

Statement of Consultation:

Introduction

This Consultation Statement sets out the details of the consultation the Council has undertaken in relation to the development of the new fourth Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

Consultation Requirements

Although the Rights of Way Improvement Plan is not a Supplementary Planning Document as set out in the Local Plan Regulations, the Council felt it was worth compiling a summary of the main issues raised by stakeholders in response to the consultation on the Plan. Key council officers, members, and other important stakeholders were consulted on the fourth ROWIP.

Consultation on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 4 2024-2034

The Plan was made available for a full public consultation on the Council's consultation website from the 3rd May 2023 to the 26th July 2023, therefore a 12-week consultation period.

Background and Aims of Plan

All local highway authorities have a statutory duty, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), to produce a ROWIP.

The previous ROWIP, ROWIP3, ran from 2015 to 2018, so it is now five years out of date. As a result, the Council agreed to create a new ROWIP, hence the development of ROWIP4.

To reflect the Council's approach to understanding the importance of encouraging the use of PROW in the County and the behaviour change witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic, ROWIP4 was developed. ROWIP4 is a long-term strategy with an improvement plan for the County PROW network. We are creating policies as a mechanism for delivering objectives for the benefits of our residents over a 10-year timeframe. A shorter 3-year delivery plan will be produced following the findings from the full public consultation.

Responses

The final consultation process yielded 78 pages of responses from over 21 consultees. Whilst a significant number of responses were anonymous, a proportion of the comments were from key stakeholders. The tables below show the comments received and the Council's response to them.

Q1a. Are these the right strategic objectives?

Respondent	Comment	DCC Response
Anon	Bridleway provision in the Stanhope area is virtually non-existent and needs addressing urgently. It is certainly not what one would expect in a rural area where the keeping leisure horses is common.	Comment noted.
Anon	The c2c route from Rookhope to Waskerley, which is listed as a leisure path, is about the only official route for riders. To actually get to the route riders and horses have to negotiate Crawleyside Bank which is increasingly becoming a rat run at all times of the day and night for huge wagons which take up more than half the road and, on the return journey when empty, hurtle down the hill with little regard for other road users. Weekends also see a steady stream of motorbikes both up and down often at high speed, and cyclists, often in groups, who must think they are on the Tour of Britain fly down the hill, including through the 40mph section, and certainly don't adhere to the 'pass wide and slow' message in the highway code. It is certainly no place for a horse.	Comment noted.
Anon	It does seem unfair that local riders who will all contribute to the council's coffers are being forgotten while there seems to be an unlimited budget for promoting cycling and walking for visitors.	Comment noted.
Anon	I like the strategic objectives that you have mentioned.	Support for strategic objectives welcomed.
Sarah, British Horse Society	Agree these are the right objectives for ROWIP4.	Support for strategic objectives welcomed.
Anon	Yes. The strategic objectives are good, particularly the first one.	Support for strategic objectives welcomed.
Anon	Particularly support empowering communities and ensuring the County's PROW are accessible to people of all abilities.	Support for strategic objectives and particularly the accessibility objective welcomed.

Anon	They are but I have serious concerns about the way you have adopted the term 'wheeling' quite honestly, it is ambiguous....cars use wheels as do Go Karts and wheelchairs...you need to realise that routes need to accommodate electric wheelchairs and hand propelled wheelchairs...remember that people cannot push wheelchairs over long distances!	We have not adopted the term wheeling. 'Walk, cycle and wheel' is mentioned in reference to the North East Active Travel Strategy 2023 on page 40 and in many other contemporary policy documents.
Anon	Wheeling seems an idealistic nonsensical term promoted by 15-minute cities and transport plan promoted by Sustrans which clearly doesn't understand fully the obstacles presented by so called shared spaces...e.g., walking aids and wheelchairs in spaces also used by potentially aggressive cyclists, nervous horses????	Comment noted.
Anon	These are suitably ambitious objectives which encompass the full range of issues which must be fulfilled by a RoW network.	Support for strategic objectives welcomed.
Anon	We fully support the objective to work with and negotiate with landowners is a key part of any process which enabled a satisfactory outcome for all.	Support for strategic objectives welcomed and concerns around landowner relationship noted.
Anon	We also endorse the need to fund the maintenance of PROW, in addition to the creation and publicise circular routes from settlements so residents can be more active every day.	Support for strategic objectives welcomed.
Anon	We do however have concern that simply investing in a small number of routes across the county could disproportionately impact some communities, leaving them with increased costs.	Comment noted.
Anon	We also acknowledge the uplift in digital accessibility and associated platforms, but great care needs to be taken to ensure routes are legal and welcome the support of the Council to address platforms that post illegal routes.	Comment noted.

Anon	We are also keen to understand more, how marketing the County's high-quality environment, can put a significant percentage of 'Green Pounds' into the immediate local communities' pockets.	Comment noted. We will add some information in the document on how routes contribute to local economies.
Anon	I think it would be a good idea to support farmers in keeping rights of way signposted.	Agreed.
Michael	In general terms I support the Strategic Objectives contained within the plan. In combination they appear capable of delivering DCC's vision for the PROW network provided that they can be implemented as a total package and in a balanced way. I do, however, have concerns which are as follows. In the current political and economic climate, will the resources available to DCC, and the PROW Team in particular, be sufficient to allow progress to be made in achieving all of the plan's objectives? If not, I am worried that DCC will be forced to cherry-pick and prioritise some objectives over others. If this happens, my concern is that the available resources will be sucked into a few high-profile schemes, most likely those aimed at exploiting the tourist potential of the county, leaving little left over for the maintenance and development of local PROW networks.	Comments noted, however, ROWIP4 reflects the importance of walks close to settlements not just tourist routes and destinations.
Anon	These are the right strategic objects. However, policy is fine, but ACTION is needed. I have been in contact with DCC since 2017 to clear and maintain the designated footpath from Eldon to Old Eldon (a legal duty incumbent on the Council) but this has been met by indifference by County Councillors and bureaucrats who write reports which results in no action or excuses of why this legal duty cannot be fulfilled.	Comment noted. We have passed this information regarding the footpath from Eldon to Old Eldon to the Council's Rights of Way Team who will investigate this further.
Anon	Yes, but you need to stick to them	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, totally agree to the strategic objectives although the statement of "Empowering Communities and Individuals to Move More" requires clarification. How does DCC plan to implement this?	Comment noted. See Policy 4 of the Plan, which explains empowering communities in further detail.

Cycling UK	We specifically support the objective of Managing and enhancing the PROW network, so it is fit for the 21st century. Though suggest that specific consideration ought to also be given to recognising and respecting the heritage value of these routes and their role in allowing the public to access nature for health and wellbeing.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	The objective of Empowering communities and individuals to Move More should make reference to use of the network for sustainable carbon-free travel and tourism.	Comment noted. Reference will be made to the network for sustainable carbon-free travel and tourism in the final document.
Mr John	The Council's proposals are positive and worthwhile as far as they go, addressing a restricted remit, dictated by a central government agenda.	Comment noted.

Mr John	<p>These proposals ignore a wider context, the many varied publics that make up this county - city, towns and countryside and their complex relationships. Admittedly, the authors were not asked to take a wider view but in omitting the bigger picture they do a disservice to the various stakeholders, most notably those who live and work in an environment where rights of way have a significant presence. The danger of such a narrow limitation is the creation of divisions between those who wish to access the countryside for pleasure and recreation and those who live and work in the same place. The underlying mindset behind the proposals is an exploitative one how rural area can be put to use for visitors with little consideration for any impact on residents. The County Council has followed a long-term Government plan to promote city regions at the expense of Shire counties; funding has prioritised the cities, while more rural communities have increasingly been starved of resources. The rights of way proposals are just a small example of this urban bias, concentrating on the rights of visitors to the countryside over those who live there. This is no way to create a healthy partnership between town and country and runs the risk of undermining a positive view of the county's excellent network of rights of way. Nobody would argue against those good intentions to invest in access to the countryside, but when it comes to the wellbeing of rural residents, the Council has consistently overlooked their needs, withdrew facilities and services and created a hidden sector of deprivation.</p>	<p>The draft ROWIP4 as proposed underscores the importance of working with landowners and local communities when developing and maintaining the ROW network.</p> <p>Policy 1 sets out our priorities the need to work with and for local communities.</p> <p>Policy 4 sets out the intent for communities to own their own PROW.</p> <p>Policy 6 sets out the importance of respecting the countryside code and local landowners.</p>
Mr John	<p>A few decades ago, Hamsterley Forest was a working environment, providing employment and producing much needed timber, now it is a popular visitor attraction with open access for all, but little invested in the neighbouring area to offset increased pressure on facilities and infrastructure.</p> <p>The ROW proposals overlook some key environmental issues: how will walkers, cyclists and horse riders get to their chosen right of way? Probably using their car on poorly maintained rural lanes, hopefully not requiring electric charging or, maybe, the Council will</p>	<p>The draft ROWIP4 as proposed underscores the importance of working with landowners and local communities when</p>

	<p>reinstate the buses, largely withdrawn for rural workers, jobseekers, and shoppers.</p> <p>The Council's ambition for communities to own their rights of way could sound hollow when considering the demands expressed by some user groups and endorsed by some Council officers. Ownership sounds suspiciously like responsibility, financial and structural. What responsibility does the Council expect from those exercising their rights many may willingly volunteer to share responsibility with local communities, but the Council can only offer limp promises to ensure the Countryside Code is followed and landowners respected, plainly aware that keeping such promises will be a difficult task. The prospects of a positive relationship between all interested parties doesn't look good - multiple applications by special interest groups do not demonstrate any awareness of the bigger picture, where affected homeowners and farmers would be liable to years of uncertainty and stress over what demands might be imposed upon them. Far from the partnership the Council envisages, this situation can only provoke division.</p> <p>Much has been made of the public health benefits of accessing nature and the countryside, but little consideration is given to the mental health and wellbeing of isolated rural residents whose privacy and security may seem threatened by unidentifiable visitors. Inevitably, by their very nature, the Council's proposals are specific, rather one-sided, concentrating on rights of way and their users; interest groups will have had a big input and, doubtless, rights of way officers will have written it. Therefore, I urge the Council to take a wider perspective, not to forget the scattering of residents across the county who don't have an organised voice, will be affected by these proposals and may well have a different set of priorities.</p>	<p>developing and maintaining the ROW network.</p> <p>Policy 1 sets out our priorities to work with and for local communities.</p> <p>Policy 4 sets out the intent for communities to own their own PROW.</p> <p>Policy 6 sets out the importance of respecting the countryside code and local landowners.</p> <p>Reference to how rural employment uses, such as forestry and agricultural uses, contribute to rural economies, will be made in the final draft. See Policy 5.</p>
<p>Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers</p>	<p>Yes. This response is submitted by Barnard Castle Ramblers, who recognise the extensive network of PROWs within the County, and the support from the PROW team, a job generally well done, especially in comparison with other County Council's and other local authorities.</p>	<p>Support for strategic objectives welcomed.</p>
<p>Local Access Forum</p>	<p>The LAF supports Strategic Objective 1 but there is a need to stress that not all routes should be accessible to all as many users value a degree of challenge.</p>	<p>See Policy 3 which states that not all routes will be entirely accessible.</p>

Local Access Forum	There is a need to reflect links to existing railway routes and other publicly owned land where there is access, and a priority should be afforded to identifying new opportunities for creating new ROW and access. Strategic Objective 2 Do not agree unless it leads to enhancement.	Comment noted. We would like to understand from the LAF why they do not agree with Strategic Objective 2 before the final document is completed.
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Q1b. Are there any we've missed?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	I would also like to have seen a strategic aim that incorporates ensuring that PROW remain open, as there are many farmers where I live who have blocked off PROW, haven't put an alternative in place and who then chase you off their land - even if you have an OS map demonstrating the route.	Comment noted. It is an existing statutory duty that PROW remain open and thus it is not a strategic objective.
Anon	I note plans to develop the Stockton and Darlington Railway Walking and Cycling Route. This is a big ask - can it be extended to provide a cycle route/support-between Wolsingham and Frosterley. I understand the Auckland Project have expressed interest.	We will consider this as part of our delivery plan.
South Bedburn Parish Council	South Bedburn Parish Council very much welcomed and supported the broad objectives set out in the document.	Support welcomed.
South Bedburn Parish Council	The Parish Council was concerned, however, that very little mention is made in the document about what must be one of the major issues on ROW for DCC at the moment the 300+ applications within the County for restoration of historic ROWs.	Agree. More information in the final document will be provided.

South Bedburn Parish Council	How much of the current ROW budget is being spent on this and how much is this forecast to cost over the years covered by this plan? Has the budget been increased to cover these costs or is it being funded at the expense of other ROW work? If the budget has been increased to cover the cost of these applications, how much has it been increased by and what is the effect on the rate payer? South Bedburn PC is considering doing a FOI request on this matter.	Not all the funding for ROWIP is secure but the delivery plan will give an indication of the costs of specific projects. Having a ROWIP in place, allows the Council and the ROW team specifically to bid for more funding.
South Bedburn Parish Council	Taking into account the sheer number of applications and the cost of dealing with them, how does DCC plan to prioritise them? Is it taking into account which routes offer best value, suitability and attractiveness for the end user and County Council, with minimal disruption and cost to the landowner? If not, why not?	Dealing with DMMO applications is a statutory duty for the Council's ROW Team and are dealt with in the order they come in.
South Bedburn Parish Council	South Bedburn Parish covers a large area but is a small parish population wise, comprising some 140 residents but it has 17 DMMOs affecting around half of its residents, and this is a matter of great concern and distress to many residents since a number of the DMMOs go through their farmyards, fields, and unfortunately gardens, houses and other residential buildings.	Comment noted.
South Bedburn Parish Council	The Parish Council therefore very much welcomes Policies 1(f) and 6(D) supporting diversions of PROW out of farmyards and other working areas but does this mean DCC will contribute towards the cost of these diversions, including application costs, which can be many thousands of pounds? Also, do these policies extend to diversions around lost routes that go through people's gardens, houses and other residential buildings? We hope these comments will be taken into account in the final ROWIP.	DCC will not contribute to the costs unless there is a clear public benefit. New legislation will enable the ROW Team to negotiate diversions around lost routes. This legislation is yet to come out but is anticipated.
Sarah, British Horse Society	None missed.	Comment noted.
Anon	I would add more support for landowners re maintenance and signage etc.	Comment noted.
Anon	Work with and negotiate with landowners and user groups to achieve satisfactory outcomes for all.	See policy 6 in the plan.
Anon	Accessibility for pushchairs.	We've referred to pushchair users under Policy 2.
Faith Folley, Durham University	The University believe that these are good objectives to establish more detailed policy from. Notwithstanding this, the Green Economy is emphasised in the second	Reference to urban PROW can be made in the document.

	objective and the University would stress that PROWs in more urban areas also have a large role to play both in the County's Economy and potentially are used more frequently and by more people. Therefore, urban or settlement PROW networks should be referenced and have the same weighting in the objectives as PROW in more rural locations linked to the Green Economy.	The LCWIPs cover many of the urban walking and cycling routes in the county.
Anon	You need to be very clear about the risks posed to vulnerable and disabled and young children by aggressive cycling mainly by lycra clad men who race each other.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes - improving the existing network.	See Policy 1.
Cycling UK	A specific strategic objective should also be introduced to conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the PROW network (in accordance with the authorities S40 duty to conserve and promote biodiversity).	This is covered in the strategic objectives, particularly objective 1.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	Our view is that these are a mixture of objectives, policies and initiatives and could be made more coherent as shown below (table on PDF).	Our objectives we developed in partnership with our Local Access Forum, and we have been supported as part of the ROWIP consultation.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	<i>The strategic choices.</i> If it is the case that there will be insufficient resources available to fully meet the aim of achieving a network fit for the 21st Century within the timescale of the Plan, then the Plan must have considered trade-offs. For example, will all PROW be improved to the desired standard or will only a proportion be improved? Will the resources to be invested in popular routes be at the expense of general maintenance resulting in a managed decline of the lesser used network? How much of the network improvement can be carried out by local communities? A frank assessment of the potential to deal with the deficiencies revealed by the previous iterations of this Plan would be extremely helpful in understanding and supporting the priorities of this Plan.	Comment noted.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	It is important ensure adequate provision is made for the ongoing maintenance of footpaths for existing as well as new paths.	See objective 1 and Policy 1.
Barbara, British Horse Society	DMMOs should be a priority as part of objective 1.	Comment noted.

Q2a. Are the priorities in criterion C. the correct priorities for Durham County Council's Rights of Way Team? Are there any we've missed?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Making sure private landowners keep the public rights of way open and accessible.	Comment noted. It is an existing statutory duty that PROW remain open, and landowners

		keep PROW open and accessible where PROW intersects their land.
Anon	Criterion A. Provision of Roadside finger posts is good but waymarking can be poor, this is a huge job so volunteer help needed.	Comment noted.
Anon	Criterion B. Not a personal priority, I am conscious of conflicts with other users.	Comment noted.
Anon	Criterion C. Very desirable	Support noted.
Anon	Criterion D. Yes, as these paths are used more frequently.	Comment noted.
Anon	Criterion E. Should be encouraged--see a.	Support noted.
Anon	Criterion F. Very important. We have several examples in Wolsingham Parish where this has been achieved to the mutual benefit of both the farmer and the user. E.g.: low Harperley Farm, Sunnyside Farm, Redmires Farm and Grey's Well Farm. Sometimes this is by the granting of a Permissive Path, which is clearly waymarked, as well as the existing PROW remaining in place. In other cases, a Diversion Order has been obtained. However, this policy is not going to be widely adopted unless we can come up an easier and much cheaper method of achieving changes. The user can face risks in any farmyard from large moving machinery or livestock and will also feel more comfortable not intruding on the farmer's privacy. There are often sheep and roaming sheepdogs on farmsteads. Farmers who I have dealt with accept the existence of the PROW and usually welcome walkers but see the problems that can arise.	Comment noted.
Anon	Policy does not seem to mention removal of blockages to paths or impediments to their use.	Removing blockages etc is a key duty of the Rights of Way Team. This is mentioned in Policy 1 (A).
Anon	Yes, but you cannot simply express an obscure aim like getting people to move more....nice where, when and how??? Moving does not automatically equate to exercise!!	Comment noted. There is more detail in the policies of the document.
Anon	The residents of Brusselton are extremely concerned about removal of the railway stones and grass areas to accommodate a large tarmac track through. The area is of outstanding natural beauty, full of wildlife, charm, and history. I would like to oppose plans for a tarmac track, in place of existing pathway. The	Comment noted. This comment has been passed to the relevant Rights of Way team officer.

	residents would be keen to work with DCC to discuss and adapt. I would be grateful of a site visit to discuss. Thank you	
Anon	At a time of limited funding, I disagree with the approach to supporting diversions of the network for private landowners. Such action by the council has limited benefit to the wider public (assuming the rights across the farmyard are properly enforced) and huge benefit for a small handful of landowners. As such, the landowners should fund this work privately. This is especially compounded by the huge demands on the rights of way service; maintaining paths and registering unrecorded rights of much more benefit to the wider public and should be prioritised.	Comment noted.
Anon	There should also be special provision not just for circular routes, but for paths (especially of bridleway status and above) which link settlements together. These are viable routes for people to take as transport (instead of a car/bus) and must be promoted to encourage active travel. Too few people consider the potential to use rights of way (especially those which are across fields and not tarmacked) to travel between settlements. Additional publicity and signage is needed to raise awareness that this is possible.	Comment noted. We will consider this as part of our prospective Delivery Plan with a category based on linking settlements together.
Anon	Yes, I agree with the points - however, you could make Criterion C easier to find in the document and use plain English - I don't think many people will understand "rationalising".	Comment noted.
Anon	We note and welcome the Council's plans to secure an annual budget for maintenance and continuing the registration and protection of unrecorded rights, as well as the ongoing maintenance of network records.	Support noted.
Anon	We are also pleased to see that the Council accepts the proposed Presumptions Guidance and will support the diversion of PROW out of farmyards where possible and rationalising routes where appropriate.	Support noted.
Anon	Again, we note the Council's acknowledgement that social media has enhanced the number and variety of localised walking groups, who have an interest in improving walking and riding routes. In recognition of this growth in user-group popularity, all partners must liaise with these groups in local communities to stimulate greater engagement and investment of the PROW network, which will require the allocation of resources. We would also ask that such groups ensure they use legal routes and do not undertake commercial activities on PROW, resulting in increased damage and disruption to local communities and routes.	Comment noted. See Policy 6 which emphasises this point in greater detail.

Geoffrey	<p>PRIORITY ISSUES NEEDING CONSIDERATION</p> <p>1) Many Teesdale PROW footpaths are at present particularly dangerous for people with mobility problems.</p>	Comment noted.
Geoffrey	<p>2) LEGAL LIABILITY: Just as with pavements in a town or city, if DCC advertises all PROWs as being suitable for people of all abilities then there will be accidents and claims against the Landowner or the County. The County will not have made certain that the Landowner has repaired stiles etc and both bodies may be culpable. Accidents and people getting lost will need more resources from: Police, Ambulance Service, Mountain Rescue, Air Ambulance, and the Forces.</p>	Comment noted.
Geoffrey	<p>3) STAFFING PROW WORK</p> <p>The current PROW team (no matter how efficient and how hard they work) is currently totally understaffed for the huge volume of work that needs to be done to make the footpaths obvious and safe for all to use. If repairing the PROW footpaths becomes top priority, then other work such as dealing with DMMO,s will have to be permanently ditched.</p>	This document is a strategic document which aims to secure and direct investment into the county as a whole. This may involve securing new resources for the Rights of Way Team to manage the network and the issues mentioned in your response.
Geoffrey	<p>4) FINANCE: Colossal sums of money would be needed if a minority of the people (for inclusivity) demand the majority of available money. Think just how much has been spent for wheelchair access to all public buildings).</p> <p>Consider replacing lost foot bridges, or concrete stepping stones, replacing all dodgy stone wall stiles with hand stiles at ground level. It doesn't bear thinking about. Remember that PROW is just one small part of the Council Budget and that no matter how worthy ideas are there just is not enough money available. Planners need to cost schemes before stating their policy.</p>	See Policy 3. This seeks to deliver 10 accessible routes in 10 years. Cost estimates will be provided in the delivery plan as a guide to the likely funding required.
Geoffrey	<p>5) PROW footpaths FIT for PURPOSE they aren't! And if they are not now and haven't been for 3 previous PROW noble policies then they won't be for the next 10 years. Someone needs to wake up and face facts.</p>	Comment noted.

Geoffrey	<p>6) GRADING WALKS The all-ability public needs to be informed about walking difficulty with some form of grading system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) EASY walks where the path is short, obvious, safe and well signed. b) MEDIUM longer walks where there may be some difficulties. c) HARDER walks (say over 8 miles) where the path is not obvious and there may be potentially dangerous obstacles. HOW will the public be informed about footpath difficulty, e.g., a number on each starting signpost. HOW will all ability public know how long a footpath is, and WHERE the footpath goes? 	See Policy 2. We want to develop a digital platform that has better quality information for users.
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Geoffrey	<p>7) SIGNAGE The whole current system needs a complete overhaul, as it is almost impossible to follow very many numbered footpaths shown on the Durham definitive map. It is not good enough just to put a signpost along a road where a path starts, without having any detail about where it goes, its difficulty and length. Sometimes we walk for miles without ever seeing a sign. When there are several gates in sight how does one know the correct one to use? WHO removed the finger sign from this post and why? Vandalised signs to deter the public are all too common. Consider just WHERE signs are most needed: a) At the start of a route. b) Where the path turns sharply at an angle. c) At some gates. d) Where a yellow dot helps the walker to know that they have the right to progress.</p>	<p>See Policy 1 (c) (a).</p> <p>We are aiming to audit signage across the county as part of ROWIP4 and also to improve physical and digital waymarking.</p>
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Geoffrey	8) PUBLICITY Once the PROW scheme includes people of all abilities there is an onus on the County to inform the public so that they know about where paths go, how long they are, how hard etc. It is not enough to just state that Durham C.C. has the definitive footpath map on line. In addition, the OS maps do not carry up-to-date information. We don't want obtrusive footpath map directions all along the roads of the country. How can the needs of partially sighted people be met, when they can't read a map or use a GPS on a phone.?	See Policy 2. We want to develop a digital platform that has better quality information for users.
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Geoffrey	<p>9) PASSING the BUCK Policy 4: Empowering Communities to own their Public Right of Way Network. It is ludicrous to advertise this Policy when the Public already has a right to use all of the PROW routes. The British people already own the PROW network and Durham CC is required to keep the PROWs in good order, which you don't in Teesdale. Owing to miniscule budgets you have neither the workforce nor the materials to keep Teesdale's paths in good order and many paths are falling into disuse. When you have the responsibility, especially as you are now advertising that that PROWs are for ALL ABILITIES, then YOU have to keep the paths in good order. You cannot merely pass on the responsibility to imaginary AMBASSADORS, and local Parish Councils and then leave them to it. In addition, once you state that PROWs are for all abilities you will have a clear LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY to keep all Teesdale paths in good order (and enforce repairs by the Landowners) and will have to face LEGAL consequences when there are accidents as there surely will be. I have photographic evidence of my partially sighted wife's recent accident on Scargills path 36 which has a notice Use these three bridges at your own risk. How can the legal responsibility for using a bridge on a PROW be passed on to the user?</p>	Comment noted.
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Geoffrey	<p>10) FINANCE and BUDGETS I have asked Councillor Richard Bell to provide me with a breakdown of all aspects of PROW in Teesdale, Durham, e.g., a) Number of PROW workers in County Durham, salaries etc, as well as details for outside workers who work on the PROWs to repair them etc. b) PROW budgets for the past SIX years (as a % of the gross overall budget). c) The envisaged budget for Teesdale to deliver ROWROWIP4. d) The money that has already been notionally allocated and has been set aside. So far, I have had no response! A 36-page envisaged Plan is absolutely useless without saying what it will cost to deliver. There is no point in intending to renovate a derelict house into a posh house and intending to do the work with only 5% of the money needed in the bank already. Then there is the issue that currently you cannot cope with all the work that needs to be done urgently, such as the colossal back-log of DMMOs waiting to be dealt with, countless missing signs, and damaged footpaths on even some of the most used routes, such as down the Greta valley and up and down Cauldron Snout on the Pennine Way.</p>	Comment noted.
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<p>Geoffrey</p>	<p>11) APPENDICES Your use of the photograph of a 4-rung LADDER to cross a wall is a hoot! Did any one of the Plan's designers who chose the photograph stop to consider just how many of the ALL ABILITIES that you would want to access all PROWs would fail to cross this obstacle? How about, physically impaired people for a start, those needing two walking sticks to keep themselves upright? Response to ROWIP4 Proposals There is little point in launching an ambitious 10-year plan when, owing to insufficient manpower and funding, it has been impossible in recent years to meet the demands of the GOV.UK Public Rights of Way: Local authority RESPONSIBILITIES.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
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Geoffrey	<p><u>Recording Routes and Locations</u> You have not ensured that all routes are open for public use.</p> <p><u>Maintaining and Protecting public rights of way.</u> Some surfaces are not in a fit state for public use. e.g., Fields of Rape near Hollin Hall, Gainford. Footbridges near Scargill. Stepping stones on the Greta at the foot of Gill Beck. You haven't monitored where you have failed to meet previous targets. You may have considered the needs of people with mobility problems and other disabilities, but little has been done in Teesdale to rectify what is almost totally inadequate. If Government want stiles to be replaced by gaps or gates wherever possible surely Durham should have had ladders replaced. e.g., On the Teesdale Way between Barnard Castle and Cotherstone there is a huge ladder with a locked gate beside it! Another high ladder north of Hollin Hall, Gainford. Recording historical public rights of way (pre-1949) Are the PROW team At Durham currently asking for details of ancient pathways to be recorded. If so, where is the list for Teesdale and in particular the Barnard Castle</p> <p><u>Landowner Responsibilities</u> Durham local authority has failed to enforce many of the responsibilities that the landowners have failed to deliver, e.g., barbed wire and vegetation blocking cross-field footpaths. Also, there are bull signs permanently left up even if there is no bull in a field. There are many stiles in Teesdale that are dangerous and where it is not safe and reasonably easy to use. Durham authority have failed miserably to enforce such dangers to be made safe.</p>	
Anon	Yes, though the detail of how those priorities are interpreted and delivered will be crucial, particularly in effectively engaging with local communities to identify and develop specific initiatives.	Comment noted.
Anon	While the policy states the rights of the public are asserted and protected through the allocation of an annual budget for maintenance and Good management includes maintenance, which is crucial to making the most of the network, as well as investment in improvements and encouraging people to use and enjoy the routes.	Comment noted.
Anon	In alignment with Policy 2, stakeholders believe ROWIP4 should focus its investment near local settlements and communities to develop circular routes for residents. There is a legal duty to do so, but DCC does not carry this out nor in recent years	Comment noted.

	has it developed PROW in local communities in the South of Durham.	
Anon	Yes. Agreed. Priorities appear to be well thought out and cover good strong proposals for delivering a high-quality access network of PROWs.	Support noted.
Cycling UK	a. Auditing and subsequently prioritising significant investment in signage across the County; we suggest that consideration should be given to the value of interpretation (information about nature and local heritage) in addition to simple navigational signage - including opportunities to utilise QR codes and web-based information in conjunction with physical signage.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	b. Identifying and investing in a network of bridleways; we believe this priority needs to go further, offering a commitment to enhance and improve the extent of, and connectivity within the bridleway network,	See Policy 1 C, (b), Identifying and investing in the network of bridleways. We are committed to improving bridleways.
Cycling UK	c. Delivering the Stockton and Darlington Heritage Railway walking and cycling routes; We express concern at mixed messages whether this route will include horse access, and strongly encourage the facilitation of horse-riding within this route (including ensuring that surfacing is suitable for shared use in this manner).	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	d. Prioritising PROW routes close to settlements (See Policy 2: Awareness of Public Rights of Way and other routes).	Support noted.
Cycling UK	e. Allocating resources to work and liaise with communities (See Policy 4: Empowering Communities to own their Public Right of Way Network).	Support noted.
Cycling UK	f. Supporting the diversion of PROW out of farmyards where possible and rationalising routes where appropriate (See Policy 6: Ensuring the Countryside Code is followed, and Landowners are respected).	Support noted.
Anon	I would like to see specific reference to promotion of the Countryside Code on this list of priorities for the ROW Team. A high-quality network relies on appropriate usage and considerate users, sadly lacking currently in my experience.	There is a policy specifically on this issue, see Policy 6 of the plan.
Mike	I suggest that great care should be taken in this matter. Many diversions in the past have quite cynically destroyed historic routes and replaced them with meandering footpaths round the edges of fields (i.e., working areas). There are two things that can be wrong about this.	Comment noted. It is an existing statutory duty that PROW remain open.

	<p>Firstly, as noted above, PROW themselves, not just the locations that they connect, are frequently of historical significance. Much of the inherent interest in many PROW can be lost if they are carelessly diverted.</p> <p>Secondly, diverted paths have too often been ploughed over and/or left by the land occupant to be obstructed by vegetation unless, that is, the local authority pays to have them cleared. If a PROW is diverted for the convenience or commercial advantage of the landowner, then the latter should be legally obliged to take responsibility for keeping the diverted route clear and in good condition. I suggest that specifically worded undertakings should be entered into, rather than relying on the general legal responsibilities of landowner and local authority.</p>	<p>We are not proposing to fund diversions but support the diversions if they are appropriate to the public. The landowners will be responsible to fund the diversions.</p> <p>We will input greater detail in Policy 6 around the legal responsibility of landowners to maintain diverted footpaths.</p>
Mike	<p>Rationalisation On page 17, This looks ominous. Local needs might be interpreted in terms of recent local usage. This strategy could therefore run the danger of writing off what should be valuable public assets, simply because the public does not know about them or realise their potential. That could go against the admirable spirit of this draft Plan, which is to promote more awareness and usage of PROW. Some rationalisations would nonetheless be sensible. Some urban or suburban tarmacadamed footways are still shown as PROW on the definitive map, for instance, and could be taken off it. Contrariwise, some PROW end in limbo, with no option but to turn back (or not embark on them in the first place). In those cases, rationalisation might involve extending the PROW, not removing them.</p>	Comment noted,

Q2b. Do you have any other comments on this policy?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Sarah, British Horse Society	Cross County boundaries and circular routes. Horse riding communities are often in areas where access to a bridleway means riding into another Borough. Missed opportunities for circular routes which would be safer for horse and rider.	Comment noted.
Anon	In general, I believe it is more important to improve the existing PROW's before seeking new ones.	Comment noted.
Yvonne	The A19 trunk road splits Easington District in two from north to south. When it was built in the 1960s it was possible to cross this road safely with care. But today the volume of traffic makes this near impossible and very dangerous.	Comment noted. We have passed this information to the Rights of Way Team.

	<p>Therefore, footpaths between communities that cross the A19 are not fulfilling their full potential and are not an available or enjoyable resource for the public. They are becoming unused, farmers are ploughing over them, stiles are in disrepair and there is very little signage. There are approximately 7 points within Durham County where footpaths end at the A19. The installation of footbridges at these points would greatly enhance the PROW network in the densely populated East Durham area adding to the variety of routes and making it easier to develop circular routes. Investment in tourist destinations and national and regional routes is commendable and admirable but residents need amenities on their doorstep so that it is convenient to enjoy the delights of a walk on a daily basis making it a regular habit.</p>	
Anon	No further comments on the policy other than support the objectives.	Support noted.
Anon	<p>Two very detailed points: - the footpath between Neville's Cross Bank and Broompark Bridge in Durham is blocked by a Network Rail barrier at Broompark Bridge. Give the road layout the barrier seems excessive but, if it is needed, some kind of facility to make use for the footpath easier is needed. - there is no link from the new rail station at Horden to the coastal path, meaning you have to follow a circuitous and not always self-evident route.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Due to the site in Horden being in an environmental designation, the footpath was not permitted in this area.</p>
Anon	The residents of Brusselton are extremely concerned about removal of the railway stones and grass areas to accommodate a large tarmac track through. The area is of outstanding natural beauty, full of wildlife, charm and history. I would like to oppose plans for a tarmac track, in place of existing pathway	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>We have passed this information to our Rights of Way Team to consider.</p>
Jo	<p>I was concerned that you propose a policy to divert paths from farmyards. I am not aware that there have been any accidents to walkers going through farmyards, though there are sometimes reports of accidents to farm workers. While thefts from farmyards are sometimes reported they are not committed by walkers, cyclists or horse-riders. They are generally reported as the actions of people who set out to rob isolated places of expensive items, who access those places by vehicles, presumably for ease of removal of items and speed of retreat. Diversion of paths is already covered in legislation, and the process will still apply where any occupier is considering diverting a path from a farmyard. The existing criteria will still apply. There is mention of rationalising the network, seemingly</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Sometimes there are a number of routes in one area so rationalising routes could help with sustainable maintenance or reducing the need for sign posts etc.</p>

	to reduce its size to enable resources to be used, presumably, on more well-used routes. However, there is already a legal means of diverting and extinguishing paths, and if the rationalising proposals are challenged the process could well result in greater use of resources than if the existing problems are dealt with in the normal way.	
Anon	We also support the proposal that rationalising the number of routes may be necessary to ensure sustainability based on local need. It is a central issue which could save maintenance resources and benefit both private landowners and public users by closing some routes to provide a more sustainable, suitable route.	Support noted.
Chris Lines, County Councillor for Sedgefield	I am particularly keen to see the completion of links between and around settlements. There is a road between Fishburn and the A177 to the west (Little Thornton). On leaving Fishburn and heading west, the footpath alongside the road disappears for around 150-200 metres, then resumes and then disappears again for a few hundred metres as the road approaches the A177. This means that pedestrians have to walk on the road, which has a 60mph speed limit. This discourages walking and adding those short stretches of footpath would complete the path network in that area, effectively linking all of the settlements, and creating a series of safe circular walks. Residents in Fishburn have been calling for that path to be completed for many years, but this has never been seriously considered. Of course, it will be a significant cost to complete the path, but the long-term positive impact on all of the rural communities in that area will also be very significant.	Comment noted. We have passed this information to our Rights of Way Team for consideration.
Chris Lines, County Councillor for Sedgefield	Linked to the above, there used to be a well-defined footpath all the way alongside the A177 between Sedgefield and Coxhoe. Much of the northern end of that has been allowed to be reclaimed by nature. This is very unfortunate. The road is a wide one and there is plenty of room at its side for both pedestrian and cycle lanes. Again, these will not be inexpensive projects to complete, but the impact can be huge, improving active travel links between communities in the county and encouraging more people to consider such forms of getting around, whether to keep fit, reduce environmental impact, or get to work at key employment sites such as NETPark - or all three.	Comment noted. We have passed this information to our Rights of Way Team for consideration.

Chris Lines, County Councillor for Sedgefield	Two small rural settlements in my ward - Mordon and Bradbury - are linked by a footpath alongside a road (this road). The surface of this path is in poor condition and vegetation is often allowed to overgrow the path, making it unsafe to use (again, the road has a 60mph speed limit). Residents have asked many times for the surface to be improved and vegetation to be cut back more frequently. The response to the first request is that the work is too expensive in the context of the county council's overall budget for such projects. If the council is serious about supporting rural communities and helping them stay connected in sustainable ways, this kind of request should be acted upon. The above are three examples in the Sedgefield division, all of which are projects that residents have consistently and frequently asked to be addressed. They all make excellent common sense and are entirely aligned with the ROWIP4 objectives and policies. Thus far, after years of requests, there has been absolutely no indication that they might be taken forward. I would like to see that change.	Comment noted. We have passed this information to our Rights of Way Team for consideration.
Have aFaith Folley, Durham University	The University agree with the priorities set out in Criterion C. In relation to our response in Q1 above it is useful to note that prioritising routes close to (and within) settlements is included as a priority in point C.(d) and therefore linking a reference back to urban areas as well as rural Green Economy localities in strategic objectives would be sensible and reasonable. The University, with regard to new routes that affect PROW, will make them no less accessible and kept to a high standard which ties into the design guide and min standard for new PROW surfaces suitable for all users.	Reference to urban PROW will be added into the document.
Anon	Please put measures in place regarding aggressive cycling. Particularly dangerous for deaf people.	Comment noted. This is a difficult issue to address in the ROWIP.
Ramblers Organisatio n	How will this be achieved? It is also noted that in addition to Internal Stakeholders, a number of External Stakeholders have been listed. May I propose that the Ramblers Organisation be included as an external Stakeholder. The ramblers in Durham County are extremely active nearly every day, whether conducting organised rambles or carrying out recces. Almost 95% of our rambles are carried out along PROWs and as thus the organisation as a whole has an abundance of up-to-date information on PROW conditions. This includes broken stiles, blocked paths, and locked gates etc. The ramblers can positively contribute to DCC ongoing	Support noted. The thoughts of the Ramblers organisation are welcomed.

	improvements, and I strongly recommend inclusion.	
Cycling UK	We express grave concern over policy point B: Modernise the network by improving existing routes and creating new paths only where there is a need... this proposal, limiting the authorities role to where there is 'need ' directly contradicts the statutory criteria for right of way creation in S26 Highways Act 1980 that such creation should take place where creation is expedient, having regard to the extent to which the path or way would add to the convenience or enjoyment of a substantial section of the public, or to the convenience of persons resident in the area (balanced against impact on landowner as per S26(1)(b). The legal test for creation is expediency based on benefit to the public rather than ' need', artificially limiting the use of powers in this manner would amount to an unlawful fettering of the authorities discretion in their use of statutory powers.	A 3-year delivery plan will support the 10-year ROWIP4 strategic policies, and this will inform an investment programme for routes. In future years, we hope to have an effective monitoring system which will identify our most popular routes that require investment. In a County as big as Durham, with so many PROW, we will need to identify a programme of routes to invest in.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The Policy is seeking to deliver a huge range of priorities. As expressed above, there are choices to be made if resources are limited and not all can be the highest priority. Section B of the policy refers to only creating new paths when there is a need. It is not clear whether this caveat also applies to improving existing routes earlier in the sentence. The document does not indicate how needs will be determined. Need is not the same as demand and cannot be judged solely on evidence of existing use. The importance of the PROW network for everyday journeys, as well as leisure, needs to be recognised, and need may be identifiable through referring to Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans and similar analysis.	A 3-year delivery plan will support the 10-year ROWIP4 strategic policies, and this will inform an investment programme for routes. In future years, we hope to have an effective monitoring system which will identify our most popular routes that require investment.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The inclusion of a major high-quality walking and cycling scheme on the route of the former Stockton and Darlington Heritage Railway suggests that there could be support for similar schemes. The City of Durham Council has given consideration to a Durham City Green Belt Trail as the third trail centred on the World Heritage Site of Durham City Cathedral and Castle and the Trust recommends formal appraisal of this scheme. It would be a three- to four-day trail through the Durham City Green Belt which acts as an informal parkland setting for the City and contains many attractions within it. Such a route would strengthen the links between the City and its ring of surrounding villages for all purposes. It would be mostly on existing paths including	Comment noted. We have passed this information to our Rights of Way Team for consideration.

	<p>railway paths although some path creation would be necessary for its completion. It also relates well to the National Trust's proposal for a Green Corridor from its Crook Hall Gardens to Finchale Abbey.</p>	
<p>Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers</p>	<p>Barnard Castle Ramblers would like to emphasise that where appropriate stiles should be replaced by gates, thereby making it easier to move around for all abilities.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>We will amend Policy 3 to include the where possible, the replacement of stiles with gates.</p>
<p>Local Access Forum</p>	<p>1B omit the word 'only'. 1B needs to explain how it is intended to invest in a network to address issues of disjointed routes. One way is to prioritise recording those lost ways which offer the greatest benefit. Also how is it determined that there is a need?</p>	<p>A 3-year delivery plan will support the 10-year ROWIP4 strategic policies, and this will inform an investment programme for routes.</p> <p>In future years, we hope to have an effective monitoring system which will identify our most popular routes that require investment.</p>
<p>Local Access Forum</p>	<p>Need to explain what advice has been provided by the BHS.</p>	<p>In the context of Policy 1, it states that the BHS want to create new routes to expand the number of bridleways that already exist.</p>
<p>Local Access Forum</p>	<p>1C omit the word significant. 1C should also mention the creation of bridleways.</p>	<p>We have removed 'significant' from Policy 1C.</p> <p>Policy 1 Criteria C on prioritising improvements specifically refers to investing in a network of bridleways.</p>
<p>Barbara, British Horse Society</p>	<p>A: need proactive and responsive action when routes even little used ones are obstructed reports should be logged and progress recorded, including where necessary imposing penalties on obstructive landowners. Current systems are hard to navigate and not clear what progress is or isn't made.</p>	<p>The Council's ROW Team recognise the CRM system is not perfect.</p> <p>Reports are logged and where necessary action is taken towards landowners where routes are blocked as best as possible with resources available.</p>
<p>Barbara, British Horse Society</p>	<p>B: look particularly at orphaned routes and short sections which open up other routes.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>

Barbara, British Horse Society	C: Signage really important local ownership to flag up concerns sounds potentially very useful. Also, obvious gate/stiles.	Comments noted.
Barbara, British Horse Society	F: good, but important that the quality of the route is not diminished often end up with a substandard track instead of a nice firm farm track.	Concerns about diverting routes is noted.
Mike	<p>Page 16 of the draft report states that bridleways are an important element of the PROW network, yet despite this, they lack connectivity. This is entirely understandable and, indeed, desirable for more than the advantage of those people who wish to use PROW for horse-riding. I suspect that a significant reason for this need for new bridleways is that the Definitive Map was originally drawn up when non-recreational travel by horseback had declined, and was still declining, but before horse-riding had grown to as significant a recreational pastime as it is today. Many former horse-riding routes, I suspect, may only have been recorded as the footpaths that they had become.</p> <p>Officially designated bridleways now sometimes, therefore, peter out, with no legal alternative (other than by permissive rights) to turning back and returning by the route just taken, instead of continuing by a potentially circular route. Unfortunately, this tempts some horse-riders to use designated footpaths. Often landowners may not have sought to prevent them from doing this. Sometimes this has led to their re-designation as bridleways. In the meantime, serious damage can be done to footpaths by inconsiderate horse-riding. A few weeks' riding through muddy winter conditions can create a quagmire for walkers and ankle-spraining months later, if a long dry summer follows.</p>	Comments noted. One of the aims of policy 1 is to invest in a network of bridleways.
Michael	Managing and Delivering a High-Quality Access Network Prioritising PROW routes close to settlements is a sensible approach given limited resources and the potential health and well-being benefits of encouraging people to enjoy the countryside and take more exercise. In my own area the public footpaths closest to Stanhope, the main settlement in the dale, include some of the most neglected rights of way locally and have deteriorated considerably over recent years. I would therefore welcome this targeted approach here.	Support noted.

Q3a. Do you agree that we should improve digital and physical signposting for our Public Rights of Way?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Sarah, British Horse Society	Agree more physical and digital signposting is required.	Support noted.
Anon	Yes, in some parts of County Durham waymarking is poor.	Comment noted.
Anon	Agree that digital and physical signposting for PROW should be improved.	Support noted.
Anon	Yes, but information about networks etc. also needs to be available in non-digital formats.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, physical signposting has a lot of room for improvement. Digital signposting could be good, but it is simply a one-off association with some vendor, it's not going to be durable, nor accessible. Digital access means something managed directly by the council, as with the online definitive map, so that it remains accessible and current.	Comment noted. We agree that keeping digital mapping up to date is of upmost importance to the success of this policy, which is why we want to develop a long-lasting working relationship with a smartphone app company and to ensure correct digital information is also the requirement of a specific role in the Council's Rights of Way Team. This is set out in Policy 2.
Anon	Yes, but at the same time be wary of digital exclusion, especially in our rural communities who suffer most from poor connectivity. More should be done to encourage local groups and their access to our ROW. Link with community groups etc. to share.	We agree with this comment. This is why we are committed to digital and physical signposting, as evidenced in Policy 1. Also see Policy 4 which aims to empower local communities.
Anon	We acknowledge the uplift in digital accessibility/associated platforms and the Councils ambition to adopt such tools itself. But great care needs to be taken to ensure routes are legal and welcome the support of the Council to address platforms that post illegal routes. There must be an easy and quick way for users and landowners to remove illegal routes and correct errors on digital platforms. This will be a key role for any staff resource allocated to the Rights of Way Team.	The Rights of Way Team need to be digitally literate so they can understand the legal permissions attached to using particular routes in order for them to adapt routes digitally, as well as physically.
Anon	Great opportunity to provide digital and physical signposts.	Support noted.
Anon	Again, all the right words but will this be carried out? There has been a legal duty on Council to maintain rights of way, but DCC does not fulfil this.	Comment noted.

Anon	Equally, worrying are the tier levels will this result in third level local routes not being maintained as is the current situation and this creates worries at the level of socio-economic discrimination against some local communities.	Comment noted. The tiered structure should help manage the routes and the third tier is also about engaging with communities which is a priority of ROWIP4.
Parish Council?	The Parish Council concurs with the Plan to provide routes and mapping on a digital platform, this being a good way to appeal to younger people who are more 'app-orientated' than 'map-orientated'. Where possible though, the County Council should 'piggyback' existing digital platforms (OS Maps, Strava etc) rather than invest in reinvention.	We agree with piggybacking off existing digital platforms, and this is why we have proposed a partnership with a smartphone app provider.
Anon	Yes please! The digitalisation of the wider access to public routes will be most welcome. The proposal of adding permissive routes onto one sharing platform will be an enhancement to the widely used OS maps and will most certainly be used by rambler walk leaders. Similarly, the possible creation of a smartphone app to host branded routes is most innovative and welcomed.	Support noted.
Cycling UK	Yes, so long as this is done in a manner consistent with the sensitivity of the local area - we raise particular concern over the visible impact and urbanising effect of metal signage (particularly blue highway signage on cycle routes rather than green PROW signage and wooden signage furniture) in rural landscapes, in particular those in protected landscapes.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	Strongly supportive of greater use of digital signage, including use of QR codes.	Support noted.
Cycling UK	We also specifically support proposals for the development of high quality promoted routes on railway paths and PROW that seek to produce a targeted tourism offer and promote enjoyment of heritage assets.	Support noted. See the case study on the Heritage 100 project and the Northern Saints Project as an example of PROW targeting tourism.
Anon	Yes, to include appropriate reminders from the Countryside Code.	Comment noted.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	Yes, the County Council's webpages on walking could be improved to encourage walking for residents and visitors, including many of the examples given in the full strategy document.	We agree, comment noted.
Mike	Accordingly, Policy 2, on page 18. This is a most excellent idea. Where possible, I suggest it should also include on-the-ground signposting. At present, many a potential walk along a PROW will not begin, because it is not known whether a track or path shown on a map, some way further on, will be open for public use. It will doubtless involve a considerable amount of work, to establish from landowners which undesignated paths and tracks can be used by the	Support noted. We propose improved physical and digital signposting as part of Policy 2.

	general public. I suggest that the Council's excellent on-line definitive map should be updated as and when information about permissive routes is received, rather than waiting for a full list (even within this or that parish).	
Michael	Awareness of Public Rights of Way and Other Routes Improving digital and physical signposting for PROW is important in enabling the public to access accurate and up-to-date information about the network. Using enhanced digital mapping systems to facilitate the on-line reporting of problems with PROW is a good idea providing that the PROW Team is sufficiently well resourced to take effective action in response. If it is not, this initiative will add no value and is only likely to increase public frustration.	Comment noted. We agree that keeping digital mapping up to date is of utmost importance to the success of this policy, which is why we want to develop a long-lasting working relationship with a smartphone app company and to ensure correct digital information is also the requirement of a specific role in the Council's Rights of Way Team. This is set out in Policy 2

Q3b. Do you have any other comments on this policy?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Sarah, British Horse Society	Signage has deteriorated with age, either damaged, removed or has just never been there.	Comment noted.
Anon	While digital mapping has its place, physical signposting is still essential. Roadside finger posts in County Durham are good and regularly replaced but when followed the user can often then become lost. In Wolsingham Parish we have about 2000 way markers on 140 miles of path and probably 10% need to be replaced every year--a big job. I carry a smart phone with the OS app using GPS, but some users still prefer a printed map or walk leaflet. The PROW map on the D.C.C. website is excellent.	We agree that physical signposts are still important and require resources to maintain.
Anon	There are many signposts of public footpaths without any parking laybys near them, to allow people to drive to their locations. Many PROW are becoming overgrown because they are away from housing and people can't park near them. In the lake District popular walks commence with parking at the start. Does Durham council think people just pop up at public ROW .	Comment noted.
Anon	The development of a digital platform would be welcomed however, it needs to be ensured that this does not lead to any digital exclusion and that there are alternatives for people who are not digitally confident/aware or do not have digital access.	Comment noted.
Anon	Don't forget that a lot of people do not use or own smartphones.	Comment noted.

Anon	The council should prioritise integration with existing mapping software. When people look for routes between A and B, they use Google Maps (or similar online tools). This is the most common way for people to plan their route and integrating all paths onto this software should be a high priority.	We agree with this comment and is why we propose to partner with a smartphone app provider to digitally map routes.
Jo	I note that you are proposing to promote access to High Force and Low Force, and they are worthy of promotion. However, while car parking is currently adequate at High Force, adjacent to the hotel, the same is not true of Low Force. At weekends and holidays the car park at Bowlees is overflowing, and I avoid going there at such times. There was a huge problem after the lockdown ended with cars being parked on grass verges all around the Bowlees area, and this is now forbidden. Parking is also very limited in Middleton in Teesdale. Something needs to be done not to increase the parking problem if these places are to have increased promotion.	Comment noted.
Anon	We would also welcome the collaboration with other teams within the Council (e.g., planning, growth, etc.) to encourage and maintain/increase the digital accessibility and network across all parts of County Councils area.	Comment noted.
Anon	Durham County Council's Definitive Public Rights of Way map does not include any indication of open access or coastal access land. This is a major oversight as open access and coastal access land cover a large area of Durham County Council - far larger than the overall paths network. According to p14 of your outline of your Scope of Work, The only way I know how to find out about open access and coastal route land is through the Natural England website, but it is hard to use because you need to know specific location information. Putting details of open access and coastal access routes on the Definitive map would be the simplest solution.	Comment noted. Natural England manage Open Access Land.
Anon	The list of external stakeholders / partners should be widened to include rambler groups. The involvement of these groups would assist the Council in cost-effectively identifying signage and access problems along routes and would help the Council examine what types of educational information may promote greater use of the routes. For example, the footpath leading from Healeyfield Lane across Cockshots Bank to the railway line at Charlton Howl and eventually to Whitehall is not used very much. There is a single footpath sign at the start of the route and end of the route but there are no arrow signs along	Comment noted.

	the walk indicating the convoluted route between the start and end footpath signs.	
Anon	A wider range of external stakeholders could include local history groups, churches and other institutions working with the community. This would assist the Council in promoting existing signage or information hubs provided by some of these outside organisations and thereby reduce the financial burden on Durham County Council's footpaths signage budget. For example, the churches at Waskerley and Edmundbyers have outstanding display boards highlighting the history of the local areas.	Comment noted. Its important that local communities take ownership and pride in local routes – see policy 4.
Anon	The list of external stakeholders should be widened to include local conservation and animal welfare groups - particularly groups working in designated sites or protected areas. Council Rangers could liaise both with groups (as well as landowners) with knowledge of conservation projects or flora or fauna along routes to enable information to be included on an interactive footpaths map. The information could: promote and highlight the work of the groups showcase the wildlife and plants benefitting from those schemes remind members of the public to act in a way which will not disturb wildlife in sensitive areas and alert members of the public to local flora or fauna dangers.	The Council are happy to work with local conservation and animal welfare groups. In addition to these groups, the Council have their own ecological and biodiversity teams who speak to the groups you mention and advise on all projects.
Anon	Car parks provide a convenient point at which information boards highlighting local path routes and unique selling points about the paths might be a cost-effective way of using display boards to target as wide an audience as possible. Contact details for the Council PROW team so problems can immediately reported.	Comment noted.
Anon	Motifs on the Council's interactive map could save the Council money on the provision of larger information boards on paths. motifs could alert and link map users to local information displays or internet sites for groups and businesses working in the area (from trekking, walking, outdoor sports, conservation, history, food groups etc.)	We agree with the idea of motifs or QR codes and will suggest this idea to the team working on providing the digital information and the partnering app.

Jonathan Milroy, Cockfield Parish Council	It is great to see the proposals being made and in particular was drawn to sections relating to making our redundant rail network more accessible.	Support noted.
Jonathan Milroy, Cockfield Parish Council	We have already made DCC and S&DR bicentennial group aware of the lack of access and poor condition of the old railway lines within the Gaunless valley from Ramshaw. We feel that given the important heritage the Gaunless valley provides, it being part of the original S&DR plan as a branch line, as well as giving access to historic Cockfield Fell it would seem a candidate for improvements.	We have forwarded this information to our Rights of Way Team.
Jonathan Milroy, Cockfield Parish Council	An extension of the existing cycle/walkway from Ramshaw to the Haggerleases line terminus (approx. 3 miles) would be a much-used route within the area and allow access into the Gaunless valley adjoining other paths and clearly fits with plans intent. Whilst this would also join the main road at Butterknowle for cyclists ideally a continuation of the railway from Cockfield station to Barnard Castle should be considered. This is no doubt a big undertaking, but these such routes have been converted throughout the county. This particular route would again allow a link between existing routes at Ramshaw to join the Teesdale railway again fitting with the proposed plan scope but seems to be continually overlooked.	Comment noted. We have forwarded this information to our Rights of Way Team who will investigate this further.
Jonathan Milroy, Cockfield Parish Council	In regard to existing access there are circular footpath routes in the region of the Lands viaduct. However, these are inaccessible, unsafe and lack basic signage. We have raised concerns many times with DCC (lately through Helen Barber) but have had no progress on resolution. We have also been awaiting repairs to a small railway bridge on Cockfield Fell which has been cordoned off for over 10 years despite requests to reopen. Footpaths and railways in this locality given the historical significance of the area we feel should be given some priority in-line with the proposals outlined in the improvement plan. We would be grateful if you could feed these above suggestions and concerns into the plan review.	Comment noted. We have forwarded this information to our Rights of Way Team who will investigate this further.
Faith Folley, Durham University	The University agree that the County Council should invest in physical and digital signage. The University have invested heavily in the estate's pedestrian network (including links to PROW) in the last 5years, this investment has included wayfinding signage improvements across the estate. This has had a positive impact on better pedestrian way finding and managing pedestrian flows. Improving signage from PROWs which connect into the University's estate including additional way finding within the pedestrian network as a whole in Durham City itself would be welcomed.	Support noted.

Cycling UK	We would like to see the development of a clear network strategic multi-user (i.e., bridleway) routes spanning the county that connects together town and country.	We agree and this is why we are proposing to develop the network bridleways through investment in Policy 1 C (b).
Cycling UK	We also believe that the current network of disused railway routes should be dedicated as bridleway or restricted byway to better communicate rights of access to the public, clarify maintenance duties and protect public rights of access from the impact of development in perpetuity.	We believe that information for the general public is more important than the classification of the route, and we will communicate routes to the public online.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	Digitising the wider access network and public routes onto one digital platform will be transformational in promoting the network to all users and to ensure that walking becomes a more popular activity for all purposes from day-to-day movement to healthy exercise and tourism promotion.	Support noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	Creating a tiered system of branded national and regional routes, tourist routes and local routes will indeed help to ensure investment in the right places.	Support noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	While working with a commercial partner to develop a County Durham specific smartphone app is a laudable policy objective, the Council should also be making its data available via a permissive licence allowing third parties to incorporate the information in their own applications. The routes of all paths on the network, their legal status, accessibility, surface quality, branding, and any temporary closures are all information which would be valuable to users. The text following the policy mentions Strava and Komoot. Both of these services depend on OpenStreetMap for the underlying data, as does the national Cyclestreets journey planner and leisure-oriented sites like cycle.travel. The Council could work with local OpenStreetMap volunteers to enhance the map data, or partner with OSM consultants to set up automated data feeds from the Council's proposed digital platform, enabling high-quality mapping to be shared with the widest possible user-base.	We appreciate this information. We will take data sources into consideration with our discussion with the third-party app provider. If the provision of our information will ultimately help our residents to move more than the Councils should be open to this.
Caroline, Barnard	Yes, we would emphasise the on-going maintenance of digital platforms (old and new) together with the	We agree that both digital and

Castle Ramblers	continued maintenance of physical signposting. Residents/visitors can be put off from walking unfamiliar routes where physical signposting is inconsistent and serves as confirmation for walkers and landowners of being on the right route.	physical signposting is vital for the PROW network to be used effectively. We agree that keeping digital and physical mapping up to date is of upmost importance to the success of this policy, which is why we want to develop a working relationship with a smartphone app company and to ensure correct digital information is the requirement of a specific role in the Council's Rights of Way Team. This is set out in the proposed policy (Policy 2).
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Q4a. Do you think establishing 10 accessible routes in 10 years is achievable or sufficiently ambitious?

Respondents	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	No, I think you should be more ambitious. People are losing their connection to nature and need to feel that they can access the nature on their doorstep.	We feel that 10 circular routes in 10 years is ambitious but realistic.
Sarah, British Horse Society	10 circular routes in 10 years are probably achievable. It would be nice to see more but appreciate that the outcome should be useable by all PROW users, and this takes time and thought.	We feel that 10 circular routes in 10 years is ambitious but realistic.
Anon	Yes, given that this is a 10-year plan. A realistic target.	Support noted.
Anon	Not enough	Comment noted.
Anon	Establishing 10 accessible routes in 10 years appears to be achievable, realistic, and sufficiently ambitious at this point in time.	Support noted.
Anon	It may be possible, but I think you need proper rangers or wardens rather than so called ambassadors...in my experience the biggest problems are aggressive cyclists and off-road vehicles...you need paid employees to monitor with body cameras etc . I think an ambassador will simply	Comment noted

	be someone in a distant office who is likely to already be e.g., on the council and waste tax payers' money producing useless blogs etc...telling people what to do!!	
Anon	I think it is insufficiently ambitious. Durham is a large county the nearest route could be many miles away.	We feel that 10 circular routes in 10 years is ambitious but realistic.
Anon	This is a very woolly question i.e., how long is each route? How difficult/inaccessible is the terrain? If each route is only 5km, the 10 accessible routes in 10 years is achievable.	We are aiming for the routes to be short and accessible, ideally circular but each route will be different. Potential routes will be set out within the 3 years delivery plan.
Anon	We are keen to see local communities benefiting from the adoption of a 'loo, a brew, and a view' across Durham.	Comment noted.
Anon	We also notes that the Council will work with landowners to help support the provision of infrastructure on the PROW network to help achieve this inclusive approach. We would therefore welcome further details on how this will be integrated into the many departments within the Council.	Potential routes will be set out within the 3 years delivery plan. It will then be up all stakeholders to make sure these routes are progressed and made inclusive.
Anon	Great idea, easy parking.	Support noted.
Anon	The target of creating one accessible route per year in the whole of Durham County Council doesn't seem very ambitious at all however I am not aware of the budget or how much that budget would buy.	Potential routes will be set out within the 3 years delivery plan. It will then be up all stakeholders to make sure these routes are progressed and made inclusive.

Geoffrey	<p>Future PROW problems for Partially Sighted walkers in Teesdale, County Durham. If the County Council PROW team has highlighted 10 routes in the County for those minority adventurers with mobility scooters, then once a declaration is made that ALL PROW paths are available for ALL abilities of walkers, then there MUST be a consideration as to how the partially sighted or blind are catered for. So far there is little or no consideration for many such walkers. 20 years of world experience in jungles, deserts, snow and ice, forests and mountains with a registered partially sighted wife have led to the following conclusions about grades of difficulty of PROW in Teesdale.</p>	<p>Comment noted. Policy 3 of ROWIP4 notes that not all routes in the County will be accessible for all individuals, and that accessibility requires the provision of information so the individual can make their own decision as to what is accessible for them. Therefore, we cannot declare that all PROW are accessible for all abilities.</p>
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<p>Geoffrey</p>	<p>EASY PATHS</p> <p>1) The surface is either short -cropped grass or hard flat earth. The path is clearly seen and there are no difficult stiles. Walking poles are not necessary. The walker can stroll in confidence and enjoy the surrounding scenery.</p> <p>2) Slightly harder is a good path with perhaps a few small holes, stones, or roots which a sighted companion can point out.</p> <p>3) A path with enough irregularities for the partially sighted person to need a walking pole or poles.</p> <p>SOMEWHAT HARDER PATHS</p> <p>4) Paths essentially easy with some seasonal vegetation (e.g., grass or bracken) which may obscure the path.</p> <p>5) Paths where a walker needs to halt to slowly negotiate any obstacles which need to be pointed out to them.</p> <p>6) Steeper paths (perhaps slippery) when going downhill, especially after recent rain.</p> <p>7) Tussocky heath and moorland paths (perhaps boggy) which are frequently not obvious.</p> <p>HARD PATHS</p> <p>8) Paths with obstacles where a brief helping hand needs to be given by a sighted companion.</p> <p>9) Even harder terrain where long sections of the way need a constant helping hand.</p> <p>10) Constant help is needed to cross difficult stiles, ladders, dikes, streams or dangerous footbridges.</p> <p>11) Help is needed to deal with much vegetation (holly, hawthorn etc) or barbed wire which illegally obstructs a public right of way.</p> <p>EXTREME PROW WALKING</p> <p>12) Constant help is needed to cross wild moorland, perhaps with deep ravines, rock/stone fields, or deep boggy peat troughs, where the path is not obvious.</p> <p>13) Walking a path which is perilously close to a dangerous drop, or where the muddy terrain is sloping and where a slide or fall may take place.</p> <p>14) Last but not least is the case where walkers are crossing a wide farming stretch of land where there are cattle (frisky/boisterous young ones, cows with calves, and bulls). Perhaps the cattle are not seen at first and there are no walls to escape possible intimidation and serious incidents. The partially sighted walker will have no warning and may not be able to dash for safety. Remember that partially sighted people can not usually read an OS map, the County definitive master PROW plan on a computer, use a compass, or use a phone with a Satnav. They will need constant help, hopefully from an experienced walker. How will future SIGNAGE be planned to advise the carers of partially sighted walkers who are keen to walk paths which are as difficult as possible? Even partially sighted walkers</p>	<p>We agree that there will need to be ratings of different routes to ensure that the correct information is provided to individuals who can make their own decision as to whether the route is accessible for them.</p> <p>We appreciate you setting out the potential scale for accessibility, this is very useful for us.</p> <p>As part of Policy 2 we are aiming to provide information on a digital platform about routes in the county so the individual can assess for themselves whether the route is accessible.</p>
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	like a challenge, p.s., Scargill Parish has notorious PROW with problems such barbed wire, dangerous footbries, broken stiles, damaged handrails etc.	
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Geoffrey	There is no details of a Parish Council on the Web, and it merely says Parish Meeting 24 electorate.	It is unclear which Parish you are referring to.
Anon	I am a layperson on the practical challenges involved in developing accessible routes, but 10 does not instinctively feel sufficiently ambitious.	Comment noted.
Anon	Incredibly worrying - where will these ten be? In the 'elite' main areas of County Durham! The south of Durham (Shildon, Middridge, Dene Valley, Eldon areas of the county) will be ignored and the managed decline continue. Once again, one of the most highly taxed area within the country with one of the highest poverty levels is ignored by DCC. These local routes, the natural resources and the many historical assets need to be developed to bring hikers etc. into the area to create economic development and resilience. Yet DCC seems totally opposed to development of this network in these local communities.	We are proposing to develop accessible routes in area where this is currently lacking, which is subsequently northern, central and coastal areas of the county. PROW should be close to local communities and should be easy to access for all to enjoy.
Anon	Whilst disappointed that the Plan's proposed '10 in 10' doesn't include any routes in the south/west of the county, the Parish Council believes that it would be better for a focus to be placed on making existing paths and routes better to find and use (e.g., through signposting/waymarking). (e.g., FP2 between Wiregill and Great Egglehope Beck, and footbridge across the beck).	Potential routes will be set out within the 3 years delivery plan. It will then be up all stakeholders to make sure these routes are progressed and made inclusive. Policy 2 of the Plan proposes to improve physical and digital waymarking.
Ramblers	Yes, it is most achievable and may I offer the support of the ramblers. The ramblers are in a position to voluntarily carry out or assist in surveys etc and make any recommendations or suggestions for improvements and furthermore assist in the publicity of such routes. As an example, and when the Darlington / Stockton route is complete we already have plans to walk the route (over three weekends) and invite the Ramblers Magazine to produce a detailed article. Please be aware that the magazine has a readership of millions nationally.	Support noted.
Cycling UK	We believe this is woefully under-ambitious - because the proposal fails to identify the extent or mileage of these routes. Does the proposal envisage mean 10 x 1-mile routes or 10 x 100-mile routes? A clear target mileage should be identified.	Potential routes will be set out within the 3 years delivery plan. We are aiming for the routes to be short and accessible, ideally

		circular but each route will be different.
Anon	It doesn't put any investment into the South and West of Co Durham, not achievable when many existing PROWS need attention, paths clearing, stiles making/renewing etc.	We are proposing to develop accessible routes in area where this is currently lacking, which is subsequently northern, central, and coastal areas of the county.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	This may be achievable; it will depend upon whether these are new routes or extension to existing routes.	The '10 in 10' routes will be partly new routes and extensions to existing routes, such as railway paths.
Michael	Making Our Network Accessible - 10 in 10 Establishing 10 accessible routes in 10 years (i.e., an average of one per year) does not sound like an ambitious goal. However, given the current squeeze on council resources I fear that even 10 might prove to be an unrealistic figure.	Potential routes will be set out within the 3 years delivery plan. It will then be up all stakeholders to make sure these routes are progressed and made inclusive.

Q4b. Do you have any other comments on this policy?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Sarah, British Horse Society	Ensuring surfaces are horse friendly would be helpful with Pegasus crossing where appropriate.	Improvements will be appropriate to the status of the route.
Anon	A very commendable policy. My wife has walking difficulties and has recently enjoyed using the newly introduced Trampers at Killhope, Bowlees, Talkin Tarn and High Force. We have a Wheelchair Walk around Wolsingham which was established 25 years ago and is ever popular.	Support noted.
Anon	More kissing gates for access, more parking at ROW start/finish points.	We agree with the comment. Policy 3 of the Plan proposes to ensure accessibility on PROW routes, which includes installing accessible infrastructure.
Anon	If the 10 accessible routes are completed earlier than the 10-year target, would there be an opportunity to increase the target accordingly? Would there be	We believe that '10 in 10' routes is an

	regular reviews to establish whether the target is on track or needs increasing/amending?	ambitious but realistic target.
Anon	What about people with arthritis, impaired mobility etc. Locally I have noticed many gates are now locked, the step over Stiles are no good for people with mobility/balance problems. Kissing gates are great but in 30 years of walking our local paths I have never known them so inaccessible.	Policy 3 of the Plan proposes to ensure accessibility on PROW routes, which includes installing accessible infrastructure such as gates or gaps rather than stiles.
Anon	We are very pleased that the Council have acknowledged the issue of 'footpath-creep' and welcome any work that supports this.	Support noted.
Anon	We are also keen to see how new Environmental Market funds, managed by the Council (section 106/BNG) can be used by landowners to maintain a biodiverse risk network.	Comment noted. This area of work, around Biodiversity Net Gain, is still emerging but there could be an opportunity for landowners to provide better biodiversity.
Anon	I support the proposal in Policy 1. Unfortunately, dead-end paths lead to neglect and disuse and open access land is often impossible to enter!	Comment noted.
Anon	Where paths are dead end paths linking on to open access land, provision needs to be made to link the official footpath to the nearest bridleway, footpath or other maintained path by clearing away obstructions on neighbouring open access land to create circular routes. For example, Footpath 20 had been neglected for a considerable length of time. The actual path had become completely inaccessible due to vegetation growth but partly because of a dangerous, rotten 6ft high stile, and a blocked overgrown open access point at the end of the dead-end path. It was re-opened this year but the stile and inaccessible open access point at the end of the dead-end official footpath continue to discourage use of the footpath. The overgrown, blocked open access area between the end of Footpath 20 and the nearby track is only about 150m or so.	Comment noted. We have passed this information to our Rights of Way Team who will investigate this further.
Anon	Supporting landowners (perhaps by using volunteers) to help dead end paths become accessible to nearby paths by clearing overgrown vegetation through open access land to dead end footpaths would encourage members of the public to take advantage of and enjoy a complete circular route.	Comment noted.

Anon	Stiles over 4ft high are not safe or appropriate forms of access along pathways in the 21st century. Stiles of such a dangerous nature discourage use of the route by people with disabilities or people with young children and dogs or walkers with heavy rucksacks. Landowners of access points like high stiles need to be encouraged to replace the stiles with gates. Where the cost of replacement is excessive to the landowner, assistance to the landowner should be considered. Exclamation motives could alert the users of the Council interactive map to access problems for people with disabilities (e.g., uneven paths, difficult to use stiles awaiting replacement etc.). The idea of using photos (as appears to be the case in the app called Phototrails) to illustrate any access issues is excellent.	Support noted. Policy 3 of the Plan proposes to ensure accessibility on PROW routes, which includes installing accessible infrastructure like kissing gates rather than stiles.
Faith Folley, Durham University	The University supports this policy of establishing accessible routes within the County's PROW network. Durham University recognise that due to the ancient medieval layout of the City, certain limitations can be encountered. However, Durham University strives to make the campus accessible to all users. The University do recognise users may encounter limitations around the Estate but do their best to make reasonable adjustments where possible and understand the importance of accurate and practical information on accessibility of the Estate. The University work with AccessAble to provide access to such important information for anyone wishing to study, work or visit Durham University. Durham University is committed to providing inclusive spaces that provide a positive experience for all staff, students, and visitors. In terms of whether the policy is sufficiently ambitious it is difficult to answer as the 10 routes have not been determined yet and thus the amount of work to establish the routes has not been outlined. There is always potential to be more ambitious though and creating flexibility in the policy by having a priority top 10 list and an additional next priority list of 5 or 10 more routes to move onto if the priority top 10 list is established quicker than 10 years.	Comment noted. We agree that having a reserve list for routes is a good idea. Potential routes will be set out within the 3 years delivery plan. It will then be up all stakeholders to make sure these routes are progressed and made inclusive. We also note the great work done by the University on accessibility.
Anon	I think it will never be properly done because of cost etc.	Comment noted.
Ramblers Group	Our local rambler's group do not have any disabled members. The policy will make a massive difference to ensure those with disabilities can be included in some walks which will increase as time progresses and improvements made.	Support noted.
Cycling UK	Accessible needs to mean accessible to the widest diversity of users - it should not be limited to walkers and wheelchair users but should offer use for cycle and horse-riding access too, particularly given recent	Comment noted. Improvements will be appropriate to the status of the route.

	research identifying the importance of cycles as mobility aids.	
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The Trust recommends that the Durham City Heritage Trail be included in the 10 in 10 project, in that it meets the criterion of being in central Durham and has potential for improved wheelchair access. It also has accessible parking, links with rail and could be promoted strongly as a visitor and tourist attraction. The trail shown in the leaflet produced by the Trust and the City of Durham Parish Council has a route for wheelchair users and people of limited mobility. The Trust would welcome discussions on how to improve this routing and the physical surfaces to make it eligible for inclusion in the 10 in 10 initiatives.	Comment noted. Potential routes will be set out within the 3 years delivery plan. It will then be up all stakeholders to make sure these routes are progressed and made inclusive.
Local Access Forum	Page 20 should include '10 in 10' accessible new routes.	Comment noted. Page 20 does include reference to the '10 in 10' accessible routes.
Barbara, British Horse Society	How are new development plans measured Accessible routes funding? Measurement? Have they already been identified?	Apologies, we do not understand the question.
Barbara, British Horse Society	Maybe use of what three words as alternative to GR?? Flagged maps/ guides to named routes maintained. Map to show if blockage notified, can be removed once dealt with?	Comment noted. What Three Words is a great idea and something to consider as we develop the plan.
Barbara, British Horse Society	More accessible online maps would help with accessibility.	Policy 2 is aiming to bring awareness to PROW routes through the Council partnering with a smartphone app provider to provide maps digitally.

Q5a. Do you see the value in having local ambassadors to promote local routes and encourage use of the PROW network?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Pamela Cox	I notice that one of your priorities is to promote the rights of way network to communities. Can I therefore tell you about a problem we had related to finding out about a local right of way. We live in Haswell (3 Blossomfield Way). If you remember, in approximately Nov 21, we had some really high winds that caused quite a bit of devastation with trees falling etc. At that time, we couldn't get out of our estate as trees had fallen in both directions. We were booked to go away that weekend and we hoped that family	Comment noted. We have forwarded this information to our Rights of Way Team who will investigate this further.

	<p>could get to us to pick us up if we could get to the main street. We thought about trying to climb over one of the trees, but it wasn't really an option. I have lived in Haswell all my life and I remember a right of way through the back of our estate onto what is now Kestrel Way. Houses were erected at the rear of our estate are where I thought the right of way to be. Back when these houses were erected, we were led to believe that the right of way remained and went through one of the gardens to these properties. I looked at DCC website to see if I could see where it was and couldn't find anything. I tried telephoning DCC and couldn't get through but to be fair it was a terrible time for people so I would think you would be inundated with calls. In the end we just had to resign ourselves to not getting away and we lost the cost of the hotel. Having had this happen however, I was still curious to know if there was still a right of way from Blossomfield Way to Kestrel Way in case anything like this was to happen again. I have never seen any publicity regarding the removal of this right of way. We emailed DCC via your customer portal to explain this and ask if they could advise if the right of way was still in place and if so, where it was situated. We received a reply which was in no way related to the query. From memory, I think the reply only told us that no repairs were being made to a path. It looked to us as if someone had received the query then just pressed an automated reply which did not answer the query. (this query may have been sent from my husband Gerald Cox). We tried contacting again to query this, but we did not receive any response at all. Earlier this year we had to contact DCC regarding the open plan land near our property (nothing to do with right of way) however I again queried whether there was a right of way and, yet again, did not receive a reply.</p>	
Anon	Yes, if they are empowered	Comment noted.
Sarah, British Horse Society	Same question as 4. Would more inter council working help to achieve better cross boundary access to bridleways? It would be beneficial to plot areas of higher incidences of horse riding, bearing in mind riders are now having to use transport if they have it to access off road riding or are choosing to ride in riding arenas, making it too expensive for most horse owners or would like to be horse owners, again increasing the likelihood of it becoming a minority activity.	The Council prioritise investment in the network of bridleways as part of Policy 1 of the Plan.
Anon	Just to note, the correct questions for 5a and 5b have not been included in the full document. The questions listed are 4a and 4b.	Comment noted.

Anon	However, in terms of the value in having local ambassadors to promote local routes and encourage the use of the PROW network, this will be key to engaging and empowering local communities. It will be really important to get local and community buy in with local ambassadors.	Comment noted.
Anon	No. How will they achieve stated aims??? Banging on people's doors and pestering them??? I do not believe in expecting local people to clean up the mess left by inconsiderate visitors e.g., litter or be responsible for volunteering to carry out maintenance or repairs. Council tax is exceedingly high and if you intend to use this tax it needs to be spent in proper wages on proper staff to monitor PROW. You seem to be saying local communities have to assume responsibility, but you don't define what community is.	Policy 4 is about empowering community ambassadors, who are likely to be a mix of volunteers and paid Council staff, to promote and navigate PROW users on the PROW network. These ambassadors will work with communities to maintain and promote their local routes and have pride over the PROW in their settlements, which will encourage the use of the PROW network and thereby benefit physical and mental wellbeing in local communities.
Anon	The definition of local ambassador is not set out clearly. What are their roles in more detail, and how are they recruited? In principle, local wardens sounds good. But maybe that's not what you mean. Are ambassadors meant to be resident near to a particular set of Ways? Maybe that's good. Particularly if they can be given substantive responsibilities for monitoring, reporting, and liaising over way-related matters	Although not fully defined, we anticipate that there would be some paid ambassadors in some local communities, as well as some volunteers. Volunteers will not replace full time staff but work alongside them.
Anon	Yes. But with proper support and training	Comment noted.
Anon	We welcome more details on actions the council will undertake to ensure a strong relationship between local community ambassadors and the Rights of Way Team is formed (reflecting both users and landowners), in the managing the PROW network in local areas. Such activities has been undertaken by	Comment noted. We anticipate that there would be some paid ambassadors in some local communities, as

	the LAF, but ensuring a critical balance between all actors on these groups is a challenge.	well as some volunteers.
Anon	Prior to the pandemic, working with Groundwork Northeast this was arranged in the Eldon area with particular reference to Blackie Woods and the local footpaths all of this came to nothing though information was passed to DCC no follow up occurred.	We have forwarded this information to our Rights of Way Team who will investigate this further.
Anon	In terms of the 100 walks, one wonders if any of these will be in South Durham - and will develop the area given DCCs current attitude towards this area.	Comment noted.
Anon	No because these so-called ambassadors will presumably be paid high salaries thus increasing council tax and also, I think they will be office based with no meaningful contact with the public especially those without internet access.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, but it would need to be fully and sustainably funded by Durham County Council.	Comment noted.
Chester-Le-Street Ramblers	The use of local ambassadors to promote local routes is welcomed. Chester Le Street Ramblers are indeed already well placed to act as representatives on behalf of DCC. All members are local to County Durham and live within various locations.	Support noted.
Cycling UK	Yes, we fully support this proposal - indeed, we would go further and support a greater role for parish councils in the maintenance of their local public right of way network as envisaged by Section 43 Highways Act 1980.	Support noted.
Anon	Yes, I would like the ambassadors also to promote the Countryside Code.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, but it must be funded by DCC.	We anticipate that some ambassador roles will be DCC staff.
Michael	From my perspective this policy is the most significant in terms of enabling the maintenance and improvement of local PROW networks. I am sure that empowering local community ownership is the right approach. However, building relationships and partnerships with Parish Councils and local community ambassadors across the county will require a considerable amount of time, effort, and persistence. Once again, my main concern is whether the PROW Team at DCC is adequately resourced to tackle this challenge. My own experience locally makes me doubt that this is the case. A couple of years ago I attempted to engage my Parish Council in a discussion about problems with some local footpaths around Stanhope caused by fallen trees and damage to fragile paths in woodland resulting from the incursion of stray sheep. I was met with a total lack of interest and the	Comment noted. We appreciate that resources will need to be found to deliver the ambitions of this plan. Policy 4 does state that the Council will allocate specific resources within the Rights of Way Team to work with residents and Town and Parish Councils and local community groups to map where important

	assertion that this was not the PC's responsibility. When I subsequently tried to contact DCC's PROW Team for advice about possible ways of addressing the problem I received no reply to my email (which I took to be indicative of the resource pressures the team was experiencing). I would like to see the Improvement Plan setting out in more detail exactly what the Council proposes to do to achieve this objective and how it will ensure that sufficient resources are provided.	PROW are in the different settlements.
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Q5b. Do you have any other comments on this policy?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	The Plan uses Wolsingham Wayfarers as a case study. I am a member of W.W and we are fortunate to have an enthusiastic committee of five. However, this is quite a time-consuming commitment in an age when volunteers are harder to find.	We anticipate that there would be some paid ambassadors in some local communities, as well as some volunteers.
Geoffrey	1. There are several footpaths in my area which are in a poor state of repair or where the farmer ploughs right up to the hedge/fence and they are unusable. What is the process for feeding this back to yourselves? 2. There are also several footpaths in my area which have been in use for at least 70 years. But are not rights of way. What is the process for formally making them rights of way?	You can contact the Council's Rights of Way Team by email, phone or online. Making a footpath a formal right of way is either through landowner dedication or by a modification order application (online). There is more information on line: https://www.durham.gov.uk/prow
Anon	It is good to see the strategy being linked with other documents such as the Moving Together Strategy and that there will be an alignment with the principles of the whole system and place-based approach.	Support noted.
Anon	Good idea but unlikely to be effective.	Comment noted.
Chris Line, County Councillor for Sedgefield	We should certainly encourage active travel ambassadors and evangelists in local areas - their knowledge, passion and networks can be invaluable in promoting the PROW network. However, we need to help them in that work. Just because someone is an advocate for something, does not make them an expert in communications. We need to furnish them with collateral that is easy to use and share and offer a degree of practical support in that work. Simply signing up lots of ambassadors does not mean that such a programme will succeed.	Comment noted. Policy 4 does state that the Council will allocate specific resources within the Rights of Way Team to work with residents and Town and Parish Councils and local community groups to map where important PROW are in the different settlements.

Faith Folley, Durham University	The University agrees that engaging local ambassadors to promote the County's PROW network will be valuable to empowering communities to use and steward their local routes more. It is important that there is a diversity (age, gender, ethnicity, ability etc) of local ambassadors to allow for a depth and breadth of connections within local communities to be made. Specifically in relation to PROW in Durham City having input from the University including Estates Management and Students will help in communicating to 5,767 employees and 22,130 students who use the PROW network within the City.	Comment noted.
Faith Folley, Durham University	It also noted at point E. of the policy that the County Council will engage with local educators to promote their local PROW and advise on heritage links. Durham University welcomes this proposed engagement as the key higher education provider within the County.	Support noted.
Anon	The Heritage 100 idea of creating a 100 walking routes from 3 to 10 miles long and at the same time providing people with motivation to collect with family and at the same time learn about the heritage and environment is brilliant and most welcomed. This initiative is simply outstanding.	Support for H100 noted.
Cycling UK	We believe that an important part of empowering communities to 'own' their PROW network includes giving parish councils greater responsibility in the maintenance and development of their local network - including a parish-based ROWIP that identifies the rights of way network improvements (including new routes) that local communities (parish councils) would like to see in their local area.	Policy 4 does state that the Council will allocate specific resources within the Rights of Way Team to work with residents and Town and Parish Councils and local community groups to map where important PROW are in the different settlements

John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	<p>The Trust supports the County Council's Moving Together Strategy to encourage communities to take ownership of their local paths and PROW building on the success of the Parish Path Partnership over the last 30 years.</p> <p>We will encourage the City of Durham Parish Council to work with DCC to find local community ambassadors to help promote local routes and maximise the local environment to support physical activity, and to identify a community hub with facilities where information about local PROW is accessible for a greater understanding of local PROW and the history or culture that is attached to them.</p> <p>Looking Forwards, the companion document to the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan contains an initiative for 'Identifying, Conserving and Improving Footpaths In and Around Durham City. The Trust would welcome the opportunity to work with local community ambassadors on implementing this initiative. The community hub could also advise and assist residents and community groups to apply for existing paths to become PROW.</p>	Comment noted. Appreciate the support of the Trust and potential involvement in promoting local PROW.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	In the section on Case Studies, consideration could be given to the inclusion of the City of Durham Parish Council and the Trust's cooperation as an example of local involvement in PROW and positive community involvement. The Durham City Heritage and Seven Hills Trail leaflets have been published over the past two years and the Parish Council is active in engaging local people in litter picking local paths.	Comment noted.
Local Access Forum	Support but need to make links with private sector pubs, hotels, cafes etc.	Comment noted.

Q6a. Do you think more could be done to promote PROW in County Durham and if so, how?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Have local education routes been included – educating children and young people how to respect the routes and encouraging groups to use the routes?	This is covered by Policy 6 criteria A, which outlines that the Council will work with primary schools to promote the accepted and expected behaviour when using PROW.

Pamela Cox	If you are looking at an improvement plan, and whilst I appreciate actions within this plan will be primarily related to work on the pathways themselves, can I suggest that there is some investigation into the publicity/website/communication with regard to rights of way. If someone has a query on a right of way can there not be a specific contact, even if directed via your customer portal. As part of your investigations for this improvement plan is it worth you looking at the level and type of enquiries you receive?	As part of policy 2 we want to improve the quality of online information we have on public rights of way in the County. Policy 5 criteria B outlines the need for the council to publicise PROW on local news sites, social media and through other means to promote PROW to local communities.
Anon	Yes. Not everyone is aware of PROW or their rights to use them or the Countryside code. Teaching it in schools would be a good start. Showing teachers where the routes are and what curriculum delivery they can do whilst on them would be fantastic too.	Support noted. The H100 project set out as a case study in Policy 4 has already started doing this in the County.
Sarah, British Horse Society	Write a section in County Durham newspaper which goes to most households, perhaps highlighting a particular route or some work that has been done on a path?	Policy 5 criteria B outlines the need for the council to publicise PROW on local news sites, social media and through other means to promote PROW to local communities.
Anon	Yes, app on internet with walks described, free of charge.	Policy 2 proposes to partner with a smartphone app provider to provide an app where PROW routes are clearly identified and is free of charge.
Anon	As suggested, through effective promotion and marketing along with physical and digital signposting.	Policy 2 proposes to improve both physical and digital waymarking for PROW routes in the county.
Anon	See earlier comments regarding access and shared spaces. You need to publicise PROW in easy to access local magazines e.g., Lanchester Village Voice rather than everything being online. That means people are aware of what is available and accessible.	Policy 5 criteria B outlines the need for the council to publicise PROW on local news sites, social media and through other means to promote PROW to local

		communities. Other means could include the County Durham New for examples, where we have recently included features on public rights of way.
Anon	Make footpaths more accessible. Promote more actively e.g., our local parish council no longer produces copies of our parish bounds walk or has it on their website.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yah, loads. As above, signposting. More information of interest, including digital and physical brochures detailing features of a particular route. Better connectivity between segments. Better maintenance, including local campaigns and work sessions to keep routes in good condition. Better quality information about routes for people to use as guides.	Comment noted. ROWIP 4 addresses all these issues in its strategic policies for rights of way.
Anon	Yes, via local groups and linking in with other well utilised services i.e., wellbeing for life and Social Prescribing Link Workers, leisure centres.	Comment noted.
Chris Line, County Councillor for Sedgefield	Yes. The principle of an ambassador programme is a good idea, as long as it is properly rolled out and supported (see previous answer).	Comment noted.
Chris Line, County Councillor for Sedgefield	The key to effectively promoting PROW in the county is to drill down to a local level and do the initial legwork to engage with and mobilise the very many hyper local formal and informal community groups that already use the PROW network and can help us spread the word. These groups, alongside town/parish councils, have the potential to do a much more targeted and nuanced job of encouraging residents to use PROW around the county. So, create an overarching campaign with consistent brand architecture and themes etc, but allow local partners to adapt for their parts of the county. One North East's 'Passionate people. Passionate places' campaign for North East England (launched in 2005) is a good example of how this kind of approach can work.	Agree with these comments. Policy 4 of ROWIP4 is all about empowering the community and Policy 5 criteria B outlines the need for the council to publicise PROW on local news sites, social media and through other means to promote PROW to local communities. Other means could include the County Durham New for examples, where we have recently included features on public rights of way.
Anon	When it is stated that The Council will market PROW to promote the tourist economy and	Comment noted.

	cultural heritage of County Durham and to engage people of all ages. Again, DCC has sold off the majority of the historical heritage of Shildon which could have been linked to the museum which could have been developed to attract tourists, plus they have failed to develop other historical and natural assets. All this unlike as in other counties in the UK where I have been hiking.	
Anon	Publicise PROW other than by internet so people can find out about it easily.	Comment noted. See Policy 2.
Anon	County Durham is an outstandingly beautiful county, but it must be seen from the many PROWs to appreciate and not be misinterpreted from scenery along the A1 or A19! Photo shots of the many places of outstanding beauty can be published in the council quarterly magazine or on the DCC tourist "Welcome to Durham" website. Perhaps a photoshoot of the local rambling group enjoying the countryside. A question-and-answer article about PROW enjoyment could be included.	Comment noted. Policy 5 criteria B outlines the need for the council to publicise PROW on local news sites, social media and through other means to promote PROW to local communities. Other means could include the County Durham New for examples, where we have recently included features on public rights of way.
Cycling UK	The development of a clear strategic network of PROW and railway routes.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	It is also important to note and identify the current inconsistency in the nature of recorded rights and how these are communicated to the public - specifically that the disused railway network is not fully shown on Ordnance Survey maps or the definitive map - this creates uncertainty in the public as to which routes, they can use on bikes or horses. It remains notable that disused railway routes, accessible public land and PROW are not featured on a single web map hosted by Durham CC. It is notable that the promoted cycle and horse-riding network concentrates on linear routes, while demand from the public is increasingly for circular routes, particularly on the urban fringe or other gateway locations (car parks, country parks etc). Cycling UK would be willing to cooperate with Durham CC on the development of promoted cycle routes.	Comment noted. We agree with the comments and welcome a meeting with Cycling UK to discuss the development of promoted cycle routes. Policy 1 aims to develop circular routes rather than simply linear routes as we recognise circular routes can be more enjoyable.
Anon	Better signposting, waymarking etc.	Comment noted. See Policy 1 which requires the need for a

		dull auditing of signposts related to public rights of way.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	A better maintained PROW network would encourage more walkers/walking. In addition, updates from the Council when issues reported about PROW and likely timescales for fixing would encourage local ambassadors/walkers/residents to report problems in order to help keep the network open and actively used.	Comment noted. Policy 8 sets out the need to use new technology to monitor the use of popular routes.
Local Access Forum	Page 25 talks of attracting more visitors, but there is no indication of how this is to be achieved.	Policy 5 aims to attract more visitors by marketing and promoting the PROW network as a tourist pursuit in connection with Visit County Durham. This will hopefully attract more visitors to County Durham who wish to access PROW.
Michael	More could certainly be done to promote PROW with both visitors to and residents of County Durham. A high-quality website combined with active use of social media is probably the best way forward. Printed leaflets quickly go out of date and inaccurate information can often be worse than no information at all. It is essential that all public information about PROW is accurate and up to date. Improved digital mapping will help to enable this (Policy 2) but significant investment will also be required to ensure that web and social media platforms are maintained constantly and always contain the latest information.	Comment noted. Policy 2 C (a) outlines that council resources will be allocated to a Team or an individual to monitor the app and website to keep the information up to date.

Q6b. Do you have any good ideas for how to advertise local walks in the community?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Using the geocaching community?	Comment noted.
Anon	Via social media and established community groups.	Support for policies contained in ROWIP4 noted.
Sarah, British Horse Society	Access local groups apps and advertise walks on there, such as the British Horse Society.	Comment noted.

Anon	<p>Hamsterley Forest give a lot of publicity to their ' Trails ' and have a readily available leaflet. Wolsingham Wayfarers have published 6 Leaflets each describing a walk starting and finishing in the village. These have been used for the last 12 years and are regularly updated, They are available free from many shops, pubs, etc and are also available on line.</p> <p>There is a detailed word description of the route and a map. Local walks in the community could be advertised via local ambassadors. Also, at local community venues. Notices in post office and shops. How many villages still have noticeboards? How many paths could have a list of routes published in a durable format at a convenient point? Which local area partnerships could promote an annual series of walks?</p> <p>On TV and radio. Social media Offer incentives i.e., walk 5km every day and receive a voucher etc. Parish council newsletters. Official path openings with local MPs or celebrity.</p>	<p>Thanks for some great ideas. Policy 5 criteria B outlines the need for the council to publicise PROW on local news sites, social media and through other means to promote PROW to local communities.</p> <p>The importance of providing traditional information such as leaflets noted.</p>
Chris Line, County Councillor for Sedgfield	Also, I should add that I think that the Walk & Talk Trust's Heritage 100 project is a great initiative and an excellent way to combine waymarked walks with a narrative that can be used to inspire residents to get active in their local area.	Support noted.
Anon	Downloadable/Printed maps of the sites of interest linked to the local community walks could be available on parish council websites or offices. Printed copies could be available in local cafes and other local amenities etc as in many other counties of the UK.	Comment noted.
Anon	Posters in shops and post offices. Information in local free magazines e.g., Lanchester News and What's On in Durham which are easily accessible in shops.	Comment noted.
Anon	Local Radio appears to work well along with local papers. Articles about previous walks from a participant could be helpful. This article could show off the attributes of the county and at the same time encourage those wishing to take part to actively do so.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	I have a number of proposals for how we could better promote and communicate off-road cycle and horse-riding routes, particularly on the urban fringe, including through the use of downloadable routes and maps through QR codes.	Comment noted.
Anon	Local Facebook and WhatsApp groups.	Comment noted.
Anon	Via local notice boards, TICs, publicity etc.	Comment noted.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	Funding for more local leaflets e.g., Walks in Barnard Castle the Witham walks, and other localities, and uploading on the Council's website an improved area for PROW on the County Council's website.	The importance of information from all sources noted.

Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	Generally greater collation of publicly funded walks information e.g., West Auckland Parish Council village guides, to encourage residents and walkers to try walking in different parts of the County.	Comment noted.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	The visibility of improved local signage within and upon the edge of settlements might encourage greater participation from amongst residents. This might be achieved by employing an apprentice/intern, graduate apprenticeship using the Apprenticeship Levy learning rights of way, interpretation, digital skills, negotiation, and communication skills.	We agree that this would be a good project for someone looking to develop their career. This is under consideration.

Q6c. Can County Durham make more of the natural environment from an economic perspective?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Nature has a massive value for people's wellbeing and carbon sequestration - both of which (I believe) will have an economic value in the future.	Comment noted.
Sarah, British Horse Society	Have routes that lead from a car park so people can visit, park up and ride/walk. The routes in Hamsterley forest, work really well keeping people to their designated tracks.	We agree with this comment.
Anon	Yes, promotion is welcome	Comment noted.
Anon	Mobile phone app	Policy 2 proposes to partner with a smartphone app provider to provide an app where PROW routes are clearly identified and is free of charge.
Anon	County Durham can make more of the natural environment from an economic perspective. However, this needs to be carefully balanced with the impact on ecology and biodiversity by bringing more people to an area. In addition, whilst an increase in economic development is important this should not be at the cost of local residents' enjoyment and usage of the natural environment.	ROWIP4 recognises the importance of protecting biodiversity whilst simultaneously promoting and encouraging physical activity.

Anon	Unlikely unless expansion in facilities such as public toilets and free parking. No use adopting parking methods that require smartphones and apps especially in areas with poor signals.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, link up with wildlife trust and other such organisations.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, absolutely. But this will have to come from someone at Directorate level, because the council is so fragmented that it cannot drive an ambitious policy without a diligent hand from above. Which reminds me, is Belmont Viaduct open to foot traffic?	Comment noted. Belmont Viaduct is not open to anyone at the moment.
Anon	YES - more must be done to support local businesses to help them combat rising costs.	Comment noted.
Anon	Absolutely, but in our local community it has consistently failed to do so and has ensured the managed decline of the area.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes. Provide refreshments in small cafes and kiosks. Provide good toilet facilities and free or cheap parking. Concentrate on family and all age activities NOT just cycling and fun runs...what about more art-based activities in venues such as Hamsterley Forest? Outdoor pursuits such as orienteering and walks that include mixed ages.	Comment noted.
Anon	If Durham Council properly fulfilled its statutory duties in respect of the network, then it would be addressing the 'green agenda' at the same time.	Comment noted.
Anon	Although expensive to erect the addition of information boards along routes are a significant enhancement and people do read them. History or heritage and local population of wildlife is most informative. This can encourage many tourists from outside the county.	Comment noted. Interpretation boards are a great idea for understanding local ecology and culture.
Cycling UK	Huge opportunities for better promotion of countryside access as a focus for, and means of, sustainable rural tourism - both for day routes and multi-day journeys. Cycling UK would be happy to advise on the development of long-distance multi-day routes that offer targeted tourism opportunities, as we have recently displayed with the development of King Alfred's Way and other routes in other regions.	Comment noted. We would welcome a further discussion on this.
Anon	I can only agree that this is a difficult issue, living on the edge of Hamsterley Forest I am able to observe visitor behaviour and can see that many take the opportunity to visit the countryside for "free" even though Forestry England are careful to explain that paying for parking is making a contribution to the maintenance of a valuable recourse.	Comment noted.
Anon	Provide proper car parks at 'honeypot' sites for all those walkers who drive to those sites/areas, e.g., Middleton in Teesdale.	Comment on parking provision noted.

Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	Better walking information/leaflets at visitor centres/ community hubs (e.g., tourism information centres, caravan parks, combined with up-to-date digital information). The promotion of the rail heritage and culture planned for 2025 needs to be underpinned with maintenance of all the railway routes to enjoy the natural environment.	Comment on better information noted.
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Q6d. Do you have any other comments on this policy?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Sarah, British Horse Society	Have information on the DCC website about rides/walks, for example rides where you could take a horse box and park safely without being stung with huge car parking fees. It would be helpful particularly on circular routes if you could park up unload and pick up the route at different points.	Good suggestion. We will consider this as part of the prospective Delivery Plan which focuses on improving and delivering bridleways across the County.
Anon	The Lake District ,the Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District have a higher profile. However, these are encouraging moves in the future.	Comment noted.
Anon	We acknowledge the significant economic benefits of appropriate PROW but are keen to understand how such activities can put a significant percentage of 'Green Pounds' into the immediate local communities' pockets.	'Green Pounds' can be put into local communities by promoting the visitor sector, which may include tourist accommodation, visitor attractions and the hospitality sector.
Faith Folley, Durham University	As the ROWIP 4 highlights there are multiple partners who have their own offers in regard to key routes within their land ownership or remit. These multiple offers could be communicated in one place, and it seems sensible that ROWIP4 could highlight the need to provide this platform potentially through DCC or Visit Durham's website and other social media settings. The University is happy to support and share information with its staff and student contingent in advertising walks in the local community and wider County if collateral or information can be made available.	Support noted.
Cycling UK	We believe that a greater focus needs to go into the development of strategic routes - for example, feeder routes that connect to the Pennine Way and England Coast Path, plus completion of the Coast-to-Coast National Trail and Pennine Bridleway Northern Extension.	Comment noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The Trust supports the promotion of the tourist economy and cultural heritage of County Durham and to engage people of all ages. The Trust has already engaged with Visit County Durham to promote the Heritage and Seven Hills Trails and	Comment noted. We have been engaging with some of these partners as part of the ROWIP4 process.

	would welcome further support in this endeavour under this policy. The Council may be able to promote walking and cycling routes more widely by engaging with partners such as Sustrans, Cycling UK and the Ramblers Association which host route maps and GPS files on their websites.	
Local Access Forum	Page 28 (b) 'to prioritise and protect the PROW network and increase' should be included.	Yes, this amendment can be made.

Q7a. Do you think there is anything else we can do to encourage good behaviour on Public Rights of Way?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Education in schools.	Policy 6 criteria A, proposes that the Council will work with local communities and primary schools to promote the accepted and expected behaviour when using the PROW network.
Anon	Signs for cyclists to slow down	Comment noted.
Anon	Education and promotion of the countryside code as suggested.	Support noted.
Anon	FULL time wardens. No use expecting volunteers to put themselves at risk.	Volunteers are in addition to full time staff, not as a replacement.
Anon	Yes, encourage the currently disenfranchised walkers who will outnumber the jobs on bikes. Don't allow off lead dogs. Encourage parish councils etc to promote the walks and their history.	Comment noted.
Anon	I think this requires national intervention, such as requiring license and registration on all off-road vehicles. The entitlement presumed by some off-roaders requires something more than the occasional visit by PCSOs. The current Police Commissioner has put a lot of time into dealing with this and isn't winning. So no, there's nothing you can do, unless you find ways of physically barricading routes to a much greater extent than now.	Anti-social behaviour is a police matter, but a partnership approach is the preferred method of addressing it. Therefore, we will share information with the Police in terms of the locations of where anti-social behaviour is most prominent.
Anon	Education - start in schools and continue this throughout the whole school.	See Policy 6 criteria A, which proposes that the Council will work with local communities and primary schools to promote the accepted

		and expected behaviour when using the PROW network.
Anon	We have seen good examples of prompt, proactive partnership work with the local police to address poor behaviour on and around the PROW network.	Comment noted.
Chris Line, County Councillor for Sedgfield	It is certainly vital that, when encouraging residents to use PROW, we also need to encourage them to do so in a responsible way. Looking back at the time of the pandemic, as the country emerged from lockdown, there was a rush of people to the outdoors, with many heading to 'honeypots' in locations like the Lake District. As that happened, there was a big spike in poor behaviour, with a rise in problems such as littering, starting of campfires in inappropriate places, and issues such as gates being left open, or dogs not being properly controlled. And of course, there were examples of walkers getting lost and into dangerous situations. Many of these problems were not the result of wilful bad behaviour, but due to inexperience and genuine ignorance about how to behave in certain situations.	Comment noted.
Chris Line, County Councillor for Sedgfield	There are experts out there who can help us compile and convey useful information that will help any newcomers (in fact anyone) who uses PROW. The council should engage with organisations like the Outdoor Industries Association, the It's Great Out There Coalition and others to establish best practice. The right and relevant information already exists, so get in touch with the folk who can supply it.	Comment noted.
Anon	More law enforcement on bikes to deter off road motorbikes and youths gathering/setting fires/smashing glass etc.	Comment noted.
Anon	The majority of responsible hikers would appreciate appropriate signage this is not just an issue in County Durham - particularly across farmland area so that they can work with the farmers.	Policy 1 proposes to divert PROW out of farmyards and Policy 2 proposes to improve physical and digital signposting.
Anon	On the other side of the question, farmers need to maintain the rights of way (as do the Council) so that appropriate access can be complied with. And when concerns are reported there needs to be immediate attention and response.	Comment noted.
Anon	Employ wardens instead of ambassadors and these wardens need webcams and phones or radios so that aggressive cyclists and people using off road	Volunteers are in addition to full time staff, not as a replacement.

	motorcycles are properly identified and prosecuted. If necessary, install CCTV where possible.	
Anon	Proper signposting and waymarking would lead to less infringement of the Countryside Code.	Policy 2 proposes to improve physical and digital signposting which would hopefully reduce infringement of the Countryside Code.
Anon	Also, if landowners/DCC properly maintained stiles, gates etc and didn't cause obstructions, then path users would be less likely to abuse them.	Comment noted.
Anon	A sign posted response number for reporting activities relating to ASB. This could of course be included in the Mobile App proposed earlier. A quick response team by the police when activities such as scrambling on PROW and damage is being caused. Civil action taken against offenders and consolidated pressure on the legal system for the culprits to rectify damage at their own expense.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	Cycling UK has worked closely with the British Horse Society on the development of 'be nice, say hi' signage and would encourage this positive user message.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	We also believe that the use of restrictive furniture such as choke points and chicanes can lead to increased conflict.	Comment noted.
Anon	Promote, educate, remind by signage on the routes and all advertising of the routes.	Comment noted.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	Start early by education in schools. More notices about observing the Countryside Code, especially with respect to disposable BBQs. We would encourage messages such as if you enjoy this place leave it as you found it, leave nothing but a footprint behind. Keeping footpaths clean and clear for walking could encourage good behaviour.	See Policy 6(A), which proposes that the Council will work with local communities and primary schools to promote the accepted and expected behaviour when using the PROW network.
Michael	Encouraging good behaviour by the public via understanding of the Countryside Code is always very important. Constant reinforcement of key messages via websites and social media is a good approach. Working with landowners to ensure that they recognise and act in accordance with their responsibilities is equally important. In Weardale, for example, there are still too many PROW routes being obstructed or obscured by landowners in order to discourage walkers.	Support noted.

Q7b. Do you have any other comments on this policy?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
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Anon	The massive number of applications for new Bridleways from B.H.S is alienating farmers and landowners, who are sometimes less helpful with footpath issues as a result.	Comment noted.
Anon	Continued and extended partnership working to tackle anti-social behaviour will be important.	Comment noted.
Anon	Supporting landowners to divert paths is the wrong priority, at a time when this could be better spent on ROW policies that benefit a far larger group of people. There is limited public benefit to diverting paths away from farmyards. A properly maintained network will always be traversable and well signed, going through a farmyard is of no great hinderance. However, I accept entirely the private benefits to landowners of diversion away from a farmyard. The council should not oppose these applications, but the landowners should fund it themselves as they are the largest beneficiary by far. Public funds are far better spent on recording unrecorded paths and path maintenance.	<p>We believe that diverting routes out of farmyards and other working areas will help reduce conflict between PROW users and land managers, reducing anti-social behaviour and unwelcoming PROW.</p> <p>We are not proposing to fund diversions but support the diversions if they are appropriate to the public. The landowners will be responsible to fund the diversions.</p>
Anon	It's pleasing work has already started but needs ramping up to support landowners and farmers to deliver greater security by re-directing particular PROW out of farmyards and thereby provide security to farmers through reducing potential criminal activity on PROW and subsequently their private land.	Comment noted.
Anon	Currently, when rights of way are being abused by quad bikes and motorbikes and these matters are reported, these reports are ignored with members of the public being told to gain registration numbers or facial recognition otherwise no action is taken.	Comment noted.
Faith Folley, Durham University	Engagement opportunities with primary education providers are highlighted as an opportunity in this policy. Durham University suggest that this could be updated to highlight the opportunity for engagement across all education settings to increase coverage of message to young people at all ages. Potentially looking at providing lesson plans, field trip guides or leaflets/posters that educators could use from early years to higher education settings.	The supporting text to Policy 6 (A) will be re-worded to reflect this suggestion. We recognise that it is important to encourage young people of all ages to understand the Countryside Code and respect PROW.

Faith Folley, Durham University	There is also potential for written collateral to be included in the existing network of parish magazines and local press including the Palatinate.	Comment noted.
Faith Folley, Durham University	The University could support the County Council through including information on its internal messaging board and other notice boards in colleges and departments to staff and students encouraging good behaviour on PROW within the County and specifically Durham City.	Support noted.
Cycling UK	We have concerns over the impact of resurfacing rights of way and disused railway lines - particularly with tarmac, and the impact of this on median user speeds. Research shows a clear correlation between increased user speeds and conflict.	Comment noted. ROWIP4 Policy 6 does not mention resurfacing PROW or railway lines.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The Trust supports this policy and has specifically referenced the Countryside Code in the leaflet for the Durham Seven Hills Trail. It is also vital to create better relationships with landowners where desirable improvements to the PROW network including permissive paths are located.	Support noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The Trust welcomes the inclusion of partnership with the Police over the issue of anti-social motorbike use on the PROW network, which can conflict with aims to make the network more accessible. The emphasis on enforcement is very welcome. This needs to be applied to the design of new developments also. The recent approval of planning permission for the Bent House Lane housing site has incorporated chicane barriers on paths, presumably to combat motorbike use, but this will limit the usefulness of the new routes for some, including people relying on non-standard cycles and other mobility aids. There needs to be a more consistent approach to planning approvals in this area which favours accessibility, supported where necessary by enforcement.	Support noted. We have forwarded this information about Bent House Lane and the chicanes to our Rights of Way Team who will investigate this further.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	Barnard Castle Ramblers supports the policy to reroute footpaths away from farm buildings where appropriate, as long as every effort is made to retain the integrity of the PROW, so that routes are not lost, and that this is backed up in a	Support noted.

	timely fashion upon the definitive rights of way map.	
Barbara, British Horse Society	Encouraging separation of field edge tracks from livestock where this can be done without overly narrowing a track. (e.g., up at Barnard Castle and Harperley. Bridleway prioritisation: can we get a local BHS member survey to highlight potentially high value (and practical) BRs on either project 2026 or separate map? Still need to have all considered. Concerned about closing routes except as last resort because of future uncertainty.	Comment noted.
Barbara, British Horse Society	Stricter reinforcement of landowner's duties.	Comment noted.
Barbara, British Horse Society	Things that are not perfect: response time for obstructive owners Fly tipping seems mean that landowners aren't supported in this if it is on their land, perhaps support for responsible owners could be considered?	Comment noted.

Q8a. Do you think it is important for developers to contribute to Public Rights of Way?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Yes, especially if they are building on / near them.	Comment noted.
Anon	It is important that developers contribute to PROW.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes. Design of housing estates is often entirely dominated by the desire to accommodate the car, with the rights of way network very much a secondary consideration.	Comment noted.
Anon	Definitely, there is a lack of green space in many developments. Opportunities for wildlife corridors etc.	Comment noted.
Anon	It is exceptionally important for developers to contribute. This develops communities and areas that are desirable to live in.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, but at scale i.e., larger developers and in a well thought out way - not just throwing money at a project.	Comment noted.
Anon	Absolutely. There is a bridleway and prow near to us, property developers are building nearby, and they had totally taken away this route by blocking it and making it dangerous to pass. Many complaints have gone into the council, but the developers don't seem to care!	Comment noted.
Anon	The protection and enhancement of rights of way near or in development areas MUST be ensured. Developers should contribute financially and physically to this work. Equally, developments should be appropriately landscaped to enhance the area including wild plantings for pollinators etc. and developments should ensure that appropriate action is	Comment noted.

	taken for the wildlife of the area (e.g., hedgehog highways, etc).	
Anon	Most definitely. As a good example the PROW at Lumley was recently changed. The renewed footpath saw enhancements to signage and kissing gates etc. We cannot stop positive development, but it is vitally important PROW are included in any proposals and at the developer's expense. Developers without doubt gain from new builds etc, it is only fair that they put something back to the community.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	Vital - new developments should be directly connected to the surrounding local rights of way network in order to provide recreational activities (including dog walking) and promote active travel.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, because developers use access to ROW to their advantage as an attraction to buy/visit.	Comment noted.
Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	Yes, and more widely to include solar, wind turbine, lithium energy development and other land-based developments	Comment noted.

Q8b. Do you have any other comments on this policy?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Funding is always going to be a problem.	Comment noted.
Anon	Connecting PROW's will encourage walking and cycling.	Comment noted.
Anon	The policy needs to ensure that should there be any changes to securing S106 money and the way in which developer contributions are required through the planning system, that it is still possible to secure the money. Changes to planning policy/requirements need to be built in given that the strategy is for a 10-year period.	Comment noted.
Anon	Just a positive comment about the new footpath link through the Mount Oswald development which is both useful and pleasant to use.	Support noted.
Chris Line, County Councillor for Sedgfield	In my experience, developers pay lip service to issues relating to PROW and give very poor consideration to their importance in local communities. Too many developments have been allowed to proceed that fail to enhance PROW connectedness in our county. It's appalling. Developers should be required to embed pedestrian and cycle links between their developments and the communities they are within and close to. Such connections have not been given proper attention through recent housing developments in my ward and we're now having to deal with some of the consequences, which takes time, people resource and funding. While some Section 106 agreements might provide some of the money to complete elements of this work, that should not be necessary, and it shouldn't come after a development has been built.	Comment noted.

Faith Folley, Durham University	The University is encouraged that the case study used for this Policy includes one of its own projects at Mt Oswald. The University agree it is important for developers to contribute to PROW where it is reasonable and relevant to do so and meets the tests of including such clauses within a legal agreement attached to a planning permission i.e., S106. Notwithstanding, the University would like to note that in circumstances where proposals for new, rerouting or closure of a PROW have a material detrimental impact on the Estate, the University would consider reasonable objections to such proposals.	Support noted.
Faith Folley, Durham University	With regard to other comments in relation to Policy 7, Policy 26 of the CDP 2022 is referenced within this policy. To reflect the wording accurately from the CDP the University request that in part A of Policy 7 this is updated to read; A. Protect Maintain or improve PROW from through development within the County in accordance with Policy 26 of the CDP.	The supporting text to Policy 6 (A) will be re-worded to reflect this suggestion. See comment above on Policy 6.
Anon	Far too many houses being built with no leisure facilities etc.	Comment noted.
Chester-Le-Street Ramblers	Again, working with external stakeholders for monitoring the PROW network is considered essential. Chester Le Street Ramblers are willing to assist in Counters.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	Experience tells us that one of the key problems with ROWIP is that they do not contain clearly identified prioritisation plans for improvement and sit at a different level of local government than planning permission decisions are made. The result is that the plans 'sit on the shelf' and are rarely referred to in planning decisions. We have previously identified potential for 'parish-based rights of way improvement plans' identifying improvements that local communities would like to see in their local area.	Comment noted. It is important that ROWIP4 is used and referred to not only by the Public Rights of Way Team but by internal and external stakeholders post adoption.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The Trust strongly supports the protection and enhancement of existing PROW; the seeking of additions to the PROW network when new development is being planned; the provision of clear guidelines on securing S106 money; and the spending of this funding in the right places to prioritise and protect the PROW network.	Support noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	We recommend that these policy elements are brought to bear on the Sniperley Masterplan and modifications be made to that document if necessary.	Comment noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	One area which the PROW team could improve on, in relation to planning approvals, is obtaining conditions to ensure that path connections are made available as soon as sites are occupied. The document refers to Mount Oswald as a case study, but several key paths giving access northwards to the A167 and walking routes to primary and secondary schools were opened to users a considerable time after the first houses were occupied.	Comment noted.

Q9a. Do you think there are any other methods in which we can monitor PROW?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Give walking groups / community groups / schools an easy means of contacting you / and electronic means of noting when PROW are blocked / in poor repair.	Comment noted.
Anon	Just by ensuring that local people/communities are aware of where/how they can feed into this process.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, recruit and resource walkers into advisory groups.	Comment noted.
Anon	Satellite imagery could be investigated.	Comment noted.
Anon	Frequent surveys. Ask locals to walk their routes and document in detail.	Comment noted.
Anon	Boots on the ground i.e., get council staff to walk the routes. Link in with Neighbourhood Wardens. Include a reporting hotline on signage.	Comment noted.
Chris Lines, County Councillor for Sedgfield	Through ongoing engagement and collaboration with the local community groups that I referred to in a previous answer. They, and landowners, know their areas better than anyone.	Comment noted.
Anon	CCTV	Comment noted.
Anon	Monitoring is essential and while this can be carried out by the county wardens and links with relevant organizations, working with volunteers in local communities would enhance the monitoring of the network further.	Comment noted.
Anon	Wardens and CCTV	Comment noted.
Anon	Possibly by placing a pressure counting pad on a kissing gate or stile.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	Strava offers opportunities, though we would also highlight the value of good old fashioned manual point surveys for monitoring levels of use.	Comment noted. Policy 2 of the Plan aims to develop a working relationship with a smartphone app company who can host our branded routes. There could be a possibility of working with this partner to monitor the PROW routes through Bluetooth connections.
Cycling UK	Regards condition - we would suggest that fixed point photography and lidar photogrammetry offer opportunities for simple monitoring of routes.	Comment noted.
Anon	You could make regular contact with County Durham residents who live beside ROW, these are not necessarily the landowners.	Comment noted.

Caroline, Barnard Castle Ramblers	Ensure there are enough PROW officers, volunteers adopt a path officers, continuation of the Parish Paths Partnership, or similar.	Comment noted.
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Q9b. Do you have any other comments on this policy?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Local involvement and more widespread ideas like 'adopt a path'.	Comment noted.
Faith Folley, Durham University	It is noted that this policy is focussed on monitoring numbers of people using PROW through technology. Obviously use can be impacted by physical barriers and/or anti-social behaviour, therefore linking user number technology to real time complaints raised by users would allow for quick and accurate corrective action to allow a PROW to become accessible again and potentially better used. Notwithstanding the detailed comments as laid out in answers to each consultation question above, the University generally agree with ROWIP 4 draft objectives and policies.	Support noted. Policy 8 of the Plan aims to allocate a resource to monitor and improve the Council's Rights of Way website. Policy 2 looks to improve the digital coverage of the PROW network.
Anon	A most difficult task to achieve albeit with the use of counters a rough estimate is better than no estimate.	Comment noted.
Cycling UK	We refer to our previous point on supporting the involvement of parish councils in the monitoring and repair of their local networks, in accordance with Section 43 Highways act 1980.	Comment noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The Trust agrees that monitoring the use of the PROW network and understanding how the use of the PROW network impacts ecology and climate resilience is important. It is also important to monitor the achievements of the Plan and would recommend the adoption of a performance standard for each policy so that internal and external stakeholders can receive the evidence of where the Plan is succeeding and failing on a regular basis.	We agree that monitoring the policies is great idea.
Local Access Forum	Page 29 Sentence beginning with Extreme weather, this is confusing as coastal erosion by its definition will only affect coastal paths.	Comment noted. The supporting text to Policy 8 will be amended to reflect the definition of coastal erosion.
Mike	On page 29, Policy 8 suggests how the Council hopes to develop monitoring of the PROW network. While understandable, this might appear to be rather intrusive. (Will walkers, runners, cyclists, and horse-riders have to opt out of their data being harvested? Or will those only be collected if they have opted in?) I also fear that too much reliance might subsequently be attached to inadequate data. Such harvested data might seem more important than other information that is harder, or even impossible, to collect. It might also exaggerate the unimportance of a PROW of which too few potential users are aware. Perhaps this	Bluetooth and GPS data on mobile phones is usually a mechanism in which the mobile phone owner has voluntarily switched on, which tacitly consents to their data being recorded. We would see this as opting into having their data harvested for monitoring purposes. But data security is an issue that we would discuss with any third-party provider, as

	technology could be used in combination with specific campaigns to promote particular PROW.	we understand the sensitivities you have highlighted.
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Q10a. Do you agree that the ROWIP4 contains the right policies overall to improve our public rights of way network over the next 10 years?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Overall but could be more ambitious given their importance.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, I think the plan contains many good policies.	Support noted.
Anon	Agree that the ROWIP4 does contain the right policies overall to improve the PROW network over the next 10 years in County Durham.	Support noted.
Anon	Yes, apart from deficiencies in stiles and provision for the very young and very old. Not all disabled people are wheelchair users.	Comment noted.
Anon	It will result in some improvement.	Comment noted.
Anon	As stated previously, fine words, but will the action follow through particularly at the local community level.	Comment noted.
Anon	Yes, and I congratulate DCC for the proactive and well written PROW Improvement Plan for the next ten years. It covers just about every subject matter on PROW and improvements.	Supported noted.
Cycling UK	We believe that ROWIP 4 still fails to offer an ambitious plan for improvement with clearly identified, SMART objectives specifically, we believe that ROWIP should include a clearly identified list of priority routes for creation and improvement, in order that stakeholders can easily identify and prioritise improvements that can be delivered through their ongoing work.	Comment noted. As part of ROWIP4, the Council will produce a 3-year Delivery Plan which will outline priorities including objectives, improvements, and funding etc. We also want to monitor the success of the policies.
Anon	I think more stress should be on looking after existing ROW, rather than new schemes.	Comment noted. Policy 1 of the Plan, under criterion B, aims to modernise the PROW network by improving existing routes, and creating new paths only where there is a need. We recognise the importance of improving the existing PROW.

Q10b. Do you have any other comments on ROWIP4?

Respondent	Comments	DCC Response
Anon	Would support the draft ROWIP4 and look forward to being involved further in the future.	Support noted.
Charlotte, British Horse Society	In order to maximise opportunities within Durham to help provide more off-road links for equestrians the Durham ROWIP should support the automatic inclusion of horse riders on shared off-road routes, unless there are cogent reasons why this is not possible (in any of these cases the local BHS access representative should be consulted before any decisions are made to exclude equestrians). The BHS would like to see a clear policy statement within the ROWIP that states in the development of any new routes, these should be fully multi-use wherever possible. Active Travel includes equestrians.	Improving bridleways is a theme in the Plan and the prospective Delivery Plan. We will include a statement in ROWIP4 that any new routes should be fully multi-use wherever possible.
Charlotte, British Horse Society	The Society recognise that many of the proposed routes within this consultation are in urban areas. However, many horses are kept on the urban fringe, so it is important that equestrians are not excluded from routes that exit the urban areas into the surrounding environs.	Comment noted.
Charlotte, British Horse Society	As a general principle, we believe that, for maximum public benefit and fairness, the reciprocal approach should be implemented, i.e., that new cycle paths should be shared with other user groups unless there is a specific, unresolvable reason not to do so.	Creating new cycle paths does not come under the Rights of Way Team but rather the Council's Sustainable Travel Team. We cannot change the legal designation of a route.
Charlotte, British Horse Society	The BHS is disappointed to see the loss of wording 'Walk, Cycle, Ride' from the 2015-2018 ROWIP that placed emphasis on walking and cycling. The Durham ROWIP currently excludes carriage drivers, the BHS would like to work with Durham County Council to rectify this and ensure carriage drivers are provided for within the 2023-2033 ROWIP.	'Walk, Cycle, Ride' was the title of the document for 2015-2018. We have reflected the needs for equestrian users in ROWIP4. Carriage drivers are not excluded from the ROWIP as they can use Byways and Restricted Byways.
Ted	Generally, I agree with the policies outlined in the ROW Improvement Plan and would like to see some improvements for walkers, cyclists, horse riders etc.	Support noted.

Ted	<p>I have noticed that some improvements have already taken place around my local neighbourhood (Pittington) and although I am aware there is only a limited amount of funding for these improvements, I would like to see more in the area.</p> <p>Specifically: Improved footpaths between Pittington Village to Sherburn and Belmont. (This has been completed to Littleton). Improved/renewed signage on Public Footpaths in the surrounding area.</p>	Comment noted.
Ted	<p>The next suggestion is a bit more ambitious and probably costly: Conversion of the old "Leamside" railway line, the one that runs alongside Ramside Hall/Belmont. I think this would benefit a great deal of people if it was converted into a public footpath, cycle way, bridle path etc. Something like the one at Thorpe Thewles. It runs through some fantastic countryside and links up to several villages along the way. It could even lead to some business opportunities in the future, like a cafe, bike hire etc. Anything that improves and encourages people to get out more has got to be a good thing.</p>	Comment noted.
Paul	<p>Reading through the outline of the above online plan I agree with all the proposals. I have also included a few comments on improvements I would like to see, based on my experiences as a keen walker and mountain biker in the County.</p>	Comment noted.
Paul	<p>1/ Improved signage on existing ROW including more use of repeater ROW discs throughout a route to reduce unintended trespass. Also, the repair/re-instalment of stiles and gates for easy public access.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Policy 2 of the Plan aims to improve both digital and physical signposting to increase people's confidence when using PROW and provide clear direction to prevent trespassing.</p>
Paul	<p>2/ Research into and re-instalment of historic ROW omitted from current maps, particularly bridleway networks.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>In relation to the Definitive Map and the British Horse Society, ROWIP4 recognises that bridleways are going to be added to the PROW network even if only a proportion of the alleged historic bridleways are proven to exist. Policy 2</p>

		will help inform people of these changes.
Paul	3/ The upgrading of suitable footpaths to bridleway status, particularly those which once had this status but may have been downgraded.	Comment noted. Policy 1(b) proposes to identify and invest in a network of bridleways in the county.
Paul	4/ Creation of new footpaths and bridleways possibly following a theme (e.g., following a 2000 ft contour, industrial heritage packhorse route or linking isolated sections of ROW to encourage greater use. Also adding to a linear route to create a circular one.	Comment noted. Policy 1 and Policy 2 of ROWIP4 aim to develop circular routes for residents near local communities. The Heritage 100 routes are an example that we use which develop routes that recognise the rich historic value of County Durham.
Paul	5/ Publication of improvements and completed projects for the public to enjoy.	Comment noted. This will be part of the three-year Delivery Plan. We will monitor progress of the policies.
Staindrop Parish Council	The Parish Council expects Durham County Council to properly fulfil its statutory duties in respect of good quality maintenance of the public rights of way network. The balance of emphasis and focus of resources between urban and rural parts of the network needs to adjust.	Comment noted.
Staindrop Parish Council	The Parish Council believes that the draft Plan is too heavily focussed on urban areas of the county.	Comment noted.
Staindrop Parish Council	There needs to be more proactive and planned work on the maintenance and improvement of existing rural footpaths rather than relying on reactive, piecemeal, and ad hoc actions.	The Council agrees with your comment, and we are developing a three-year delivery plan.
Jo	My general comment is that it is pleasing to see it proposes proactive action rather than merely reactive actions, though you have made it clear that it will be reactive in so far as carrying out the statutory duty of the department is concerned.	Support noted.
Jo	It is particularly pleasing in that it demonstrates strong relationships with other departments and aims of DCC.	Support noted.

Jo	In particular there are benefits for health in good access to the countryside and the environment in general. There are also implications for links to travel and transport if people can instead move about on foot and bicycle.	Support noted.
Jo	It was also pleasing to note the importance of retaining and enhancing rights of way in new housing developments. These wider benefits should enable enhanced funding for greater achievements.	Support noted.
Geoffrey	I offer my services to speak to the PROW team about the current problems with locating (signage) and following footpaths in Teesdale, how to assess the length and difficulties of existing footpaths, how easy it is to get lost (!), the sad dangerous state of many footpaths, stiles, and what needs to be prioritised and attempted if you persist with the ROWIP4 plan as it is laid down.	Comment noted.
Geoffrey	I trust that you have seen my two recent letters about ROWIP4 in the Teesdale Mercury. Given time I shall send more material for your consideration.	Comment noted.

Geoffrey	<p>OBSTACLES</p> <p>The obstacles met while on footpaths include the following: Walls, hedges, fences, trees (fallen and surface roots) streams and rivers (with bridges or fords), rocks and stones, seasonal vegetation, landslips, farm animals, horses, dogs, wild animals, and holes. Note the cautious couple needing poles for balance starting to descend to Cauldron Snout. They haven't even got to the part where they need to lower themselves down the rocks. (refer to attachment for photos)</p> <p>Even the approach to Cauldron Snout from Widdybanks is not straightforward as there is a long section which is boulder strewn. The mother and daughter shown in the picture need to use hands for balance, and even some Penning Way walkers have found this section as being dangerous. Can this really be described as a FOOTPATH for all abilities in 2023 and the next ten years?</p>	Comment noted.
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<p>Geoffrey</p>	<p>The CURRENT SITUATION Of the vast network of local footpaths that have been listed as PROW since 1947, despite the work of professionals and amateurs, many stiles, and indeed the paths themselves have fallen into disrepair. The Weardale footbridge shown (or what is left of it) was recently located by two experienced walkers who were attempting to follow paths: 23, 29 and 24 which was neither obvious nor signposted. The potential for an accident in poor weather should be obvious. The crossing of Gill Beck via a sheet of corrugated iron is hardly Durham County state of the art when it comes to bridges. Before going into further details, it occurs to me that as a trendy current issue, seen in all aspects of modern society, (think WOKE) the DCC has opted for PROWs to be INCLUSIVE for everybody, without considering all the practical implications of encouraging people who are really not physically able to explore the whole countryside. My wife suggested that it is gung-ho and a bit like irresponsibly encouraging a blind person to drive a car on a motorway. Jumping on bandwagons trying to look progressive fools no-one.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>We have forwarded this information on to our Rights of Way Team who will investigate this further.</p>
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Faith Folley, Durham University	The next steps and timeline for the process of adoption of the ROWIP 4 is unclear from the consultation document but it is understood adoption will be sometime in 2023 and the document will have strategic weighting within the County Council's decision-making process, including planning, where PROW networks are concerned.	The webpage will be updated to include the specific timeline of ROWIP4 once we have made all the necessary amendments to the document.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	The Trust's conclusions are: 1. The Plan is a major step forward in engaging local communities in the management of the PROW network.	Support noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	2. The work of the Trust and the City of Durham Council should be recognised as an example of good practice as a Case Study and i. The Heritage Trail should be included in the 10 in 10 Accessible Network initiative. ii. The Green Belt Trail should be given consideration for inclusion in the High-Quality Access Network. iii. The City of Durham Parish Council should be supported by the County Council in encouraging local engagement in PROW.	Comment noted.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	3. Modifications should be made to the Sniperley Masterplan document if necessary to bring it into line with the policy for incorporating Public Rights of Way in new development.	There are ongoing negotiations on Sniperley and Council officers are aware of the PROW on the site.
John Lowe, City of Durham Trust	4. A frank assessment based on the current state of the network, of the potential to deal with the deficiencies revealed by the previous 3 iterations of this Plan should be made as part of more coherent approach to the relationship of strategic objectives and policies, and performance standards to monitor the achievements of the Plan should be adopted.	We will monitor the policies in ROWIP4 as outlined in Policy 8 of the Plan.
Mr John	I am concerned that this consultation may not have involved a group of stakeholders with a considerable interest in the subject but who may well not have been aware of its existence. I learnt of it by chance a couple of weeks ago, a month after the two online events - not that I could have taken part because like a lot of residents in more rural areas our broadband service is inadequate.	Comment noted.

	I hope you will take this into account when reviewing the responses to the consultation.	
Local Access Forum	The Local Access Forum (LAF) suggests that the document should not just show beautiful landscapes there is a need to show images of urban fringe and the whole range of prospective users, ethnic minorities, kids on mountain bikes etc.	Comment noted. The document will be amended to reflect a diverse range of PROW users.
Local Access Forum	There is too much repetition in the Executive Summary, Introduction, Vision and Scope. These could be shortened to make it less wordy. Details of the length (years) for the different phases of the Plan, Covid and use of the countryside are amongst the items repeated a number of times.	Comment noted.
Local Access Forum	The LAF consider there to be a lack of clarity about how it will be delivered, monitored, and reviewed. These elements are essential if the plan is to make a difference and the LAF needs to be central to this process moving forward. A steering group of the key partners should be established to guide this process.	We are developing a three-year Delivery Plan which will sit alongside ROWIP4. This will outline specific objectives that the Council's Rights of Way Team will deliver in the three-year period, along with important monitoring indicators and targets.
Local Access Forum	There is a need for a glossary of terms Heritage Way, Brightwater etc.	The document will be amended to incorporate a glossary of terms.
Local Access Forum	The LAF oppose rationalising routes unless it will lead to an enhancement of the network.	Comment noted.
Local Access Forum	Need to evidence all statements and provide references i.e., increasing cycle use. 'Policies' on page 14 says 'An objective is to establish County Durham as the flagship area for access to the outdoors and to be seen as the nation's premier walking County'. Really? There is no indication in the Plan how this is to be done, and no mention of this anywhere else.	The objective to establish County Durham as the flagship area for the outdoors and to be seen as the nation's walking county is to be achieved through the policies in the plan, such as encouraging physical activity by greater promotion of PROW, maintaining and improving the network, monitoring and directing investment into routes.
Local Access Forum	There seems to be some mix-up between policies, objectives and strategic objectives. I'm not sure which is which. Clarity on these would be helpful.	Comment noted.

Mike	<p>For the Vision for ROWIP4, on page 10, it is worth emphasising, however, that it is not just the locations at each end of a PROW that are historically significant. So too are the paths between them routes of the PROW themselves. Most PROW were originally transport routes, not recreational facilities. Indeed, this is probably the case for all long-established ones. Whether they were used by people on carts, horses, or shanks pony, they came into existence as a means of communication routes to work or worship, or for industrial or commercial transport. Like canals in other parts of the country, these routes are now used primarily for recreation. But that is not their sole purpose, even today. And a knowledge and understanding of their history of pre-recreational use can itself be an enormous source of pleasure and interest for those who now use them recreationally.</p>	Comment noted.
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