

Out & About Two:

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan
for Rhondda Cynon Taf



2019-2029



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



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Executive Summary

This is the second edition of 'Out & About: the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf'.

The introduction provides the legal background for preparing the Plan and describes the area covered. Section 2 provides a brief background on the first Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and a summary of the evaluation of that Plan.

Section 3 provides a summary of the Assessment undertaken in 2017 to inform the review of the Plan. It considers the current condition of the access opportunities, future public need, active travel, the Public Services Board and the Well-being Plan and the conclusions of the Assessment: namely to prepare a revised Plan.

Section 4 provides a background to the Statement of Action. The aims and priorities from the Assessment are described and, the long term strategic commitments identified. The consultation on the draft Plan and the resulting changes are summarised. The purpose and content of delivery plans is explained and the proposed process of policy change set out.

Section 5 is the Statement of Action. Unlike the first ROWIP, detailed actions are not included. Instead key themes for action are identified under each of the six objectives. The objectives are as follows:

- Promote outdoor countryside activity for health, regeneration, tourism and recreation
- Walking and cycling as transport options
- Protect the access resource
- Improve provision for walkers, cyclists, horse riders, off-road vehicles and users with mobility or sensory disabilities
- Involving local community and voluntary organisations in the development, promotion and use of access opportunities
- Develop a more efficient management system for statutory Rights of Way work, including the Definitive Map

Section 6 explains how delivery plans will be used to implement the Statement of Action.

Section 7 considers monitoring, reporting and plan review.





1. Introduction

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act 2000) required local highway authorities to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) for their area. In the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), this was called 'Out & About' and included open access land, Key Countryside Sites, parks and other permissive access as well as public rights of way (PRoW). It was published in 2007/8.

The CROW Act 2000 specified that plans should be assessed and considered for review within 10 years of publication. In 2016, Welsh Government published guidance on the review of ROWIPs in Wales and this has informed the review of the first ROWIP.

The area covered by the Review is the same as for the first ROWIP, namely RCT excluding the Brecon Beacons National Park (See Appendix Three). The National Park is also undertaking a review of their Previous Plan. RCT is taking an active role in the development of this Plan.

2. Out & About: the first Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf

2.1 Background

The first ROWIP was based on an assessment of the access resource, the extent to which it met current and likely future needs of the public and the opportunities provided for exercise, open air recreation and enjoyment. The first ROWIP provided a strategic plan, a means of bidding for resources and the basis for developing work programmes. It contained 75 actions relating to six specific objectives.

The process of developing the Plan took several years and involved a number of stages, each of which included stakeholder and public consultations (issues, assessment, draft plan and final plan). Once the Plan had been adopted by the Council, the implementation of the Plan was monitored through quarterly meetings with an annual summary report presented to the Local Access Forum (LAF). This monitoring continues.

2.2 Evaluation

An evaluation of the first ROWIP was undertaken as part of the assessment as to whether or not to review the Plan. This was completed in 2017 and used the quarterly monitoring information to consider progress over the last ten years. The evaluation considered both the detailed actions and the broader scope of work carried out under each of the six objectives. This was published as appendices (2 and 3) to the Assessment (2017). A summary is included here.

Individual actions

These were categorised as completed, ongoing, modified, no progress or abandoned. In 2017, of the 75 actions:

- 27 (36%) were completed
- 30 (40%) were ongoing
- 6 (8%) had been modified
- 2 (2.8%) had made no reported progress
- 10 (13.3%) had been abandoned

The 2 actions where there had been no reported progress relate to 'Lost Ways' and re-opening PRow on Welsh Government Woodland Estate. Actions have been modified where circumstances, organisations, funding streams or legislation have led to a different approach. Some actions have been abandoned, for example when the lead organisation has closed or not progressed with the project or where an anticipated role has not developed.

Welsh Government undertook an evaluation of ROWIPs in 2013. Nationally, at the half way stage evaluation; 74% of actions were completed, part-completed or recurring and 24% abandoned.



2.3 Objectives

The evaluation found that the objectives had stood the test of time better than the individual actions. In general, the priorities identified in the first ROWIP still reflect current concerns and had, to some extent, anticipated new legislation and guidance.

Objective One: Promote outdoor countryside activity for health, regeneration, tourism and recreation was the means of ensuring that Out & About reflected the broader concerns of the Local Authority and that actions were co-ordinated. The evaluation concluded that this will continue to be important, particularly in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (See below).

Objective Two: Walking and cycling as transport options preceded the active travel legislation but provided a focus for relevant PRow and broader access concerns pertaining to transport.

Objective Three: Protect the access resource and

Objective Four: Improve provision were the main focus of the statutory rights of way work and are likely to continue to be important considerations for the future.

Objective Five: Involving local community and voluntary organisations has been a vital component of the plan implementation. This way of working is a key feature of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and reflects the sustainable development principles. It also reflects the issues raised by the public in the Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment (2016) (See below). Finally

Objective Six: Management system was central to improving the resources and organisational approach to rights of way and access issues.

3. Summary of the Assessment (2017)

In an addition to the evaluation of the first ROWIP, the guidance stipulated a number of other issues the assessment should consider. A summary of the findings are presented here.

3.1 Current condition

RCT was well provided with access opportunities and this has not changed much over 10 years. The population in the south of the area has increased slightly, there has been a small increase in open access land and in Key Countryside Sites associated with new developments (such as at Cefn yr Hendy and the Church Village Community Route). A ward by ward breakdown was appended (4) to the Assessment (2017).

Welsh Government Performance Indicator for PRow, which was collected from 2000/1 until 2013/14 shows a steady improvement in the percentage 'easy to use' for RCT from 21.1% in the first year to 78.79% in the final year.

The Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) has been used to manage the rights of way network since 2011. At the outset, a survey of all paths was undertaken and photos, conditions, limitations and issues were recorded on the system. There are 2576 items of furniture on the network including bridges, gates, stiles and steps. The Assessment considered the types of issues that are logged on CAMS and the rate at which they are resolved. Vegetation issues are the most frequent, followed by issues relating to furniture. More issues are being resolved than added each year but there is still a significant backlog.

The condition of the legal documentation of PRow was also assessed and the works in hand to review the 1971 Definitive Map for the Taff Ely area described. The need for work to update the Cynon (1995) and Rhondda (1992) definitive maps was also noted. Definitive Map Modification Orders were reviewed. There were 44 applications on the Register, 8 have been determined with a further 2 being investigated.

3.2 Future public need

The assessment of future public need drew on the findings of the Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment (2016), the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2008 and 2011, some of the emerging results from the Wales National Survey 2016 and the general trends identified in the Welsh Government 'Future Trends' report 2017. The LAF also considered future public need. Mobility and Equalities issues are addressed and finally, the Welsh Government's 2015 consultation on improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation.

The key themes emerging were that the population is generally more sedentary and less fit than 10 years ago and that 'traditional' activities such as hill walking and horse riding are minority concerns. The areas of growth are in sight-seeing, short walks, family excursions, dog walking, and to some extent active pursuits like cycling/mountain biking and running. There is a good understanding of the importance of the outdoors for good physical and mental health and for children's development. The focus on the health and social benefits of the outdoors was a strong feature of the Well-being Assessment, together with the promotion of tourism based on a stunning natural environment with excellent access opportunities. Involving and supporting people in developing opportunities, in managing local green spaces, in improving their own health etc. was also a key theme. There is a need to cater for a huge diversity of minority concerns, not just in the traditional areas but, for example, for those with disabilities or protected characteristics, for Welsh speakers or those without access to a car.





3.3 Active Travel

The Assessment described the steps undertaken by the Council under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. There is a close working relationship between Active Travel and Countryside staff, and a mechanism is in place for joint working across the authority. More detail is given in s 4.2 below.

3.4 Public Service Board and Well-being Plan

The Well-being Plan for Cwm Taf has been developed under the provisions of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The plan is being prepared by the Public Service Board (PSB) and covers the areas of RCT and Merthyr. The PSB is a collection of public bodies working together to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of people who live, work and visit Cwm Taf. The Well-being Assessment undertook extensive public and stakeholder consultation, in 2015/16, which informed the ROWIP Assessment. The draft objectives for the Well-being Plan was published in autumn 2017 and the final Well-being Plan was published in 2018.

3.5 Conclusions

The purpose of the ROWIP Assessment was to ascertain whether or not the first ROWIP for RCT was in need of review. The conclusion was that a review is required, largely because the legislative background has evolved significantly since the first Plan was written. A Report to Scrutiny Committee in December 2017 RESOLVED:-

1. That a formal review of Out & About: the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf is necessary; and
2. That the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee will pre scrutinise the review of 'Out & About' ; the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf at a future meeting and feedback to Cabinet.

4. Background to Statement of Action

4.1 Aims and priorities from the assessment

The Assessment identified that the first ROWIP provided a useful framework for identifying, prioritising and monitoring action across the County Borough. The objectives had stood the test of time, while many of the individual actions were ongoing, others had been completed, modified or abandoned with changing circumstances. Very few actions had made no progress. The objectives were considered to provide an appropriate framework for the revised ROWIP and reflected the priorities and the legislative change highlighted in the guidance.

The Assessment identified the contribution of new public open space, created as part of new housing developments through S106 planning agreements. This was of particular importance in the south of the County Borough where the population has increased since the first ROWIP.

The use of the CAMS has dramatically improved the recording, monitoring and management of the rights of way network. The system provides scope for further improvement but this is currently constrained by a lack of resources (both financial and staff time).

Progress with practical works on the ground has been similarly constrained by the budget cuts arising from austerity. The number of ranger teams and the budget for contractors have both been reduced. Work with volunteers has also declined due to the lack of ranger time to co-ordinate, assist and monitor work. Despite this the percentage of the rights of way network that was 'easy to use' had steadily improved, although there is still a significant backlog of practical work.

Administrative and legal work to update the Definitive Map and Statement has commenced, using funding from the Welsh Government. Completion of the Taff Ely area (relevant date 01/01/1971) is a priority, with further work needed to update Cynon (15/12/1995) and Rhondda (11/11/1992).

The Assessment of future public need identified a number of key themes of relevance to the revised ROWIP.

- Active travel, that is walking and cycling for journeys with a purpose rather than solely for recreation, is now a government priority. Ensuring that there is continuing close liaison with the Council's Transport Strategy Team (who deal with the active travel legislation) and that the ROWIP reflects the Council's policy on active travel will be important. The active travel legislation only applies within the built up area. In RCT, the links between settlements, and into the settlements from the surrounding countryside, will continue to be important for journeys with a purpose.
- Improving public health through the use of the outdoors has emerged as a serious policy concern at national and local level. Rising levels of obesity and poor mental health are areas where outdoor activity is seen as part of the solution. The population is generally more sedentary and less fit than 10 years ago.
- As mentioned above, the types of outdoor activity that people take part in is changing. 'Traditional' activities such as hill walking and horse riding, although popular, are minority concerns. The areas of growth are in sight-seeing, short walks, family excursions, dog walking, and to some extent active pursuits like cycling/mountain biking and running.
- Declining childhood experiences of the outdoors, both at home with families or peers and at school, is leading to a loss of knowledge of the local countryside and of the skills to explore and enjoy it. Perceptions of risk have changed and contribute to reducing outdoor freedom and a lack of challenging activities for young people.





- Tourism, based on a stunning natural environment with excellent access opportunities continues to be a local and national priority.
- Involving and supporting people in all aspects of the outdoors is still a priority. This is about much more than volunteering. Some local people want to be involved in developing access opportunities, learning and sharing countryside skills, in managing local green spaces, discovering local history or wildlife, in improving their own health etc.
- There is a need to cater for a huge diversity of minority concerns, not just in the traditional areas but, for example, for those with disabilities or protected characteristics, for Welsh speakers or those without access to a car.

4.2 Long term strategic commitments

4.2.1 Sustainable Development and the Wales Well-being Goals

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on all public bodies (including local authorities) to carry out sustainable development, which is defined as

The process of improving economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.

The sustainable development principle means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and applying the following five ways of working.

- Long term: The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to meet long-term needs.
- Prevention: How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
- Integration: Considering how public body's well-being objectives may impact on each of the well-being goals, on their objectives and on the objectives of other public bodies.
- Collaboration: Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
- Involvement: The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area that the body serves.

The Well-being Goals for Wales are:

A prosperous Wales	An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.
A resilient Wales	A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).

A healthier Wales	A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
A more equal Wales	A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).
A Wales of cohesive communities	Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
A globally responsible Wales	A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

4.2.2 Well-being Plan for Cwm Taf

The Well-being Plan for Cwm Taf has been prepared by the Public Service Board under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. It was published in May 2018 and contains 3 objectives each with immediate, short to medium term steps and a long term vision. See The Plan overleaf. Within the Plan there are many references to the value that people have for their local environment, the importance of the outdoors for health and well-being, the opportunities for tourism and for being involved in managing and improving the local environment. These cut across the objectives of 'thriving communities', 'healthy people' and 'strong economy'.

Specific proposals include

- Utilising the strength of communities to support volunteering
- Community zones
- Helping local groups to adopt green spaces and develop creative activities
- Regular physical activity and use of 'social prescribing'
- Integrate outdoor activity into daily life: daily mile, outdoor learning in schools
- Planning for walking, cycling and access to the outdoors, so all ages can enjoy their local environment
- Cycling and mountain biking networks, walking routes in every community
- Marketing the Valleys and supporting the Valleys Landscape Park
- Making the most of the Metro proposals
- Green infrastructure
- Protecting the countryside





The Plan on a Page: Cwm Taf Well-being Objectives and Steps

Cross-cutting Objective: Immediate
TACKLING LONELINESS & ISOLATION
 We will work in new ways to channel the undoubted strengths of our communities, including volunteering to tackle more effectively the loneliness and isolation which often exists within many of them.

	THRIVING COMMUNITIES	HEALTHY PEOPLE	STRONG ECONOMY
OBJECTIVES	1 To promote safe, confident, strong, and thriving communities improving the wellbeing of residents and visitors and building on our community assets.	2 To help people live long and healthy lives and overcome any challenges.	3 To grow a strong local economy with sustainable transport that attracts people to live, work and play in Cwm Taf.
STEPS: Immediate (12 years)	1.1 Develop Community Zones as an area or place based approach focussing support to improve outcomes for our areas with the greatest challenges.	2.1 Work with our communities to make sure everyone has the best chance to live long and happy lives e.g. First 1000 days, working with older people to stay fit and healthy for as long as possible.	3.1 Stimulate and boost the aspirations and skills of our people to meet public and private sector career opportunities.
STEPS: Short to Medium Term	1.2 Work with our communities to provide consistent messages, links and signposting to community, public sector and business support within and close to communities.	2.2 Collectively promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging "One More Healthy Behaviour" for all staff and citizens.	3.2 Growth and promotion of tourism using the assets of our beautiful natural environment, heritage and culture for the health, prosperity and benefit of the whole community and alongside the development of the Valleys Landscape Park.
STEPS: Short to Medium Term	1.3 Work with and support communities who want to manage and improve their local environment.	2.3 To work together as public services and with our communities to reduce levels of obesity.	3.3 To make the most of the investment and return opportunities of the £1.229 billion City Deal locally within Cwm Taf.
STEPS: Short to Medium Term			3.4 Further explore the opportunities for sustainable housing and renewable energy developments with associated community funds.
VISION: Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well coordinated community volunteers and public services with ACE informed and thriving communities. A safe, healthy environment which people use, value and enjoy. The communities shaping services to meet the needs of residents and visitors. A better understanding of our natural assets and how our actions impact on them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the frailty of our ageing population by improving the rates of the population that have 4 or 5 healthy behaviours to 20%. Improve the rates of healthy life expectancy and life expectancy in Cwm Taf to the average Wales. People of all ages spend time outdoors, using and enjoying their local environment to improve their health and wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage opportunities for development and regeneration as the City Deal delivers jobs and returns on its investments, including attracting hotels. Supporting the development of a clean economy. A sustainable, energetic and expanding economy with employment rates equalling the UK average. A vibrant tourist industry attracting people from near and far, enjoying our natural environment, history and culture.

4.2.3 Area Statement for South Central Wales

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is required to produce Area Statements, under the provisions of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, to implement the priorities set out in the National Natural Resources Policy (2017). These are

- Delivering nature-based solutions;
- Increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency; and
- Taking a place-based approach.

Seven areas across Wales have been identified and RCT falls within the South Central area with Cardiff, the Vale, Bridgend and Merthyr. Engagement with partners about data and issues to inform the statements is due to commence in spring 2018 with the Area Statements likely to be completed in 2019.

4.2.4 Local Development Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf

The existing Local Development Plan (LDP) for RCT was adopted in March 2011. The LDP provides a land use framework which forms the basis on which decisions about future development in the County Borough are based. Policy AW7 includes protection for PRoW, cycletracks and open space. Policies NSA 23 and SSA 21 list the proposed cycle network improvements which are also shown on the proposals map. The design and place making policies AW5 and AW6 promote sustainable transport options and a few developments have included new or improved walking and cycling infrastructure in their proposals. The LDP is subject to ongoing monitoring, culminating in an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The Council are considering the results of these AMRs as part of the formal review procedure.

Recent changes in planning legislation (including the Planning (Wales) Act 2015) has put in place the opportunity for Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) to be prepared across various regions in Wales. Consideration is currently being given for such an SDP to be prepared across South East Wales, focused on Cardiff and 9 other authorities including the Valleys. There is also an opportunity to prepare replacement LDPs or reduced scale LDP 'Light' once SDPs, or certain stages of it, have been prepared and agreed. There is also the opportunity to work on elements of LDP and LDP Light preparation with other Local Authorities, or to actually prepare Joint LDPs/ LDP Lights.

Welsh Government is considering introducing Green Infrastructure Assessments (Draft PPW10). These may provide further opportunities to integrate open space, PRoW and active travel.

4.2.5 Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is prepared by highway authorities under the provisions of the Transport Act 2000 and as amended by the Transport (Wales) Act 2006, often working in partnership across a wider area. There are strong links between the ROWIP and the LTP in RCT. The Regional Walking and Cycling Strategy was a feature of the SE Wales Transport Plan and generated significant European funding for cycle / community route development and upgrading. The South East Wales Transport Alliance, which published the Regional Walking and Cycling Strategy no longer exists and this document has been replaced by a number of LTPs for South East Wales. More recently, a Regional Transport Authority for the Cardiff Capital Region has been established in order to take forward the City Deal investment for transport in the area which will include proposed programmes and projects which aim to improve connectivity across the region and achieve a modal shift from car use, including the Metro proposals. Their initial Strategy was published in early 2018 for consultation. It contains a number of proposals for new stations and rail-lines, park and ride, bus / rail interchange, bus corridor improvements and road proposals in RCT. The current LTP, together with a number of other policy and strategy documents, is available to view at:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ParkingRoadsandTravel/Travel/TransportSchemesandPolicies/TransportSchemesandPolicies.aspx> (or search the Council's website).





4.2.6 Active Travel in Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 aims to promote walking and cycling for everyday short distance journeys. Initially the Council was required to produce a map of the existing network of walking and cycling routes within the built up area and audit them against the Active Travel quality standards (The Existing Routes Map and Statement 2015). The second stage was to compile an Integrated Network Map containing proposals for developing routes over 5, 10 and 15 years (2016). This was approved in February 2018 by Welsh Government. Both stages involved public consultation and engagement. The results informed the final proposals and the planned works programme. The proposals are available on line at:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ParkingRoadsandTravel/Travel/ActiveTravelandCycling.aspx> (or search the Council's website). Welsh Government funding allocations will be based on the approved proposals.

4.2.7 Valleys Taskforce / Valleys Landscape Park

The Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys was set up to develop a fresh approach to improve prosperity in the south Wales valleys. The high-level plan 'Our Valleys, Our Future' was published in 2017. Under their 'my community' theme: by 2021 they propose to create a Valleys Landscape Park to help communities celebrate and make the most of the natural resources and heritage.

4.2.8 Corporate Plan: Economy, People, Place

In 2016, The Council launched its Corporate priorities for the period to 2020 under the title 'The Way Ahead' In 2017, the Plan was refreshed to reflect the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Each year the Council sets out its priorities for the economy, for people and for place.

4.2.9 Summary of the consultation responses on the draft Plan

The draft Plan was published for a twelve week consultation period in summer 2018. A survey form was available on line and in paper format and, in addition, a number of informal consultations were undertaken by Council staff and by LAF members. Some written, verbal and email responses were also received. The draft was presented to the Council's Scrutiny Committee in September.

A total of 335 representations were received. A detailed (200 page) report and an accompanying data spreadsheet has been produced. This records all the comments and the resulting actions or changes. A summary is also available.

The consultation responses generally supported the overall approach of the Plan and the six objectives. However, a number of changes have been made to the text of the Plan and in particular to the priority themes under each objective as a result of the observations made. Numerous suggestions were made relating to each of the Objectives and these have been collated into an 'ideas list' which will help to inform the work programme to be set out in the annual Delivery Plan. A number of respondents also volunteered to assist with various aspects of the Plan. This is a tremendous resource, and all those that gave contact information will be approached to discuss their interests.

4.3 Purpose and content of delivery plans

The Guidance produced by Welsh Government for the review of ROWIP introduced the concept of delivery plans. These are not included in the CROW Act 2000 and are therefore non-statutory. The guidance suggests that Statement of Action, included in the statutory ROWIP, should only include actions that are sufficiently long-term and strategic to avoid them becoming obsolete during the 10 year term of the Plan. It suggests that shorter-term commitments and work plans should be included in Delivery Plans and that these should be included as an annex to the ROWIP.

The guidance also notes that the Planning Inspectorate are unlikely to consider the content of delivery plans as 'material provisions' section under the Highways Act 1980 and suggests that content that should be considered in this regard be included in the core ROWIP rather than Delivery Plans.

It is proposed that a brief annual delivery plan will be produced to deliver the Statement of Action set out in section 5 below.

4.4 Process of Policy Change

The first ROWIP did not specifically address policy or policy change. However, the pressure on resources arising from austerity and the Welsh Government guidance for the plan review suggests a more comprehensive policy framework for PRoW should be developed.

In October 2011, the Council adopted Policy Guidelines for determining claims under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, in order to provide a clear rationale for prioritising work on claimed rights of way, against the background of limited resources and increasing demands on those resources.

The following list for the initial review or development of policy and guidance is proposed. Further detail will be included in the relevant delivery plans.

Policy or guidance topic

Legal Orders
Volunteering
Maintenance
Planning
Diversions
Promoted routes
Enforcement
General access

The procedure to be followed in developing each policy or guidance note will be as follows:

- Review existing
- Collate evidence regarding best practice (including discussion with LAF, local organisations, other stakeholders, other LAs)
- Draft document
- Internal consultation including legal, amend as required
- Consult LAF and others as necessary
- Amendment as required, re-consult for any significant change
- Cabinet member approval

Once the Policy or Guidance Note has been adopted it will be utilised by the Council in decision making and will be a 'material provision' where cases are taken before the Planning Inspectorate.





5. Statement of Action

Introduction

S.60 of the CROW Act 2000 requires that ROWIPs includes a Statement of Action the authority proposes to take for the management of local rights of way, meeting the needs and developing the opportunities identified in the Assessment.

The approach taken in this review of the ROWIP is similar to that taken in the first ROWIP. It considers PRow and other access opportunities (such as community routes, open access, parks and key countryside sites) and uses similar objectives to focus action. As described in s 4.3 above, detailed actions will be set out in the annual Delivery Plan, with the priority themes for each objective outlined here.

Objective 1: Promote outdoor countryside activity for health, regeneration, tourism and recreation

The Wales well-being goals and ways of working, encourage public bodies to ‘join up’ policy and action to achieve multiple benefits for local residents and visitors. The Well-being Plan for Cwm Taf is focusing on a ‘place-based’ approach, using the local assets and strengths to support new ways of working. The countryside has been identified as an important asset, often very close to where people live. It could make a contribution to addressing issues as diverse as community cohesion, adverse childhood experiences¹, air quality, economic regeneration and local pride. The value of the countryside as an asset in RCT was overwhelmingly supported in the response to the consultation on the draft Plan.

This objective provides support for actions which promote outdoor countryside activity and utilise the rights of way network, community routes, open access resources and Council owned parks and Key Countryside Sites. Suggestions from the public consultation also included the protection and promotion of wildlife and heritage.

Actions will focus around the following themes:

1.1 Health	Actions under this theme could include support for social prescribing ² ; liaison with ‘hubs’ developed for the Well-being Plan; Walking for Health groups; short circular walks near doctor’s surgeries; specific ideas generated by local communities or voluntary groups; practical work; promotion and community engagement.
1.2 Regeneration	Actions under this theme are primarily focused on local residents and businesses and could include local trails of historic or cultural interest, countryside running or walking route/app for a hotel or fitness business, initiatives in Parks, links to public transport.
1.3 Tourism	Although there will be some cross over with 1.2 above, actions under this theme are primarily focused on visitors. The outdoors is an important part of the local tourism ‘offer’ and actions to develop, market and maintain existing facilities, such as the Taff Trail and the Pontypridd Circular Walk, and to develop new opportunities are covered here. Tourism has a ‘digital strategy’ to promote on-line information.

1.4 Recreation	Actions under this theme could include many of the ‘traditional’ countryside activities such as led walks, ramblers and riding groups, dog walking, visits to parks, family outings and areas of growth, such as mountain biking and running.
1.5 Education	Actions under this theme could include Walk to the Wild for primary schools; continued project working with the University of South Wales students; the ‘daily mile’; ideas developed by pupils and their teachers, cycle and road safety training, adventurous play and outdoor activity.

Footnotes

¹ Adverse childhood experiences can affect peoples’ life chances. Minimising them is a key priority of Welsh Government, the Health Service, Police, Local Council and other public services

² Social prescribing can be an alternative or additional therapy and may include outdoor activities such as walking

Objective 2: Walking and cycling as transport options

Walking and cycling as transport contributes to a variety of policy agendas including

- climate change (reducing carbon emissions from transport)
- physical activity (for public health benefit)
- social inclusion and regeneration (access to employment and services for those without a car)
- independent mobility for children and young people and some disabled users
- local environmental quality (reduced air and noise pollution, green corridors)
- green infrastructure; and
- tourism promotion

As discussed above, the active travel legislation has raised the status of walking and cycling as transport options. Whilst the legislation only applies within the built up area, the existing community route network (largely on disused rail lines) and a number of PRoW outside the built up area continue to be important for transport purposes. The model standards published by the Welsh Government relating to active travel routes are generally more onerous than for PRoW, and will not be appropriate for many routes, especially in the countryside.

The public consultation on the draft Plan suggests that whilst people often support Active Travel, many consider it is not practical for them. Distance, terrain, time constraints and lack of suitable routes were frequently mentioned. Safety, maintenance, the continuity and standard of routes were also of concern. These issues will need to be addressed in all of the action themes below. Positive suggestions included promotion, bike hire, cycle parking, facilities at work, and better links with public transport.

Actions will focus around the following themes:

2.1 Strategic input	Actions under this theme could include input to policies in the Local Development Plan, the Local Transport Plan and the Active Travel network, local priorities and standards. It could also include regional working and cross border initiatives.
2.2 Community routes	Actions under this theme would focus on existing and new community routes including the Taff Trail, Cynon Trail, Celtic Trail (route 4 and 47), the Rhondda Fach trail.





Objective 3: Protect the access resource

The first ROWIP identified the range of duties that the local highways authority has to manage and protect the rights of way network. These duties remain and this objective provides the focus for the Council's policies with regard to their implementation.

The Local Development Plan for RCT (2011) includes policies to protect rights of way and public open space, as well as more general countryside protection policies. Any new development plans (regional/ strategic or local) should seek to retain protection for the access resource.

Managing the network involves joint working with the Council's highway managers, development control and legal officers, public health and street care and the police, as well as practical works on the ground. Maintenance, including signage, was a particular concern for many respondents to the consultation on the draft Plan. Protection also embraces issues such as rubbish dumping and anti-social behaviour that can damage the resource as well as deter users. This was also reflected in the observations on the draft plan. Some respondents were dissatisfied with the current performance of the Council, especially in relation to routine works. In particular, improving public information and ways of reporting problems were raised. Additional text has been added to Objective 6 to address these issues.

Actions will focus around the following themes:

3.1 Strategic planning	Actions under this theme could include input to the new Cardiff area Strategic Plan; the review of the Local Development Plan; Local Transport Plan; highways policy; the metro proposals, working with neighbouring Local Authorities.
3.2 Welsh Government woodland estate	Actions would include continuing to press NRW to remove obstructions for PRow on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate and to promote use of the majority of the estate that is dedicated as 'open access'. Temporary closures for operational reasons can be accommodated through normal processes.
3.3 Lost ways	In the CROW Act 2000, 2026 is the deadline for claiming paths not currently registered as PRow. Welsh Government has consulted on the possibility of removing this deadline but it is not yet clear whether this will occur. Actions may be required during the Plan period.
3.4 Routine works	Actions under this theme include inspection, enforcement; changes to the network; temporary closures; maintenance works; management of Key Countryside sites; observations on planning applications.
3.5 Level Crossings	Proposals to increase train service frequencies and reduce journey times along Valleys Routes to Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil as part of the South Wales Metro development will require the railway operator to review level crossing risk. Actions may be required during the Plan period.

Objective 4: Improve provision for walkers, cyclists, horse riders, off road vehicles and users with mobility or sensory disabilities

Improvements to the existing network, and in particular providing additional facilities suitable for particular groups of users remains a priority. This area of work is heavily dependent on external funding, especially as ‘austerity’ has inevitably focused local authority spending on statutory duties. Some existing facilities mentioned by the public in the draft Plan consultation are under pressure, for example public transport and toilets.

The priorities for improvement are likely to be driven by the external funders. For example, the active travel legislation is likely to focus spending on the Council’s priorities for routes within the built up area, making it harder to attract funding for ‘rural’ routes such as the Taff Trail.

Seeking new sources of funding for improvement priorities, for example relating to health initiatives or community projects will become increasingly important. It will also continue to be important to take advantage of funding opportunities in non priority areas which can create improvements that benefit local residents or visitors.

The public consultation provided a range of priorities for improvement, with walking, cycling and access for all being particularly favoured. Off-road vehicles were the generally the lowest priority but a number of respondents suggested a dedicated facility for them. Some respondents considered that Objective 3 (protect the access resource) should have priority over any improvement.

Actions will focus around the following themes:

4.1 Funding for improvements	Actions under this theme could include developing partnerships; joint projects; grant applications; S106 agreements relating to planning consents.
4.2 Access for all	Actions under this theme could include active travel improvements that create new opportunities for users with mobility or sensory issues; kissing gate replacements for stiles; support for new users.
4.3 Tackling anti-social behaviour	Actions under this theme could include waste and littering prevention; reducing motorbike trespass; tackling dog fouling; supporting local community initiatives: promoting local pride.
4.4 Permissive routes	Permissive routes are valuable for securing additional access and for improving the safety and attractiveness of the existing rights of way network. Actions under this theme will be dependent on funding and driven by priorities from Tourism, Health etc.





Objective 5: Involving local community and voluntary organisations in the development, promotion and use of access opportunities

The first ROWIP recognised the importance of grassroots participation and utilised this objective to promote actions being promoted by user groups, Communities First, and a diverse range of local community and voluntary groups. Whilst many of the organisations have changed in the intervening period, the importance of the third sector¹ in outdoor activity remains pivotal. Involvement is one of the five ways of working identified in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. Working with people who use the countryside provides an important perspective. Similarly those who don't use the countryside can shed light on barriers to participation as well as their aspirations. The Well-being Assessment identified a broad interest in the countryside and outdoor activity and highlighted a number of specific concerns (examples see below).

- Young people expressed concern at the lack of challenging outdoor activities for them to take part in.
- Some local groups wanted greater involvement in the use and management of Council owned land in their area.
- Individuals wanted more information about where they could go.
- Local organisations had formed around proposals to develop specific facilities.
- More recently, a social prescribing initiative has identified outdoor activity as an area of demand with limited provision for beginners or those needing support.

The Well-being Plan includes proposals relating to 'community zones' and Community hubs which can provide information, advice and support which could be utilised to forward this objective. It also includes proposals relating to volunteering, which could support a broader engagement agenda.

The LAF will continue to provide the statutory input from user groups, landowners and other interested parties to the local recreation and access agenda.

The public consultation response to the draft Plan generally supported this objective and many people offered assistance. Following these up is a priority. Suggestions included utilising local groups, clubs and community councils, encouraging local pride, using local knowledge and learning from elsewhere. Others referred to timing (around work), promotion, providing proper support for volunteers, ensuring the Council doesn't 'off-load' its liabilities and responsibilities and providing flexibility to allow individuals and families, as well as groups to become more involved.

Actions will focus around the following themes:

5.1 Local Access Forum (LAF)	The LAF provides the statutory mechanism for users and landowners to contribute to policy, priorities and action relating to rights of way and countryside access. Each LAF has a term of 3 years, after which a new LAF is advertised and appointed.
5.2 Create your Space	This theme focuses on the two community based, seven-year lottery funded programmes in Treherbert (Welcome to our Woods) and Ynysybwl (Ynysybwl Vision) who are developing new approaches to their local countryside.
5.3 Voluntary and community participation	This theme is a focus for actions arising from or developed with other local community and voluntary organisations. It could include developing relationships with the Well-being Plan 'hubs' to understand their aspirations for their local countryside and rights of way; developing a volunteering policy in conjunction with Interlink.

5.4 Adopt a Path	This theme would continue actions to support and promote the 'Adopt a Path' scheme and to develop initiatives like that with the Taff Ely Ramblers who have adopted the Pontypridd Circular walk.
5.5 Community Councils	This theme includes actions promoted or developed by Community Councils and includes the agency agreements that some Councils and the Brecon Beacons National Park have entered into.

Footnotes
¹ third sector = the social economy

Objective 6: Develop a more efficient management system for statutory Rights of Way work, including the Definitive Map

Whilst significant progress has been made in this area in the last 10 years, there is still much to be done. The pressures of austerity have slowed the anticipated progress with the updating of the Definitive Map, but completion of this work remains a high priority, albeit currently dependant on external (Welsh Government) funding. Technological developments are continuing to provide opportunities for efficiencies in management systems and for service improvements. These are rarely without an 'up front' and often recurring annual cost.

The public consultation of the draft Plan suggests that improvements are required to the information provided to the public, its promotion, and in particular the means of reporting problems relating to the rights of way network.

6.1 Definitive Map	Actions under this theme will focus on completing the updating of the Taff Ely Definitive Map and Statement and then progressing to the Rhondda and Cynon.
6.2 Policy and guidance	Actions under this theme will include the review or development of a range of policy and guidance notes as set out in para 4.4 above.
6.3 Protocols for routine tasks	Actions under this theme could include proformas for responses to planning applications and land searches, for surveys and inspections; standard letters; recording of practical works.
6.4 CAMS and other technological support	Actions under this theme could include hardware; software; training; adding layers such as the Active Travel network and permissive routes; website and social media (bilingual).





6. Delivery Plans

Non-statutory annual delivery plans are proposed to provide the detail of actions to be undertaken each year. The first Delivery Plan for 2019/20 will be published as an Annex to the Plan in due course. The content of this and subsequent delivery plans will be informed by the objectives set out in the Statement of Action in Section Five above and by the resources available, including staff, capital and revenue funding, grant aid, voluntary and community support.

The LAF will have a role in determining the content of the Delivery Plan but the responsibility will remain with the Local Authority.

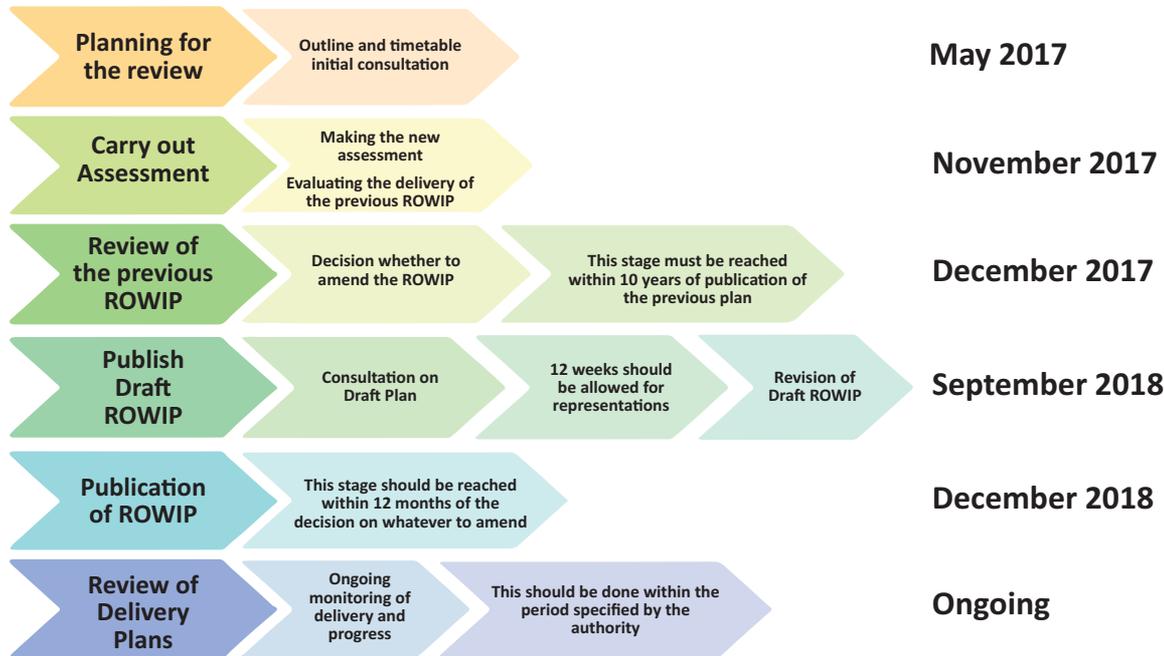
7. Monitoring, Reporting and Plan Review

The internal Council quarterly monitoring of the ROWIP will continue and will consider both the overall Statement of Action (section 5 above) and the detail of the annual Delivery Plan. Each year, the LAF will receive a report of progress against each objective.

Welsh Government guidance suggests that the ROWIP will require a further round of assessment and potential review in ten years (2028/9).

Appendix One

Timetable



Consultation List

Community Councils

Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm CC
Rhigos CC
Hirwaun and Penderyn CC
Pontypridd Town Council
Llantwit Fardre CC
Llantrisant CC
Llanharan CC
Llanharry CC
Tonyrefail CC
Gilfach Goch CC
Pontyclun CC
Taffs Well CC

County Councillors

Aberaman North, Linda Marty DeVet
Aberaman North, Sheryl Evans
Aberaman South, Anita Calvert
Aberaman South, Tina Williams
Abercynon, Elaine George
Aberdare East, Steven A Bradwick
Aberdare East, Michael Forey
Aberdare West / Llwydcoed, Gareth Jones
Aberdare West / Llwydcoed, Sharon Rees

Beddau, Richard Yeo
Bryнна, Roger K Turner
Church Village, Graham Stacey
Cilfynydd, Stephen Belzak
Cwmbach, Jeffrey Elliott
Cymmer, Margaret Tegg
Cymmer, Gareth Caple
Ferndale, Susan Morgans
Ferndale, Philip Howe
Gilfach Goch, Aurfron Roberts
Glyncoch, Doug H Williams
Graig, Jayne Brencher
Hawthorn, Martin Fidler Jones
Hirwaun, Karen Morgan
Llanharry, Wayne Owen
Llantrisant Town, Glynne Holmes
Llantwit Fardre, Mike Diamond
Llantwit Fardre, Joel S James
Llwynypia, Wendy Lewis
Maerdy, Jack Harries
Mountain Ash East, Pauline Jarman
Mountain Ash West, Wendy Treeby
Penrhiwceiber, Adam S Fox





Penrhiwceiber, Gavin D G Williams
Pentre, Shelley Rees-Owen
Pentre, Maureen Weaver
Penygraig, John L Culwick
Penygraig, Joshua R Davies
Penywaun, Helen Boggis
Pontyclun, Kate L Jones
Pontyclun, Margaret Griffiths
Pontypridd Town, Heledd Fychan
Porth, Julie Williams
Porth, Alun G Cox
Rhigos, Graham Philip Thomas
Rhondda, Robert W Smith
Taffs Well, Jill Bonetto
Talbot Green, Steven M Powell
Tonteg, Lewis Hooper
Tonteg, Lyndon Walker
Tonypany, Gareth Wyn Hughes
Tonyrefail East, Danny Grehan
Tonyrefail East, Dan Owen-Jones
Tonyrefail West, Alexandra Davies-Jones
Trallwng, Michael J Powell
Treforest, Steve Powderhill
Treherbert, Geraint R Davies
Treherbert, Will Jones
Treorchy, Alison Chapman
Treorchy, Sera M Evans-Fear
Treorchy, Emyr John Webster
Tylorstown, Mark Adams
Tyn-y-nant, Clayton J Willis
Ynyshir, Darren Macey
Ynysybwl, Sue Pickering
Ystrad, Lorraine Jones
Ystrad, Elyn Stephens

Neighbouring Authorities

Brecon Beacons National Park
Bridgend County Borough Council
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Cardiff County Borough Council
Merthyr County Borough Council
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council
Powys County Borough Council

Other Organisations

Abercynon Action Team
Aberdare Business and Tourism Association
Action for Hirwaun
Angling Association (Taff Bargoed)
Arts Factory
Assembly of Welsh Counties
Auto Cycle Union
Black Environment Network
Caerphilly Commoners and Brinkers
Association

British Association of Shooting and
Conservation
British Horse Society
British Mountain Bike Federation
British Mountaineering Council
British Trust For Conservation Volunteers
British Trust for Ornithology
Bruton Knowles (Chartered Surveyors)
Bryncynon Angling Association (F.O.R.T.)
Bryncynon Strategy (Green Valley)
Butterfly Conservation
Byways & Bridleways Trust
CADW
Cadw Welsh Historic Monuments
Cambrian Lakeside – Leisure
Secretary of the Cambrian Mountains Society
Camping & Caravaning Club
Cardiff Conservation Volunteers
Cardiff Cycling Campaign
Cascade Angling Association (F.O.R.T.)
CLA Cymru
Cefn Pennar Welfare Association
Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation
Commission for Racial Equality
Community Education Centre (Blaengwawr)
Community Service Volunteers Wales
Council for National Parks
Country Land and Business Association
Country Landowners Association
Countryside Management Association
Cwmparc Community Rivercare Group
Cwmparc Community Association
Cynon Culture Community Learning
Cynon Valley Ramblers
Cynon Valley Museum
Dai Davies Community Centre
Dare Valley Riding School
Daerwynno Outdoor Centre
Disability Wales
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
Ebbw Vale and District Development Trust
Farmers Union of Wales
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Ferndale & District Womens Institute
Fernhill Rhondda Conservation Group
Field Studies Council
Forest Enterprise Wales
Friends of Aberdare Park
Glamorgan & Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd.
Glamorgan Badger Group
Glamorgan Bat Group (east)
Glamorgan Bird Club
Glamorgan Federation of Womens Institutes
Gelligaer YFC (Young Farmers Club)
Gower YFC (Young Farmers Club)
Llantrisant YFC (Young Farmers Club)

Maendy YFC (Young Farmers Club)
 Neath YFC (Young Farmers Club)
 Wick YFC (Young Farmers Club)
 Glamorgan Fungus Group
 Glamorgan Mission to the Deaf
 Glamorgan Moth Recording Group
 Green Days Project
 Groundwork Wales
 Hirwaun YMCA
 Interlink RCT
 Keep Wales Tidy
 Land Access & Recreation Associatio
 Llanharan Community Development
 Project Ltd
 Mid Fach Rivercare Group (F.O.R.T.)
 Mountain Ash Rivercare Group
 Mountain Ash YMCA
 Motoring Organisations' Land
 Mountain Leader Training Board
 National Caravan Council Ltd
 National Association of Local Councils
 National Trust
 National Parks Wales
 Natural Resources Wales
 Open Spaces Society
 Osprey Fly Fishers Association (F.O.R.T.)
 Pedestrians Association
 Pen Y Rhondda Trust
 Penywaun Riverfield Group (F.O.R.T.)
 Pontypridd Canal Conservations Society
 Pontypridd Historical Cultural Centre
 Pony Club -Cantref Riding Centre
 Pony Club- Cardiff Riding School
 Public Health Wales
 Ramblers Cymru 3
 RCT Access Group
 RCT District Scout Council
 Rhondda Civic Society
 Rhondda Mencap (Mencap Cymru)
 River Care
 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
 Royal Welsh Agricultural Society
 S A F E
 South Wales Fire & Rescue Service
 South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group
 Spider Recording Scheme
 Sports Council for Wales
 Sustrans
 Taff Ely 50+ Forum
 Taff Ely Ramblers
 Taffs Well and Nant Garw Community Garden
 Tanglewood
 The Fern Partnership
 The Forum of Older People
 Treherbert Gardening Group
 Timber Growers United

Wales Association of Community Councils
 Wales Tourist Board
 Wales Environment Link
 Welsh Cycling Union
 Welsh Orienteering Association
 Welsh Trail Riders Association
 Wildlife Trust South and West Wales
 WWF Cymru
 Ynysybwl Regeneration Partnership
 Youth Hostel Association England & Wales
 Yr Urdd

Cabinet Members

Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet,
 Andrew Morgan
 Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for
 Council Business, Maureen Webber
 Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong
 Learning, Joy Rosser
 Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities,
 Well-being & Cultural Services, Rhys Lewis
 Cabinet Member for Children and Young
 People, Christina Leyshon
 Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development
 and Housing, Robert Bevan
 Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure &
 Heritage Services, Ann Crimmings
 Cabinet Member for Adult Community
 Services & Welsh Language, Geraint E Hopkins
 Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Mark
 A Norris

Regional Assembly Members

David Melding– South Wales Central
 (Conservative)
 Gareth Bennett AM – South Wales Central
 (UKIP)
 Neil McEvoy, South Wales Central
 (Independent)
 Mohammad Asghar, SW East (Conservative)
 Mick Antoniw, Pontypridd (Labour)
 Vikki Howells, Cynon Valley (Labour)
 Leanne Wood, Rhondda (Plaid Cymru)



Appendix Two: Significant changes from first ROWIP

The original Out & About was published following a three year long process of consultation with an Issues Paper, Assessment and Draft Plan preceding the final document. As such, Out & About drew on a major collation of evidence and information about countryside access and opportunities in Rhondda Cynon Taf, not gathered together before. The Welsh Government (WG) guidance for the Review of the Plan sets a shorter timeframe and focuses on areas in need of change. The Assessment (2017) sought to identify these areas.

The major changes in the Welsh policy framework, identified in the Guidance, are reflected in the new ROWIP. The WG strategy 'Climbing Higher', which was used to establish monitoring indicators for the first ROWIP, is no longer relevant. New legislative requirements have been addressed.

Changes to policy and structures within Rhondda Cynon Taf, voluntary and community organisations and statutory bodies have been reflected in the new Plan. Any new issues identified by the review of the policy framework have been considered in the Plan.

Changes in the needs of different users and the use, demand and reasons for access have been considered and future public need identified in the Assessment (2017).

The Assessment also considered what had been achieved by the first ROWIP and the continuing relevance of the original objectives. The objectives in the new Statement of Action remain broadly the same but detailed actions have been omitted and instead broad themes for priority actions identified. Detailed actions will be included in the non-statutory annual delivery plan.

Appendix Three: Map of Area covered by the Plan

