

Rights of Way Improvement Plan Funding Programme Case Studies 2013-2014.

This report highlights examples of the types of work that the funding Programme made possible during 2013-14, the sixth year of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Funding Programme

It is a compilation of the examples provided by the authorities and has been structured to reflect and emphasise the key points and characteristics of the work that was undertaken.

It accompanies the *Rights of Way Improvement Plan Funding Programme End of Year Outputs Report*.

As well as delivering work within each part of Wales, the funding also delivered at a national level; in addition, to administering the funding in 2013/14, WG requested that NRW commission the *Evaluation of ROWIP Implementation and ROWIP Funding Programme* in 2013-14 and this was carried out by external consultants. The evaluation provided a number of useful findings and insights including that **'the RFP had been hugely important-even integral- in enabling ROWIP actions to become a reality, rather than just a paper action plan'** and it formed the basis of NRW advice to WG in order to inform future planning for public rights of way and outdoor recreation more generally. The Evaluation will continue to be used to inform NRW work in this area. The Executive Summary and Full report are available from NRW.



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol
Cymru**
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Resources
Wales**



On the ground...

Most of the funding (£672,507 or 70%) was used to make practical improvements to existing access. Here are some examples of work from across Wales:

North Wales: Anglesey

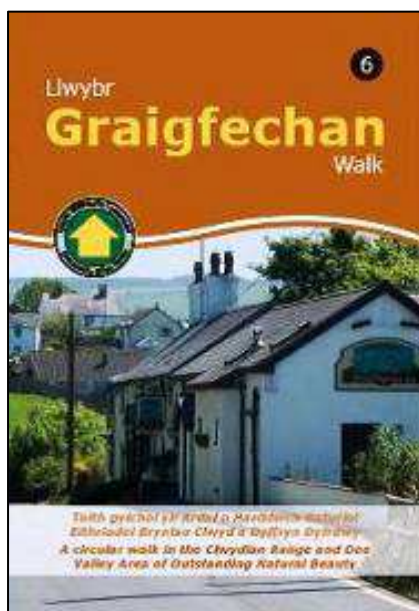
Anglesey County Council used part of their ROWIP allocation to improve the accessibility of a promoted circular walk at Holyhead Mountain from Trewilmot to Mynydd Celyn Bach. Five stiles were removed and replaced with gates or kissing gates, together with localised surface repairs. As a result a 2.4km section of the circular walk is now free of stiles which is designed to make the path easier to use for all.

https://www.visitanglesey.co.uk/media/73792/circular_walks_holyhead_mountain-1-.pdf

Before...



After...



Denbighshire Graig Fechan Community Miles was launched on the 13th of December. The project demonstrates good practice as the route was identified in partnership with the local Community Council, with a process looking at the local footpaths that communities value and which routes they would like to see improved. Work on the ground included replacement stiles, fingerposts and gates to aid access. Ditch clearance has also improved the drainage around certain access points, reducing the mud on the path.

The success of the projects already completed through the Community Miles scheme has resulted in a waiting list of Community Councils that would like to see a walk adopted for their area.

On the ground...

North Wales: Wrexham

PRESS RELEASE: Wrexham County Borough Council has recently improved nearly 5km of Public Footpaths between Hanmer and Bronington. Walkers can now enjoy and benefit from new kissing gates, ditch crossings and improved signage – making the area more accessible for everyone.

Funding came from the Welsh Government via Natural Resources Wales to support Wrexham's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Cllr. Bob Dutton, lead member for Environment, said "I would like to thank the many farmers and landowners for their help and cooperation. The opening up of this stretch of the Maelor Way provides easy access to a fantastic area of our countryside for even more people."

The Environment Department can also report that their annual 'Performance Indicator' score for public rights of way (a measure of how much of the path network – based on a random sample – is "easy to use") is now at 76%, up from 29.6% only five years ago. This means that a large proportion of the public rights of way in the County Borough are now open and sign posted.

Cllr. Dutton adds "These figures are a testament to the hard work and dedication of staff in the Environment Department, and I'm sure their efforts are appreciated by many residents of the County Borough"

<http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/prow>



Andy Jones of Footprint Conservation (pictured), contractor for Wrexham County Borough Council alongside a newly installed Footbridge.



PRESS RELEASE: Footpath improvement helps community project

Wrexham County Borough Council's Rights of Way Department recently improved the Public Footpath leading up to 'Garth Hillside Organic Garden' above Glynceiriog. It is a community-based garden whose aims are to reduce food miles, show people to grow organically and sustainably, and to provide a meeting place for people with shared values around protecting and preserving the environment.

Volunteers at the garden helped with the project, which used local materials and contractors, which provides a clear and accessible route to the garden and also the surrounding countryside.

On the ground...

North Wales: Gwynedd

PRESS RELEASE: Official opening of new look footpath in Efailnewydd

A very useful village footpath which help to improve access in Efailnewydd has been officially re-opened following significant improvement work.

The path forms an important pedestrian link between the Pengwern estate and the main road through the village, and is therefore an important route used by local residents and visitors to the area.

Indeed, due to its position within the village, the number of users who have used the path over the years have taken its toll on the footpath surface. However, with resurfacing work now completed, and work undertaken by Gwynedd Council's Dwyfor Area Highways Works team, the path is back to its best. The upgrade of this popular footpath is part of Gwynedd Council's programme of improvements undertaken on the county's footpaths.



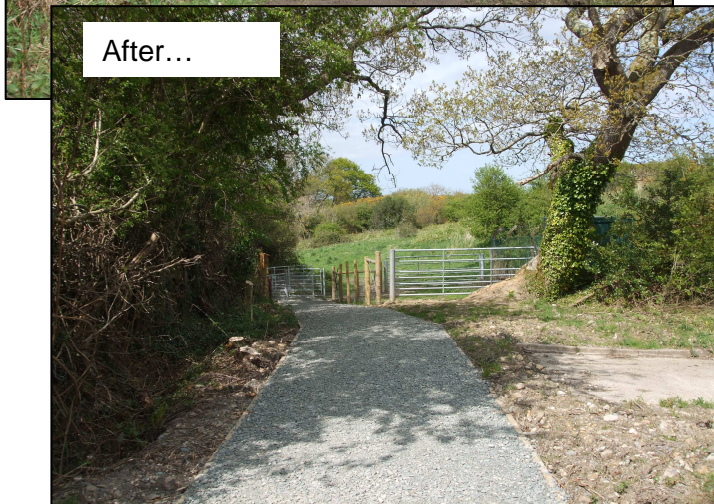
Councillor John Wyn Williams, Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for public footpaths said:

“These improvements at Efailnewydd will help improve access for villagers and other members of the public so that they can keep active and better enjoy the village amenities.

“Officers from Gwynedd Council's rights of way team have worked closely with the local member together with landowners, local residents and the community council to deliver this important project. We hope that local residents along with visitors to Efailnewydd will make the most of the new and improved footpath to better enjoy the short strolls within the village boundary, and which will also facilitate a safer access to the local children's play area, sports grounds and shop.”

The improvements to the footpath include laying a full width tar-macadam surface to facilitate pushchair and wheelchairs use, together with the installation of a pedestrian rail to prevent children from running straight into the main road. The improvements at Efailnewydd have been funded by the Welsh Government's Rights of Way Improvement Plan Grant, administered by Natural Resources Wales, and help to implement the actions identified in Gwynedd's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

On the ground...



North Wales: Gwynedd

Improvements Footpath 25/26, Bangor consisted of replacing old restrictive kissing gates with new wider self-closing gates. North Wales Wildlife Trust worked in conjunction with the authority on additional access improvements.

Sections of the path located outside the SSSI area (now under the care of the North Wales Wildlife Trust) were re-established and parts of the path line were overgrown and extremely wet and muddy.

This path is in regular use by local residents and school children, linking schools, residential areas, Ysbyty Gwynedd, the SSSI site (Brewery Fields) and other PROW within the vicinity, and also to the Wales Coast Path at Treborth/Menai Bridge.

Mid and West Wales: Ceredigion

STOP PRESS.....

Footpath improvements

CEREDIGION County Council has improved a public footpath which links into the Coast Path south of Aberaeron and a path near Lampeter. Stiles have been replaced with new gates and signs have been improved.

The work was funded by the Welsh Government and carried out in partnership with Natural Resources Wales and is aimed at implementing Ceredigion's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

The council has also improved a public footpath near Lampeter, which allow wheelchair-users to access a viewing area overlooking Falcondale Lake. The path can be found by turning off the A482 two miles west of Lampeter.

Details of the Aberaeron walk can be found on the Coastal Path website (www.ceredigioncoast-path.org.uk/pdf/aberaeron.pdf) or leaflets are available at Tourist Information Centres.

On the ground...

Mid and West Wales: Powys

Elan Valley Trail.

The Elan Valley Trail is a popular family cycle route that follows the line of the old Birmingham corporation railway. It starts in Cwmdeuddwr, Rhayader and forms part of the National Cycle Network.

The new route has come about as a result of partnership working between The Elan Valley Trust, Welsh Water, Powys County Councils Tourism department, Cycling Officer and Countryside Services.



This joint project to create a new shared use surfaced path linking into the popular Elan Valley Cycle Route has been completed.

The new section of path will make a big difference to walkers and cyclists using the trail. The high quality traffic free path increases safety for all users and creates a more pleasant environment to enjoy the area. A free leaflet showing the trail and suitable places to park is available from the Elan Valley visitor centre or Powys county council's Cycling Officer. The free map also shows the route and various options available to make longer and shorter rides.

Public Rights of Way Improvement Project.

Rights of Way and Access Officer, Carlton Parry, from Powys County Council's Countryside Services carried out the public rights of way improvement project in the community of Llanidloes Without.

Carlton started by liaising with the Community Council before carrying out an initial condition survey of the public rights of way within the community. Once works were identified landowner liaison took place, with Carlton working alongside landowners to achieve improvements to access opportunities. This was followed by a comprehensive programme of practical works; such as improved signage, footbridge repairs and the replacement or repair of any gates that are found to be inadequate. Assistance with the repair or replacement of gates or stiles on public rights of way, which are the responsibility of the landowner or tenant, were available from Countryside Services. Other practical works, such as signage and footbridge repair, will be carried out either by volunteers, supervised by a County Council Officer, or where appropriate by contractor.

On the ground...

Mid and West Wales: Swansea

The Llanrhidian Higher Community Project is a long term project to open up as many paths possible in the Community of Llanrhidian Higher using ROWIP funds and was one of the original ROWIP grant projects. SW8 is now nearly complete and the final work should take place in 2015/16.

This particular path links Llanrhidian Higher with the neighbouring Community of Ilston and had been unusable for decades. It required gates, clearance and a diversion, as well as the two bridges, to open it up for public use once again. The bridges were installed by volunteers, young offenders and our Ranger Team last autumn. The path is located in the centre of the Gower AONB.



On the ground...in the air!

Mid and West Wales: Brecon Beacons

PRESS RELEASE...

National Park Authority reaches new heights in a bid to restore footpath erosion damage

Spectacular scenes as over 400 tonnes of crushed stone are airlifted by helicopter and taken to a remote section of the famous Offa's Dyke to resurface a section of the footpath.

Battling freezing conditions and changeable weather, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is planning to airlift the material to Hay Bluff (at 677 metres / 2221 ft above sea level) to create a sustainable path surface in areas where the path has eroded. The air lift will be taking place all week and will create sustainable improvements to more than 3200 metres of the path to minimise further erosion damage.

The stone will be taken in 1 tonne loads, one at a time to the site and will take approximately 5 days to transport the complete load. The aggregate has been specially selected because of its durability and compatibility with the existing stone along the footpath.



The sections of worn and eroded footpath are up to 2 miles from the nearest road, and due to its steep gradient and ground conditions it can only be accessed on foot or by helicopter. Wardens and staff from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority are being assisted by the Black Mountains Uplands volunteers during the operation.

Richard Ball, Access Officer for Brecon Beacons National Park Authority said: "Changeable weather conditions, the remote location and the altitude of the site meant that using a helicopter was the most appropriate option for this access work. Most of the upland area in The Black Mountains is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its upland habitats which are really special and we need to take care not to damage the site whilst completing the works.

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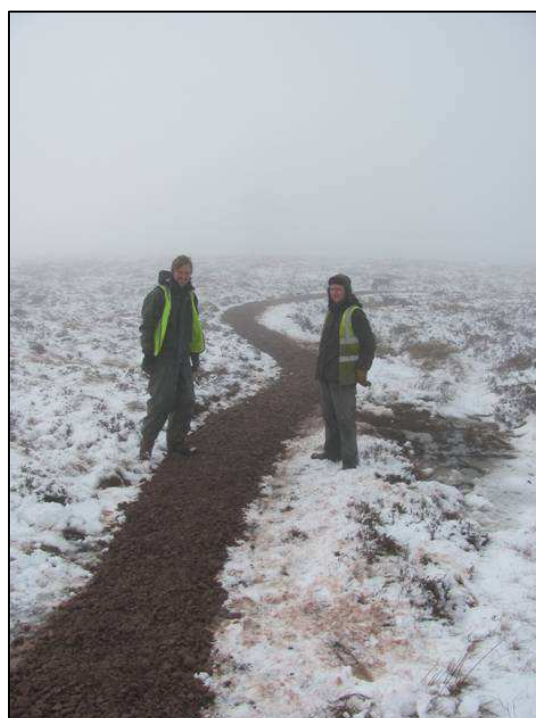
On the ground..in the air!

Mid and West Wales: Brecon Beacons

“The area is also important economically in terms of farming and tourism and whilst this brings important income to the area it also costs money to ensure that it is protected and maintained. The Black Mountains Upland Volunteers play an increasingly important role in maintaining upland paths in the area and they have started to undertake essential maintenance on paths across the area. Most years we undertake upland path repairs across the National Park to improve the surface but mainly to discourage walkers from trampling sensitive upland habitat in the surrounding area. Walkers can also do their bit by following the Countryside Code remaining on repaired paths and considering how they could contribute to maintenance of paths.”

Margaret Underwood, Member Champion for biodiversity for Brecon Beacons National Park Authority said: “Offa’s Dyke Path is internationally famous, people love walking it and that means many feet wearing away the path surface. It is very important that people can enjoy their walks and take in the wonderful views without damaging the special qualities of the place. This work offers us the opportunity to provide a high quality path that provides good walking and minimises damage to the rich biodiversity of the area. Our wardens will certainly have a job on their hands given the current weather conditions but I am confident they will be more than up to the task.”

The path lies between Hay on Wye and Pandy and is one of the most popular trails used by walkers who are visiting the area.



On the ground...

South Wales: Cardiff

A series of improvements were made across Cardiff to improve Access for All through the replacement of stiles with kissing gates and clearly way marking paths.

On Pentyrch footpath number 28, the installation of a board walk was carried out due to the ground conditions on the foot path being particularly muddy and subsequently eroding the surface of the foot path within a sensitive wild life habitat. The addition of the board walk has prevented further erosion on the footpath and directing walkers away from sensitive wildlife areas thus protecting habitat. The work was carried out by a group of volunteers over a number of weeks.



Monmouthshire

Volunteers can help save on bridge costs

Monmouthshire County Council is to consider using volunteers in a bid to save maintenance costs to the county's public rights of way. A report funded by a Welsh Government rights of way improvement grant identifies where volunteers can help with the repair and installation of Monmouthshire's 787 bridges. These are mainly on footpaths.

Principal Countryside Access Manger, Ruth Rourke said: "Volunteers helping with the repair and installation of small footbridges can save the authority potential contractor costs of over £36,000. We are now working on the report's recommendations to help develop short and medium term maintenance plans. Although the report was originally intended for internal use we are aware that there is a great deal of public interest - particularly from communities with bridge closures – so we are placing it on the council's website for the next month.

Multi benefit...

Most project delivered under the ROWIP Funding Programme benefit more than one user group, with projects that had a “general benefit to all users” and projects that were “multi benefit” (benefiting more than one user type) together accounted for 59% of the total value of projects and 46% of the total number of projects funded this year.

North Wales: Denbighshire

Tread Lightly Scheme

The ROWIP asks the Council to manage the network to be suitable for those legally able to use it and ensure its condition is sufficient. There have been occasions when the condition of those unsurfaced routes open to vehicles may deteriorate or other users or landowners disagree with such use. Often solutions to resolve this require information about level of use, but for which there is no reliable data to help assess the matter.



The only solution that has been possible was to undertake manual counts which can be both a burden on resources or expensive if using external contractors. The Lake District NP had had success by placing a new variety of remote battery powered counter that can be buried in the earth alongside a track for up to 8 months and uses electromagnetics and noise to evaluate passing items and can separately identify cycles motorcycles and 4x4 vehicles providing a time stamp of passing and will work if a group passes.

Recognising the value of the limited mileage of unsurfaced network to the vehicle users, Denbighshire wanted to work with vehicle users to help them contribute to the ongoing management of the route to ensure they remain open and in a reasonable condition for all users. In addition to being able to accurately count and analyse usage of unsurfaced roads the counters will provide other assistance to managing access. The Council has also experienced incidents where unauthorised use by vehicles on open country is arising which is impacting on both conservation or the enjoyment of access on foot to open country or other rights of way. In order to deal with the management of this problem the Police have indicated a need to be able to better identify hot spots and possibly predictable patterns of activity which the use of these counters will be able to support.

Multi benefit...

North Wales: Denbighshire

Triban Trail

The culmination of work undertaken under to make ways for horses and cyclists has resulted in the creation of a 3 day 150km plus trail from Llandegla, Ruthin to Llyn Brenig. The trail is an on-off road route which passes through the best landscapes of north east Wales. Sections of the trail can be used alternatively as three circular routes, Alwen-Brenig Circular, Moel Famau Circular (using a new permissive bridleway which is now complete) and the Llantysilio Mountain Circular. The work has resulted in the opening of Plas Norwy Bridleway, upgrade of a footpath to a bridleway at Llantysilio to link an existing bridleway to a road, completion of a new permissive bridleway at Moel Famau.



Mid/West Wales: Powys

Powys County Council and Shropshire County Council's Countryside Services completed a joint project to resurface a section of the popular recreational trail 'The Kerry Ridgeway'. The section of bridleway was resurfaced using stone from a local quarry and a further section of track was maintained and some drainage works undertaken.

The Kerry Ridgeway is an ancient path 15 miles long, journeying from Cider House Farm, near the village of Kerry to Bishops Castle in England. It holds a long tradition as a trade and drovers' route from Wales to the lowland English markets.

The route follows a ridge top overlooking Wales on the one side and England on the other. It never dips below 1000 ft above sea level, resulting in remarkable views in all directions, up to 70 miles on a clear day.

The ancient pathway forges a route through heather moors, woodlands and bilberry rich heaths and is available for walkers, pedal cyclists and horse riders.

Multi benefit...

Mid/West Wales:

Carmarthenshire: Byways and Bridleways programme was carried out in partnership with The British Horse Society, Carmarthen Riders and CCC Streetscene. The local riders group continue to work closely with the authority, providing expert knowledge, information and feedback on routes as well as match funding for improvement works. The partnership encourages best use of resources, targeting works in areas of most need and all parties are keen to continue to work together successfully.

As a result of the improvements over the last year Carmarthen Riders have pledged financial contributions towards match-funding for grant assisted programmes again for the coming year.

Pembrokeshire: The surface of a bridleway in St Dogmaels has been improved by Pembrokeshire Council to benefit walkers horseriders and cyclists. The route links to the coast.

Neath Port Talbot: carried out improvements for multi user routes, this included: Surface Improvement of Byway 10 and the development of a new programme of waymarking at Maesgwyn. Improvement at Edward Street, Alltwen, to provide multi user access. With additional projects included in the grant - F7 Blaenhonddan, F2 Port Talbot, F1 Llanguicke, F150 Llanguicke, F139 / 141 Llanguicke.

South Wales:

Vale of Glamorgan: Improvement of a restricted byway link into Cosmeston Lakes Country Park and Nature Reserve

Cardiff: There is a growing demand within the County Of Cardiff for the Green lanes to be maintained to a sufficient standard for them to be used for the purpose of leisure activities, especially by the equine community and rambling groups. The County boasts several Green Lanes and of late volunteers groups have been going out to re-establish the lanes to a sufficient standard for them to be used once again, this is an on going project which will take several years to complete and then continuous maintenance will need to follow.

Information and promotion...

Actions for improving information and promotion about linear access has been a consistently popular use of the funding over the lifetime of the programme and accounted for 9% of the overall spend in 2013-14. Here are some examples of the range of things delivered across Wales:



Bridgend: During the year the Rights of Way team prepared an advertorial for publication in the 'Around Town – Bridgend' magazine at the beginning of 2014. The purpose of the advert was to highlight all the work that the Council's Rights of Way team carries out and included information on the work that has been undertaken utilising the ROWIP funding. Photographs used in the advertorial show some of the work implemented as part of the RoWIP funding programme

Conwy: The Community Walking Project Officer has assisted a volunteer group to prepare and publish a series of walks programmes. The information relating to the groups work is available at www.conwy.gov.uk/conwywalks

Powys: The County Council's approach to raising awareness of works and opportunities for access....Officers have written a number of press releases through the year. However, not all have been picked up by the media. As well as the traditional press release, there has also been a lot of emphasis placed on social media this year. Countryside Services now have a twitter and facebook account. Officers try to post daily. Therefore information in being passed out to a wide audience regularly. All information that goes into the traditional press releases is posted on social media plus a lot more. Due to the numbers involved (728 followers on facebook and 1,684 on twitter) information posted here reaches a significant number of people. This is something that will be utilised even more in future years.

Visit our website at [Cynfor Sir Powys County Council: Countryside](http://www.cynfor.gov.uk)

Find us on www.facebook.com/powys.countryside

Follow us on <https://twitter.com/PowysCountry>

Information and promotion...

Merthyr Tydfil: Organised their annual walking and cycling event in aid of the Mayors appeal. This year's event featured cycling activities including a large pump track on site promoting the new downhill mountain bike centre at Gethin Woodland Park. The event consisted of a 20 mile bike ride from Brecon to Merthyr and a family event on the Taff Trail, followed by a family fun and information day with approx £900 raised for charity.

As part of work to develop and implement a programme to promote the Taff Trail, linking with the Visit Merthyr App, a leaflet promoting the Taff Trail in Merthyr Tydfil was designed and printed.



Cardiff: Outdoor Cardiff branding & website

Branding and Printed Publications: Outdoor Cardiff partnership is now using the one brand concept for all leaflets and publicity materials. The design concept has been used on several leaflets reprints and newly designed publications (e.g. Fforest Fawr Circular Walk; Healthy & Scenic Walks Packs).

Website: The website has also proved to be a great portal for outdoor information. Cardiff Council has been redesigning their website which is due to be launched in April and through this development it was agreed that publicity information from partners would be hosted on the Outdoor Cardiff website to reduce duplication across service areas.

Cardiff Walking Festival 2013: The Outdoor Cardiff partnership hosted the first annual Cardiff Walking Festival from the 4th-12th May 2013. The festival is intended to be an annual event as part of Cardiff's response to National Walking Month which occurs each May. Other focuses for walking during May include National Walk to School Week and National Walk to Work week.

Steering Group: The festival was led by Outdoor Cardiff partnership and involved several other departments and organisations (Leisure; Libraries; Ramblers Cymru; Let's Walk Cymru; Sustrans; Public Health; Tenovus; and further input from several other community groups).

Low use groups...

Some 34 projects using £203,711 of the funding were delivered meeting the WG requirements for the RFP in 2013/14 to deliver at least one improvement aimed at better meeting the needs of people with disabilities, Communities First areas, ethnic minorities or other groups who make a disproportionately low use of the countryside:

North Wales: Denbighshire

Work has been focused on extending existing works to remove all stiles around the town of Ruthin which has a good network of paths circling the town and providing access to the countryside but many older users, especially with dogs, have reported the stiles increasingly difficult to access as their agility decreases and reducing use. With the cooperation of the landowners the authority has been able to use the grant to provide and erect new kissing gate kits instead of stiles on farms around the town. In addition works to improve access on paths around the Loggerheads country park by the replacement of stiles with gaps or gates which will extend opportunities for visitors to take alternative routes enabling people to extend their visit and encouraging visits to villages and businesses nearby.

Mid/West Wales: Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire County Council opened and waymarked routes adjacent to urban fringe housing, some with significant social issues on the outskirts of Pembroke dock. The network of paths had become unusable, the project enabled a set of circular routes to be opened and clearly marked for people wishing to explore the area, a higher level of clearing waymarks and security was needed to ensure that users felt comfortable venturing into the countryside.

Low use groups...

Mid/West Wales: Pembrokeshire

PRESS RELEASE: FORTUNE SMILES ON PATH!

An historic riverside walk - reputed to have been the location of one of the last ever duels fought in Wales - has been given a new lease of life. Fortune's Frolic is named after a young local man named Samuel Fortune who is said to have taken part in a duel in the area over a young lady in 1799. Fortune's Frolic in Haverfordwest has been



resurfaced so that its waterway views – and historic ambience - can be enjoyed by all members of the community. The £11,000 project has been designed and carried out by Pembrokeshire County Council. It was funded through the Welsh Government's Right of Way Improvement Plan Funding Programme administered by Natural Resources Wales. To celebrate the new 400 metre stretch, members of the public joined council officers and members of the Pembrokeshire Access Group on the path last week. "We're very pleased that this walkway is now safely open to all," said Councillor Simon Hancock, Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Well-Being and Equalities. "Although it's close to the centre of town, it's a very beautiful stretch of the river – and also a very historic one! "The recent improvements, which included new benches, mean that it can now be appreciated by everyone." A spokesman for the Pembrokeshire Access Group said it welcomed the new addition to the rights of way network in the County. Counter situated at New mobility gate on route

"We're pleased that the path had been designed so that all members of the community, including disabled people, can enjoy this riverside walk."

It's hoped to extend the pathway further along the bank of the Upper Cleddau in the future.

Low use groups...

Mid/West Wales:

Carmarthenshire: The Newcastle Emlyn Riverside Walk was identified as being an important route within the community. It was impassable in places, with serious erosion from the river Teifi and no more than a dirt track. The opportunity was taken to match fund some ROWIP grant and obtain funding through the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007 – 2013 and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development which is funded by the Welsh Government and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development to install over 600m of newly surfaced path alongside the river together with seating and a feature walled entrance. This was part of Carmarthenshire's 'least restrictive access' programme which now completed, allows the route to be usable by the wider community all year around. It is promoted through the new area walks leaflet.



Pembrokeshire Coast National Park: Public footpath 5/13 at Carew is situated on the edge of the village linking directly to the picnic site and car park associated with Carew Castle and Tidal Mill. The public footpath forms a link into the wider countryside and is part of a promoted walk on the National Park Authority website. The public footpath had three stone step stiles of some antiquity along the route. These stone stiles were difficult to use and walkers were contacting the National Park Authority to complain that the stiles prevented them from undertaking the walk as they were so difficult to climb for less able walkers. The farm was also experiencing trespass by people trying to find an alternative route and experiencing trespass with dogs that were worrying his sheep. The ROWIP funding allowed the National Park Authority to remove one stile and replace it with a gate and bypass the other two stiles with gates. It also allowed a field edge section of public footpath to be fenced off from the adjacent field to prevent dogs roaming, allowing the farm to safely have lambing in that field. The reasonably level terrain and the fact that the route is now stile free has made it suitable for the less able walker as it junctions with a wheelchair suitable path at the tidal mill.

Low use groups...

South Wales: Bridgend

The Parc Slip Nature Reserve in Bridgend was in serious need of boardwalk replacement and making it more accessible for the wider community.

The existing boardwalk came to an abrupt end and where it rejoined the path it was extremely boggy. Volunteers at Parc Slip helped repair and extend the boardwalk creating a brand new pathway, a number of sections of route were resurfaced and kissing gates replaced stiles. Overall the route has been made more accessible.



Low use groups...

South Wales: Vale of Glamorgan

ROWIP funding assisted in delivery of Barry Heart Walk, which was provided in cooperation with Public Health partners and the British Heart Foundation. The premise of the route, which also constituted a coastal loop, was to produce a heart shaped walk.

Merthyr: installed picnic benches with wheelchair/pushchair access to extend provision for all.

Caerphilly: over the last 3 years a large proportion of their ROWIP budget has been used to implement a project for people with mobility problems. With a conscious effort made to change stiles for gates with landowners agreement and improve surfacing of pathways primarily in urban settings. These improvements have the added advantage of improving the network for other user types such as pushchair users or safe routes for school children.



Assisting Biodiversity...

There were a variety of projects that also assisted public understanding, or conservation, of local biodiversity. Some 43 ROWIP included a biodiversity element. Demonstrating the opportunities for access projects to deliver on other priorities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf: Undertook a project improving access to a site of importance for nature conservation/ CROW Access Land and managing the routes over this land for the benefit of biodiversity and informal enjoyment of the hillside. This site of around 15 hectares has 18 public footpaths running over it at a total length of 4.2km. The Graig and the Billy Wynt can be seen from far afield and is an incredibly popular site for walking and general enjoyment of the countryside



offering views around Llantrisant from its summit at the Billy Wynt, or old windmill. The Graig Llantrisant, is owned and maintained by the Llantrisant Town Trust. The area is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The Council has worked in partnership with the Llantrisant Town Trust, Llantrisant Community Council, NRW, Butterfly Conservation and PONT to restore grazing to the Graig.

This project is a real success and ROWIP funding has allowed the Council to further improve the site for biodiversity, and access as well as helping to guard against grass fires. The networks of paths have been widely cut back and where the paths bend, corners have been opened up along the paths. This has improved access for members of the public, provided safe passing places for people and cattle and encouraged the cattle to venture further onto the slopes to graze, where they are already making a notable impact on the densest bracken.

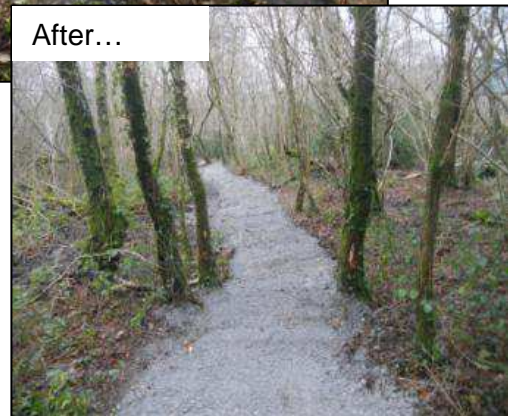
Although bracken dominates most of the Common, it grows over very species rich acid grassland with dog violet, bluebell, saw-wort, golden-rod, devil's-bit scabious and betony, with heather and bilberry on steeper ground, and path banks. The Graig has a species rich invertebrate fauna with small pearl bordered fritillary, grayling, purple hairstreak, dingy skipper butterflies, and these species will be encouraged to flourish in areas opened up by a cutting and grazing. It was really important to the Council to promote what they are doing to help biodiversity and access at the Graig and encourage more people to get out and about in the Countryside, as well as promoting responsible use of the Countryside, particularly when there are livestock on the paths. In conjunction with the Town Trust, and local graziers two interpretation panels were designed, produced and installed at the two main access points to the Graig.

Assisting Biodiversity...

Carmarthenshire : Ynys Dawela Nature Park was established on the site of an old coal mine and farmland and still contains flower rich meadows and woodland (secondary and ancient) that support a wide variety of wildlife. The principal aim of the works was to improve access within the Nature Park, utilising existing interpretation on site and primarily to create access to a particularly attractive area of secondary woodland.

This path was only accessible during bouts of fine weather, and after rain or during the winter it quickly became unusable. In order for the footpath to be accessible all year round, drainage works were required to reopen the old drainage channels along the edge of the wood to stop the rainwater running directly onto and down the line of the path.

The aim was to maintain an informal feel for the path so no edging has been used and surfacing materials kept to a minimum. The edges will soon grass over and the path will have as natural an appearance as possible. The improvement works have allowed for a circular route through and around the section of woodland of nature conservation and biodiversity interest as well as significantly improved drainage and surfacing on other paths nearby. Through improving access within the Nature Park along with existing interpretation on site, this will assist public understanding of and conservation of local biodiversity.



Cardiff: There are a series of interactive maps created by Strategic Planning Department and the Biodiversity Officers for each of the River Valleys (e.g. Ely River Valley, Taff River Valley and Rhymney River Valley) which are now uploaded onto the Nature & Countryside webpages.

Working with the Biodiversity Officer, a printable online 'Spot the Wildlife' worksheet has been designed and made available online for residents of Rumney and wider communities across Cardiff. This is the initial project set out to work with local communities first groups in order to install a Wildlife Explorer Trail which will be part of a series across Cardiff Parks.

Investing in Staff and People...

On the basis of information from the authorities funded under the Programme, during 2013/14 10.5 people were directly employed using the ROWIP Funding Programme compared with 12.5 staff the previous year.

Some of the posts that were included:

Conwy: Community Walking Project Officer

Flintshire: The member of staff was an apprentice who worked solely with the 2Rights of Way Inspectors and was involved in the identification of projects, design of some of the works required and monitoring progress of the work carried out for the ROWIP.

Blaenau Gwent & Rhondda Cynon Taff – Definitive Map Officers

Resource used for ROWIP Implementation	No of days spent on ROWIP works
Existing internal Local Authority staff (a combination of permanent and FTA)	2017
Contractors	1234.50
Volunteers	312
Consultants	323
Other staff related resources e.g administration	31

As well as delivering through own staff, consultants and contractors, whilst the reported figures of volunteer time have reduced, in bringing together this casework report the involvement and contribution that volunteers make to access improvement in Wales was evident. Together with examples included earlier in this report, some specific examples are highlighted overleaf...

Investing in Staff and People...

Monmouthshire:

A Countryside Service Volunteering Development Strategy was developed by consultants to allow Monmouthshire County Council to make better use of the willingness of people to volunteer to do work on public rights of way and countryside access maintenance, through focussing on exploring options for working with groups of volunteers. The proposals to move forward were presented to the Local Access Forum in February 2014. The full report is available at:

<https://monmouthshirecountryside.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/combined-report-21-2-14-ie.pdf>

The Council will now work towards implementing the proposals and move towards working with more community groups, although there will also be a need still for using individuals on certain projects.

Caerphilly: Volunteer Project over the last 2 years the ROWIP funding was used to help develop the Volunteer network. Monies have enabled Caerphilly County Borough Council to establish 2 working groups and several individuals. They have been able to work with the public in giving them training in manual handling of small hand tools, surveying techniques and also First Aid. The authority has been able to carry out maintenance to the network and also undertake surveys of their promoted path network, which have proved invaluable in times of austerity at the Local Authority.

Merthyr: worked in conjunction with two partner bodies, (Groundwork Trust Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taff and Princes Trust Wales) with landowners and users to instigate and implement a volunteer scheme of waymarking in the area.



Thank you to all the Local Authorities who have contributed to the compilation of this report, all photographs are provided by the respective authority.

Note that the information gathered here has come directly from the Local Authorities end of year reports for the last year of RFP.

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