Key findings report

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan

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Background to the service:

The first Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) was produced by Powys ten years ago to meet the legislation set out under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.   This legislation placed a duty on local authorities to review their plan on a 10 year basis. This review is now due.

The plan sets out how the council is going to identify, prioritise and plan for any improvements so as to aid both access to and enjoyment of the network for all who wish to use it.

Powys has over 12,000 individual public rights of way which are used for recreation – particularly walking, cycling, horse-riding and driving "off-road".   The network is open to everyone and a right of way can consist of roads, paths and/or tracks – some of which go through Powys towns, the countryside and over private property.

Background to the consultation/engagement etc.

To comply with the duty, Powys County Council has to carry out a review of its current plan to establish and check progress on the objectives and actions listed within it. Alongside doing this it sought to engage interested stakeholders to capture their views on the current use of and condition of the rights of way network and seek views on priority actions so as to incorporate them into the next plan.

To do so effectively three surveys were developed using the originals created as an initial template to enable views to be compared in the ten year period since the original plan.   The three surveys were aimed at specific groups:
1) A generic survey for all users of the network
2) A landowner survey for all those whose land includes a right of way
3) A town and community council survey

All three surveys were built using an online software package and translated into Welsh so residents/stakeholders could respond in the language of their choice.

The surveys were published on the councils Have Your Say website and press releases were issued to promote the opportunity for people to respond by the deadline date.

Emails were also sent to all the town and community councils and known landowners seeking their views on the network. The surveys closed on 31st January.

The legislation also sets out some very specific target groups that have to be engaged including any Local Access Forums that may exist and specific disability groups that may struggle to access the network. The council has subsequently been working to engage other groups that may have access issues including families with young children and thus pushchairs, residents and students with learning disabilities who may wish to utilise the rights of way but need support to reduce barriers and various access groups that exist in the county like the Brecknock and Montgomeryshire Access groups.

A short bi-lingual Moovly was also produced to help residents get an overview and information about the network and the purpose of the consultation before completing the survey.

Report format:

This report sets out the key results from the generic survey and highlights any significant similarities or differences to the original results, followed by the key results from the landowner survey and the town and community council responses. There is then a more detailed question by question analysis for the generic survey. A separate shorter report has been produced for both the landowner and the town and community council survey responses. This is available on request but will be sent to those landowners/town and community councils who requested a copy.

Response rate:

The generic survey resulted in 289 responses.

The landowner survey had 71 replies

The town and community council survey elicited 15 responses and a handful of emails which were sent directly to the service.

Key findings from each of the other two surveys follow on from the key findings for the generic survey but fuller reports are also available with regard to the views of landowners and town and community councils to support the development of the next ROWIP.

Key Findings:

The key findings for the **general survey** are as follows:

- 78% of respondents said they used the rights of way network all year round come rain or shine with 11% stating they used it regularly but generally more on a seasonal basis. This gives a total of 89%. *(In 2006 84% of respondents said they used the network per se. The question had a yes or no answer)*
- Five respondents said they didn't use the network but would like to and two people said they didn't use the network and didn't wish to.
- The most popular recreational trails used were Offa's Dyke, Glyndwr's Way and the Wye Valley Walk. *(These were the same in the 2006 survey)*
- Walking was the most popular reason for using the network with 36% of those who responded stated that they did so on a daily basis and 44% stating they did so on a weekly basis. *(This activity was again the most popular in the original survey followed by dog walking)*
- Again 36% said they walked their dogs daily on a right of way.
- Running and cycling were more popular on a weekly or monthly basis with numbers for use by people horse riding and 4x4 or horse drawn carriage riding being lower. *(Similar results were gained in the 2006 survey).*
- 27 respondents said they used the network for other activities. Eight of these stated they like to wildlife watch. Other reasons included scouting sessions, mountain biking, fishing, shooting, climbing and taking part in running type events. One person said they used the network to walk to work every day whilst a few others were volunteers working to fix and improve the network for others.
- Just under three quarters of respondents stated they used the network because it was how they liked to spend their leisure time.   69% said it allowed them to stay healthy and get some exercise and 66% felt it also

added to their personal well-being and mental health. *(These results were similar to those expressed by residents in the 2006 survey)*

- When asked how people usually travelled to a right of way the top two answers were they walked or they drove there. *(These were the top two answers in 2006 as well).*

- 78% of respondents stated that they didn't really have a preference on the type of route they used and used circular, long distance and the generic network. *(Respondents in 2006 felt that they had no preference and used all types of routes)*

- The key problems users experienced on the network were poor way marking and signage, overgrown paths, styles or gates being unsuitable for the user and obstructions like a fallen tree blocking a path etc. Some concerns were expressed around dogs barking or not being on leads and being wary of farm animals in fields. *(Respondents in 2006 were also concerned primarily around signage and way marking, followed by the issues above).*

- 44% of respondents who classed themselves as walkers felt the network was suitable for their use compared to 28% or horse riders and 31% of cyclists.

- Residents felt families with pushchairs and those with a mobility issue would find the network difficult to use.   (Only 5% and 3% respectively felt the network would be suitable for these users).

  Note: Interesting a higher number of men than women rated the network as poor or very poor for families with pushchairs (38 versus 28) and no women stated they had given birth in the past six months although the age profile of the women who responded suggested that some could be mothers or grandmothers with children in pushchairs. In terms of mobility three respondents out of the six respondents who stated they had mobility issue had rated the network for this question. One stated they felt it was average and two felt the suitability to be very poor (2).

- Just over half of respondents (52%) felt satisfied with the service overall with more specific figures ranging from 69% of respondents stating their satisfaction with the quality and standard of the network surfaces to only 25% (a quarter) stating they felt satisfied and could see evidence of enforcement action taken by the service to reduce obstructions to a pathway.

- Respondents used Ordnance Survey maps, the internet and local knowledge primarily for information about the network. *(In the 2006 survey Tourist*

Information Centres were a key source of information alongside leaflets. The growth and ability to access information via the internet has changed these figures).

- Obstructions to and the condition of a pathway were the top two things that discouraged people from using the network. This was followed by a dislike of crossing over someone's land or walking through a farmyard. *(Not knowing the routes and walking over someone's private land were secondary concerns expressed in the 2006 survey with the top two being the same as shown above).*

- 38 respondents choose "something else" and said that farm dogs barking or biting them, paths being completely blocked and overgrown and farm animals like bulls and cows being in fields were intimidating and discouraged them from using the network.

- 61% of respondents said they used open access land regularly. 36% sometimes did and 3% never did.

- The main issue that deterred people from using open access land with just under a third of respondents choosing this was not knowing where these routes were. A few additional comments were made around aggressive landowners, barking farm dogs, lack of way marking, the poor condition of the pathway or blocked pathways and routes not showing up on OS maps. A few people were worried about getting lost and there were some concerns about potential bad weather and the routes not going where people wanted to go. *(Views given in the original survey were very similar)*

- In terms of improving access to the network respondents were asked to rank six things in order of importance. Reducing obstructions was a top priority followed by the upkeep and clearance of vegetation and third was keeping the furniture like stiles and gates maintained so people can navigate the network easily. *(In the 2006 survey respondents choose signage, clearance of vegetation and improving the condition of surfaces as their top priorities).*

- When given a more detailed list of priorities and asked to place these in order respondents choose *"General maintenance - opening up and maintaining routes and trails including installing gates and stiles and clearing overgrown vegetation"* as their first choice closely followed by *"Way marking and signage - maintaining and erecting more way markers to help people navigate the network on the public rights of way at entrances to access land "* and then

"Resolving anomalies - working with landowners to resolve issues around things like access to cul-de-sacs paths etc."

- In terms of the discretionary powers that the council has for open access land residents wanted the focus firstly to be on "Way marking and signage - putting way markers up and maintaining them on public rights of way and at entrances to access land"

- Information posted on the council's website which highlights the routes and the definitive map followed by information boards positioned at the start of or at a half way point of a route were deemed to be the most useful forms of information the team could provide for users of the network. *(There has been a change from the 2006 survey results and a clear move away for users wanting printed leaflets or literature about the rights of way network. The reliance and ability to access information via the internet has changed the information channels that people use and want to use).*

- Diversions that resolved anomalies and linked dead paths back to the network, farmyard diversions and those that protecting wildlife, flora and fauna were deemed the most important to consider. Diversions around woods or forests were considered to be of the least concern. *(In the 2006 survey diversions around farmyards, private gardens and then those that protected wildlife were classed as the priorities for respondents).*

- When asked about modification orders around the definitive map respondents ranked two things as taking priority over other options. There were "applications where the possible error has meant that the public cannot use the path at all e.g. the path on the map passes through a very old building" and "applications where adding or upgrading a public right of way should add significantly to the network e.g. a missing link".

- 60% of respondents would rather funds were used to "Open up routes on the definitive map which up to now have received no maintenance work at all" than see the council focus on "Maintaining the routes that are already opened up and improve their standard." *(This results has changed completely from the view given in the original survey where 36% of respondents said open up routes which had not been maintained to date and 43% said maintain those that were already open instead. This shows a change in view on this issue.)*

- Creating new local circular routes was considered more important than creating long distance routes as was negotiating with landowners to open up blocked rights of way rather than taking enforcement action at the earliest opportunity. Overwhelmingly respondents also felt that equal priority should be given to recreational trails and other public rights of way.

- In terms of the approach to the rights of way network there was no clear view expressed around whether the council should continue with its community priority option or instead give each individual route its own priority ranking. The views were even on this front with only slight more people stating the community approach would be their preferred option. (80 versus 74)

Additional comments from other channels

Alongside the survey responses a few residents had contacted the council to comment via email or letter. For the most part the comments reflect those already given by those responding to the survey. One resident however felt that there was a conflict between the farming community and local residents which could be resolved with a proposal.

The proposal suggested that any future development should include (small) areas of land in and around villages set aside as natural habitats connected by permissive paths that follow hedge lines rather than any existing Rights of Way. That the paths are easily negotiated – no stiles etc. That these areas and the connecting paths are made the responsibility of the local community giving a focus for community responsibility – a function that would promote localism and local democracy. That they are seen as a way of promoting a biodiversity that is close enough to people, particularly the retired, to both value and enjoy. That the funding for this provision is drawn from development profit, government investment in natural habitat, and other financial resources. This would require an understanding of all available investment funding for the wellbeing of communities and the natural environment so that it is holistically used to provide for people and nature together, in close proximity.

The respondent listed the benefits as providing easily accessible walks without stepping foot onto farming land, safe and familiar routes for people including perhaps those with dementia, local involvement and responsibility for maintenance and added value to life in the community.

Key Findings:

The key findings for the **landowner survey** are as follows:

- 62 out of the 71 respondents have a public right of way that crosses their land

- 15 felt that their right of way made a positive contribution to both tourism in the area and provided social interaction for them. 11 felt it was educational, 7 felt it was beneficial as users reported problems they may have seen to them that they were not necessarily aware of and 2 said it allowed people to get some fresh air.

- The top five problems that caused landowners difficulties were people not closing gates after them, trespassing, dogs being off leads, people getting lost and people littering.

- 11 had local circular routes that crossed their land and 10 had long distance ones.

- 33 out of the 57 who answered the question said they were aware of their legal duties in relation to the rights of way on their land. However five weren't and 19 were not sure.

- 11 were aware of the service offered by the council, 32 weren't and 14 were not sure.

- Only six respondents said they had received a copy of the Landholder Guide to public rights of way. 54 hadn't. 18 requested a copy.

- 21 landowners had had contact with Countryside Services over the past two years, 39 hadn't and two couldn't remember.

- Landowners were more satisfied than dissatisfied with the provision and quality of the furniture provided, the helpfulness of staff from the service but were not content with way marking and signage, work carried out to the network surface and the definitive map.

- Landowners felt similarly to the general public on a number of issues. Firstly that the council should create new local circular routes rather than long distance ones, that negotiation rather than enforcement notices should be the approach to reduce obstructions on the network and that equal priority should be given to both recreational trails and all other routes.

- Landowners were similarly slightly more in favour of continuing with the community type approach rather than giving each and every right of way an

individual ranking. This was as close as the general public view with 12
landowners being in favour of the community approach versus 10 for
individual rating.

- However landowners felt that it would be more useful to maintain routes that
were currently open than open up routes on the definitive map where no work
had yet taken place. 60% of respondents to the general survey felt the latter
should take priority though although in the original survey this figure was
reversed with more residents/users in support of the current landowners view.

- Landowners rated their top five priorities as way marking, general
maintenance of the network, educating the public about the countryside and
the access, resolving anomalies and sustaining the provision of promoted
local and long distance trails/routes. There did appear to be a specific
problem with some users leaving gates open.

- In terms of diversions landowners felt priority should be given to farmyard
diversions first and foremost followed by those to avoid private gardens, those
which would avoid high maintenance costs and then those that would
preserve conservation, wildlife, flora and fauna.

Key Findings:

13 town and community councils responded to the survey. However on closer analysis one response was on behalf of two councils so 14 survey responses were received in total plus an email from another town and community council. Out of the 14 survey responses one town and community council choose not to disclose who they were but the remaining 13 did.

The key findings from the survey sent to all **town and community councils** are as follows:

- Three town and community councils said they were always involved in the maintenance of existing routes and also with the production of leaflets and guides to promote their rights of way locally.   Six said they were sometimes involved at this level.

- Permissive access agreements were not common with only two councils saying they sometimes used them.

- One council had always worked to establish a walking group whilst six others said they were sometimes involved in doing so.

- In terms of suitability of the network, it was clear that in the main walkers, dog walkers and horse riders would in the view of the town and community council's rate the network as good. People with mobility difficulties, families with pushchairs and those using horse drawn carriages would class it as poor.

- When asked to consider how adequate certain aspects of the network were versus their importance to the community, routes from towns, local circular routes, routes that by-passed busy roads and routes which provided access to particular features were deemed to be very important. In terms of the current adequacy of these aspects they were all classed overall as adequate. The main exception was around routes from towns where three councils had rated them as good and six average.

- When asked what related activities town and community councils were already or would like to be involved in, the key things that four were already doing things included either monitoring and reporting obstructions, helping to maintain some of the network and working to secure and support circular routes. One was happy to help with signage and offered to walk routes to

provide feedback around access issues. Another had set up a walking group (Walkers Are Welcome Montgomery) and were planning a walking festival and wanted to be more involved in promoting routes and carrying out low level maintenance. A few were keen for updates on specific routes including a cycle route through Maes Y Dre, progress on a modification order for Graig Lane in Berriew and the Montytrax.

- When asked to consider some dilemma questions around best use of resources all the councils that answered the question (11) were in favour of the council creating new local circular routes as opposed to long distance routes.

- Nine out of the 11 felt we should give equal priority to both recreational trails and the typical network routes rather than focusing on recreational trails as a priority.   Seven out of the 11 ranked maintaining routes on the definitive map that were already open and sustaining these as more important than opening up new routes.

- Six voted to keep the priority community approach as opposed to three town councils who thought we should rank each individual right of way. (Note: 9

- Finally ten out of the 11 were clear that negotiating with landowners whenever there were obstructions was their preferred stance rather than us serving an enforcement notice. One council felt we should do this though.

- General maintenance of the network and way marking were clearly the two key things that councils felt needed to be a top priority. Following this was resolving anomalies, working to create school routes, working on the definitive map, looking at routes that promoted health and access management.

- Promoting the network via a mix of channels also came out as a priority when the councils were asked to consider what three things they would choose the council to focus on if they could only achieve three things. Way marking and general maintenance were the other two.

- One council felt that dealing with the issue of damage caused by 4x4 vehicles was a priority whilst another stated that landowner compliance and ensuring there were circular routes in place was something they felt should be tackled. Health and school routes were also mentioned.

General Survey

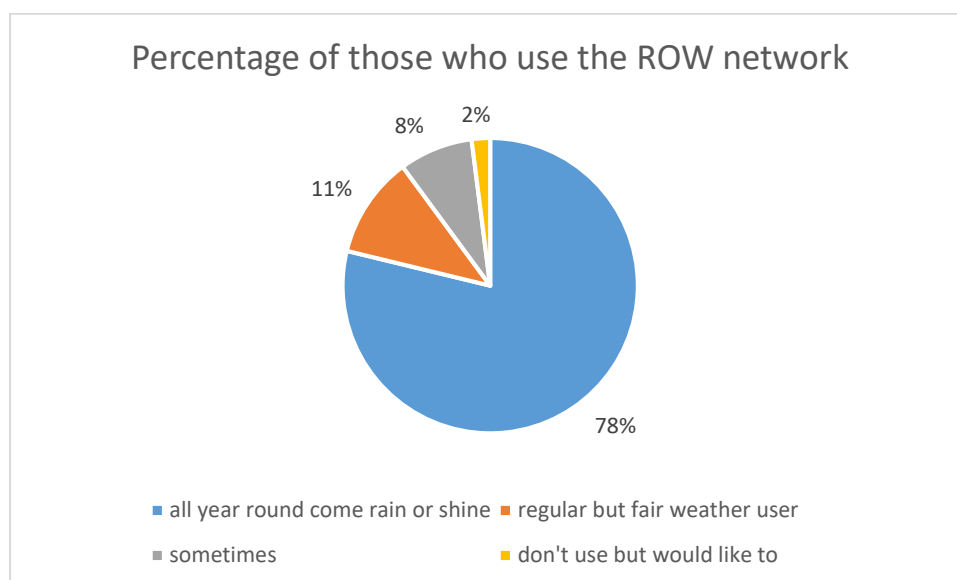**Question by question analysis.**

Q1. Do you visit any of the following?

Respondents could select as many answers as applied to them. The two most frequently chosen answers were woodlands and forests with 79% of respondents selecting this and slightly less (78%) stating they visited common land and open countryside. Only 19% of respondents chose playgrounds but this is most likely to be because parents of young children were unlikely to have responded to the survey.

Answer	Number	Percentage
Parks (1)	150	52%
Playgrounds (2)	54	19%
Lakes (3)	172	60%
Common land and open countryside (4)	**226**	**78%**
Nature reserves (5)	178	62%
Farmland (6)	189	65%
Woodlands and forests (7)	**228**	**79%**
Riversides (8)	199	69%

Q2. Which of the following best describes your use of the public rights of way in Powys?

51 respondents choose not to answer this question giving a base of 238 who did.

Percentage of those who use the ROW network

- all year round come rain or shine
- regular but fair weather user
- sometimes
- don't use but would like to

Just over three quarters of respondents (78%) were people who use the network all year round regardless of the weather whilst around 11% stated they did use the network on a regular basis but this was more on a seasonal basis. 2% of respondents stated they didn't currently use the Rights of Way network but would like to.

The 2% who answered that they didn't use the network but would like to were asked a follow up question around what barriers may exist and what would help them to access the

network. None of the respondents choose to give any further details although two other respondents who hadn't answered the original question suggested that we should have provided an answer for those who didn't use the network and didn't wish to do so.

Q3. Do you use any of the following recreational trails within Powys?

Number of respondents who used recreational trails
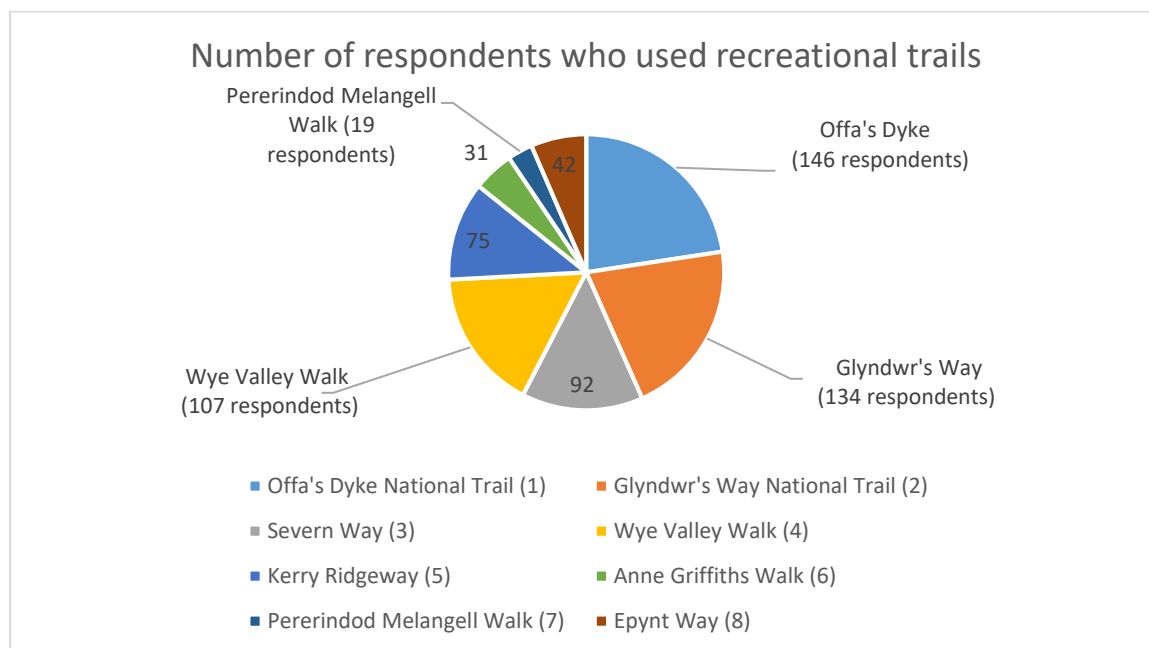
Offa's Dyke, Glyndwr's Way and Wye Valley Walk were the most used trails in the county with 146, 134 and 107 respondents stating they used these trails respectively.   The least used was the Pererindod Melangell Walk with only 19 people starting they used this trail. This may be due to lack of knowledge of this particular route and perhaps also for the Anne Griffiths (31) and Epynt Way (42) or it may be that those responding lived nearer to the more well-known trails or they prefer to avoid lesser known routes.

Q4. The following activities are popular on our rights of way network. Please state which ones apply to you and how often you do them.

Respondents were asked to consider each type of activity and rate them based on their usage.   The table below shows the results.

Activity	Daily Use	Weekly	Monthly	Twice Yearly	Yearly	Activity Base	Never use
Walking	82	100	36	7	2	*227*	2
Running	6	24	16	6	4	*56*	69
Cycling	7	35	42	24	8	*116*	39
Horse riding	2	9	4	3	9	*27*	93
Horse drawn carriage	1	0	0	0	2	*3*	100
4 x 4 driving	1	1	5	5	8	*20*	94
Motorcycling	0	5	11	2	0	*18*	96
Dog walking	54	22	16	6	2	*100*	48

A number of respondents choose to either skip an activity that didn't relate to them or to select "never use" in the answer options.

The results show that both walking and dog walking are the most popular activities undertaken on the network. Just over a third (82) of those who choose walking as an activity said they used the network to walk on a daily basis with a further 44% (100) using routes weekly. Over half of those who were walking their dogs via a right of way path did so on a daily basis with a fifth saying it was more a weekly occurrence.

Walking

	1	2	3	4	5
Walking	82	100	36	7	2

Activity Frequency: 1=Daily, 2=Weekly, 3= Monthly, 4=Twice Yearly and 5=Yearly
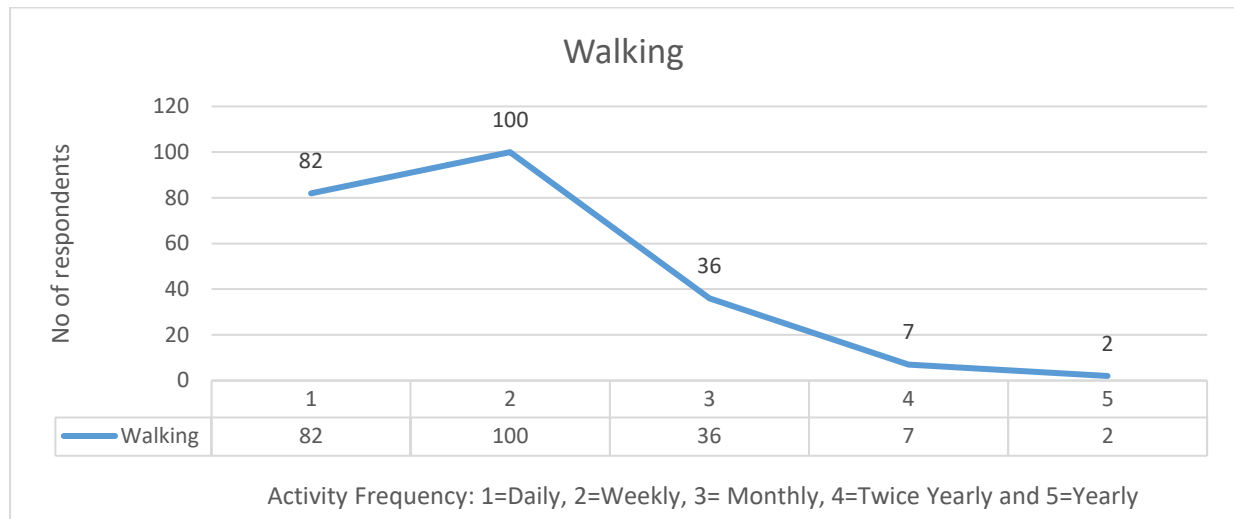
Interestingly when comparing the figures cycling comes out as a more popular pursuit on both a weekly and monthly basis when compared to dog walking. Running appears to be more popular on a weekly and a monthly basis rather than daily too and has similar figures to people dog walking at these times.

Top 4 activities

	1	2	3	4	5
Walking	82	100	36	7	2
Running	6	24	16	6	4
Cycling	7	35	42	24	8
Dog walking	54	22	16	6	2

Activity Frequency: 1= Daily, 2=Weekly, 3=Monthly, 4=Twice Yearly and 5=Yearly.

Walking   Running   Cycling   Dog walking
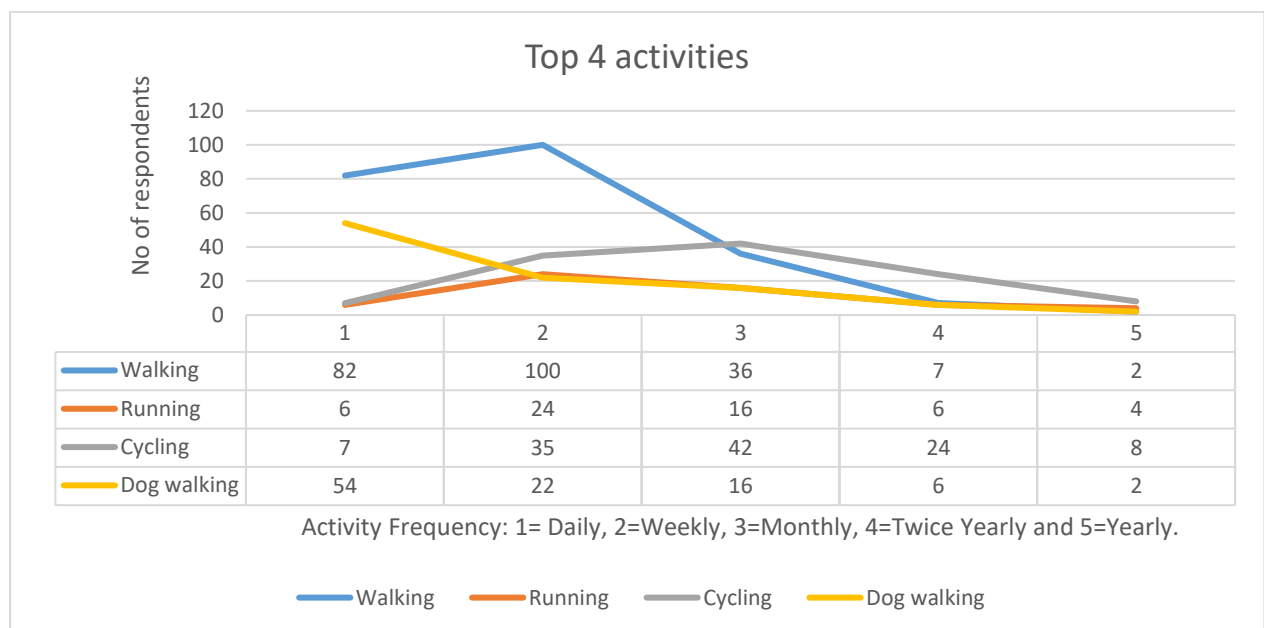
Respondents were also given the chance to state they used the network for something else. 27 respondents said they used the network for other activities like watching wildlife, scouting, fishing, mountain biking, climbing, shooting and taking part in events.   Of these 27 six people stated they used the network on a daily One person said they used the network to walk to work every day whilst a few others were volunteers working to fix and improve the network for others.

Q5. What makes you use the public rights of way?

Respondents could select any or all of the answers given. The most popular answer with 72% of respondents choosing it was that it was how people liked to spend their free/leisure time. Similarly just under 70% had selected that they felt it helped them to stay healthy and get some exercise and this was a reason to use the network. The table below gives all the responses.

Reason	Number of responses	Percentage
It's how I like to spend some of my leisure/recreation time (1)	209	72%
It's about getting some exercise / staying healthy (2)	200	69%
It's about my personal well-being/it helps me to relax and unwind (3)	192	66%
I use them to get to work or go to the shops locally (4)	38	13%
I use them for another reason not listed above (5)	27	9%

In relation to the final answer where 27 respondents stated they had another reason not listed to use the network, the key things were very similar to those given in the previous question. Volunteering, dog walking and using the network to run scouting activities or to get to visit neighbours or get to their own home were listed. Three respondents appeared to have some concerns about the long term future of the network and had written the following:

148	ROW will be lost without proof of use and ancient tracks get lost
227	to keep the network open and accessible
230	To keep them alive!

Q6. How do you usually travel to the start of a public right of way?

The following chart shows that on the whole people tend to either walk or drive to their chosen starting point. Seven used their motorbike and one person a train.

Travel options to get to a public right of way
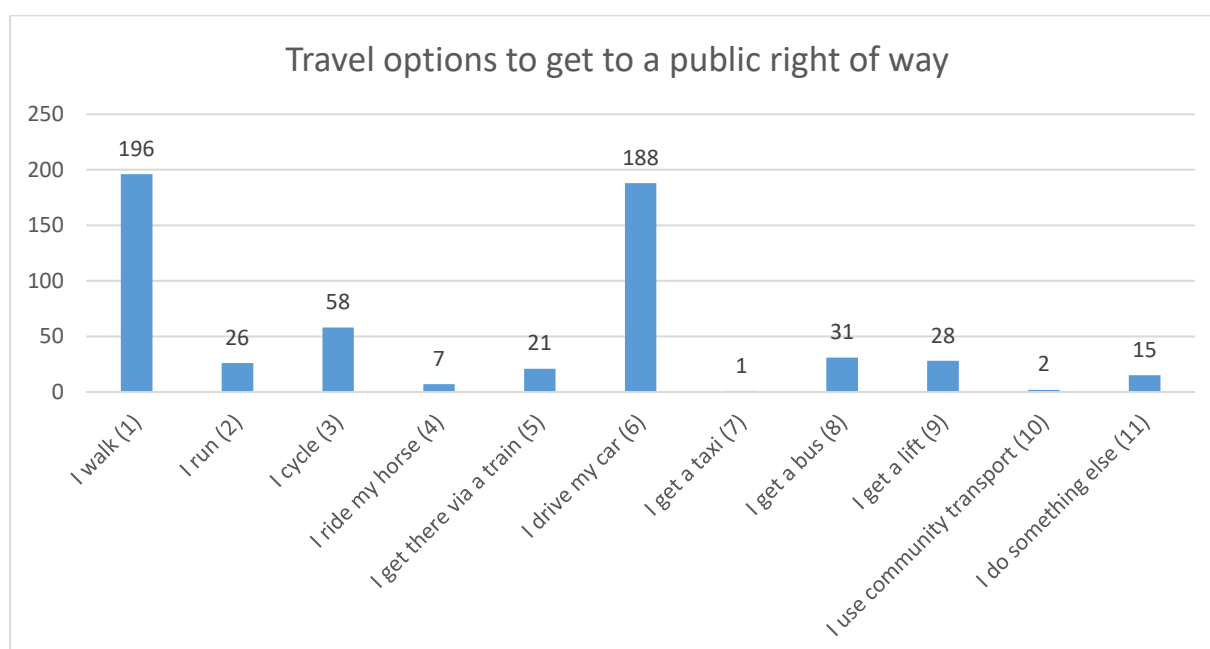
Q7. Which type of route do you prefer to use?

Route preferences

Legend:
- A long distance promoted trail (1)
- A town walk (2)
- A promoted circular route (3)
- The general pulbic rights of way network (4)
- All of the above (5)
- I don't have a real preference (6)

Values shown on chart: 4, 6, 11, 31, 68, 115
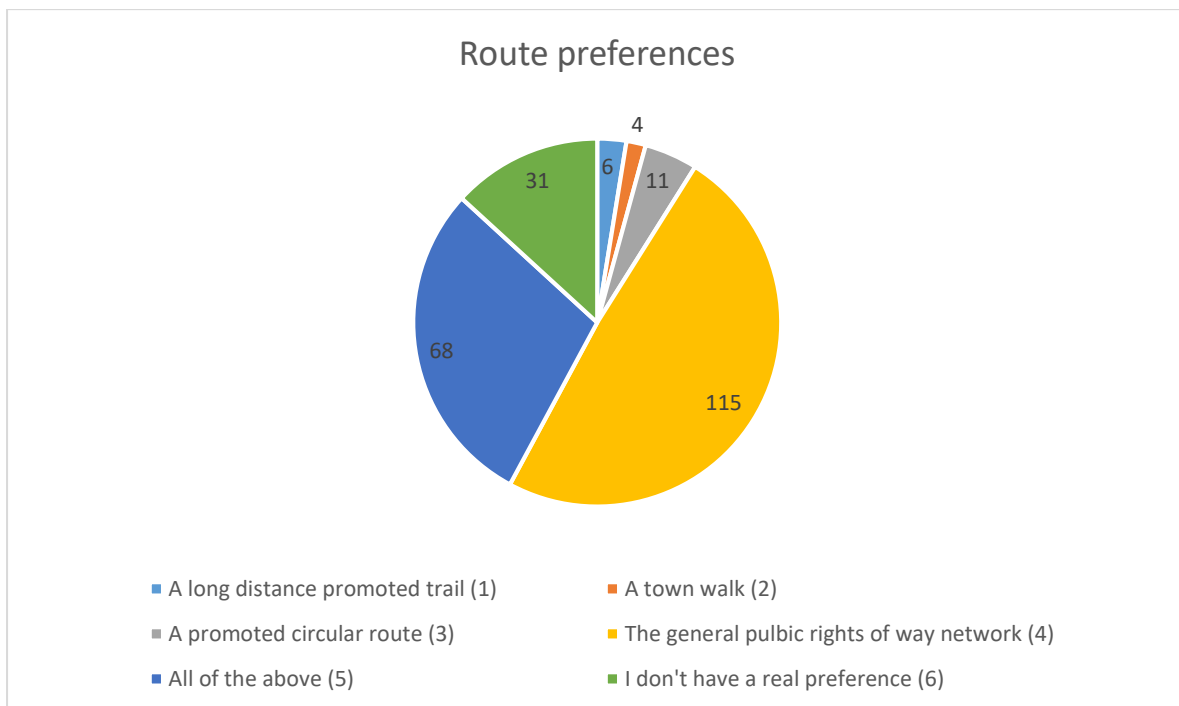
On the whole it appears that just under half of all the respondents (49%) stated that they enjoyed the general rights of way network per se with a further 13% not having any real preferences and 29% saying they liked all of the routes. Only 11 respondents said they preferred a circular route, six a long distance promoted trail and four a town walk.

Q8. What problems, if any, have you encountered whilst using the public rights of way in Powys?

Problems Experienced

Legend:
- Something else (8)
- Animals (dogs not on leads or bulls, sheep etc) (7)
- Inaccurate information (6)
- Fallen trees /obstructions (5)
- Poor condition of stiles/gates (4)
- Intimidation (from other users/landowners) (3)
- Overgrown surface/ vegetation (2)
- Poor signgage/waymarking (1)

Values shown on chart: 24, 86, 29, 131, 158, 70, 168, 183

Axis: Number of responses / Problem types
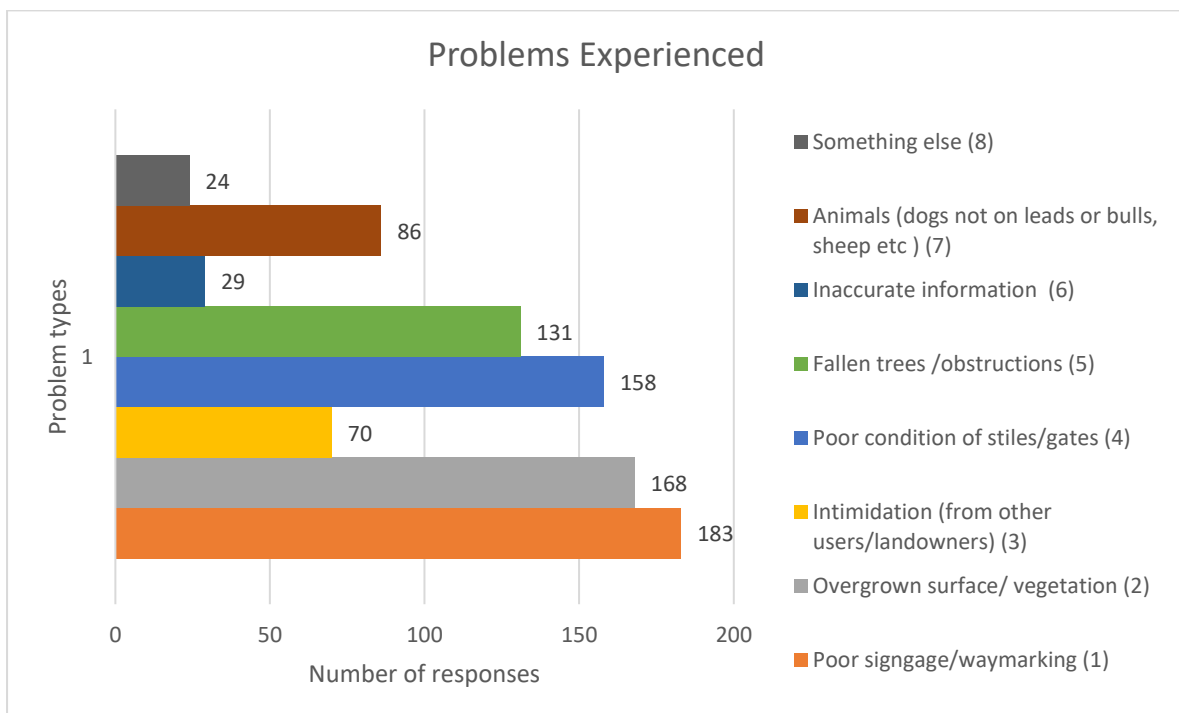
The main problems facing users was poor signage, overgrown pathways and the poor condition of some stiles and gates or these being unsuitable for the user.

There appeared to be some incidences of intimidation from either other users or landowners and on further scrutiny the majority of additional comments were more about landowners being aggressive when respondents walked over their land.

Alongside landowners being intimidating the fear of farm animals and in particular issues with dogs being off leads and farmyard dogs barking and being aggressive when having to navigate through a farmyard were of concern to just under 90 respondents.

23 respondents choose to say that "something else" was a problem. The key things listed were around bridges being rotten or missing on parts of the network, hedges or fences (electric and otherwise) being erected over paths and barbed wire too being placed to deter walkers. A few other comments were given including the following:

11	A lack of information as to where ROWs actually are.
19	Access through farm yards is obstructed or unclear. Routes blocked by ploughed fields or crops. Routes blocked by fences over farm land.
68	Public footpaths indicated on map inaccessible due to absence of gates/stiles
82	Ploughed pathways
190	people on bikes with no bells, screaming at you to get out of their way
192	Stiles are not always dog friendly, very problematic when you are half way around a walk. (Try lifting a fully grown Alsatian!)
221	fences across paths around Llansantffraid ym Mechain
229	Powys County Council's anti-vehicular use policy
233	Deep mud!

Q9. What are your views on the suitability of the public rights of way network in Powys for each type of the following users?

Walkers/dog walkers were deemed to be the users for whom the network was most suitable followed by cyclists, horse riders and then motorcyclists/4x4 users. 45% of respondents rated the network as either excellent or good for dog walkers with 44% stating this for walkers. 83% of respondents felt that people with mobility difficulties would find the network unsuitable and 67% of those who answered the question felt that families with pushchairs would do so.

Type of user	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Walker	17	83	72	40	13
Horse rider	3	21	26	23	12
Person with a mobility difficulty	1	2	16	55	41
Family with a pushchair	1	5	37	54	33
Horse-drawn carriage	1	0	12	13	19
Motorcyclist/4x4 driver	6	13	21	10	9
Cyclist	3	23	27	18	13
Dog walker	13	46	39	24	8

Q10. The Countryside Services section deals with a number of things to promote and improve the rights of way network. This includes: the repair and maintenance of paths and furniture taking appropriate enforcement action when a user of the network has found an obstruction to a path promoting long distance routes/trails. We'd like to know your level of satisfaction with any that you have experience or knowledge of.
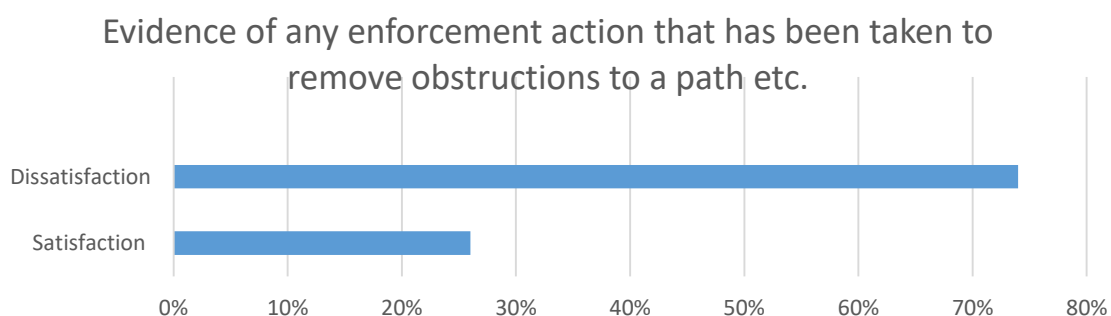
Aspects of work	Very satisfied / Fairly Satisfied	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied
The quality and standards of network surfaces.	69%	31%
The quality and standard of the furniture e.g. stiles and gates.	56%	44%
Signage e.g. Waymarks and signposts	44%	56%
The quality of practical improvement work that you see whilst out using the network.	61%	39%
Evidence of any enforcement action that has been taken to remove obstructions to a path etc.	26%	74%
Promotional information (leaflets, noticeboards) that give details re the network and what we do to look after it.	47%	53%
Information about long distance trails.	67%	33%
Our staff response to you if you contact the service i.e. professionalism, politeness etc.	66%	34%
Use and maintenance of the definitive map including diversions or dealing with modification orders.	42%	58%
Open Access advice and assistance	55%	45%
Overall rating of the whole service	52%	48%

Those who responded to this question feel that the quality and standards of the network surfaces overall are to their satisfaction (69% are very or fairly satisfied).
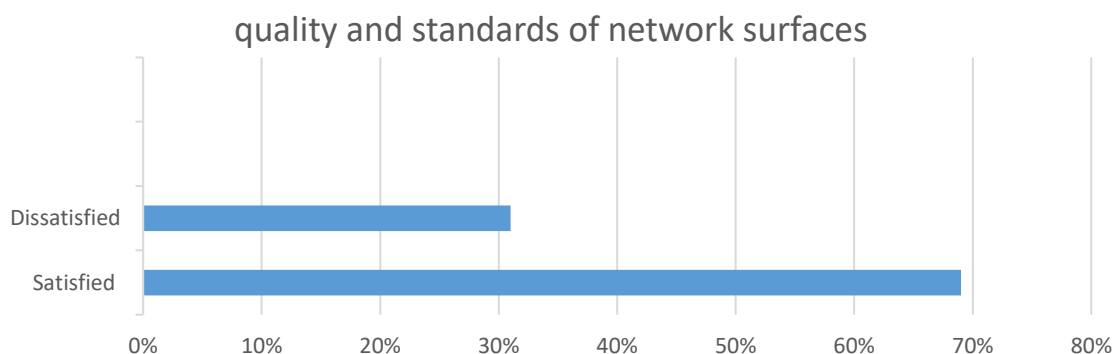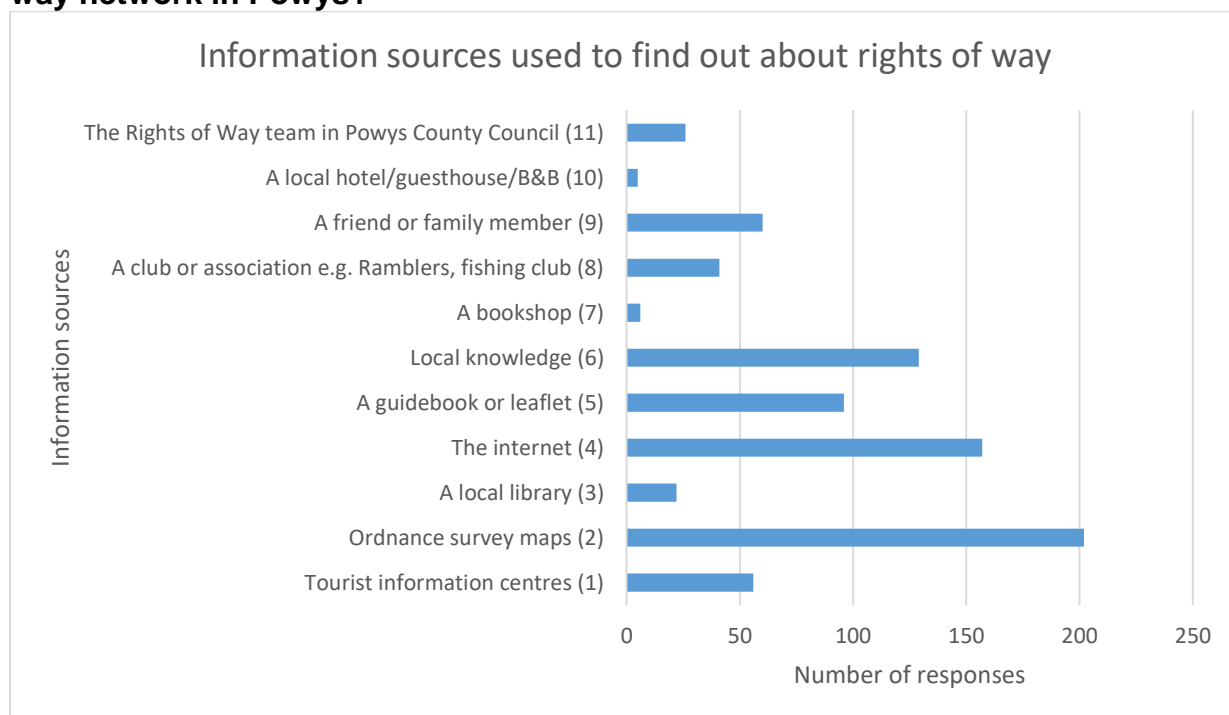

67% of respondents said that they were satisfied with information about long distance trails and 66% were happy overall with customer care and their dealings with staff in the service. The quality of the practical improvement work that users see is also high with 61% stating they are satisfied.

However there appears to be dissatisfaction with the lack of evidence of any enforcement action taken to remove obstructions. Just over a quarter of respondents (26%) were satisfied with this aspect of the service meaning 74% are not. The reasons for this dissatisfaction could be mixed in that users may not be aware of negotiations that are underway with land owners to remove obstructions and that if an obstruction has been removed it may not be that a user would actually be any the wiser and know there was an obstruction in the first instance that needed removing. However there are indications from the previous questions that obstructions are a concern and that perhaps there is dissatisfaction per se with barriers being put in place which users see with regard to not just fallen trees blocking a path but fences, barbed wire and hedges being erected by landowners to put users off using a particular route.

Evidence of any enforcement action that has been taken to remove obstructions to a path etc.

Dissatisfaction	(bar extends to ~74%)
Satisfaction	(bar extends to ~26%)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

The other aspects where dissatisfaction was higher than satisfaction were around the use and maintenance of the definitive map, signage and way marking and promotional leaflets/noticeboards which set out information about routes and what we do to look after the network.

Q11. Where would you normally get information from about the public rights of way network in Powys?

Information sources used to find out about rights of way

Information sources (y-axis), Number of responses (x-axis, 0 to 250):

- The Rights of Way team in Powys County Council (11): ~30
- A local hotel/guesthouse/B&B (10): ~5
- A friend or family member (9): ~60
- A club or association e.g. Ramblers, fishing club (8): ~40
- A bookshop (7): ~10
- Local knowledge (6): ~130
- A guidebook or leaflet (5): ~95
- The internet (4): ~155
- A local library (3): ~25
- Ordnance survey maps (2): ~200
- Tourist information centres (1): ~55

Ordnance survey maps, the internet and local knowledge were key sources of information for the majority of respondents with a bookshop, local B&B and the local library being the least favoured places to find out more about the network. Naturally with this survey being promoted to local residents it's unlikely that many would class themselves as tourists and thus would be unlikely to be staying in a hotel or B&B. This number would be more likely to increase if we'd targeted tourists groups or asked some local B&Bs to hand out questionnaires at the time of the consultation.

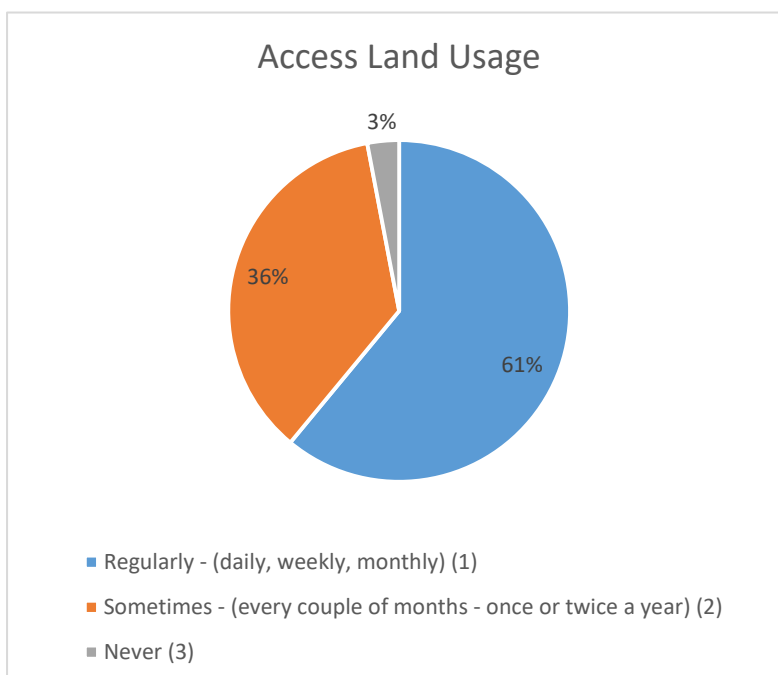**Q12. What discourages you from using the public rights of way?**
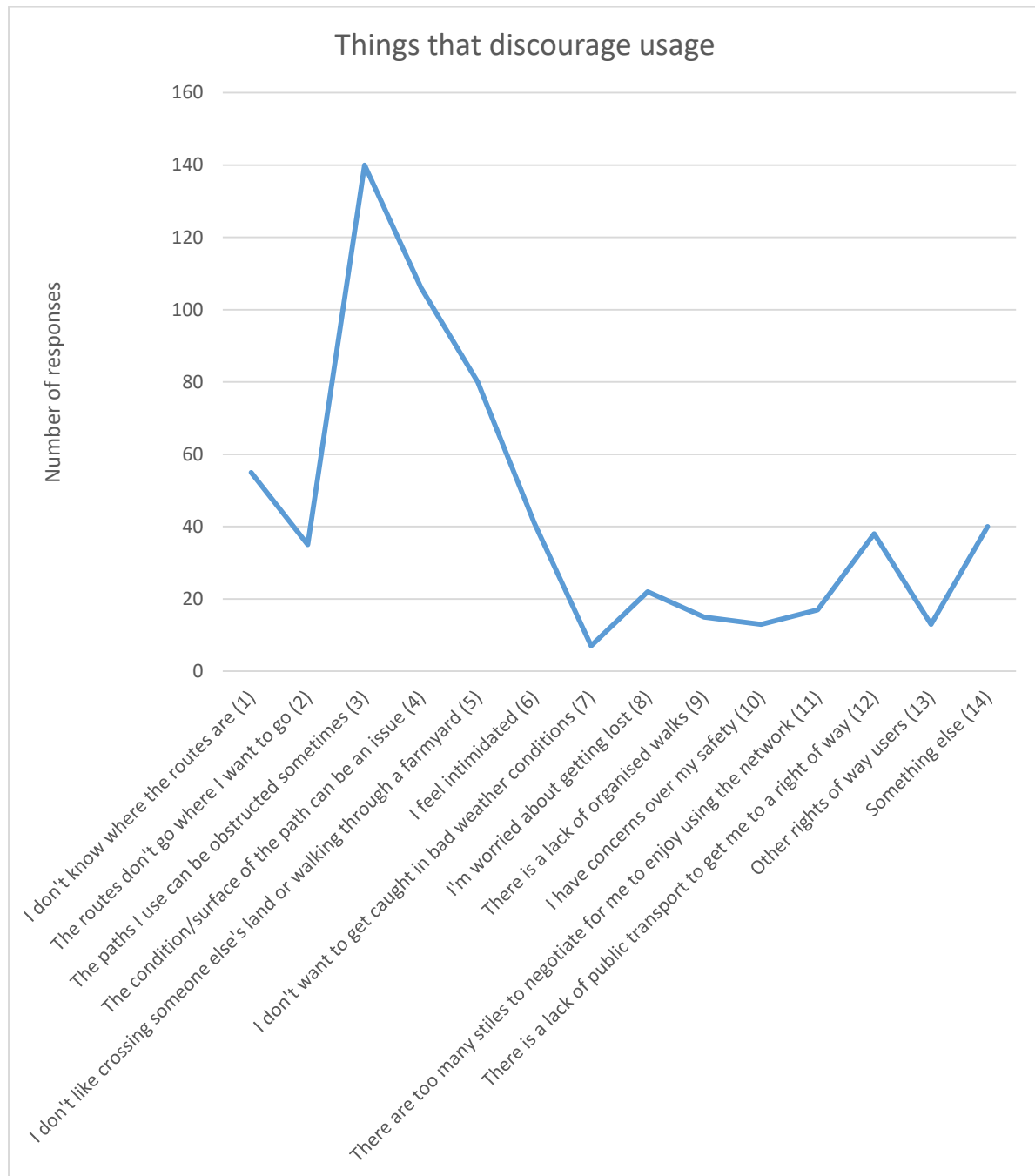
The top answer was obstructions to the paths that people want to use followed by the condition of the path and a reluctance to cross someone else's land. There was also an indication that some users do feel intimidated.

In terms of those who said 'something else' made them reluctant to use the network the key comments were around paths being obstructed or blocked or non-existent on the ground even if showing up on an OS map; issues with crossing farmyards and dogs and animals in fields causing concern. A sample of some of the comments given is below.

12	Passing intimidating dogs left loose by homes I pass
32	In my locality few/no public footpaths are identified or open
39	I know where the routes should be but a lot of them are completely impassable and often mean having to walk on busy roads or trespass
59	Dogs in farmyards. Bulls in fields.
68	Paths permanently obstructed
74	OS Mapping errors are much worse and more common in Wales than in England
78	Bulls in fields and frisky cows have occasionally scared us.
93	Dogs in farm yards that are not under control. I have been bitten by one.
106	I don't believe people should be trampling over others property unless it is an agreed "named" path
108	I don't agree with walking all over some one's business premises
110	Paths that are marked on OS but no longer active, misleading signage and walks information
111	Signs destroyed, styles broken, access blocked e.g., fencing
280	The Poor 'Policing@ of the RoW which doesn't deter illegal motorised activity

Q13. How often do you use open access land?

Access Land Usage

- 3%
- 36%
- 61%

■ Regularly - (daily, weekly, monthly) (1)

■ Sometimes - (every couple of months - once or twice a year) (2)

■ Never (3)

The 229 respondents who answered this question were regular users of open access land. 36% stated that they tended to do so on a less frequent basis from once or twice a year to every couple of months.

3% said they never used open access land.

Q14. What would, or does deter you from using open access land?

The key thing that deterred people from using open access land was in essence their lack of knowledge about how or where open access land was in the county.   85 respondents said they didn't know where the land was. The following key points raised was around the condition of the network, the routes not going where it goes and bad weather putting people off.

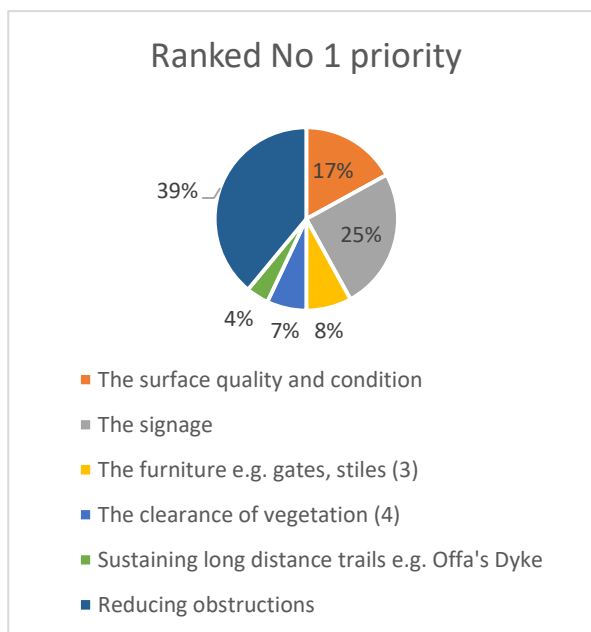| Answers	Number of responses
I don't know where the routes are (1)	85
The routes don't tend to go where I want to go (2)	33
Bad weather (3)	32
There is a lack of organised walks (4)	12
I have concerns over my own safety (5)	14
I feel intimidated (6)	23
I am worried about getting lost (7)	28
The condition of the network surface is an issue (8)	37
There are too many stiles on the network (9)	13
There is a lack of public transport to get me to the start of a right of way (10)	23
Something else (11)	24

24 respondents choose "something else" as a deterrent. A mix of comments were given by these individuals including a lack of way marking, aggressive landowners and problems with bridges being out of action. A selection of a few comments is listed below.

7	I don't like walking on open land belonging to others
32	Footpaths on OS maps are not available on the ground. No stiles and blocked
48	Badly publicised and incorrect information given by rights of way
81	Not knowing where gates occur in lengthy barbed-wire fences
87	Bridges out of action
106	I actually dislike aimless plodding about!
152	Access land is not clearly marked on maps or on the ground.
156	Too many loose dogs so I don`t feel safe using routes alone with my dog as he is small.
196	Aggressive landowners
247	illegal motorbikes in Dovey and Dyfnant forests riding on the bridleways
279	intimidating/contradictory firing information e.g., Mynydd Eppynt, Radnor Forest
303	I am disabled and use a hand driven wheelchair.

Q15. In simple terms there are six key aspects of the work that is conducted by the team to improve the rights of way network. Please place in order of importance.

The aspect which came out as a top priority was to reduce obstructions on the network with 39% of respondents selecting this first. 25% chose signage and 17% had ranked the network surface as their number one priority.

The upkeep and clearance of vegetation was a popular second choice with 48 respondents choosing this ahead of signage, the surface and tackling obstructions. Naturally it's very likely that respondents had chosen one of these as their first choice and thus had chosen the upkeep as their second.

Ranked No 1 priority

- The surface quality and condition
- The signage
- The furniture e.g. gates, stiles (3)
- The clearance of vegetation (4)
- Sustaining long distance trails e.g. Offa's Dyke
- Reducing obstructions

Q16. In more detail what do you think our priorities should be for the future of the rights of way network? Please rank in order of importance.

Way marking and signage - maintaining and erecting more way markers to help people navigate the network on the public rights of way at entrances to access land	**55**
Information & promotional work - doing more to publicise and promote the network to both landowners and the general public. e.g. information boards, website	2
Practical improvement work - this would focus on making the network more easily accessible for people with mobility difficulties	7
General maintenance - opening up and maintaining routes and trails including installing gates and stiles and clearing overgrown vegetation	**57**
Resolving anomalies - working with landowners to resolve issues around things like access to cul de sacs paths etc.	17
Unrecorded routes -discovering and recording unrecorded routes	5
Definitive map work - updating and improving the definitive map where there is evidence to suggest this is needed	6
Active travel work - provide paths which link to public transport, places of work, shops and other amenities	2
Access management - work to improve user access to common land and open country	5
Health routes - target work on routes which can be used and promoted for exercise and recreation	2
School routes - increase links for access to the network by and for schools and their pupils	0
Education - to increase their knowledge and awareness of the countryside	4
Promoted routes - sustain the provision of promoted local and long distance trails	27

As can be seen in the table above the first ranked priorities were close with 57 respondents selecting general maintenance as the key priority and 55 choosing instead to select way marking and signage as theirs.

When looking at the rankings for the 13 priorities listed and adding up the scores for the things that residents selected in their top five they were as follows:

- General maintenance
- Way marking and signage
- Resolving anomalies

There were three priorities that scored the same in terms of the fourth priority. These were:
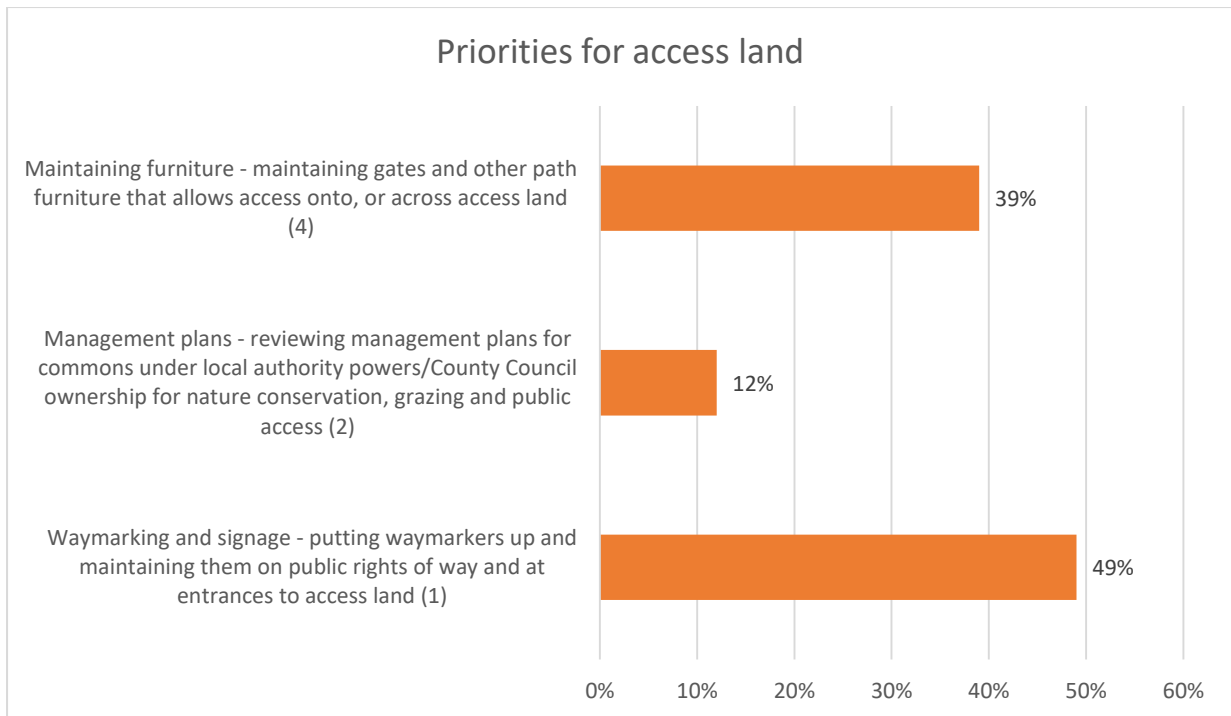
- Practical improvement work
- Unrecorded routes
- Access management

Finally work to the definitive map was considered to be a priority and ranked fifth with 69 respondents in total selecting this as one of their top five.
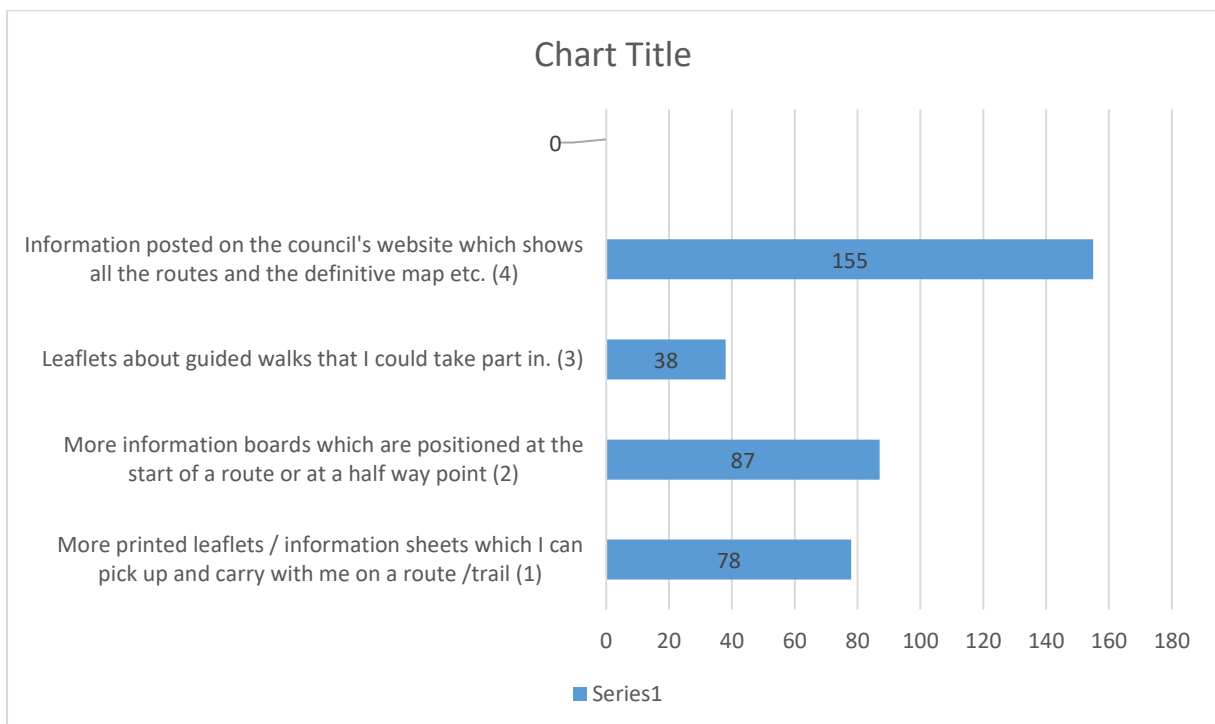
Priorities	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Way marking and signage	55	32	32	19	11	**149**
Information & promotional work	2	6	5	13	26	52
Practical improvement work	7	10	24	18	11	**70**
General maintenance	57	49	27	14	6	**153**
Resolving anomalies	17	24	28	20	18	**107**
Unrecorded routes	5	17	13	15	20	**70**
Definitive map work	6	13	15	16	19	**69**
Active travel work	2	6	7	8	4	27
Access management	5	10	15	21	19	**70**
Health routes	2	4	5	6	11	28
School routes	0	0	2	7	5	14
Education	4	7	1	2	10	24
Promoted routes	27	4	5	12	7	55

Q17. The council has some discretionary powers to carry out work in relation to access land. If funding becomes available in the future, what do you think our priorities for this work should be?

Again respondents were asked to rank the options in order of priority. Out of the three options listed way marking and signage came out as the top priority followed by maintaining gates and other furniture and then finally reviewing management plans.

Priorities for access land

Maintaining furniture - maintaining gates and other path furniture that allows access onto, or across access land (4)	39%
Management plans - reviewing management plans for commons under local authority powers/County Council ownership for nature conservation, grazing and public access (2)	12%
Waymarking and signage - putting waymarkers up and maintaining them on public rights of way and at entrances to access land (1)	49%

Q18. What type of information would you find useful with regard to the rights of way network?

Chart Title

Information posted on the council's website which shows all the routes and the definitive map etc. (4)	155
Leaflets about guided walks that I could take part in. (3)	38
More information boards which are positioned at the start of a route or at a half way point (2)	87
More printed leaflets / information sheets which I can pick up and carry with me on a route /trail (1)	78

■ Series1

Respondents would on the whole find it useful for information to be posted on the council's website followed by more information boards being positioned at the start or at a half-way point during a route. Only 38 respondents were keen to see more leaflets produced that they could take with them.

Q19. The council currently processes applications for diverting a right of way around a person's property or new housing developments or for conservation purposes. Looking at the list below please rank in order of importance.

Priorities	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Farmyard diversions	40	31	30	25	5	**131**
Diversions due to a new housing or road development	10	22	21	22	19	94
Diverting rights of way from a person's prviate garden	16	37	34	17	26	**130**
Diversions around woodlands or forests	3	5	4	5	12	29
Diversions which protect wildlife/flora or fauna i.e. conservation	28	25	16	20	24	**113**
Diverting rights of way to link with open access land	9	16	27	27	22	**101**
Diversion to avoid high maintenance costs	2	7	12	20	24	65
Packages that would resolve anomalies e.g. linking dead end paths to the network or roads	50	28	20	16	18	**132**
Diversions to make paths more convenient to use e.g. by moving them off steep ground	23	7	8	16	11	65

Viewing the table above it is clear to see that the top five priorities that people felt should be considered around diversions scored are:

- Packages that would resolve anomalies
- Farmyard diversions
- Diverting rights of way from a person's private garden
- Diverting rights of way that protect wildlife/flora and fauna
- Diverting rights of way to link with open access land

Q20. The council also processes applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders, where someone believes that the DM is incomplete or incorrect and has evidence to support that. We must deal with all of these applications by law, but we do give some high priority to others. How do you think we should do that?

From the six options given respondents were generally keen to see applications where adding or upgrading a right of way would add significantly to the route or applications where a possible error has meant that the public cannot use a path tackled as priorities first and foremost.

Priorities	1	2	3	Total
By date or receipt (1)	28	8	13	49
Applications that have strong supporting evidence (2)	15	30	42	87
Applications affecting sites where development is proposed (3)	5	10	26	41
Applications where someone's privacy or business are affected (4)	13	16	34	63
Applications where adding or upgrading a public right of way should add significantly to the network e.g. a missing link (5)	52	44	22	**118**
Applications where the possible error has meant that the public cannot use the path at all e.g. the path on the map passes through a very old building (6)	52	50	19	**121**

**Q21. Please read the two options and choose the one that you feel should take priority.**
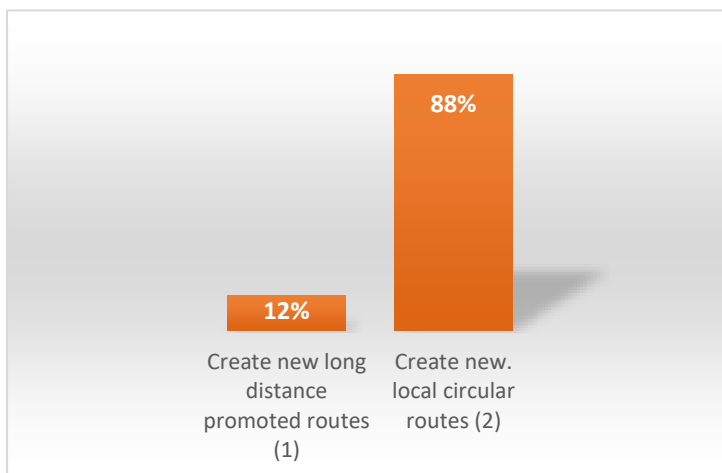
Respondents were given a series of dilemma questions and asked to decide which of the two options they would prefer to see the council prioritise.

Overwhelmingly respondents were in favour firstly of the council creating new local circular routes as opposed to creating long distance ones.
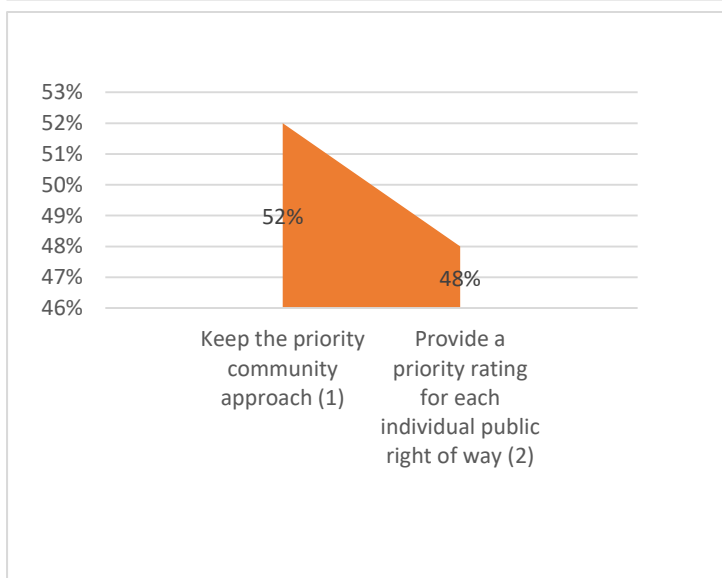
The second dilemma question resulted in a closer view with 52% wanting the council to stay with their priority community approach rather than create a rating for each and every individual public right of way.

However 48% had chosen the latter as their priority. The criteria used to maintain the network is thus something that splits those interested in the network.
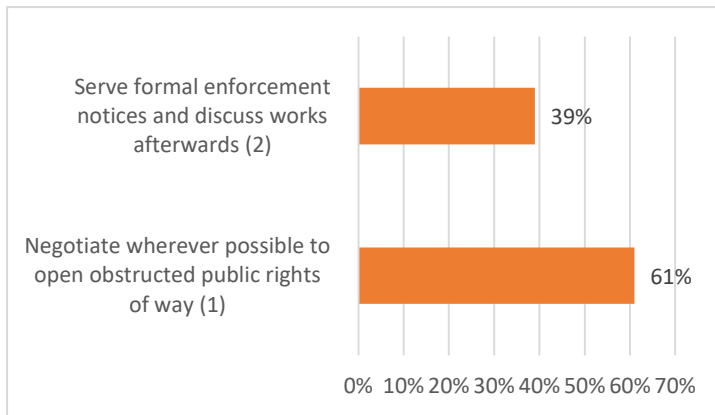
The penultimate dilemma question resulted in 61% of respondents stating that they wanted the council to negotiate with land owners around obstructions to the network wherever possible. Just under a third felt we should move towards serving enforcement notices to progress things.
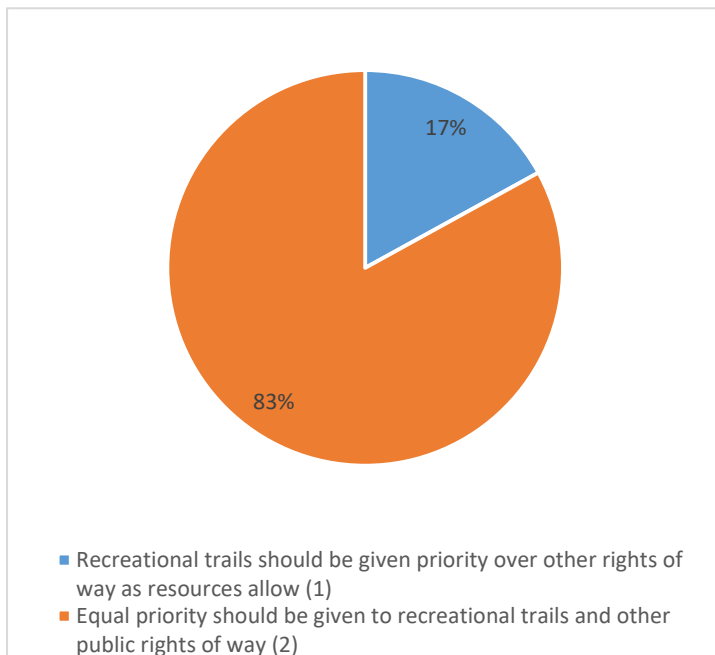
Finally, there was a clear view expressed around the issue of priority for recreational trails and all other rights of way.

83% of respondents felt that recreational trails should not take priority over other rights of way on the network and that they should all be given equal priority.

Conclusion:

The results from these surveys will help the service consider fully what actions should be included in the next iteration of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the next ten years.

Focus groups with access groups in the county will also aid understanding of issues which impact on residents with mobility issues so that consideration and due regard can be given to improvements to the network so that access is available for all that wish to use the rights of way in Powys.

Profile questions:

Every survey that is conducted by the council includes some specific questions about the respondent. These are called profile questions. The analysis of this data allows the council to consider whether the responses received are robust in terms of the population by considering who is responding from where and if there is anything significant in relation to the findings when comparing things like gender, age, marital status or ethnicity that needs further consideration.

The following provides details around this profile data of the respondents who completed the general survey. A number of respondents tend to choose not to answer these questions so the total number is a lot lower than the total number of respondents.

Gender	Number
Male	110
Female	68
Total	178

111 respondents chose not to give details of their gender.

Age	Number
Under 45	34
45 – 64 years	93
65+ years	57
Total	184

105 respondents chose not to give any details of their age.

From the above two charts it is clear that more men than women have responded to the survey. This does not mean necessarily that more men use the network but this could be the case. Reasons why women may not access the network as frequently as men could be down to a number of reasons including safety and confidence.

The age profile shows that more people aged between 45 – 64 years responded to the survey but overall there is a decent spread of age groups although it's likely that younger people may not have seen the survey via the channels by which it was publicised – hence the number being just over 30.

In terms of working status 40% were working full-time, 11% part-time and 10% self-employed. 33% were retired, 2% were looking after children, a further 2% were otherwise unemployed, 1% were unemployed and looking for work and one person(0.5%) was in full-time education.

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions, illnesses or impairments, lasting, or expected to last, 12 months or more?

Condition	Number
Yes	25
No	144
Don't know	2
Total	171

15% of respondents who answered this question had a specific condition. Of these two said it affected their ability to carry out day to day activities a lot, 14 said it impacted on this a little and nine residents said it didn't do so at all.

The top two conditions that people had listed were hearing loss (13 respondents) and stamina, breathing loss and fatigue (12 respondents). A few other respondents had ticked mobility, mental health and visual impairments.

One of these residents stated that they didn't use the network and didn't want to whilst three people stated that they only used the network sometimes. However the remaining 21 classed themselves as regular users of the network. In terms of their use the majority of those with a condition were walkers (with or without dogs) and a couple said they ran or rode a motorbike occasionally.

There were no real differences in the views given by this group in comparison to the rest of the sample with regard to any problems encountered. The top four listed by these respondents were the same as the wider sample and were around poor way marking, the condition of the paths, obstructions and stiles and gates being in a poor state or inappropriate for use.

How do you travel to the start of a public right of way?
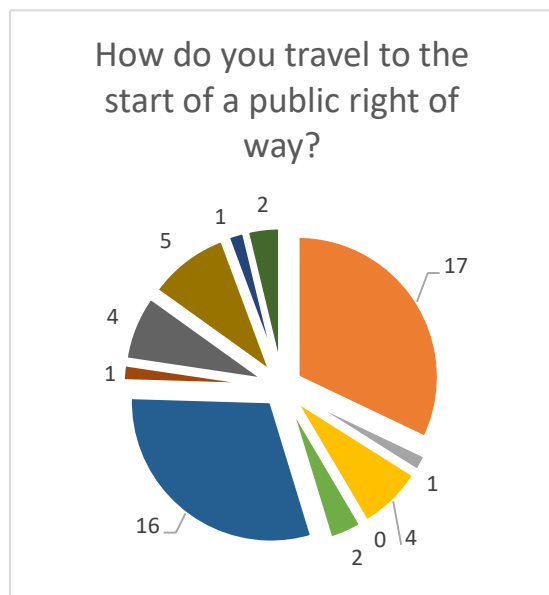
For the majority of the 25 respondents who stated they had a condition that impacted on their health they tended to walk and drive to the start of a public right of way which was similar to those without any condition.

However there was clearly more reliance on getting a bus or a lift for these respondents than other users without a health condition. 16% of residents with a health condition said they got a bus compared to 12% of respondents minus a health complaint, 20% got a lift compared to 11%, and 68% walked compared to 85% of those without a health condition. See charts below. Left: Respondents with a condition Right: Those without.

I walk (1)	17
I run (2)	1
I cycle (3)	4
I ride my horse (4)	0
I get there via a train (5)	2
I drive my car (6)	16
I get a taxi (7)	1
I get a bus (8)	4
I get a lift (9)	5
I use community transport (10)	1
I do something else (11)	2

I walk (1)	122
I run (2)	17
I cycle (3)	39
I ride my horse (4)	5
I get there via a train (5)	11
I drive my car (6)	113
I get a taxi (7)	0
I get a bus (8)	17
I get a lift (9)	16
I use community transport (10)	1
I do something else (11)	5

A note about market research and consultations conducted by Powys County Council.

When conducting market research companies use a margin of error and confidence level to ensure that their results are robust and representative of the population they are seeking views from. (I.e. the population of interest).

A public consultation however isn't market research as people choose to respond having normally seen publicity around the topic/survey. They are not contacted directly using a sampling methodology. People self-select so sometimes when conducting a consultation the organisation seeking views will most likely hear from people who are either strongly in favour/strongly object to a proposal/service change or from those who may have a specific interest in the topic being consulted upon. The silent majority may not give a view either way because the topic doesn't interest or concern them. When we analyse any consultation results we do consider how robust they are in terms of the population of interest.

For this exercise we have promoted and publicised the generic survey to all residents but then also considered and engaged some key stakeholder groups to capture their specific experiences of using the network. Having analysed the survey we feel that overall the findings do represent the views of a good mix of network users who are also residents.

We are also currently seeking views from residents who may have more problems accessing the network than the general population. These stakeholders include those who are blind, partially sighted, have mobility difficulties and who are mothers using pushchairs.

When conducting consultation exercise Powys County Council works to the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales.

http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/national-principles