, Northamptonshire County Council and Wokingham Borough Council. Some authorities completed a stakeholder survey, others provided answers in their own format. A summary of the main points of these responses is shown below.

London Borough of Hillingdon

- Current or future cross - boundary or strategic access projects - Colne Valley Trust / Groundwork South with stakeholders have identified two areas for access improvements between London Borough of Hillingdon and Buckinghamshire County Council, these being Uxbridge to Denham Country Park and Denham Village and Mabey's Meadow/West Drayton to Thorney, these are currently ongoing, the public footpaths on the Bucks side require extensive improvement works.
- Future working with Buckinghamshire County Council - London Borough of Hillingdon is open to improvement suggestions between Hillingdon and Buckinghamshire and would engage in viable suggests for improvements to the wider countryside and Colne Valley Park.

- Responses to common large-scale projects - London Borough of Hillingdon is currently liaising with Colne Valley Trust and stakeholders with regard to High Speed 2, the Colne Valley Trust are currently collating stake holders and suggested mitigation improvements, these are ongoing and aimed at improving links and user experience between the Colne Valley Park and Harefield/Hillingdon.
- How the Bucks ROWIP can respond to the needs of the public in neighbouring authorities - Access between Buckinghamshire and Hillingdon is limited due to the Grand Union Canal, river Colne and lakes situated between the borough and county boundaries, therefore as highlighted in point 1, it is important for improvements to be investigated where possible. The Council is very keen to secure support from Buckinghamshire County Council for its current project of upgrading the towpath along the Grand Union Canal to Quietway standard. Officers are already collaborating with the Canal & River Trust and stakeholders to implement the Quietway from the east to Uxbridge Town Centre. We are also in discussion with Hertfordshire County Council and the Groundwork Trust with a view to extending the works further north to Watford. This will support our respective Local Transport Strategies. We would be very grateful if Buckinghamshire County Council could actively participate in upgrading the condition of the towpath between Harefield and Uxbridge, which lie within Buckinghamshire. This could greatly improve the ambiance along the Grand Union Canal, access to/from Denham Park as well as facilitate active travel between two Metropolitan Town Centres.

Hertfordshire County Council

- To ensure that there is an off-road commuter route (cyclists) between Chenies and Chorleywood. This could involve surfacing and upgrading the status existing rights of way.

Northamptonshire County Council

A map of public rights of way at the boundary with Buckinghamshire was provided, with the comment – *“Please see attached a document with screen grabs for all the paths which we believe cross from Northamptonshire into Buckinghamshire. It would be helpful if Bucks CC could review the links on their side of the border with a view to making sure they all link up on their Definitive Map, if they don’t already.”*

Wokingham Borough Council

- Improving public rights of way to support health and wellbeing - More information should be available for people to know where they can go, and what they will need (shoes, clothing etc). Then active encouragement to use the network. Analysis of more deprived areas and access to greenspace to focus activity on improving this link as evidence shows access to greenspace has a direct link to the health and wellbeing of people.
- Improving public rights of way network improved for travelling to work and school - Surfacing and lighting are the usual concerns. Focused activity on a few paths in this theme will help.
- Improving public rights of way network for tourism and the visitor economy - Information is key however for tourism and visitor economy targeted information is needed to highlight the particular opportunities and features, working with the local businesses and tourism organisations.
- Improving public rights of way network improved for people with visual impairments or those with mobility difficulties - The Gaps, Gates and Stiles British Standard should be applied rigorously. Work with disabled interest groups to identify desired areas. Work with local visually impaired groups to devise solutions to issues with visual impairments - it all depends on what

the issue is, however with GPS and Mobile Technology more smart solutions are possible to help these users.

- Work with neighbouring authorities to help assess needs across local authority borders.
- Thames Path National Trail is a key asset between Wokingham and Buckinghamshire.

District Councils

The four district authorities within Buckinghamshire were invited to comment. Wycombe District Council provided a response.

Wycombe District Council

The council has a number of strategies (open space, outdoor sports and leisure, environmental enhancements etc) that have made use of the existing Bucks CC ROWIP.

- Improving public rights of way network to support health and wellbeing - RoW offer a sustainable and healthy alternative to the car. Greater use can combat climate change, poor air quality and poor physical and mental health. Therefore more money should be directed towards the maintenance and improvement of the network. RoW provide fantastic opportunities for exercise and recreation. Exercise whether it be walking, running, cycling or horse riding, often involve the possibility of needing to have a shower and wash clothes afterwards, therefore keeping perfectly clean is not an expectation, however most users (possibly with the exception of horse riders) will want to avoid deep mud. Ways around muddy patches can lead to paths widening into and destroying neighbouring habitat. It would be good if there could be targeted measures to reduce the particularly muddy patches.
- Improving public rights of way network for travelling to work and school - Pupils and office workers want to be clean when they get to work or school, or they need to think about taking a change of clothes and have changing facilities at work.
- Improving the public rights of way network improved for tourism and the visitor economy - RoW provide fantastic opportunities for exercise, tourism and recreation. Their attraction is derived from the contact with nature people get, the views of landscapes and exercise. To meet these needs requires different ways of thinking.
- Improving the public rights of way network for people with visual impairments or those with mobility difficulties - RoW are sometimes small and windy sections of unmade footpaths, with gated access. Thought needs to be given to developing a single universal standard RoW which caters for all, this may include widening certain RoW's, developing a more regular maintenance approach etc. Routes around and on the edge of towns and those around particularly attractive destinations for a walk in the countryside should be given the greatest attention.
- Do you think promoted routes are adequately maintained? - No - It is likely that the RoW service is probably under resourced for just monitoring and maintaining the current network. This is a long way from where I think it should be.
- Given that the population of Buckinghamshire will grow considerably in future years, what improvements do you think need to be made to improve the public rights of way to accommodate future needs? - To deal with the pressures of more development and more people, and the opportunities for tackling climate change and public health problems there is a need for a proactive ROWIP which takes a strategic approach to considering the threats and opportunities and is then properly funded to deliver its potential.

Chilterns Conservation Board

Main points of meeting 6th March 2019 – Annette Venters.

- Section on access in the AONB management plan – due in April 2019;
- Previous ROWIP was helpful as evidence and to highlight priorities. It was used to support funding bids;
- A priority is strategic links, particularly links from urban areas to the countryside. Some of these paths may not be good quality – narrow, overgrown, litter and dog fouling – which makes them unattractive for people to use, especially those who aren't confident at using the countryside. Concentrate resources and improvements in a few targeted areas to make a difference rather than a 'scatter-gun' approach;
- Priorities would be upgrading trails around Aylesbury, routes to the Ridgeway and to Wendover Wood, or from urban areas to other hub sites;
- Addressing wider public needs is important and different people and groups have different needs, e.g. social activity may be important for BAME visitors;
- Some hub sites have very high visitor numbers – need to invest in good visitor management at these sites. Also need to promote other sites and areas to explore to disperse visitor pressure;
- Not clear on Bucks CC website where to find promoted routes. Chilterns Conservation Board has 20 promoted routes (Chiltern Country Walks) – 5-6 miles, 'Miles Without Stiles' and wheelchair friendly routes. Produce them with help from the Chiltern Society;
- Chiltern Society check paths and send reports on public rights of way;
- Ridgeway National Trail important asset, projects underway to increase visitors and improve circular routes from the trail;
- Projects such as the HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme 'Chalk, Cherries and Chairs' are important to connect with those who don't usually visit the countryside and non-traditional audiences. Gain funding and learning from these projects;
- Walking Festival is important – 20% of participants were new to walking;
- Other attractions can be important to getting people to explore the countryside who don't usually visit – e.g. the main attraction could be a visit to creamery or to learn about things, the walking can be secondary;
- Want to reach new audiences – one target is young people not going into schools or education;
- Tend to work with Bucks CC on projects but would like to work more on Chilterns-wide issues;
- Few people use 'access for all walks' – perhaps it is the title – 20% of people have mobility issues but they are not joining in events;
- There is great potential for increasing the visitor economy in the Chilterns. Trying to work with businesses, they don't currently use the Chilterns as a brand. Large market for people from London. Tour operators also do not use the Chilterns as a brand, but will use 'Midsomer Murders' tours. Visitor payback scheme trialled on booking site for Walking Festival.

Colne Valley Regional Park

Main points of meeting 5th March 2019 – Stewart Pomeroy and Paul Graham.

- North-south connectivity is poor and is being affected by major infrastructure;
- Links with neighbouring authorities is important – the Colne Valley Regional Park crosses 5 county authorities and ‘falls between the gap’ of attention of the authorities;
- Bucks CC have been very good in dealing with mis-connected paths and have created around 50km of paths;
- Producing a green infrastructure strategy for the Colne and Crane Valleys as part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme – aim to produce by July 2019. It will build on and tie together existing green infrastructure strategies and will contain actions and projects;
- Access to the countryside is a priority in the Landscape Partnership Scheme;
- The quality of the urban fringe and access from towns into the countryside is a particular issue – the public rights of way can be in poor condition and unattractive for people to use. Some areas, such as Iver, have low levels of greenspace and the public rights of way are very important for access;
- Completing a feasibility study to connect paths from Hillingdon into the Regional Park – people will use this if it is extended.

Additional letter from Colne Valley Regional Park:

The Colne Valley Regional Park would wish to see the following issues addressed in the Bucks RoW Improvement Plan:

North to South Connectivity in the centre of the Colne Valley Regional Park from Iver to Colnbrook.

North to South connectivity has been severely constrained by east to west transport routes. In more recent times it has been constrained further by the removal of Dog Kennel bridge severing path IV15 and the removal of Reeds Bridge severing path IV16. In Bucks there is now only 1 off road crossing of the Paddington to Bristol Railway, 2 off road crossings of the Slough Arm of the Canal and no off-road crossings of the M4. Opportunities to address this lack of connectivity include:

- IV16. Replace Reeds Bridge to re-connect path north and south of the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal,
- IV15. Replace Dog Kennel Bridge to re-connect path north and south of the railway,
- Creation of a new path running north west from Iver Station to link up with UIV15 at Meads Bridge
- Review of opportunities and options for a crossing point of the A412 between Black Park and Langley Park
- Undertake an ‘area of search’, on the M4 to create a new footpath or bridleway crossing between Old Slade Lane and Sutton Lane (this could take the opportunity to re-connect IV20 with the corresponding path in Slough or could be located further east)
- Formalising the permissive route of the Colne Valley Trail at Iver Water Works
- Extension of IV21 (in Hillingdon) to create a connection between the Colne Valley Trail and Mabey’s Meadow Nature Reserve

Poor signage and maintenance and lack of links from urban areas. Local people are often discouraged or prevented from accessing the countryside because of the quality/attractiveness and signage of the routes. Particularly in the start of the routes from villages and residential areas. The likely increase in population in, and around, the Colne Valley Regional Park will require

significant improvements, both in terms of additional routes linking residential areas to the local countryside, and in terms of better signage and maintenance. Major infrastructure projects should be resisted on Green Belt and Colne Valley Park grounds, but they will present opportunities to improve the rights-of-way network. The public rights-of-way service can support improvements in health and wellbeing by better maintenance of the network and by continuing to nurture the Simply Walk programme. The Iver & District Countryside Association has listed specific new routes which should be included in the Improvement Plan and actively promoted, these are supported by the Colne Valley Park CIC.

National Trails

Thames Path National Trail Partnership

The Thames Path National Trail running through Buckinghamshire is one of the most heavily used stretches of the river for local communities, long distance walkers, international tourists and numerous events taking place.

Working in partnership with Bucks County in its upkeep, is crucial to ensure the continuing success of the trail. Because of its flatness, the Thames Path lends itself to access for all projects, supports Buckinghamshire's health and wellbeing agenda. It attracts new audiences into walking and helps both the urban and rural economy of Buckinghamshire, supporting businesses along the trail's riverside towns and villages.

Economic value of the Thames Path National Trail information provided.

Ridgeway National Trail Partnership

- Please can you ensure The Ridgeway National Trail is recognised a strategically important route in your ROWIP, providing for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Not every county has a National Trail, it is something to be proud of and it takes people through the AONB too.
- In addition to the Trail itself, please regard the 'strategic link' PROW routes connecting the Trail to nearby settlements as important in your ROWIP. For example, in future we would like to see a pleasant off-road signposted route connecting the Trail to Aylesbury so that the people of Aylesbury can make better use of their nearby National Trail (we think the proposed Sustrans route may be a good option).
- Please note in your ROWIP that the National Trail must be managed to meet National Trail standards defined by Natural England and DEFRA. This is because the family of Trails across England and Wales are meant to provide some of the best recreational routes in the country and provide a good quality introduction to exploring the English countryside, e.g. they must be well-signposted.
- Note in your ROWIP that permanent or temporary changes to the PROW along the Trail has a massive impact on local tourism and recreation such as organised fundraising events. I was not involved in discussions/plans last year when the PROW around Ivinghoe Beacon were closed temporarily for filming and this impacted the annual UK Ultra Distance Trail Running Championship supported by British Athletics!
- Please can you register our project to identify and promote a route for cyclists and horse riders which will run parallel to the footpath sections of the National Trail. It is our aspiration to have a Ridgeway Riding Route through the Chilterns so that cyclists and horseriders can enjoy a route from Goring to Ivinghoe Beacon, just as walkers currently do. The Bucks areas where we need

to find a riding route are: Bledlow-Saunderton area; Princes Risborough-Wendover area and Pitstone-Ivinghoe area. This may involve upgrades in Bucks and so it would be great if these applications could be prioritised and you could encourage landowners (e.g. National Trust are interested in upgrading a footpath to bridleway along The Ridgeway near Pitstone).

- Linked to the Ridgeway Riding Route project, we want to move towards positioning the Ridgeway as part of the off-road cycling network. This means improving the links between the Ridgeway and the Phoenix Trail and Aston Hill-Wendover Woods, for example, and also promoting the Trail to cyclists and horse riders in Bucks.
- Your ROWIP could potentially help attract funding to Ridgeway projects, e.g. developer contributions.
- I hope your ROWIP will bring out all the benefits to society that access to the countryside brings – mental and physical wellbeing, rural tourism, recreation tourism.
- On a general point, more could be done to provide off-road routes where there are no pavements around small villages, e.g. field edge PROW. The Ridgeway has a road section around Saunderton and this includes the A4010 which will be affected by HS2 haulage – can we negotiate for a field edge bridleway in this area? Also, creating an off-road riding link between Bledlow-Horsenden-Phoenix Way-Princes Risborough would be really useful.

Higher Status Rights of Way Users

Responses were received from users of higher status routes – British Driving Society Beds, Bucks and Herts, Trail Riders Fellowship, British Horse Society and individual equestrians.

British Driving Society Beds, Bucks and Herts

- Improving the public rights of way network to support health and wellbeing - More joined up thinking to use the variety of opportunities creating routes for multi-user routes from walking to horse carriage drivers.
- Improving the public rights of way network for travelling to work and school - Multi-user routes between key locations and safe crossings of the motorised network.
- Improving the public rights of way network for tourism and the visitor economy - Promotion on-line and printed leaflets of significant sites, both historical and visual, plus natural features
- Improving access to the public rights of way network for people with visual impairments or those with mobility difficulties - Removal of barriers and poor surfaces. Where relevant and possible, audio descriptions.
- Do you think promoted routes are adequately maintained? - Generally yes but the map doesn't cover horse riding or horse carriage driving it seems.
- Given that the population of Buckinghamshire will grow considerably in future years, what improvements do you think need to be made to improve the public rights of way to accommodate future needs? - Protect what is there already. Consider upgrading existing routes to as wide range of user as possible. Ensure the opportunity of new developments are integrated with the rights of way network and additional multi-user routes are created.
- Does your organisation have any strategies, policies or projects that could link with the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan? - The key project for the BDS is Restoring the Record, plus responding to local and neighbourhood plans as an early stage, and lobbying for restricted byways where they are practical, whilst contributing to the wider discussion on Rights of Way.
- Please tell us anything else which may be helpful in developing the new public rights of way improvement plan - Lack of integration with Sustrans plans and other initiatives such the Agricultural Bill and Active Travel funded by public money. It would be useful to have a 'wish list' included so that future developments can include them in the plans since the RoWIP is a

statutory document. This could cover gaps and anomalies as well improvements and new routes.

Trail Riders Fellowship

- Improving the public rights of way network for support health and wellbeing - Consider the higher rights access needs of all users including minority user segments with specific needs. Do not seek to remove or restrict their lawful access entitlements without good reason.
- Improving the public rights of way network for tourism and the visitor economy - Recognise the value of sustainable motorcycle trail riding to the tourist economy <https://www.trf.org.uk/the-economic-value-of-trail-riding-2018/>
- Improving the public rights of way network for people with visual impairments or those with mobility difficulties - Recognise the importance of green roads for disabled users on motorised vehicles <https://www.trf.org.uk/green-roads-for-all-users/>
- Given that the population of Buckinghamshire will grow considerably in future years, what improvements do you think need to be made to improve the public rights of way to accommodate future needs? - The problem with 2026 approach I believe the BCC understands PROW cannot be created by future evidence of use. For any diversions or planning applications, consideration of higher rights to RB status are risk of being lost by the diversion, and only the FP right being recorded. Even if it ends in a cul de sac or dead end, the current FP to FP approach denies the opportunity for further recording on the non-diverted till 2026, and permissive use thereafter. A proposed solution - any application for any diversion of a FP without consideration of loss of higher rights should be accompanied by a historical record for higher rights that may be lost at the applicant's expense. If not, the application risks being delayed whilst interested users & affected user groups (esp. cyclists & equestrians) are given a reasonable amount of time to gather evidence e.g. 12 months. I believe there are specialist consultants who can provide a search quickly and at modest expense in the scheme of a planning application or overall project. Alternatively, any diversion order to at least RB status will not need this level of scrutiny, delay or expense. I have concerns about any loss of FP to Diverted FP to anything other than Bridleway status without a historical use or user evidence search contained in the application.
- Does your organisation have any strategies, policies or projects that could link with the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan?
 - Trail riding & green exercise <https://www.trf.org.uk/what-are-the-health-benefits-of-trail-riding/>
 - Trail riding & the economy <https://www.trf.org.uk/the-economic-value-of-trail-riding-2018/>
 - Trail riding support of the police and acting against rural crime www.trf.org.uk/police
 - Green road clearance programmes <https://www.trf.org.uk/green-lane-clearing-for-beginners/> Green roads and disabled users <https://www.trf.org.uk/green-roads-for-all-users/>
 - Share the trail <https://www.trf.org.uk/equestrian/>

British Horse Society

- The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public - There is a great need for the Public Rights of Way network to respond to present day needs. With regard to equestrians a connected and well maintained network of bridleways and byways is essential. Research has shown that some rights of way are not shown on the Definitive Map at the correct status and some footpaths should be upgraded to bridleways or restricted byways thereby creating a more joined up network in some areas. Some bridleways end in

busy highways which it is not possible to cross safely so it is essential that where new roads or railways are created all the public rights of way crossings are preserved. The use of the powers of creation should be used to ensure that the PROW meet present day needs. Possibly where a right of way is not used it should be stopped up to save costs and help create new rights of way where needed. Sometimes there are reasons why a path is not currently used which can be addressed such as a dangerous road crossing but if visibility were improved or a controlled road crossing installed it would be used by many. Consideration should be given to creating wide verges alongside busy roads which link up rights of way to keep vulnerable users off the road.

- The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other recreation and enjoyment - Horse riding is an extremely popular and healthy outdoor activity for people of all ages and abilities. Children and young people as well as adults find great enjoyment in hacking out on the bridleways and are often inspired to go on to competitive equestrian sports. It is a diverse and family-friendly sport where men and women compete on an equal basis. The majority of equestrians are women who are often in the minority with regard to other sports. Most equestrian users of rights of way are recreational riders but owners of competition horses also find them vital for exercising their horses and keeping them fit. Equestrian activities stimulate positive psychological feelings and a sense of wellbeing. The bridleways and byways are essential for the sport providing a means of enjoying the countryside from horseback and exercise for both horse and rider. Many people with mobility problems enjoy riding but not all disabled people have a mobility problem. Some, like those with autism, may form a special relationship with animals including horses. Many equestrian centres provide informal opportunities for the employment of people with learning difficulties such as autism or others who find it hard get into employment. The BHS programme Changing Lives does this in a more structured way at some of their approved centres. Again, equestrian centres are very dependent on an accessible network of bridleways for hacking out.
- Accessibility of rights of way to blind, partially sighted and others with mobility problems - It is essential for horse riders with mobility problems, who may include older riders who cannot mount without a mounting block, that all gates on bridleways are easy to open and shut from horseback. Latches need to be easy to reach and operate. Vegetation clearance is very important for people with visual impairments. We also have the following comments in response to your additional questions:
- Is there anything you think discourages or prevents people or those your organisation represents from using public rights of way? - Dangerous gates or gates which are difficult to open and shut without dismounting. Fast and dangerous roads leading to bridleways or which are virtually impossible to cross because of speeding traffic. Poor badly maintained surfaces. Wherever possible surfaces and widths provided should be fit for purpose for the environment and all users, e.g. on new routes where a sealed surface is necessary consider using water-permeable surfacing made from recycled rubber granules and aggregates bound with a specially formulated polyurethane binder that fully meet the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) requirements.
- How well do you think Buckinghamshire County Council performs in terms of its public rights of way service? - Reasonably well but we would like the following points to be taken into account:
 - Where maintenance of public rights of way has been devolved to parish councils checks should be in place to ensure the funds they receive have been spent correctly.
 - The website could be improved so that there is a better feedback for those who report issues on public rights of way.
 - More funding is required to keep the public rights of way in good repair
 - Bridleway gates should be of the legal width – 1.5 metres between posts – and conform to the British Standard for bridleway gates. Those that do not meet these standards

- should be replaced. Other structures on byways should be safe not only for horse riders but also carriage drivers.
- The investigation of DMMO applications is painfully slow. Those that upgrade footpaths to bridleway create a more joined up network of bridleways. Many anomalies are resolved by historic research. It is important that staff and funding is allocated to this work.
 - Greater willingness to use enforcement powers where necessary.
- How should the public rights of way service respond to increased population, growth and major infrastructure projects in Buckinghamshire? Equestrians, unlike other recreational users, are not automatically included in the planning process. This is partly due to the lack of an equestrian strategy for the county and to a lack of knowledge of equestrian needs generally. The economic and health benefits of increased equestrian activity can, however, best be secured by building equestrian considerations into the planning process from the earliest stages onwards. Planners and developers should develop contacts with equestrian interests and representatives, and consult them alongside all other interested stakeholders, as plans develop and mature. The requirement to provide more housing and employment in rural environments affects the daily lives of people who already live there, often in vibrant communities that have a large part to play in the success of new developments. Historically equestrians have been an important element in the cement that binds these communities, and it is therefore correspondingly important to identify their needs and provide access for equestrian pursuits. Since equestrian activities are not specifically supported within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in the way that other recreational pursuits are it is all the more important that local planning policy should support and facilitate a duty of care to this category of vulnerable road user. Equestrians should be considered alongside other non-motorised users as an integral part of planning policy for infrastructure and building developments. The NPPF promotes a healthier lifestyle by providing, among other things, easier access to safe routes and recreational activities in both urban and countryside areas through the development of green infrastructure policies. This presents an excellent opportunity to local planners to include the needs of local equestrians as one of the user groups when developing these policies. See sections 3 (Supporting a prosperous rural economy) and particularly 8 (Promoting Healthy Communities) of the NPPF where Point 75 states: 'Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example, by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.' Planning of a new cycle way in developments often focuses on the creation of utility routes; however these will also form the backbone of recreational routes. People do not stop using these routes at weekends simply because they are not cycling to work or going to school. Therefore there is an opportunity to include equestrian use to provide safe off-road access where appropriate. Sustrans, the charity responsible for the creation of the cycleways network, states that, wherever possible, equestrians should have access to the cycleway network. Green Infrastructure Plans create ideal opportunities to be inclusive of all non-motorised users where it is practical to do so.
 - How can the rights of way support the economy and tourism? - The equestrian industry is the largest rural employer after the agricultural sector. The trades involved in the industry include not only the livery yards and equestrian centres but also equine vets, farriers, equine dentists, shops selling equestrian goods, farmers and many others. Nationally the industry, according to figures collected by the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA), is worth £4.3 billion. According to figures collected for the number of horse passports issued in Bucks in 2010 there were 18,313 horses with passports. The cost of keeping a horse per annum is £3,600 which means that the equestrian industry is worth £66 million to the Bucks economy. A well maintained and connected bridleway network is vital to the well being of this industry. Recently

the BETA published the initial findings from its recent National Equine Survey. The initial findings show that the number of regular horse riders has increased to three million with the greatest increase in the 25-44 age group.

Mr T Howard-Jones, Cholsey Farm (individual)

Cholsey Farm Riding has become an established part of the local equestrian scene. We have been open 4 years and built a 5-star reputation for delivering a fabulous 'hacking experience' to riders wanting to take their own horses onto the Bridleways of the Chilterns AONB. The bridleways we access probably cross into Oxfordshire too, but it's all part of the AONB.

Demand seems high. People are prepared to hire a horsebox to come to ride here, and/or travel 1.5 hours (some come from as far away as Essex) just to ride for a couple of hours. Our scale has risen to around 600 'rider rides' per year, i.e we have an average of 1 horsebox per day with 2 riders per box. Naturally, the majority come at weekends, when we might have 10 riders. On average they go for a 2-3 hour ride, but we are attracting an increasing number of TREC and Endurance riders looking for 30K + challenges.

The majority of our 16 mapped, circular rides are a combination of the quiet lanes and bridleways, although some rides start or end on our 200 acre farm and the field-margins. 90% of riders are 'self-guided' but we also occasionally take a guided ride, or a private hack / tour by arrangement. We have suitable insurance cover and follow the BHS codes for trek leader etc. No jumping is offered! Our holiday options (camping or self-catering) are becoming very popular. Our venture is supporting the local economy and helping to keep our small farm viable.

Thoughts:

- Generally, the local bridleway network is underutilised. This is not our opinion, but that of the AONB. They have been very encouraging about our development of the business, but we are respectful of the ground conditions and will not over-use any specific route when wet.
- The local network is generally in good repair and landowners are quick to clear fallen trees etc.
- Some steep section of the bridleways are prone to 'gullying' which can be dangerous if the horse tries to get out of the gully and slips. This has been known to unseat riders, or even result in a horse fatality (10+ years ago). We worked on a short section of particularly poor 'gully' with the Parish Council, Landowner, BHS and BCC to have it widened with a digger. More could be done though.
- There are a number of bridleways that are 'dead ends' that could be joined up to form more logical circular routes. Encouraging landowners, and making this an option would be a great step forward.
- Gates are a particular concern. Many are sub-optimal for horse-riders. Either difficult to open, too narrow, or they have weighted self-closing mechanisms that are too aggressive.
- The BHS and local riding / TREC clubs have been very supportive of our initiatives. Sadly the local planning/highways authority just don't seem to 'get it'. They don't seem to 'join the dots' in terms of helping us to provide a better visitor experience (we wanted to offer easier parking by adding some hardstanding, but the Highways department had no interest in listening to our evidence or applying any form of logic to our application, despite a letter of support from the AONB.

Phillipa Burton (individual)

I mainly use rights of way as a horse rider for leisure. I keep my horse near Marlow, and ride about 5 days a week. I would estimate that there are upwards of 100 horses kept for riding

within the areas around Marlow Common. Many of these are horses ridden by children and adolescents.

I volunteer with the South Oxfordshire Riding Club. In my full time work I am a mental health professional within the NHS, and could endlessly discuss the psychological and physical benefits of equestrian sports, physical activity and time spent outdoors.

In recent years I have noticed a significant increase in traffic on the country roads surrounding the stables. These roads are single track with very few passing spaces. While some car drivers will wait until we can reach a passing space, others are much more aggressive. For example, yesterday a car squeezed past me on one of these roads, so close that I had to move my leg out of the way to avoid scratching his car. Speed limits on these narrow roads is 60mph.

There is one short bridleway that within easy hacking distance (i.e. less than half an hour riding on the roads). This bridleway is very short and passes through Marlow Common before hitting the Frieth Road. It is not a circular ride. There is currently a house being built within these woods, and the bridleway is the only form of access. As a result there are often huge trucks passing along this bridleway, so it no longer feels safe to ride here. The ground underfoot is also stony so it is only possible to walk or maybe trot here.

I would love to support the development of more bridleways around Marlow Common, Pullingshill Wood, Marlins Grove, Widefield Wood, Hollowhill Wood, Hog Wood, Damaskfield Wood and Homefield Wood. It is such a shame that there is so much woodland and open space that could be being enjoyed, while at the same time improving the safety of children and adults who ride in this area.

Natalie White (individual)

From: Natalie White
Sent: 08 October 2019 17:31
To: Definitive Map Mailbox
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Future of rights of way

Hi,

Having just read your rights of way improvement plan I have some suggestions of Bridleways in my area that could do with improvement.

DFU/45/3 - This bridleway gets completely churned up every winter by the hunt to the point where it is just a sea of mud and impassable. It then doesn't get harrowed or rolled and dries out very rutted (you can't even walk it on foot). This contributed to my horse this summer damaging her suspensory ligament in her knee whilst walking the path costing me over £2k in veterinary bills and reducing her value significantly. I have asked time and time again for it to be harrowed each spring and nothing ever happens.

DFU/31/3 - the surface of this metaled bridleway has degraded and becomes impassable in the winter with deep potholes filled with water and no way around.

DFU/39/1 - this bridleway go absolutely nowhere, I suggest that the ROW looks at upgrading footpaths DFU/19/2 & DFU/18/1 to a bridleway to provide a vital link to Dinton and Eythrope. There are 8 yards in the village of Ford and another 4 in Dinton that would benefit from this route, directing horses off of the Dinton to Ford road which gets very busy and has dangerous corners.

DFU/1/2 - Starts on the A418 and to access it and the bridleways across Eythrope I have to cross that road from the Upton road. This crossing is 50 mph and incredibly busy with large vehicles that don't often slow down for me. It is a well-used crossing by the local equestrians, how there hasn't been an accident I don't know.

DFU/36/1 & DFU/35/1 - according to local knowledge and historic maps of the area this footpath has been incorrectly recorded. In the maps predating the 1950's it is recorded as a metalled track not a footpath. I am currently collecting evidence to have it reinstated at a restricted byway.

Apologies for the essay, I could also go on and on about the state of the bridleway gates in my area but I'm sure you are already aware of most of them. Let me know if you want more details.

Other Local and Stakeholder Organisations

Berryfields

Discussion with visitors to café at Church on Berryfields.

- Lots of young families on estate – need pushchair accessible routes, no stiles;
- The Waddeson Greenway Cycle Route is really popular and a great addition – good for families as well as cyclists;
- Want more information on the Countryside Code. Don't know where to go or what they should do;
- Have seen public rights of way signs but don't know where they lead. Would be useful to have destinations and distances. More information on local routes;
- Most people have moved to Berryfields from outside of the area, many are from London. New estates are a more affordable option;
- There are nice places to walk locally, medieval villages, but not much information.

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership

Nicola Thomas

- Have produced green infrastructure opportunity zone mapping which includes access and recreation priorities. These were drawn up through looking at access mapping and through the knowledge of partners;
- Has Green Infrastructure and Health Task Group;
- Useful to have further contact with NEP and include on consultation list. Good local knowledge
- Exploring natural capital mapping for Buckinghamshire.

Bucks Mind

Conversation with service users at drop in centre in Chesham.

- Want to get out more, but some of the group have physical disabilities and find that the paths are not accessible, stiles are difficult and one member is in a wheelchair;
- Worried about aggressive landowners, worried about getting lost;
- Don't know where to go;
- There is no information about paths, can be a challenge to get out into the countryside;
- Want short walks they can follow from the town as a group.

Bucks Vision

Lisa Redford

- Have a walk once a month;
- There is a lot to think about when organising a walk for people with visual impairments. Need good car parking, can be difficult to cross busy roads. If using roads the verges need to be wide. Cattle and livestock can be an issue, especially if people have their guide dogs with them;
- Guide dogs have to walk on normal leads and not harness and handle when not on pavements, so do not assist the visually impaired person. This can be very tiring for the visually impaired person;
- Stiles are not a particular problem, but stiles, steps and infrastructure need to be in good condition;
- Need to walk with a guide, so the width of paths and verges is important, walking in single file is difficult and very tiring for people;
- Very frustrating when scoping out routes and nearly find a full circuit but there is one problem which stops progress and have to turn back;
- When find a good route, tend to stick to it. Most visually impaired people would not go out and explore the countryside. It would be good to have more routes to choose from;
- Disused railways are very good, but bicycles need to have bells;
- Undergrown and overhanging trees and bushes are also an issue;
- Handrails are very useful – on bridges and steps;
- Kissing gates can be better than stiles, but can be tricky to get people through.

Main points of meeting held May 2019.

- Matrix approach is useful way to prioritise maintenance. Generally the priorities are correct but may need some alterations to learn from the experience of the past ten years. For example, overgrown paths is only a priority seasonally. Ploughing and cropping is to be resolved within 6 months for 45% of the network, but the crop will have been harvested by then;
- Chiltern Society and Ramblers' Association carry out surveys of paths. Currently do not share with each other or with Buckinghamshire County Council. Sharing of this information would be helpful to avoid duplication of effort and improve information about the condition of the network;
- Parish and town councils could support more, e.g. in Oxfordshire each parish is encouraged to have a footpath warden – they may be able to provide information on how to set up a parish scheme. Encourage parishes to walk their paths once a year. The Ramblers' survey a parish each year and then have concerted action – this information needs to be shared with Bucks CC and the Chiltern Society when in their area. More information is needed between Bucks CC and devolved parishes so that Bucks CC are aware if the standard of paths in an area is falling – there needs to be more information sharing between Bucks CC and the parishes;
- There is potential to utilise volunteers in more roles, including surveying and maintenance, supporting with CAMS, filtering reports, providing information;
- The north and south of the county are different, with fewer people in the north and few active volunteers. Need a more active volunteer group to carry out path maintenance in the north of the county;
- Overgrown paths a priority concern – the 'blitz' contract targeted overgrown paths, through this teams were deployed to clear paths;
- More enforcement is needed for landowners who consistently do not clear crops. Bucks CC could clear the path themselves and charge the landowner;
- Data on infrastructure on CAMS is out of date. Needs to be a system in place to gradually update the information on CAMS. Officers may need more support to review reports and disseminate to groups. Option is a 'trusted' volunteer who could support the team;
- Restoring the record project is important and should be in the action plan. It could be possible to survey before 2026, but low uptake when relying on volunteers. Should include 'white roads' as several footpaths end before the highway and the white road needs to be used, there could be a risk of these ways being lost;
- Many thousands more people will be living in the county who will want to access the countryside. There needs to be good links to the wider countryside from the development and good standard of paths;
- There are lots of bridleways which cross busy roads and where safer crossings are needed;
- Aylesbury will be surrounded by a dual carriage way, so crossings will be very important;
- There are many gaps in the network but difficult to join these up. Development could help to unlock these improvements;
- Look to the s147 process to remove stiles where there is not livestock;
- Surface condition, tree roots, camber etc. important for those with mobility problems, as well as better information.

Iver and District Countryside Association

- In general, and in basic way, local rights-of-way do meet the present needs of the public, but the likely increase in population in Iver will require significant improvements, both in terms of additional routes linking residential areas to the local countryside, and in terms of better signage and maintenance.
- Local rights-of-way do provide opportunities for exercise, recreation and general enjoyment of the countryside, but the improvements mentioned above would encourage more people to take part in them.
- In general, local rights-of-way do not provide easy access to the blind, partially sighted and those with mobility problems. It is difficult to see how this situation could be improved radically, and it might be better to concentrate on such areas as Black and Langley Parks in this regard.
- Local people are often discouraged or prevented from accessing the countryside because of lack of additional routes linking residential areas to the local countryside, and because of poor signage and maintenance.
- In recent years, Bucks County Council has severely cut funding to the rights-of-way service so that even statutory functions are not carried out.
- The likely increase in population in Iver will require significant improvements, both in terms of
- additional routes linking residential areas to the local countryside, and in terms of better signage and maintenance. Major infrastructure projects should be resisted on Green Belt and Colne Valley Park grounds, but they will present opportunities to improve the rights-of-way network.
- The public rights-of-way service can support improvements in health and wellbeing by better maintenance of the network and by continuing to nurture the Simply Walk programme.
- I am unsure how the public rights-of-way service can support the economy, but it could support tourism by carrying out significant improvements, both in terms of additional routes linking public transport hubs to the local countryside, and in terms of better signage and maintenance.
- There should be regular reviews of the final plan by officers and members of the council to ensure that the document is actioned and not merely shelved.
- There are a number of specific new routes which should be included in the Improvement Plan and actively promoted:
 - A link between Iver BW32 and Denham FP26 via a footway parallel to the A412 but shielded from the traffic.
 - A link between Iver BW32 and the A4007 via Mansfield Farm.
 - A link between Iver FP6 and Denham FP23 via Watergate Farm and the Denham Quarry site.
 - A kissing gate on Iver BW32 to access the A412 pavement south west of the M25 bridge.
 - A link between Iver FP3 and Iver FP4 via the western verge of Pinewood Road.
 - Dedication as rights-of-way of various existing informal, often tarmacked, paths on the Trewarden Estate in Iver Heath.
 - A link from Iver FP2 to the A412 parallel to the M25.
 - Signing of a route from the 5 Points (Crooked Billet) Roundabout along the north side of the A412 to the SE corner of Black Park where there should be a new access point.
 - A link from Bangors Road South (j/w Love Green Lane) to Iver BW8 at the north end of Coppins Lane.
 - Signing to Langley Park from the eastern end of Bellswood Lane.
 - Improvement and signing of the steps down the embankment from Iver Lane to Ford Lane.
 - A link on the east bank of the Colne Brook from Iver BW9 to Iver FP25.

- A permissive circular footpath around Farlows Lake.
- Dedication as a right-of-way of the link from Kingsway to Bangors Close.
- Dedication as rights-of-way of various existing informal paths in Thorney Country Park.
- Reinstatement of Dog Kennel Bridge linking Iver FP15 south of the railway to Iver FP15A north of the railway, and its dedication as a right of way.
- A link from Iver Station to the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal across land to the west of Thorney Lane North.
- A route along the bank of the Withy Ditch from North Park to Market Lane.
- In all the above, consideration should be given where appropriate to the provision of both cycle and pedestrian paths.

LEAP

<https://www.leapwithus.org.uk/>

Chris Gregory

LEAP aims to improve lives through physical activity and sport by reducing the number of inactive residents in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Key challenges across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes are created by the geography of the area and the changing population. The challenges include an increasing ageing population, growing inequalities and rural deprivation, increasing poor mental health and large scale housing growth. We believe physical activity and sport can improve lives and help reduce the pressure on local health, housing, social care and community services.

- Have an understanding of the county at a granular level;
- Invest in activities which will appeal to different age groups and demographics;
- Don't deliver themselves but use delivery organisations – coordinate with others, e.g. leisure centres;
- Chairs the Physical Disability Activity Task Group
- Trying to engage inactive residents;
- Has a good network of contacts.

Marlow Society

- Did the previous rights of way improvement plan influence any of your strategies, policies or project? - No. The Society's executive was aware as necessary through committee members active in Chiltern Society and on local councils.
- Improving the public rights of way network to support health and wellbeing - Better provision for RoW users (walkers and cyclists) when the path uses a public road. Improvements of infrastructure and information on alternatives to reduce the need to use busy/fast roads.
- Improving the public rights of way network for travelling to work and school - Introduction of safer roads around schools - park and stride areas, 20mph limits. Better sustainable transport interlinking at hubs - secure cycle parking at stations, for example. Emphasis on safe RoW access to transport hubs.
- Improving the public rights of way network for tourism and the visitor economy - More information. The Society publishes a leaflet for walking around Marlow town that is distributed by the Tourist Information Centre (which is not open on Sundays!). Add destination and distance/walking time info on finger posts (as Switzerland).

- Improving access to the public rights of way network for people with visual impairments or those with mobility difficulties - Personally, I'd focus on serious upgrade to the access for a limited number of routes to start with. Stile replacement is welcome, but when there are other major issues, it can seem slightly pointless.
- Do you think promoted routes are adequately maintained? - Maintenance is generally good on those around Marlow, yes. Not clear to visitors how to follow a circular walk. The A404 crossing - directly across a 70mph motorway - is very dangerous despite ad hoc re-routing signs and should not be promoted as shown.
- Given that the population of Buckinghamshire will grow considerably in future years, what improvements do you think need to be made to improve the public rights of way to accommodate future needs? - RoW at County level needs to fully support parish council work - particularly where access is gained through planning obligations (difficulties with disabled and bike access in 'Portlands' in Marlow, for example). As county-level the team needs to become aware of a need to coordinate. Access on foot / bike between Marlow town and the Little Marlow Lakes Country Park is disregarded by Highways England when making changes to A404 (Westhorpe roundabout and 'Volvo' footbridge replacement without bike provision for example). An informal route using the verge of the A404 river bridge between Bucks and Berks needs to be made safe - but there is no coordination and HE has no responsibility for county RoW maintenance. In general cycling is very poorly provided for both as a recreation and as a means of transport - safe routes between conurbations (e.g. Marlow and High Wycombe) are not available.
- Does your organisation have any strategies, policies or projects that could link with the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan? - Marlow Society aims to improve the town as a place to live, work and visit. We have a serious problem with motor traffic and the Society's Members (we have a membership of around 600 people) ask for sustainable transport to be actively enabled, which the executive tries to do when responding to planning matters.
- Please tell us any specific public right of way issues which need to be addressed - Access east (High Street) to west (Portlands Alley and West Street) across the recent 'Portlands' development in the centre of Town. The area's supplementary planning guide was reflected into the planning obligations and required pedestrian and bike.
- Please tell us anything else which may be helpful in developing the new public rights of way improvement plan - Footpaths are long established and seem to work well for most pedestrians (disabled access needs attention in places). But cyclists are Cinderella users of the network and could be given a separate part of the plan.

Parkinson's UK Amersham and High Wycombe Branch

John Grainger

- Have two walking groups – one short walks (3 miles) and one longer (6miles) – 'Chiltern Tremblers'.
- Improving the public rights of way network to support health and wellbeing - More circular walks advertised of varying lengths between 2 miles and 6 miles. Clear signage, good path maintenance, replacement of all traditional stiles with gated stiles, creation of more circular walks, more publicity. Replacement of stiles by gates to increase access.
- Improving the public rights of way network for travelling to work and school - More regular path maintenance and improved surfaces. Identify those most regularly used for this and improve path surfaces. It's not great walking to school or work along a muddy path.

- Improving the public rights of way network for tourism and the visitor economy - Publicity material in more prominent locations. Increased publicity and higher profile/availability of leaflets/downloads. Paths to and from schools should not be muddy.
- Improving the public rights of way network for people with visual impairments or those with mobility difficulties - Mobility - gated rather than traditional stiles, wider footpaths with better surfaces to allow stroller access, improved pathway maintenance. Visual impairment - difficult question. If Braille signage were to be used it would have to be low level. Creation of series of routes that have wider paths and surfaces that will allow the use of strollers/mobility scooters. Widen paths so two people can walk side by side.
- Do you think promoted routes are adequately maintained? - Mostly, but can be variable.
- Given that the population of Buckinghamshire will grow considerably in future years, what improvements do you think need to be made to improve the public rights of way to accommodate future needs? - Allowance for the continuance of, or new provision of, public rights of way in and around new developments.
- Does your organisation have any strategies, policies or projects that could link with the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan? - Expansion of our walking groups using circular walks, preferably ending at a pub!

Transition Town Marlow

- Did the previous rights of way improvement plan influence any of your strategies, policies or project? - Yes - we work to improve cycling and walking in the area. Changes to the infrastructure (positive or negative) and missed opportunities to improve infrastructure have a major impact on this.

Several public rights of way improvements were suggested:

- Particular focus on linking places where routes have been cut/compromised due to cars/developments e.g.:
 - A404: routes cut during creation – alternatives not good. (Links needed eg Marlow to Wycombe Leisure Centre; Little Marlow to High Wycombe Asda end)
 - M40: routes cut during creation – alternatives not good. (Places to link: Marlow Bottom to Asda/John Lewis underpass Winchbottom Lane to Wycombe Daws Hill end; Marlows and Bourne End to Wycombe leisure centre)
 - Wycombe Road (much faster now than originally when M40/A404 put in place) – where can bikes safely cycle in pace of this road?
 - Including checking that initially proposed paths aren't axed (e.g. connection path Daws Hill to Wycombe cycle paths – reports that proposed path has recently been axed. Also example of Portlands Alley development in Marlow where accessible specification from town was ignored by development)
 - Chalkpit Lane: pinchpoint as it rises out of Marlow towards Marlow Common. There is a footpath runs alongside to East, but no other cycle route. Now has got quite dangerous with car speeds/poor overtaking of bikes
 - When cycling/walking in westerly direction out of Marlow there is a bad pinch point on the A4155 on a bend at the top of an incline. In some counties, this type of problem is solved/mitigated by enabling walkers/cyclists to go through the hedge and walk/cycle on the far side of a hedge until it becomes safe for them to rejoin the carriageway. This could be done here.
- Increase number of paths e.g.:

- Run a shared use path from the new car park on Fieldhouse Lane northwards between A404 and lake. This would give future access to Little Marlow Lakes.
 - Develop a pleasant route Marlow to Bourne End mainly away from A4155 (eg through Little Marlow)
 - Develop shared use paths to overcome problems outlined above.
- Improve child transport options for schools/activities:
 - Improve cycle/walk route to Athletics Centre from Marlow and Bourne End
 - Improve morning cycle/walking experience for Holy Trinity School (eg shut Wethered Rd cut-through in front of school from for example 8.30 – 9.00 and 3.20 – 4.00 in term time (between west end of HT carpark – allowing for staff to exit – and west side of Trinity Close – allowing entrance/exit) and shut Trinity Road for the same times). This would enable safe walking /cycling out of school gate, down Trinity Rd, through to Rookery Gardens and onto the Eastbound shared use path. Do a ‘pickup car park ticket’ at Dean St car park if felt appropriate.)
 - Need a safe walking/cycling route to Danesfield School from Marlow. See also ‘pinch point’ problem outlined in 1.f above)
 - Improve car build-up of traffic for St Peter’s School drop off/pick up
- Increase number of accessible paths (bikes and pushchairs/wheelchairs):
 - In town: Heron’s Place
 - Crown Rd (enable two-way cycling to and from Sainsbury’s)
 - From Cromwell Gardens to New Court/Liston Rd
 - From Newfield Gardens to cycle path along A4155 (wide already)
 - From Newfield Gardens to Victoria Rd – could be widened if required
 - Linking: See above suggestions available for potential routes.
- Improve paths currently available but unpleasant/dangerous:
 - Marlow to Bourne End shared use path – along A4155: several parts very narrow and poorly surfaced
 - Marlow to Bourne End – walking along towpath – several wide access gates have become badly waterlogged. Not pleasant to negotiate.
 - Both sides of A404 around Westhorpe roundabout (e.g. safer route to Athletics Centre if have a safe southern route section around A4155 roundabout)
- Extend/sign/build routes where route lacking: e.g.:
 - Marlow Bottom to Wycombe: Extend path to new link to enable cycling between Asda/John Lewis part of Wycombe and Marlow Bottom
 - Daws Hill to link to Wycombe cycle paths – currently a footpath. Build strip of shared use path from the southern end of the (north/south) bridleway that ends on the east side of Wycombe road to the bottom of the hill (going past Rebellion), so as to link with the Marlow Bottom shared use path. This would make more use of the current bridleway, as there is currently no sensible place to walk once bridleway hits Wycombe Rd. Also at the northern end of this bridleway, run shared use path behind east side of hedge where bridleway currently joins Ragman’s Lane and then up the side of field to top of hill where Ragman’s joins Wycombe Rd. This could then link (eventually) with Winchbottom Rd to the east and a link to the tunnel under the M40 to the west.
 - Cycle path Marlow to Longridge (some on other side of river – so Berkshire – but a shared use cycle path here would benefit Marlow as well as Bisham)
 - Cycle/walking path to Globe Park to A4155 (down back of Cliveden Manor through car park of Marlow International) – no motorised traffic.

- Encourage green routes to work
- Upgrade route to accessible where lacking e.g.: Winchbottom Hill to Daws Hill – footpath but difficult for bikes/disabled Improve ‘Volvo bridge’ over A404. Ideally to fully accessible for all. First step add gully for bikes to be wheeled across.
- Improve ‘policing’ of routes: e.g.:
 - Tackle problem of cars parking on shared use paths (and footpaths) - e.g. Bobmore Lane in Marlow – both students and residents park over the width of the shared use path
 - Tackle anti-social behaviour on rights of way: e.g. under M40 – need to enhance this potentially key access point
- Trial ‘pedestrian priority’ routes/signs and process replacing ‘cycling forbidden’ with ‘pedestrian priority’ on paved/tarmacked footpaths where safe (e.g. in Marlow: Oak Tree Avenue to Trinity Court – straight path, high visibility)
 - Also Newfield Gardens to Victoria Rd – straight paths, high visibility) also non-paved routes/sections where alternative safe accessible/bike routes not yet set up (e.g. towpath from Spade Oak in Bourne End to Bourne End centre)
 - In other areas where pinch points occur on bridleway so horses/bikes (i.e. larger/faster transport) in same place as walkers (eg sections of bridleway from Marlow Bottom northwards)
- Improved signage in some areas:
 - I recently met a Marlow Town councillor lost under the A404 cut through at Monkton Lane
 - Improve signage at Chalkpit Lane at lower Marlow section as the road bends west.
 - Could do with improved signage to say that there is a footpath that runs up the hill and rejoins the road further up, thereby avoiding walking up the dangerous narrow road.
- Given that the population of Buckinghamshire will grow considerably in future years, what improvements do you think need to be made to improve the public rights of way to accommodate future needs? - Draw up a publicly available wish-list of all improvement in rights of way and ensure that all developments contribute financially to improvements on list AND that the developments themselves can be reached by non-motorised traffic and those with accessibility difficulties. Prioritise cycling and walking over car use. Look at the improvements that e.g. Windsor and Maidenhead have made, break down the evident barriers that Bucks has to doing likewise, and take every opportunity to improve rights of way.
- Does your organisation have any strategies, policies or projects that could link with the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan? - We have done some work on the Marlow Bottom to High Wycombe link via the M40 underpass. Would welcome further help as have found landowner to be unhelpful. We would like to trial the pedestrian priority idea (see section 9) on some footpaths in Marlow. We will be campaigning for the improved accessible paths listed in sections 1-7 and would like to see them adopted as targets in the ROWIP. We would like Highways England to significantly improve the Westhorpe interchange with respect to cyclists and pedestrians. At present crossing this requires someone to cross a slip road with a speed limit of 60mph!
- Please tell us any specific public right of way issues which need to be addressed - We have done some work on the Marlow Bottom to High Wycombe link via the M40 underpass. Would welcome further help as have found landowner to be unhelpful. We would like Highways England to significantly improve the Westhorpe interchange.

- Please tell us anything else which may be helpful in developing the new public rights of way improvement plan - We need an agreed list of improvements to be made and a forum for getting this done. We are not happy for there to be a plan and no action. The group is also very concerned that plans are made in Bucks without enabling of green transport links.

Visit Buckinghamshire

Lucy Dowson

- Very immature offer for the Chilterns – compare with the Cotswolds;
- Very fragmented offer for tourists - there are lots of resources but these need to be more joined-up;
- Walking and cycling are an important part of the tourism offer, both inside and outside of the Chilterns;
- High profile events such as cycle races raise profile and visitors e.g. L'Etape Chilterns;
- Few leaflets, no money to promote routes. Used to have links to Bucks CC but these were broken so took them down. Website should be the first port of call for people to download pdf's;
- Bucks is an outdoor county – a county of contrasts – all areas can benefit from improved visitor economy;
- Aylesbury Garden Town is an opportunity to improve walking and cycling routes and link into the countryside;
- Interested in developing itineraries to encourage visitors to stay for a few days, e.g. food and drink itineraries – public rights of way an important part of the offer;
- Can put promoted walks on the Visit Buckinghamshire website;
- Travel trade discussions about high-end walking holidays;
- The outdoor offer needs higher visibility;
- Want to build products around accessible tourism, accessibility is a high priority, working with LEP.

Additional Parish Council Responses

The Ivers Parish Council

There are a number of specific new routes which should be included in the Improvement Plan and actively promoted:

- 10.1 A link between Iver BW32 and Denham FP26 via a footway parallel to the A412 but shielded from the traffic.
- 10.2 A link between Iver BW32 and the A4007 via Mansfield Farm.
- 10.3 A link between Iver FP6 and Denham FP23 via Watergate Farm and the Denham Quarry site.
- 10.4 A kissing gate on Iver BW32 to access the A412 pavement south west of the M25 bridge.
- 10.5 A link between Iver FP3 and Iver FP4 via the western verge of Pinewood Road.
- 10.6 Dedication as rights-of-way of various existing informal, often tarmaced, paths on the Trewarden Estate in Iver Heath.
- 10.7 A link from Iver FP2 to the A412 parallel to the M25.
- 10.8 Signing of a route from the 5 Points (Crooked Billet) Roundabout along the north side of the A412 to the SE corner of Black Park where there should be a new access point.

- 10.9 A link from Bangors Road South (j/w Love Green Lane) to Iver BW8 at the north end of Coppins Lane.
- 10.10 Signing to Langley Park from the eastern end of Bellswood Lane.
- 10.11 Improvement and signing of the steps down the embankment from Iver Lane to Ford Lane.
- 10.12 A link on the east bank of the Colne Brook from Iver BW9 to Iver FP25.
- 10.13 A permissive circular footpath around Farlows Lake.
- 10.14 Dedication as a right-of-way of the link from Kingsway to Bangors Close.
- 10.15 Dedication as rights-of-way of various existing informal paths in Thorney Country Park.
- 10.16 Reinstatement of Dog Kennel Bridge linking Iver FP15 south of the railway to Iver FP15A north of the railway, and its dedication as a right of way.
- 10.17 A link from Iver Station to the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal across land to the west of Thorney Lane North.
- 10.18 A route along the bank of the Withy Ditch from North Park to Market Lane.
- In all the above, consideration should be given where appropriate to the provision of both cycle and pedestrian paths.

Denham Parish Council

We welcome the opportunity to participate in a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and have a strong wish to see positive changes being introduced.

There are many Rights of Way across the various parishes but there is all too little resources allocated to regularly check them and to ensure that they receive adequate attention.

Under Devolved Services we are funded to keep 9658.70 metres of certain identified Rights of Way cut twice a year including the overgrowth and the hedges. The ROWs to be maintained were identified without any consultation with the Parish Clerk and subsequently since the scheme started in 2016 there has not been any discussion as to whether we are maintaining the most relevant paths or to giving any consideration as to what might be improved.

With the extreme limitation on funding available for the maintenance of Rights of Way we would like to see developed a clear strategy for the future. This should include

- examine how some paths can be linked to others and developed to improve access and cohesion within and between local communities.
- some of the paths might also lend themselves to be developed as fitness or nature trails with a limited number of apparatus being installed encouraging more use and in addition helping local people to lead a more healthy life. This in turn should encourage more awareness of the various Public Rights of Way in their vicinity.
- by increasing the number of residents using a path it will help to keep paths open and reduce the amount of vegetation growth. However we must recognise that it will also lead to increase in surface erosion which will inevitably lead to an increase in expenditure.
- arrange for all of the Rights of Way across the Parish to be 'Walked and Reported on' at least once a year and as part of the process a fully costed schedule of works be prepared and fully reported back to the Parish.

Whilst all ROWs are equally important and none should be left to disappear we must recognise that some are strategically more essential than others. In Denham we have 3/4 that are absolutely essential in maintaining pedestrian links between communities.

1. DEN/52/2 The Pyghtle an important link between Denham Village and the Railway Station and at the northern end DEN/16/1 and DEN/17/1 between Savay Lane and Savay Close and Denham Green shops. **This ROW is regularly used by wheelchair users and Mobility Scooters.**
2. DEN/51/1 between Higher Denham and the Denham Green shops. **This ROW is regularly used by wheelchair users and Mobility Scooters and is the only safe pedestrian route between the two communities.**

Unless the ROW is actually 'metalled' the surface is eroded more quickly with an increase in the number of 'vehicles' using it and we have to recognise that with people living longer the number of residents with mobility aids will continually increase.

We have found it necessary to cut this Bridleway 3 times a year because of the rate of vegetation growth.

3. DEN/22/1 from Oxford Road, New Denham to top of Knighton Way Lane currently only used by dog walkers but will be heavily used when HOAC moves to the Denham Quarry.

These footpaths need funding made available for surface maintenance as well as keeping Hedges and Undergrowth cut and maintained. Already DEN/51/1 needs the surface of the path to be recovered to keep it available for use (photo attached).

Under Devolved Services Denham Parish Council is funded to maintain the paths listed below:

Denham					
Parish	FP/BW Number	Cams Number	Length Mts	No of Cuts	Total Length per route
Denham	41/1	55533	101.02	2	202.04
Denham	51/1	59322	556.96	2	1113.92
Denham	20/2	60000	232.32	2	464.64
Denham	46/1	63258	707.80	2	1415.60
Denham	46/3	63259	709.22	2	1418.44
Denham	41/3	63260	378.84	2	757.68
Denham	8/1	65091	274.31	2	548.62
Denham	2/1	65376	566.99	2	1133.98
Denham	3/1	65377	5.00	2	10.00
Denham	38/1	68082	1003.51	2	2007.02
Denham	26/1	69661	139.71	2	279.42
Denham	41/4	76088	153.67	2	307.34
Denham	54/1	??	??	2	??
Denham	26/3	??	??	2	??
Total Length in Mts to be Cut					9658.70

In addition we also regularly maintain DEN/43/1 which runs from Hollybush Lane alongside the southern boundary fence of the Tatling End Play Area to the Western Boundary to prevent dog walkers taking their dogs through the Play Area

Prior to the Devolved Services Agreement Denham Parish Council were provided funding, by submission of Invoice, by BCC for the cutting and maintenance of the following paths: BW3; FP4b; FP8; FP9; FP11; FP12; FP22; FP26a; FP27; FP20; FP30; FP30; FP33; FP35; FP37; BW38; BW39; FP43; FP45; BW46; BW52. At the time these paths were regularly used.

If Rights of Way are not properly maintained they are a wasted asset.