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Place and Resources Overview Committee

Date: Thursday, 19 November 2026
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Meeting Room 1, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Members (Quorum: 3)
Ryan Hope (Chair), Andrew Starr (Vice-Chair), Piers Brown, Richard Crabb, Simon Gibson, Sherry Jespersen, David Northam, Roland Tarr, David Taylor and Val Pothecary

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic & Governance Services Meeting Contact 01305 224450 /antony.nash@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. If you would like to attend this meeting and have any specific requirements please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.

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Agenda

Item **Pages**

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES 5 - 18

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2026.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the

interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via MS Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. **The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below**. Further information read Public Participation - Dorset Council

All submissions must be emailed in full to
antony.nash@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
by 8.30am on 16 November 2026.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- a question may include a short pre-amble to set the context.
- It must be a single question and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda

and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to antony.nash@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on 16 November 2026.

Dorset Council Constitution – Procedure Rule 13

6. WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES 19 - 32

To receive the paper from the Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement.

7. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 33 - 206

To receive the paper from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace.

8. PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 207 - 222

To review the Place and Resources Overview Committee Work Programme.

To review the Cabinet Forward Plan.

9. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chair has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

10. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To move the exclusion of the press and the public for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph x of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered.

There are no exempt items scheduled for this meeting.

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Dorset Council

PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2026

Present: Cllrs Ryan Hope (Chair), Andrew Starr (Vice-Chair), Piers Brown, Simon Gibson, Val Pothecary and David Taylor

Present remotely: Cllrs Sherry Jespersen and David Northam

Apologies: Cllrs Richard Crabb and Roland Tarr

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):
Janet Moore (Service Manager for Environmental Protection), Graham Duggan (Head of Regulatory Services), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer) and John Miles (Democratic Services Officer)

20. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21. **Declarations of interest**

The Senior Democratic and Governance Officer reported that in respect of agenda item 6 'Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027', Councillors S Gibson, D Northam, S Jespersen and R Hope had indicated that they were dog owners and following advice from the Monitoring Officer, they had been granted a dispensation, to allow them to take part in discussion and voting (where applicable) on the item.

22. **Public Participation**

One question had been submitted from a member of the public. A copy of the question and the response provided at the meeting is set out at Appendix 1 to the minutes.

23. **Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions from councillors.

24. **Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027**

The committee considered a report of the Service Manager Environmental Protection, which summarised the findings from a Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order public consultation undertaken between May and August 2026.

Informed by the consultation, it proposed the new draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) 2027, which would replace the existing PSPO. The report outlined the proposed provisions for the Council area for a period of 3 years from 1 January 2027 until 31 December 2029. The committee was invited to consider the matters within the report, make any comments on the draft Order and recommend the draft Order to Cabinet at their meeting on 10 November 2026.

The Service Manager, Environmental Protection, provided a presentation, which focused on the key issues of consideration by officers, for councillors to consider during their deliberations. The process of establishing the Order was about balancing competing interests and included review of the consultation responses, consideration of public health issues, the welfare of dogs and their needs, establishing a balance between different groups of people, recognising the role of having consistency across locations, review of complaints data, enforcement issues and equality impacts. In addition, it was noted that a petition had been received which included around 7000 signatures. The petition needed to be distinguished from the consultation response due to the nature of the petition and the limited information on the people that had added signatures. It provided evidence of significant public interest rather than information on specific recommendations. Councillors had to consider the information to reach a view on the provisions of the draft Order.

Councillors considered general issues arising from the report and presentation and points were raised in the following areas:

- The review required consideration of a balance of needs between different groups
- It was noted that there was a mixed response to proposals relating to the fixed period of beach related summer restrictions and this could be given further consideration during the next review period
- It was reported that the issue of timings for beach restrictions had been included in the consultation and could therefore be considered at the meeting
- In response to a question, it was noted that reference to ‘formal public gardens’, generally referred to gardens owned by town and parish councils who would determine which ones would be enforced. The definition could be reviewed during the drafting of the Order and amended as necessary to make this clearer.

The committee discussed the provisions contained within the report in turn. The recommendation in respect of the provision is provided, including comments of the committee where relevant.

6.0 Proposed Provisions – lead length and direction to be on lead.

6.1 Maximum lead length of 2m where required (page 11) and the areas are listed in Schedule 3 of the draft Order. This received strong support at 83%.

6.2 Dogs on lead as directed by an authorised officer, maximum lead length 2m, (page 12). This received almost universal support at 96%.

Recommended for inclusion

7.0 Proposed Provisions - dogs on leads, generic locations

7.1 Municipal cemeteries, church, and graveyards, where dogs are permitted, (pages 13 & 14). Received almost universal support at 91%.

Recommended for inclusion

7.2 Public formal gardens, (pages 13 & 14). Received strong support at 81%.

Recommended for inclusion

7.3 Council owned allotments where permitted, (pages 13 &14). Received significant support at 78%.

Recommended for inclusion

Note: Swanage Town Council requested that restrictions relating to Town and Parish Council-owned allotments be considered for inclusion in the Order. However, this is not something that can be incorporated within the current process and will instead be reviewed as part of the development of the next Order.

7.4 Council owned car parks, (pages 13 & 14). Received almost universal support at 92%.

Recommended for inclusion

7.5 Within 5m of marked sports pitches, (pages 13 & 14). Received strong support at 83%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.0 Proposed Provisions - dogs on leads, specific locations, (pages 17, 18, 19, 20 of Consultation Report).

8.1 Rodwell Trail, Weymouth. A well-used urban cycle and footway connecting the outlying wards to Weymouth town. Received majority support at 57%. Supported by the Friends of Rodwell Trail Group.

Committee comments:
It was noted that the PSPO took precedence over any matter relating to the trail being a public right of way.

Recommended for inclusion

8.2 West Bay Harbour Walk and promenade. Received majority support at 66%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.3 Lyme Regis pathways etc. adjacent to the Front/Town Beach. Received majority support 65%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.4 Weymouth Esplanade. Received majority support 70%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.5 Swanage. The Parade and adjacent roads leading to the Beach. Received majority support 65%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.6 Studland. Access to Studland Beach from the car park, including the car park and staircases leading to the beach. Received majority support at 62%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.7 Studland Beach (known as Knoll Beach), Middle Beach, and Shell Beach, (1st May to 30th September). Received a small majority support at 52%.

Committee comments:
In response to a question, it was noted that the National Trust had previously been supportive of the restrictions due to the protection of the natural habitat.

Recommended for inclusion

8.8 Studland – Ferry Road, from Studland Beach car park to South Coast end marker, Shell Beach National Trust Car Park, and access routes. Received majority support at 62%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.9 Charmouth, Lower Sea Lane Car Parks and surrounding areas leading to the Beach. Received majority support 61%.

Recommended for inclusion

9.0 Proposed Provisions - dog exclusion areas, generic (pages 20, 21, 22 of Consultation Report).

9.1 Recreation areas, including skateboard parks, tennis and basketball courts, bowling and putting greens, enclosed play parks, sporting or recreational facilities and athletics tracks. Received majority support at 61%.

Recommended for inclusion

9.2 Marked Sports Pitches. Received majority support at 61%.

Recommended for inclusion

10.0 Proposed Provisions – beach restrictions (page 24 - maps are produced to support the Order by clearly delineating areas where restrictions apply).

10.1 Fixed period for summer restriction. Continuing the fixed period of 1 May to 30 September for relevant beach restrictions received the largest support at 44%. 35% respondents wanted a set period but with different dates or times; 20% wanted no restriction and 1% did not know.

Of those that did not support the current requirement, 47% wanted another period of restriction, chiefly reducing the period. For instance, Dorset Police supported limiting the period from the 1 May to the end of the school holidays. Others wanted dogs to be allowed on beaches in the morning and evening periods.

Opening beaches at either end of the daily exclusion period may be viewed favourably by some dog owners; however, it also presents a number of practical challenges. There is potential for an increased incidence of residual dog fouling and for dogs to remain on the beach beyond the permitted period, resulting in encroachment into the exclusion hours. In addition, several Town and Parish Councils undertake mechanical beach raking in the early morning, while organised exercise classes and swimming groups frequently use beaches during early morning and late evening periods. Retaining the current restriction also provides consistency with neighbouring authorities, as both Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and East Devon District Council prohibit dogs from beaches throughout the exclusion period.

Maintaining the existing arrangements therefore supports a clear and consistent approach for residents and visitors across Dorset and neighbouring Devon.

Committee comments:
The committee considered the provision and during discussion the following points were raised:

- It was noted that the phrasing of the consultation questions could have an impact on the responses received, with particular reference made to date timings for the restrictions e.g. restrictions running to the end of August or the end of September. This could be reviewed in advance of the next consultation
- In drafting the Order, officers had looked at the provisions in similar/coastal councils, including the neighbouring councils of BCP and East Devon. Having consistency with neighbouring councils assisted with messaging and enforcement
- A point was raised as to whether dogs should be allowed earlier access to beaches from the beginning of September, to allow wider use whilst the weather was favourable

- In response, officers noted that consistency was important and in addition, the views of the various parish and town councils had been considered. There was a balance to be made, and it was suggested that this could be looked at in preparation for the next review
- A view was expressed that the current restrictions should remain in place as they were consistent with neighbouring councils' restrictions and another view noted that children and families should be put first, in respect of their safe use of beaches.

A discussion was held regarding the potential extension of access to beaches to allow dogs to be walked during the evening and early morning periods. During the discussion, points were raised in the following areas:

- Allowing evening and early morning dog walking on beaches could allow families to enjoy the beaches together with their dogs, to support the economy through the potential extension of trading times for businesses in these locations and support the attraction of tourists
- A point was noted that allowing dog walking on beaches in the evening and early morning periods could assist with enforcement by creating a community of people who were invested in retaining the right to walk their dogs on the beach
- The PSPO was a tool which allowed the council to deal with any hot spots for dog fouling
- It was noted that children on beaches were vulnerable and that it was important to consider the potential health issues of extending dog access to beaches
- There needed to be consideration of the balance between potential economy, enforcement and health related impacts
- The timing for amending the provision was considered and whether this should be pursued now or form part of a future review and different views were expressed
- Clarification was sought as to whether a recommendation to change the timings related to the provision could be made and it was noted that as a question around timings had been included in the consultation, this could be considered
- A suggestion was made that a trial change in timings could be undertaken on a specified beach, and Weymouth beach was noted due to it having a regular cleaning schedule
- A point was made that councillors should be considering the issues in an impartial manner
- A number of councillors spoke about the potential for a positive economic impact of extending the hours for beach access for dog walking
- The Head of Regulatory Services noted that a potential option would be for the committee to continue with the recommendation as per the report but with a rider that officers investigate the option to run a trial for early morning or late evening access and/or a reduced restriction period to the end of August rather than September. A trial could run with due consultation to inform the next review in 3 years.

Discussions could be held with Weymouth Town Council about the potential for a trial.

Further to the discussion above it was proposed by R Hope seconded by D Taylor that dogs be allowed access to Weymouth beach between the hours of 1800 – 0600 and that if this was not agreed, a trial for this be considered to inform the next PSPO review.

The Service Manager Environmental Protection clarified that the consultation had included a question around having a daily exclusion period between 8.00am and 7.00pm and that dogs could be walked on beaches outside of those times.

It was noted that beach cleaning in Weymouth took place at 6.00am.

In response to a question, the Head of Regulatory Services noted that the committee would need to add a rider to the recommendation to state that it was subject to legal advice to ensure that there was scope within the consultation to amend the provision. R Hope and D Taylor as proposer and seconder of the recommendation confirmed that they were content to include this in the recommendation.

A point was raised as to whether Lyme Regis should be included in the recommendation, but it was noted that Lyme Regis Town Council were not in support of changing the restrictions.

R Hope confirmed the wording of the recommendation and added that dogs should be kept on lead during the time period specified. D Taylor, as seconder, was content with the addition to the recommendation. It was noted that this applied during the time that dogs were restricted (1 May to 30 September).

The committee confirmed that they were content to maintain restrictions on other beaches, as set out in the report.

It was proposed by R Hope seconded by D Taylor and agreed by the committee

To be included in the recommendation to be made to Cabinet:

Subject to legal advice with regard to the wording included in the consultation and confirmation that there is scope to amend the provision, dogs to be allowed access to Weymouth beach between the hours of 1800 – 0600 to allow evening and early morning dog walking on lead.

If this cannot be forwarded as a recommendation during this review, officers are requested to undertake a trial to inform the next consultation.

In respect of all other beaches included in this provision – Recommendation to maintain the current restriction.

11.0 Proposed Provisions - specific beach locations – all day dog exclusion from 1 May to 30 September

11.1 Swanage, Central Beach, (page 28). Received a small majority support at 53%. Supported by Swanage Town Council.

Recommended for inclusion

11.2 Lyme Regis, Front/Town Beach, summer restriction, (page 30). Received majority support at 57%. For some with limited mobility, the accessibility of neighbouring beaches and alternative areas to exercise a dog has been of concern in previous years. Monmouth Beach is largely a pebble beach and access is via gravel/ earth pathways and therefore challenging for those who are unsteady on their feet. However, Members are reminded that those with assistance dogs are not subject to the Front Town Beach restriction. Lyme Regis Town Council comments;

'We have accessibility matting on Monmouth Beach, which is placed at the high-water mark. There is level access from the car parks and chalets/caravans/beach huts directly onto the matting. The ramp down to East Beach is made of concrete and isn't any more slippery than any other surface when wet. The rocks on the beach will get slippery with algae but wouldn't be accessible for wheelchairs or those with mobility issues anyway.'

'We completely oppose suggestions to allow dogs on the beaches in the morning or evenings during the current summer exclusion, as the beaches start to get busy very early and remain busy well into the evening. The argument about access for those with mobility issues isn't a factor as far as we're concerned, as there are plenty of other open spaces in Lyme Regis where dogs can be exercised on or off the lead. Some examples include Middle Mill Fields, Spittles (the section accessed from Timber Hill) and the River Lym Walk.'

'Large sections of Slopes Farm are accessible and level, as are parts of Ware Cliff. Monmouth Beach is probably more accessible than the Front Beach as it is closer to the car parks and there is a level path along the top, with access directly from the car park.'

The issue of will be kept under review with Lyme Regis Town Council.

Recommended for inclusion

11.3 Lyme Regis, Front/Town Beach – maintain no winter restriction (page 31). Received majority support at 62%. Lyme Regis Town Council were supportive of reinstating the dog on lead restriction.

Maintain current arrangement, not recommended for inclusion.

11.4 Chideock, Seatown Beach (page 33). This is a long stretch of beach and responses were evenly divided with 49.7% wishing to remove the restriction and 49.3% wishing to retain the restriction, similar to the results of the 2023 consultation. The landowner, Wraxall Estate, made representation to

maintain the restriction. Residents who responded were more likely to support retention.

Committee comments:
It was noted that to maintain a consistent approach, the committee supported the officer recommendation.

Recommended for inclusion

11.5 West Bay - East Beach and West Beach (page 34). Received a slight preference for support at 53% for East Bay and 52% for West Bay. Again, residents who responded were more likely to support retention.

Committee comments:
It was noted that subject to tides, there was beach access outside of the designated area of the PSPO. In addition, the provision provided a tool for enforcement at the discretion of the dog wardens.

Recommended for Inclusion

11.6 Charmouth, West Beach (page 36). Received a small majority in support with 53% wishing to retain the restriction, slightly higher support than in the 2023 consultation.

Recommended for inclusion

11.8 Weymouth, Central Beach (pages 38- 40). Maintain current arrangements of all year-round dog off lead exercise area at the Pavilion end. Received a small majority of support at 53%.

For those who wanted it changed, just over half were in favour of enlarging the exercise area. Comments also included relocation further north along the beach, allowing dogs on the beach during the morning and evening periods and, at a more operational level, improving management and enforcement.

Weymouth Town Council did not submit a formal response to the consultation. Instead, councillors indicated that they wished to respond in their individual capacities. As a result, any comments received from town councillors have been considered as individual consultation responses. Only one response was received from a town councillor and this is summarised in Appendix A.

Committee comments:
The committee discussed the area covered by the provision with one view being that the all year round dog off lead exercise area at the Pavilion end of the beach area should be relocated due to town council events being held on the beach, making the beach very busy in the area and another view that the current area should be retained, with an acceptance that it may be more difficult to use at times. The Head of Regulatory Services reported that there were discussions taking place with Weymouth Town

Council regarding the location of the area and this may feature in the preparation for the next Order. On this basis it was agreed that the current arrangement should be maintained in line with the officer recommendation.

Recommended to maintain the current arrangement

11.9 Retain an exclusion area from the marked dog exercise area at the Pavilion end of Weymouth Beach to the Greenhill Groyne.
Received a small majority in support at 55%.

Recommended for inclusion

Having considered each provision, the committee returned to the recommendation set out at paragraph 2 of the report.

It was proposed by D Taylor seconded by S Gibson

Recommendation to Cabinet

That the draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027 be approved with the proposed provisions as per the report attached at Appendix 1 (paragraphs 6.1 through to 11.9) with the following amendment to the provision set out at paragraph 10 of the report:

10 Proposed Provisions – beach restrictions

Recommendation from Place and Resources Overview Committee to amend the current restriction in respect of Weymouth Beach

Subject to legal advice with regard to the wording included in the consultation and confirmation that there is scope to amend the provision, dogs to be allowed access to Weymouth beach between the hours of 1800 – 0600 to allow evening and early morning dog walking on lead.

If this cannot be forwarded as a recommendation during this review, officers are requested to undertake a trial to inform the next consultation.

In respect of all other beaches included in this provision – Recommended to maintain the current restriction.

The Chair thanked officers for their work in bringing the draft Order through the process and the enforcement team working on the ground. The Chair also thanked all that had taken the time to respond to the consultation.

25. **Place and Resources Overview Committee Work Programme**

The Place and Resources Overview Committee work programme was reviewed.

The Chair noted that he had attended a meeting with the Peer Review team this week, along with the other chairs of the overview and scrutiny committees. As part

of this, a comment had been made around ensuring a greater focus on policy development and having greater visibility of forthcoming reviews.

26. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

27. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Question from Richard Daw

The Lyme Regis Dog Owners Group is asking Dorset Council to allow dogs off lead on Lyme Regis Town Sandy Beach before 10am and after 6pm from May to September, while retaining the current unrestricted access from October to April.

Dorset Council has acknowledged that the adjacent beaches are unsuitable for many people with mobility issues. Yet the current restrictions leave disabled and less able-bodied dog owners without a safe, accessible alternative for five months of the year.

The impact extends beyond disability. Local families and visitors who want to enjoy the beach with their dogs are also excluded during the summer months. Shift workers, whose working hours may not fit within the permitted times, can also be affected.

For some people, their dog is their only companion, their reason to leave the house and an opportunity to socialise. For families, being unable to bring their dog can mean missing out on a shared beach visit.

Our campaign has provided date-stamped photographs showing how frequently the beach is empty during the hours we are requesting. A Freedom of Information response also confirms that no fines for dog fouling have been issued on Lyme Regis Beach in the past three years.

We are not asking for unrestricted summer access. We are asking for a reasonable compromise that accommodates other beach users while allowing more people to enjoy the beach.

My question is:

How has Dorset Council assessed the impact of the proposed restrictions on disabled and less able-bodied people, local families, visitors and shift workers, and what evidence demonstrates that refusing a limited early morning and evening compromise is necessary and proportionate, particularly when the Town Sandy Beach is the only safe and accessible beach available to some people?

Response provided by the Service Manager Environmental Protection

Thank you for your question.

The Council has considered the impact of the proposed restrictions on a range of affected groups through both the public consultation and the Equality Impact Assessment, appendix C.

The consultation identified accessibility, disability, mobility and inclusion raised by respondents in relation to Lyme Regis Front Beach. The consultation also demonstrated that different user groups have competing needs and expectations regarding beach access.

The Equality Impact Assessment specifically considered the needs of disabled people, including those who rely on assistance dogs and those with impaired mobility. Assistance dogs are exempt from the restrictions proposed within the Order, recognising their role as an auxiliary aid under the Equality Act and the importance of ensuring disabled people are able to access public spaces on an equal basis with others.

In relation to people with limited mobility, officers considered representations both supporting and challenging the suitability of alternative exercise locations. This evidence includes information from Lyme Regis Town Council identifying alternative locations such as Monmouth Beach, where accessibility matting and level access from nearby parking are available, together with other nearby locations where dogs may be exercised. Conversely, other respondents argued that these alternatives are not suitable for all users due to gradients, surface conditions and walking distances.

There is therefore evidence presenting both perspectives. Even where some individuals may experience inconvenience as a result of a restriction, members are entitled to conclude that the restriction remains justified and reasonable in order to prevent and/or reduce the detrimental effect, or the risk of the detrimental effect, that the Order is seeking to address. Members may also wish to consider whether a less restrictive alternative would achieve the same outcome with comparable certainty and enforceability. The issue of accessibility will be kept under review during the period of the new Order.

The consultation findings, which included responses from residents, visitors and businesses showed that maintaining the dog exclusion zone during the spring/ summer period at Front Town beach received a majority 57% support.

With regard to the suggestion of early morning and evening access, officers considered this alongside other alternatives proposed during the consultation. The recommendation to retain the existing arrangements reflects officers' view that, in the absence of a clearly supported alternative, the current restriction remains the clearest, most consistent and most enforceable approach.

Members will determine whether that balance remains appropriate, and the weight given to the differing views expressed during consultation is proportionate.

Duration of meeting: 3.00 - 4.54 pm

Chairman

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Place and Resources Overview committee
19 November 2026
Working with communities
For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr M Bell, Public Health, Prevention & Communities

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:
S Crowe - Executive Director, Housing, Prevention and Communities

Report author and job title: Jen Lowis, Head of Communications
Email: Jennifer.lowis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. **Executive summary**

1.1 This report updates members on the programme of work to redesign how the council works with communities and to strengthen our place-based working across Dorset. Since July 2026, Community Conversations have been undertaken across 14 geographic clusters with organisations and individuals that represent and work within those communities, including town and parish councils, voluntary and community organisations, health partners, ward councillors and other local stakeholders.

1.2 The Community Conversations programme is informing the development of a more locally responsive approach to working with communities. The intended outcomes are to:

- enable decisions to be taken as locally as possible, with communities having greater influence over the issues that matter to them
- improve outcomes for residents through a stronger understanding of local needs and more joined-up services, support and partnerships
- strengthen the resilience and sustainability of both Dorset Council and local communities by supporting prevention, building community capacity and reducing demand on statutory services over time.

1.3 The conversations have explored how decision-making, services and partnerships can be shaped more effectively around local places. Consideration has

been given to the principle of ‘double devolution’: this is the transfer of powers, services, assets or decision-making from a principal local authority (i.e. Dorset Council) to town and parish councils or community organisations, so decisions are made closer to local people.

Alongside this external engagement, the council has also undertaken internal analysis of the provision of its own locality services, community hubs, use of local data, and leadership arrangements to better understand the effectiveness of current arrangements for working with communities.

1.4 This report outlines the next phase of development: local pilots to develop and test neighbourhood governance models and opportunities for double devolution. It summarises the main themes emerging from the Community Conversations and the internal work that will inform this next phase.

1.5 This work supports delivery of the Council Plan priority of "Communities for All", including commitments on neighbourhood governance, double devolution, prevention and partnership working.

1.6 National policy is increasingly focused on devolving decision-making and strengthening neighbourhood governance. The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 places new expectations on councils to establish effective neighbourhood governance arrangements. The council is also preparing for further reforms anticipated through the Government's forthcoming Rewiring the State White Paper, which is expected to promote greater devolution, stronger place-based leadership and increased local accountability.

2. Recommendation(s)

At this stage, members are being asked to review emerging findings and provide feedback, rather than approve a final model for neighbourhood governance or double devolution. Proposals will return to Place and Resources Overview in March 2027 and to Cabinet in May 2027.

2.1 Members of Place and Resources Overview committee are asked to:

a) review the findings emerging from the Community Conversations programme and related work;

b) consider the implications for how Dorset Council works with communities and partners in future, particularly the balance between local flexibility and a coordinated council approach, the support partners need to take on greater responsibility, and clearer routes for local influence; and

c) provide feedback to inform the next phase of development and implementation, following which proposals will be brought back to Place and Resources Overview in March 2027 and to Cabinet in May 2027.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 In March 2026, Cabinet agreed that members would receive regular progress reports on the development of neighbourhood governance and community-led working arrangements. Reporting would be through an Executive Advisory Panel, established for this purpose, and through Place and Resources Overview Committee.

3.2 The Community Conversations and internal work have surfaced clear opportunities for new ways of working with communities which we now need to act on, developing options through co-production with partners and a ‘test and learn’ approach.

4. Community Conversations

4.1 Community Conversations are a programme of structured discussions taking place across 14 geographic clusters covering the Dorset Council area between July and December 2026.

4.2 The conversations bring together town and parish councils, voluntary and community organisations, health and other partners, community leaders, Dorset Council ward members and council officers to explore how local services, decision-making and partnerships can better reflect the needs of individual places.

At the time of publication of this report, we have held all 14 round one conversations, and 6 of the 14 round two conversations across the clusters (see Appendix A). The first round of conversations has been attended by approximately 618 individuals and 364 organisations.

4.3 The conversations are intended to inform:

- future neighbourhood governance arrangements
- opportunities for double devolution
- stronger partnership working across local communities
- Dorset Council's development of a more integrated, locality-based approach to service delivery.

4.4 Two Community Conversations sessions are held within each cluster. The first explores local strengths, challenges and priorities. The second focuses on opportunities, ideas and future ways of working.

4.5 An Executive Advisory Panel with cross-party representation has supported and overseen the programme throughout its development.

4.6 What we have heard from community partners through the Community Conversations:

These themes are an interim assessment of the conversations held so far, not the final analysis of all 14 clusters. They describe the views expressed by participants and do not, on their own, establish how widely those views are shared across Dorset's communities. The themes will be reviewed alongside the remaining conversations when the programme concludes in early December 2026.

1. **Strong appetite for collaboration**
   Local partners, including town and parish councils, community and voluntary organisations, elected members, health partners and other stakeholders, have expressed a strong desire to work together to address local challenges and opportunities. Participants consistently highlighted the value of combining the strengths, expertise and resources of different organisations around shared local priorities.

   There is recognition that in some circumstances local partners may be better placed than Dorset Council to lead delivery, drawing on their local knowledge, relationships and community presence. This points towards a future role for Dorset Council that places greater emphasis on convening, enabling and supporting local action, while recognising, valuing and investing in the expertise that exists within communities. Effective partnership working will require relationships based on mutual trust, shared responsibility and a willingness to let leadership sit with the organisations best placed to achieve outcomes.

2. **Local flexibility is essential**
   There is strong support for local decision-making, but partners consistently emphasise that different communities require different solutions and levels of support, which should be established through use of local data, insight and listening to local voices.

3. **Partnership alongside devolution**
   Partners are interested in taking on greater responsibility where appropriate, but emphasise that successful devolution of assets, services or decision-making must be supported by capacity-building, funding and ongoing professional support. Organisations want to be treated as equal partners by Dorset Council (with parity of esteem, “working with, not doing to”), and would like to adopt a positive, proactive, strengths-based approach to working together.

4. **Better access and influence**
   Partners want clearer routes into decision-making and more evidence that local insight influences outcomes. Participants consistently emphasised the importance of stronger feedback loops, so that communities can understand how their views have been considered, what decisions have been taken and what action has resulted. Future arrangements should

therefore support both greater local influence and clearer communication about how community feedback has informed decision-making and service delivery.

5. **Strong support for place-based working**
   There is strong support for organising services and partnerships around communities rather than organisational boundaries, with greater integration between public services, voluntary organisations and local councils. There are strong calls for simpler ways to engage with Dorset Council through trusted local contacts and better two-way communication. Greater clarity is needed around the roles of different local partners and how we can best work together.

6. **Willingness to test and learn**
   Participants are open to piloting different approaches and helping shape future models through practical experimentation and learning.

4.7 What we have learnt about Dorset Council

4.7.1 Service mapping findings

Work has been undertaken to map out and analyse all the points at which Dorset Council services interact with local communities.

The review found less evidence of a consistent place-based approach across the organisation, despite many examples of strong work with individual residents and families and pockets of effective cross-service collaboration. This distinction highlights the difference between effective individual service interactions and coordinated working around a place.

Services are often experienced by communities as separate interactions rather than as part of a coordinated partnership. There is therefore an opportunity to strengthen community engagement, service integration and co-production, while making better use of local intelligence and insight.

4.7.2 Hubs findings

Work has been undertaken to map out all physical locations within communities from which council services are delivered.

Dorset Council's community-facing facilities do not always function as a connected local network. The council operates a significant range of these assets, including libraries, family hubs, leisure centres and day services.

Opportunities exist to improve coordination, navigation and joint working between council services, community organisations and local facilities, helping improve resident experience and maximise value from existing assets.

4.7.3 Data findings

Work has brought together locality data, community assets and existing service footprints within Dorset Explorer, creating a stronger evidence base for future neighbourhood planning and decision-making.

4.8 Emerging assessment

Participants in Community Conversations consistently expressed a desire for greater influence over decisions affecting their local areas and a stronger role in shaping solutions to local challenges. Taken alongside feedback from partners and emerging learning from the organisation, this evidence suggests a significant opportunity to strengthen place-based working across Dorset.

The findings suggest that a more place-based approach would require a shift in relationships, behaviours and ways of working. Future success is likely to depend on this shift as well as changes to structures, governance or resource allocation. For Dorset Council, this would mean moving beyond being solely a service provider towards a role that increasingly convenes, enables and works alongside communities and partners to achieve shared outcomes.

The evidence points to local capacity, commitment and leadership across Dorset's towns, parishes, voluntary and community organisations and public sector partners. This potential does not, by itself, establish readiness to take on additional responsibilities. Harnessing it effectively will require greater trust, clearer routes for local influence, and a willingness to share responsibility and decision-making where appropriate. As partners have emphasised, taking on greater responsibility also requires capacity-building, funding and ongoing professional support.

A more locally responsive and collaborative model has the potential to improve outcomes for residents, strengthen community resilience and make better use of collective resources across the Dorset system. The next phase will test this potential; the scale and form of future changes will depend on further development and evidence from practical testing.

The intended outcomes set out in the Executive Summary provide the framework against which future pilots and any subsequent implementation will be assessed.

4.9 Next steps

The Community Conversations programme will conclude in early December 2026, after which the findings from all 14 geographic clusters will be analysed and used to develop the council's future approach to community-led and

place-based working.

We will adopt an evidence-led implementation approach, using co-production with community partners. This will involve:

- Moving from discussion to practical testing and local pilots, developed with community partners through co-design.
- Gathering evidence before scaling solutions.
- Establishing clear measures of success and learning objectives for each pilot, covering the locally identified need, resident experience, local influence over decisions, partnership working and resource implications.

Specifically, we plan to run:

- **Local pilots:** We will work with willing partners in each cluster to respond to locally identified needs through a series of local pilot projects. Partners will help design and deliver the projects through co-design. These may relate to issues such as community transport, public realm improvements and the provision of local information and advice.

- **Pan-Dorset Council area pilots**: From January, we will carry out a small number of pilots to test different neighbourhood governance and double devolution arrangements. These pilots will support the development of a new model for working with communities.

- **Continue internal analysis and mapping**, including the design of options for re-modelling the council's locality presence, and voluntary sector commissioning and funding.

- **Identify and secure an independent evaluation partner** to inform decisions on wider implementation of this programme. The partner will assess what the pilots demonstrate about resident experience, local influence, partnership working, risks and resource implications.

Dorset Council ward councillors will continue to play a central role in shaping the next phase of this work. Through the pilots and co-production activity, members will help design future neighbourhood governance arrangements, ensuring that local democratic accountability remains a key feature of any model developed. This will include consideration of the specific roles and responsibilities of ward councillors within future arrangements.

Progress on this work will continue to be shared and shaped with the Executive Advisory Panel. The outcomes will inform recommendations on the

future model for working with communities across Dorset, first to Place and Resources Overview in March 2027 and then to Cabinet in May 2027.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 No future model has yet been selected. Continuing with current arrangements for working with communities has been considered and rejected because the extensive findings and feedback indicate significant opportunities to meet communities' needs more effectively through a different model of partnership and place-based working. This establishes the case for developing alternatives, not for adopting a particular model. Options will be developed through co-production and tested before recommendations are brought forward.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 requires that unitary councils must establish effective neighbourhood governance structures with their communities. We are awaiting further guidance in the forthcoming Rewiring the State White Paper.

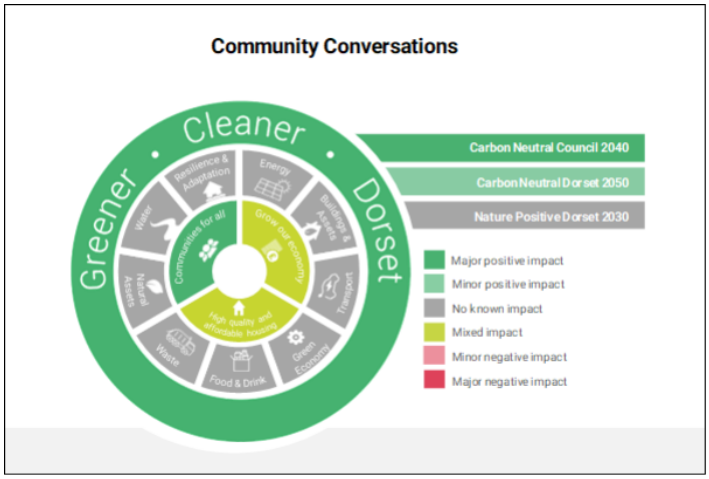
7. Financial implications

7.1 Community Conversations is supported via £0.5m funding secured through Cabinet for communities transformation in October 2025 and £0.3m one-off funding in 2026/27 from contingency, totalling £0.8m.

7.2 The programme aims to support the council's ambitions to achieve long-term financial sustainability. Forthcoming design options will be costed, and those costings will inform the council's medium-term financial plan in due course. The financial implications of a future model will therefore depend on the options developed and tested; this report does not establish the savings that will be achieved.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1



9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Community empowerment and co-production have the potential to improve outcomes across service areas, including public health, housing and planning. Potential benefits include improvements in health and wellbeing, community resilience, public trust and service effectiveness, as well as cost savings. These are potential benefits of the approach, not demonstrated outcomes of Dorset's Community Conversations programme. Evaluation of the next phase will be important in establishing which benefits are achieved locally.

Community Conversations build on strong prevention work delivered to date, through a one-council approach. Insights and information gathered through these conversations will be important in helping to shape place-based working across other programmes, including through the Health and Wellbeing Board's strategy, and the Neighbourhood Health Programme being delivered by the NHS and partners in Dorset.

Findings will also inform our future design as a prevention-focused council, building on the work begun by Children's Services, Adults and Housing. Conversations will support how we bring together separate initiatives like Thriving Communities, Day Opportunities and Family hubs towards a more joined up service in neighbourhoods.

10. Other implications

10.1 N/A

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

12.1 This work is intended to improve outcomes for all residents, including people with protected characteristics. It aims to strengthen how Dorset Council listens to, understands and responds to the needs of different communities. A more place-based approach has the potential to create greater opportunities to engage with underrepresented groups, amplify local voices and ensure that services and decision-making are informed by a broader range of lived experiences.

Through stronger community relationships, improved local insight and ongoing co-production with residents and partners, this programme has the potential to support more inclusive service design and help reduce inequalities across Dorset. Equalities impacts will continue to be considered as proposals are developed and tested through the next phase of implementation.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix A shows a map of the 14 clusters across the Dorset Council area, along with a list of the places in each cluster.

14. Background papers

14.1 None

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance & Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s)

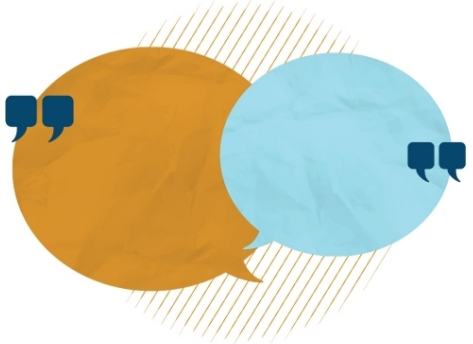


Community Conversations 2026

Dorset Council

Community Conversation

Areas that will be bought together for each event



1. Chesil Bank, Chickerell, Portland
Weymouth (2 events for this area, one for Weymouth separately)

2. Char Valley, Catherston Leweston, Upper Marshwood, Thorncombe, Broadwindsor, Mosterton, South Perrot, Chedington, Beaminster, Mapperton, Corscombe, Halstock and District, Netherbury, Loders, Askerswell, Powerstock and North Poorton, Hooke, Rampisham,Toller, Porcorum Wraxall, Frome Valley, The Comptons, Toller and Wynford Eagle, Frome Vauchurch, Maiden Newton

3. Farnham, Chettle, Tarrant Gunville, Tarrant Hinton, Tarrant Monkton and Tarrant Launceston, South Tarrant Valley, Langton Long Blandford, Pimperne, Stourpaine, Hamford, Child Okeford, Durweston, Bryanston, Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary, Charlton, Marshall, Spetisbury, Winterborne Clenston, Winterborne Stickland, Winterborne Houghton, Turnworth, Sixpenny Handley, Pentridge, Vale of Allen

4. Lyme Regis, Charmouth,Chideock, Symondsbury, Bridport, Burton Bradstock, Shipton Gorge, Chilcombe, Puncknowle and Swyre, Litton Cheney, Long Bredy and, Kingston Russel, Little Bredy,

5. Winterbourne Abbas and Winterborne Steepleton, Winterborne St. Martin, Dorchester, Frampton, Bradford Peverell, Stratton, Charminster, Dewlish, Cheselbourne, Piddle Valley, Melcombe Horsey, Hilton, Cerne Valley, Sydling St. Nicholas, Minterne Magna, Buckland Newton

6. St. Leonards and St. Ives, Verwood, Cranborne and Edmondsham, Alderholt, Knowlton

7. Ferndown, West Moors, West Parley

8. Shapwick, Sturminster Marshall, Corfe Mullen, Wimborne, Colehill, Holt, Pamphill

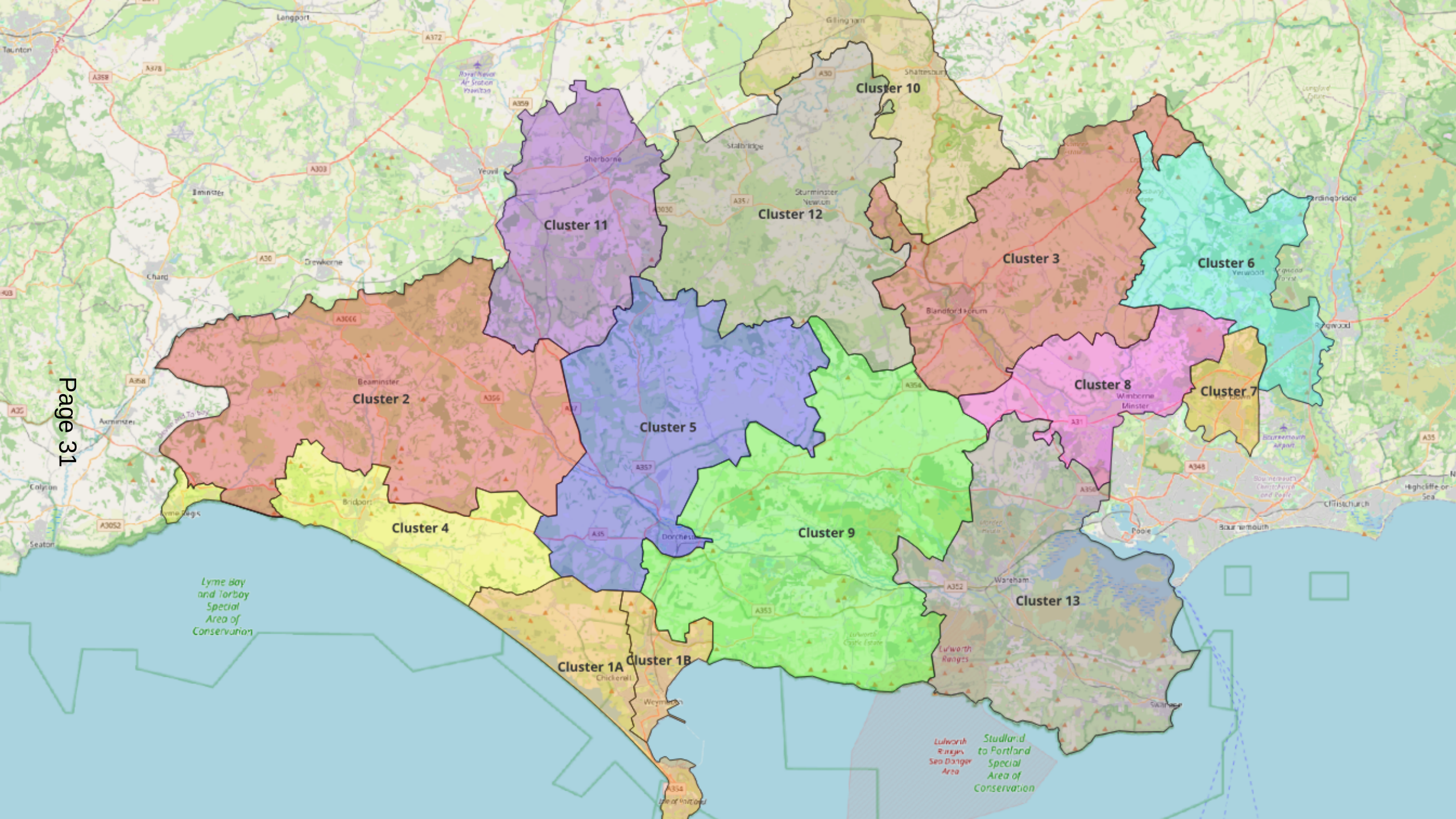
9. Winterborne Farringdon, Broadmayne, Knightsford, Crossways, Warmwell,Osmington, Poxwell, Owermoigne, Chaldon Herring, Winfrith Newburgh, West Lulworth, East Lulworth,Coombe Keynes, Wool, Affpuddle and Turnerspuddle, Bere Regis, Bloxworth, Winterborne Zelston, Lower Winterborne, Winterborne Whitechurch, Milton Abbas, Milborne St Andrew, Stinsford, Puddletown, Moreton

10. Iwerne Courtney and Stepleton, Iwerne Minster, Ashmore, Sutton Waldron, Fontmell Magna, Compton Abbas, Melbury Abbas and Cann, Shaftesbury, Motcombe, Gillingham, Silton, Bourton, Buckhorn and Kington Magna

11. High Stoy, Haydon, North Wootton,Yeohead and Castleton, Sherborne, Queen Thorne, Bradford Abbas, Thornhackett, Clifton Maybank, Yetminster and Ryme, Intrinseca, Melbury Osmond, Chetnole and Stockwood, Cam Vale, Leigh, Melbury Bubb, Evershot, Melbury, Sampford, Folke

12. Manston and Hammoon, The Orchards and Magaret Marsh, Shillingstone, Okeford Fitzpaine, Ibberton, Woolland, Stoke Wake, Hazelbury Bryan, Fifehead Neville, Mappowder, Pulham, Lydlinch, Sturminster Newton, Hinton St Mary, Fifehead Magdalen, Marnhull, Stalbridge, Stourton Caundle, Purse Caundle, Caundle Marsh, Bishop's Caundle, Holwell, Glanvilles Wootton, The Stours

13. Swanage, Langton Matravers, Worth Matravers, Corfe Castle, Studland, Kimmeridge, Steeple with Tyneham, East Stoke, East Holme, Church Knowle, Arne, Wareham, Wareham St. Martin, Morden, Lytchett Matravers, Lytchett Minster and Upton


Cluster 1A
Cluster 1B
Cluster 2
Cluster 3
Cluster 4
Cluster 5
Cluster 6
Cluster 7
Cluster 8
Cluster 9
Cluster 10
Cluster 11
Cluster 12
Cluster 13
Lyme Bay and Torbay Special Area of Conservation
Studland to Portland Special Area of Conservation
Lulworth Ranges Sea Danger Area
Taunton
Langport
Yeovil
Sherborne
Ilminster
Chard
Crewkerne
Axminster
Colyton
Seaton
Lyme Regis
Bridport
Beaminster
Dorchester
Stalbridge
Sturminster Newton
Shaftesbury
Gillingham
Blandford Forum
Wimborne Minster
Ringwood
Verwood
Christchurch
Bournemouth
Poole
Wareham
Swanage
Chickerell
Weymouth
Lulworth Castle Estate
Lulworth Ranges
Bournemouth Airport
Highcliffe-on-Sea

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Place and Resources Overview Committee

19 November 2026

Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026-2036

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:
Cllr J Jeanes, Place Services

Local Councillor(s): All Dorset Council Members

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton - Executive Director, Economy & Environment

Report author and job title: Giles Nicholson, Service Manager for Environment and Greenspace

Email: giles.nicholson@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1.1 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026-2036 sets out Dorset Council's strategic approach to managing, maintaining and improving Dorset's 2,855-mile public rights of way network over the next ten years. Dorset Council has a statutory duty as Highway Authority to prepare and review a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The network plays a significant role in supporting active travel, public health, economic growth, access to nature, climate resilience and community wellbeing.

The plan establishes a vision to make Dorset one of the nation's leading counties for walking, cycling, horse riding and access to nature. It contains ten policy areas covering maintenance, accessibility, sustainable transport, economic development, community involvement, planning and development, health and wellbeing, landowner engagement and management of the Definitive Map and Statement.

The plan has been developed following extensive stakeholder and public consultation and aligns with Dorset Council priorities relating to communities, economic growth, housing and responding to the climate and ecological emergency.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 That Place and Resources Overview committee recommend that Cabinet:

1. Approves the Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026-2036.
2. Authorises officers to implement the policies and actions contained within the plan.
3. Notes that delivery will be subject to the availability of future funding, external grants and developer contributions.
4. Agrees that progress and performance be monitored through periodic review and reporting.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 The Council has a statutory obligation under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Adoption of the plan provides a clear strategic framework for investment, partnership working and service delivery over the next decade, ensuring the network supports wider council priorities including health improvement, sustainable transport, economic growth, biodiversity and climate resilience.

4. The report

Dorset Council manages approximately 2,855 miles (4,594 km) of public rights of way, together with trailways, promoted routes, access land, country parks and wider greenspace assets. The ROWIP establishes a strategic framework for improving this network between 2026 and 2036.

The plan identifies four strategic themes:

- A high-quality network
- Accessible and inclusive access
- Supporting communities and the economy
- Connecting with wider strategic priorities including transport, health and climate action

The plan contains ten policy areas:

1. Maintaining and improving the existing network.
2. Raising awareness of public rights of way.
3. Improving accessibility.
4. Empowering communities.
5. Supporting the economy.
6. Promoting responsible use and supporting landowners.
7. Maximising benefits from development and planning.
8. Improving health and wellbeing.
9. Supporting sustainable transport and active travel.
10. Maintaining the Definitive Map and Statement.

The implementation plan identifies significant infrastructure investment opportunities, including improvements to trailways, accessible routes, bridleway infrastructure, surfacing, active travel connectivity and the South West Coast Path.

The ROWIP reflects the results and themes of the public consultation.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Do nothing was considered but rejected because the Council would fail to meet its statutory duties under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and would lack a strategic framework for future investment and management of the network. Maintaining the existing ROWIP without update was also rejected as it would not reflect current legislation, user expectations, stakeholder feedback or Council priorities.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local highway authorities to prepare and review Rights of Way Improvement Plans. Adoption of the ROWIP supports Dorset Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities as Highway Authority. The plan also supports the Council's duties under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 regarding the maintenance of the Definitive Map and Statement and aligns with responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010

7. Financial implications

7.1The ROWIP is a strategic plan and does not itself commit the Council to specific expenditure beyond approved budgets. Delivery will be funded through a combination of Local Transport Plan funding, Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy contributions, DEFRA and Natural England programmes, external grants and partnership funding. The plan anticipates in excess of £2 million investment during the first five years, together with annual Local Transport Plan funding exceeding £300,000 per annum and additional external funding opportunities.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1The ROWIP supports Dorset Council's response to the climate and ecological emergency by encouraging sustainable travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles, improving access to green infrastructure and promoting responsible use of the natural environment. The plan also supports biodiversity, landscape enhancement and access to nature through improved connectivity to greenspaces, trailways, access land and the coast.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The plan makes a significant contribution to improving public health and wellbeing by increasing opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding and access to nature. It aligns with Public Health Dorset's "Movement for Movement" programme and supports preventative health measures through increased physical activity, social connection and improved access to green spaces.

10. Other implications

10.1 The ROWIP has been widely consulted within DC and is relevant to Dorset strategic objectives and many of Dorset wider policies and plans. The ROWIP supports Dorset's visitor economy by promoting walking, cycling and outdoor recreation. It contributes to sustainable tourism, rural economic growth and improved community resilience. It also supports delivery of wider transport, planning, public health and economic development strategies. Examples of these are listed below:

- Dorset Council Plan

- Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)
- Dorset Local Plan (emerging)
- Dorset Destination Management Plan (LVEP)
- Movement for Movement (Physical Activity Strategy)
- Dorset Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy
- Green Infrastructure Strategy and Open Space Strategies
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)
- Dorset Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Dorset Housing Strategy
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Dorset Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

11. Risk implications: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as: Low

11.1 **Current Risk:** Medium

Residual Risk: Low

Failure to adopt and implement an updated ROWIP could result in:

- Failure to meet statutory duties.
- Missed external funding opportunities.
- Reduced ability to influence planning and development outcomes.
- Reduced network accessibility and condition.
- Adverse impacts on health, wellbeing and sustainable transport objectives.

These risks will be mitigated through adoption of the plan, partnership working, regular review and the pursuit of external funding opportunities.

12. Equalities

12.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The plan seeks to improve accessibility for all users by reducing barriers, increasing provision of accessible routes, replacing stiles with more accessible infrastructure where appropriate and improving information for people with varying needs and abilities. The plan supports the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1 - Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2026-2036

Appendix 2 - Consultation Findings and Strategic Responses

Appendix 3 - Rights of Way Implementation Plan

14. Background papers

14.1

- **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**

Places a statutory duty on highway authorities to assess the extent to which local rights of way meet current and future public needs and to prepare and review a Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**

Provides the legal framework for the recording and protection of Public Rights of Way through the Definitive Map and Statement and supports the protection of wildlife and habitats associated with the network.

- **Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2026-2036 Draft Consultation Document**

Consultation responses and evidence gathered during the preparation of this Plan have helped shape the priorities, objectives and actions contained within the final ROWIP.

- **Dorset Council Plan**

The ROWIP contributes to Dorset Council's ambitions for thriving communities, a healthy environment, improved health and wellbeing, sustainable growth and tackling climate change through increased access to nature, recreation and active travel opportunities.

- **Dorset Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)**

The rights of way network forms an important component of Dorset's wider transport network. The ROWIP supports LTP4 objectives by promoting walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding, improving connectivity between communities, services and public transport, and reducing reliance on private car travel. Strategic trailways, greenways and multi-user routes can help deliver active travel, sustainable transport and carbon reduction objectives.

- **Dorset Physical Activity Strategy ("Movement for Movement")**

The rights of way network provides free and accessible opportunities for people to be physically active. The ROWIP supports the strategy's aim of helping more residents become active through everyday movement, recreation and access to natural environments.

Dorset Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy

The ROWIP contributes towards climate and ecological objectives by encouraging sustainable travel, improving access to nature, supporting biodiversity enhancement and increasing the resilience of the access network to the impacts of climate change.

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance & Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s)

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Dorset's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026 to 2036

DRAFT



Dorset Council

Working together | ambitious for **Dorset**

Foreword

As Leader of Dorset Council, I am proud to introduce Dorset's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

This plan is not just about paths and trails across Dorset's countryside - it is about connecting people, places and opportunities across our county. Dorset's public rights of way network is a vital asset that underpins many of our strategic priorities, from strong communities to economic growth and responding to the climate and nature emergencies.

The ROWIP helps ensure that our network of footpaths, bridleways and byways meets the needs of residents and visitors now and in the future. It supports active travel, reducing reliance on cars and contributing to our climate goals, while promoting healthier lifestyles by enabling walking, cycling and riding for both recreation and everyday journeys. It strengthens our local economy by improving access to the countryside, supporting tourism and benefiting rural businesses. It also plays a key role in community resilience and wellbeing, providing safe and inclusive routes for people of all abilities.

By aligning with Dorset Council's objectives - tackling climate change, supporting communities and enabling sustainable economic development, the ROWIP is a strategic investment in our county's future. It reflects our ambition to make Dorset a place where everyone can enjoy and benefit from our outstanding landscapes, heritage and natural environment; while ensuring these benefits are accessible to all and improvements are planned for the long term.

Together with partners, stakeholders and volunteers, we will deliver a rights of way network that is modern, inclusive and fit for purpose - helping Dorset to thrive socially, economically and environmentally.

Cllr Nick Ireland

Leader of Dorset Council

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1: Executive Summary

Dorset's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026 to 2036 sets out how Dorset Council will develop a modern, accessible and better-connected network of public rights of way that supports everyday walking, cycling and access to natural green and blue spaces. This new ROWIP replaces the earlier ROWIP published in 2011.

Dorset Council, as the Local Highway Authority, has a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and review a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). This Plan has been prepared in accordance with Sections 60 and 61 of the Act, which require local highway authorities to assess the extent to which public rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public, the opportunities they provide for exercise and outdoor recreation, and the accessibility of the network for blind or partially sighted people and others with mobility challenges.

In preparing this Plan, Dorset Council has also had regard to wider legislation and statutory duties, including the Highways Act 1980, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Equality Act 2010, Section 69 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, the Environment Act 2021 and relevant provisions of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. Together these help shape Dorset Council's approach to accessibility, biodiversity, environmental enhancement, public access and the long-term stewardship of the rights of way network.

The ROWIP must identify how the network can be managed, maintained and improved to better meet these needs and must be reviewed periodically. This Plan sets out Dorset Council's strategic priorities for improving public access, supporting health and wellbeing, encouraging sustainable travel, strengthening communities and enabling more people to enjoy Dorset's landscapes, green spaces and natural environment.

Whilst the ROWIP is a statutory document, Dorset Council recognises that the rights of way network deliver much wider benefits, supporting active travel, access to nature, tourism, public health, climate resilience, biodiversity recovery and the local economy.

This plan fulfils that duty while setting a broader and more ambitious vision for how Dorset's public rights of way (PROW) network will contribute to the county's communities, economy and environment over the next decade.

We are responsible for recording, maintaining and protecting 2,855 miles (4,594 km) of public rights of way, including footpaths, bridleways, byways and restricted byways. This work is primarily delivered by the Dorset Council Greenspace Ranger Team, alongside the Definitive Map Team. In addition, Dorset Council manages a wider countryside access network, including long-distance promoted routes, over 80 countryside sites, four country parks and other public greenspaces. Together, these form one of Dorset's most valuable shared assets.

Why this plan matters

The way people use Dorset's rights of way network has changed significantly in recent years.
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a sustained increase in the use of local paths for both physical and mental wellbeing. Natural England's People and Nature Survey (March 2022) found that 39% of adults said that nature and wildlife had become more important to their wellbeing than before the pandemic. Therefore, access to greenspace is increasingly recognised as essential to quality of life, not simply a recreational benefit.

Public policy has evolved to reflect this shift. Access to nature is now embedded within public health thinking, with greenspace seen as a form of preventative healthcare. The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan (2025) **Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2025 - GOV.UK** includes a commitment to ensure that everyone has access to green or blue space within a 15 minute walk of their home. Dorset's public rights of way network plays a key role in delivering this ambition.

At the same time, there is growing demand for safe, accessible routes that support everyday journeys, alongside increasing housing growth and the need to reduce reliance on private cars. Public rights of way are therefore no longer solely transport or recreational assets; they are essential infrastructure supporting health, sustainability, climate resilience and social inclusion. This ROWIP complements the objectives in **Dorset Council's Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)** sets out the long-term strategy for creating a safer, healthier and more sustainable transport system. Public Rights of Way, Trailways, greenways and multi-user routes contribute to the delivery of LTP4 objectives by providing opportunities for walking, wheeling (including the use of wheelchairs, mobility scooters and other mobility aids), cycling and horse riding, supporting both recreational and everyday journeys. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is an important mechanism for delivering active travel, improving connectivity between communities and services, reducing reliance on private cars and encouraging healthier lifestyles.

The ROWIP complements the ambitions of LTP4 by helping to develop an integrated network of routes which connect people to employment, education, public transport, greenspaces and visitor destinations. Through investment in the rights of way network, Dorset Council can support wider transport, public health, climate and economic objectives

What this plan will deliver

Over the next 10 years, this plan will:

- improve the condition and usability of the network, prioritising routes that are most important to local communities
- create safer, better-connected routes linking towns, villages, schools, services and green spaces
- increase accessibility by reducing physical barriers and promoting a range of clearly defined accessible routes
- expand traffic-free and multi-user routes, including trailways, to support everyday walking, cycling and riding
- improve waymarking and information, supported by digital tools such as Dorset Explorer, making the network easier to access and navigate

- support healthier and more active lifestyles by increasing participation and reducing barriers to access
- strengthen Dorset's economy by promoting the county as a leading destination for walking, cycling and outdoor recreation
- ensure new development protects and enhances the network through effective use of the planning process, Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions
- promote responsible use of the network, maintain positive relationships with landowners and land managers, and take proportionate enforcement action where necessary to protect public rights.
- maintain an accurate and accessible legal record of public rights of way through the Definitive Map and Statement

A network with wide-ranging benefits

Dorset's public rights of way network deliver benefits far beyond recreation.

It supports the local economy by attracting walkers, cyclists and visitors. Contributing to Dorset's accommodation, food and retail sectors, particularly in rural and coastal communities. It also helps extend the tourism season beyond peak summer months, reducing reliance on seasonal income.
The network also contributes to wider economic benefits through improved public health outcomes, reducing long-term pressure on health services, and supporting sustainable transport by providing alternatives to short car journeys.
Public rights of way enable people to access Dorset's landscapes, heritage and natural environment, supporting community wellbeing, social interaction and a sense of place.

A strategic and partnership-led approach

This plan sets out how Dorset will ensure the rights of way network meets the current and future needs of residents and visitors between 2026 and 2036. It does not replace our statutory duties but builds upon them, setting out a clear framework for improvement and investment. The ROWIP contributes to the delivery of Dorset Council's Local Transport Plan, the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan, the Dorset Council Plan, Green Infrastructure strategies, climate and nature objectives, and wider public health priorities. The ROWIP provides a framework for identifying and prioritising access improvements that support both recreational use and everyday journeys.

The plan has been developed through extensive consultation with council services, external organisations, stakeholders and the public. This feedback, alongside Dorset Council's strategic priorities, has shaped the approach and informed the development of 10 policies.

These policies are grouped around four key strategic themes:

- **a high-quality network** – maintaining, improving and connecting routes
- **accessible and inclusive access** – reducing barriers and improving usability
- **supporting communities and the economy** – empowering local involvement and promoting Dorset
- **connecting with wider priorities** – including health, sustainable transport, planning and climate objectives

Dorset Council's strategic priorities:

- provide high quality and affordable housing

- grow our economy
- communities for all
- respond to the climate and nature crisis



Figure 1: Dorset Councils strategic priorities

The 10 policy areas

The plan is delivered through 10 policies which together provide a comprehensive framework for improving the network:

1. Managing and delivering a high-quality, climate resilient public rights of way network
2. Improving information, promotion and awareness
3. Making the network more accessible
4. Empowering communities and stakeholders
5. Supporting the economy
6. Promoting responsible use and the Countryside Code
7. Using new development and the Local Plan to improve the network
8. Maximising health and wellbeing outcomes
9. Supporting sustainable transport and active travel
10. Maintaining the Definitive Map and legal record

These policies provide the focus for investment, partnership working and service delivery over the next decade.

Delivery and investment

The plan will be delivered through:

- strong partnership working with communities, landowners, stakeholders and other Dorset Council services
- targeted investment through Department for Transport funding, external grants, developer contributions and other funding opportunities
- the continued support of volunteers, Rights of Way Liaison Officers, parish and town councils, and community groups
- a coordinated, cross-service approach across Dorset Council to maximise the wider benefits of the rights of way network
- integrating rights of way improvements with wider initiatives relating to active travel, health and wellbeing, nature recovery and climate resilience
- ongoing monitoring and review to ensure the network continues to evolve in response to changing needs and opportunities

This approach will place Dorset in a strong position to attract external funding and prioritise resources effectively.

This plan positions Dorset to develop a high-quality, accessible and well-connected rights of way network that supports healthier communities, sustainable travel and a strong rural economy, ensuring the county's landscapes remain accessible and valued.



Figure 2: Bridleway in West Dorset.

2: Vision for ROWIP

Dorset has a significant opportunity to refresh its Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) to support the Council's wider strategic objectives and maximise the value of one of the county's greatest assets: its natural environment.

Covering almost 1,000 square miles, Dorset has nearly 3,000 miles of public rights of way, including footpaths, bridleways, byways and former railway routes. This extensive network connects towns, villages and rural communities, providing opportunities for recreation, active travel, access to nature, improved health and wellbeing, and economic growth.

Dorset's Rights of Way network will be resilient, well-maintained and increasingly accessible, enabling more people to enjoy the countryside on foot, by wheelchair or mobility scooter, on horseback and by bicycle. The network will support health and wellbeing, sustainable travel, biodiversity recovery and the local economy, whilst responding to the impacts of climate change, including flooding, coastal erosion and extreme weather. Priority will be given to maintaining and improving routes that connect people with their communities, services, employment, education and Dorset's natural environment, alongside strategic county-wide links.

Dorset's outstanding landscapes, including the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and two National Landscapes, make it uniquely placed to become a leading destination for countryside access and outdoor recreation. The network allows residents and visitors to experience the county's rich natural, historic and cultural heritage while supporting nature recovery and sustainable travel.

The new ROWIP aims to establish Dorset as a flagship county for access to nature and one of England's premier walking destinations. The plan will support communities to create and promote local circular routes, improve infrastructure, signage and accessibility, and enhance digital route information through Dorset Explorer and GPS-enabled tools.

For most people, access to nature begins close to home. Local paths, green corridors and nearby open spaces provide opportunities for daily exercise, active travel, social connection and contact with nature.

Dorset Council will prioritise improvements to routes which connect communities with local greenspaces, countryside, schools, public transport, employment and essential services. Creating opportunities for everyday use will deliver significant benefits for health, wellbeing and sustainable travel.

Improving access to the network will help people be more active, improve health and wellbeing, and provide free opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. The plan also seeks to make the network more inclusive and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

The emerging Dorset Local Plan presents opportunities to incorporate high-quality rights of way infrastructure into new developments. Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding will help deliver sustainable transport and recreational routes that connect communities and strengthen the wider network.

ROWIP has been informed by engagement with the Local Access Forum, user groups, landowners and local communities. Feedback highlighted the importance of a network that is easy to use, well-maintained and supported by clear information and good infrastructure.

Through this plan, Dorset Council will ensure that the rights of way network remain accessible, relevant and resilient, maximising its contribution to health, wellbeing, sustainable travel, nature recovery and the local economy.



Figure 3: Walking route between Corfe Castle and Swanage.

3: Scope of ROWIP from 2026 to 2036

The ROWIP is a statutory strategy to improve and develop Dorset's public rights of way network and wider access to the countryside. It is a strategic document and does not identify improvements on a path-by-path basis. Instead, it sets out the priorities and framework that will guide future investment, decision-making and partnership working across the county. The new ROWIP replaces ROWIP1 which was published in 2011.

The scope of the plan covers how people access and use Dorset's public rights of way network, and how that network should be improved over time.

The plan includes all public access routes and networks such as:

- public rights of way- footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways
- long-distance routes and promoted routes
- trailways and former railway paths
- permissive routes and cycle routes
- Open Access Land and Coastal Access Land
- other publicly accessible land

All user types

The plan considers the needs of a wide range of users including:

- walkers
- cyclists
- horse riders and carriage drivers
- motorised users (where lawful)

We will have due regard to the Equality Act 2010, recognising the needs of a wide range of users, particularly those with mobility challenges.

The relationship between the network and the people who use it has informed the development of the 10 policies set out in this ROWIP.

What the ROWIP delivers

The 10 year ROWIP provides a framework to:

- set long-term priorities for the network
- guide investment and funding decisions
- support partnership working across Dorset Council and with external organisations
- shape how the network evolves to meet future needs

It enables Dorset Council, including the Greenspace Ranger team, to work collaboratively with other services and partners to deliver shared strategic objectives.

While day-to-day maintenance and issue resolution remain important, this plan provides the strategic direction needed to develop a more connected, accessible and higher quality network.

Cross-cutting role of the ROWIP

The ROWIP is a cross-cutting strategy and is not solely a countryside document. It contributes to a range of wider priorities, including:

- public health and wellbeing
- social inclusion and access for all
- tourism and the local economy
- rural businesses and land management
- climate change and sustainable travel
- green infrastructure and biodiversity
- transport and planning
- active travel, including walking and cycling
- safer, better-connected routes, including travel to school

Delivery and partnership

The new ROWIP will be delivered by Dorset Council in partnership with communities, stakeholders and external funders. It has been informed by the first round of pubic and stakeholder consultation and supported by gathered data and evidence and will be subject to ongoing monitoring and review. The draft will be formally consulted with the public during the summer of 2026, with the final version being published in late 2026.

Policies within this plan provide the mechanism for delivery over the 10-year period.

Stakeholder engagement

The plan has been developed through engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. A summary of public consultation and the responses to it are summarise din the Appendix.

External stakeholders including:

- South West Coast Path Association
- Natural England
- Parish and Town Councils
- Community groups
- British Horse Society
- Ramblers
- Members of the public
- Trail Riders Fellowship
- Green Lane Association

Internal stakeholders including:

- Sustainable Travel
- Environment and Greenspace
- Public Health
- Dorset Highways
- Definitive Map Team
- Equality and Diversity / Legal Services
- Visit Dorset
- National Landscape teams
- Planning and Development
- Culture, Sport and Tourism

- Local Access Forum statutory advisors to Dorset Council

4. Policies of the ROWIP 2026 to 2036

The following policies set out how Dorset Council will improve and manage the public rights of way network over the period of this plan. They have been informed by evidence, engagement with stakeholders and the priorities identified earlier in this document. They have not been placed in priority order, all ten are priorities.

Together, these policies provide a framework for decision-making, investment and partnership working. They guide how the Council will prioritise improvements, respond to changing needs and ensure the network continues to deliver benefits for communities, the economy and the natural environment.

Policy 1: Maintaining and improving the existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network

The first public consultation for the new ROWIP identified a clear priority: people want a well-maintained rights of way network. Dorset Council will therefore focus on protecting, maintaining and improving the existing network, prioritising routes that are most important to local communities and where investment can deliver the greatest benefit. Through strong partnerships and the use of digital mapping and data, Dorset Council will take a targeted, evidence-led approach to maintenance and improvement across the county.

Dorset Council also recognises that a well-connected network is more valuable than a collection of isolated routes. The Council will seek opportunities to address missing links and barriers that prevent people from making safe, convenient and attractive journeys for recreation, active travel and everyday activities. Particular consideration will be given to improving connectivity between settlements, services, schools, employment areas, public transport hubs and key recreational destinations.

Where routes have been identified as delivering significant public benefit, Dorset Council will seek to secure their completion within a reasonable timescale through negotiation, partnership working and, where appropriate, the use of statutory powers available to facilitate public access.

Through these measures, Dorset Council will champion a rights of way network that is well-maintained, accessible and fit for the future, helping more people to be active, spend time outdoors and choose practical alternatives to car journeys.

This policy supports the **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** by improving access to nature whilst ensuring that public rights of way contribute positively to biodiversity recovery, habitat connectivity and the long-term resilience of Dorset's natural environment.



Figure 4: Staff and volunteers installing a new, accessible, self-closing gate.

We will:

- **resolve maintenance issues** reported by the public in a timely manner using reports generated on our online portal.
- **improve climate resilience** by identifying and assessing routes, structures and assets vulnerable to flooding, coastal erosion, landslip, drought and extreme weather, and prioritising measures that improve long-term network resilience
- **protect and maintain access** by asserting and safeguarding the public's rights to use the network, supported by sustained investment in maintenance
- **use GIS and digital tools** to identify need, monitor condition and prioritise improvements, supported by mobile technology that enables staff to update information in real time while on site
- **Road severance** Work with highway authorities, developers and external partners to identify and address major road severance points that prevent safe access to the rights of way network. Priority will be given to locations where strategic walking, cycling or equestrian routes are interrupted by heavily trafficked roads.
- **maintain and develop our in-house GIS systems** to support efficient management of the network and provide the public with a simple way to report issues and access up-to-date information maximising the reporting simplicity for the public
- **enhance key routes** through surfacing improvements (mainly natural stone sourced locally) to support year-round use for recreation and sustainable travel

- **upgrade infrastructure** to improve durability and accessibility, including replacing stepped bridges with step-free designs wherever possible. Replace stiles with gaps or gates, using robust and inclusive designs that improve usability for a wide range of users
- **improve waymarking of the network** by increasing high-quality waymarking including signs with destinations and distances, to increase public confidence and usability
- **strengthen connectivity** by developing links between communities, services and green spaces, including investment in bridleways and multi-user routes
- **support delivery of trailways and multi-user routes** by identifying opportunities to upgrade suitable footpaths to bridleways and create new multi-user routes where these improve network connectivity, support sustainable travel and address identified deficiencies in off-road provision for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.
- **work collaboratively with town and parish councils, partners and landowners** to prioritise improvements and resolve issues locally
- **undertake periodic reviews of network deficiencies** to identify priority schemes which improve connectivity and accessibility.
- **Network improvement** will focus not only on maintaining existing public rights of way, but also on identifying and addressing strategic gaps, severed routes and missing links that limit connectivity between settlements, services, employment areas, schools, public transport hubs and key recreational destinations.

Looking after the network is about more than maintenance, it's about making it work better for people. By combining day to day care with targeted upgrades and a modern, data-led approach. Dorset will continue to unlock the full value of its rights of way: supporting healthier lifestyles, stronger communities and a more sustainable future.

Case Study 1: Upgrading infrastructure

Dorset Council is improving the quality and resilience of its public rights of way network by upgrading bridleway bridges to a more durable and accessible standard. Traditional pressure-treated timber bridges are being replaced with recycled plastic structures, which do not rot and offer a significantly longer service life.

The new bridge designs incorporate robust structural components and slip-resistant decking, providing a safe and reliable surface for a wide range of users, including walkers, cyclists and horse riders. They are designed to meet established standards for equestrian use, supporting the weight and impact of horses while offering wider, more stable crossing points.

In addition to improved safety and usability, these bridges are manufactured from recycled materials and require minimal ongoing maintenance, reducing whole-life costs and supporting environmental sustainability objectives.

All new bridleway bridges are now delivered to this specification, and the replacement of older structures is being accelerated through investment from the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

This programme directly supports Policy 1 by improving infrastructure quality, increasing durability, and delivering a safer, more accessible and user-friendly network.



Figure 5: Two recycled plastic bridleway bridges installed near Broadmayne, with sandbag headwalls forming a gentle, step-free ramp to improve accessibility for all users.

Policy 2: Raise awareness of Public Rights of Way

Dorset will make it simple for people to discover, navigate and enjoy the rights of way network. By combining clear on-the-ground information with accessible digital tools, we will help more people feel confident exploring the county, whether for everyday journeys, health and wellbeing, or visiting Dorset.

Dorset Councils free to use online mapping tool **Dorset Explorer** and locally produced 'Walkabout' leaflets will play a central role in this approach, providing reliable, easy-to-use mapping and guidance, complemented by clear signage and local promotion.

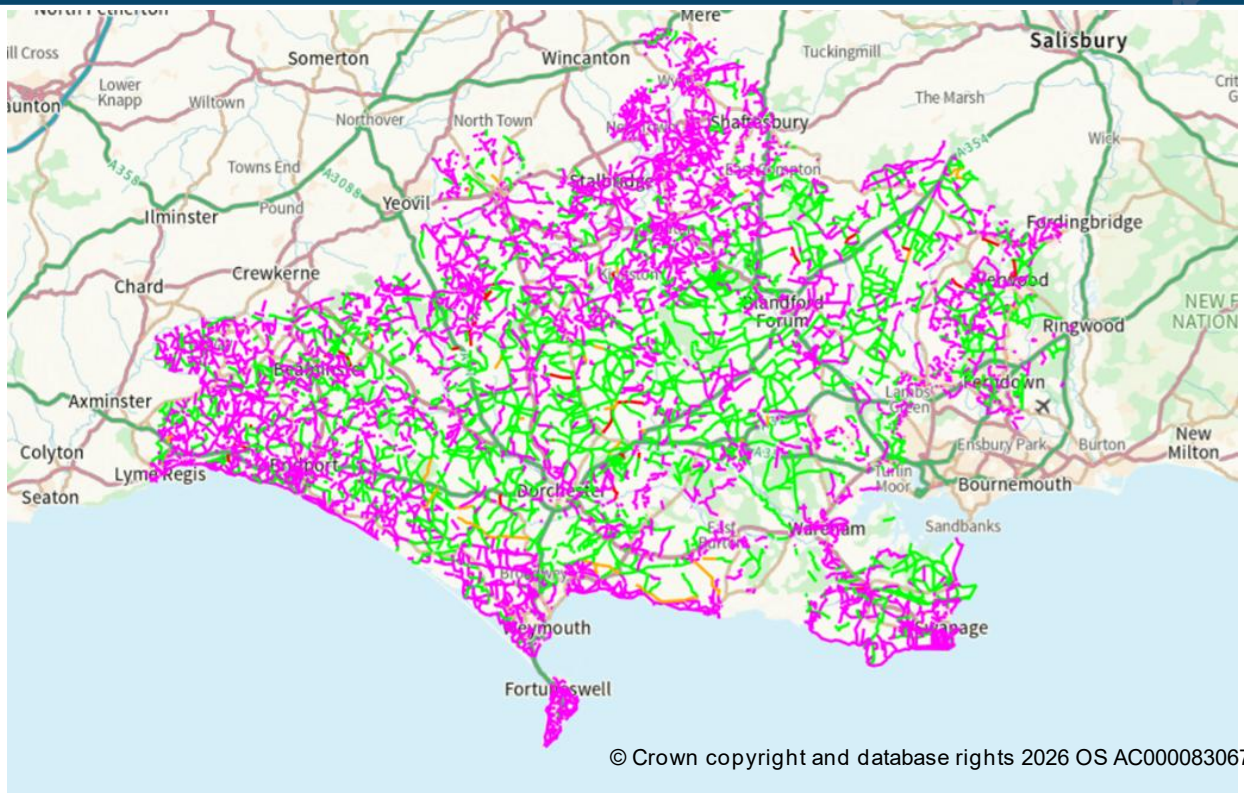


Figure 6: Screenshot from Dorset Explorer showing all Dorsets' public rights of way.

We will:

- promote 'Dorset Explorer', with a comms campaign, helping people easily find and follow routes across the county using the built in GPS function using this link **DorsetExplorer**.
- make digital tools simple to use, including short guides and videos to help people confidently access Dorset Explorer mapping and reporting network issues
- develop inclusive virtual 'walks' that allow people to experience Dorset's rights of way remotely, seeing the route, hearing the surroundings and getting a genuine sense of place. Improving access for those unable to visit in person
- improve confidence in the network by ensuring routes are clearly signed and easy to navigate, both digitally and on the ground
- work with town and parish councils to promote local routes, and improve signage, supporting communities to showcase easy to use walks and rides
- support the creation of local community led, 'Walkabout' routes, encouraging short, circular walks that are easy to use, well-connected and attractive to residents and visitors
- promote the network more widely, using social media, local networks and partners to highlight routes, encourage use and support local businesses
- encourage real time feedback from users, making it easy to report issues through an online portal and help keep the network up to date and well maintained
- encourage people to explore. Public feedback shows that people enjoy the rich natural and cultural heritage of Dorset, but many don't know how to access it
- encourage awareness and confidence through supported entry level activities, for example Dorset Councils Health & Activity programme
- work with schools, both for active travel to and from school and by educating young people of the network of recreation and transport possibilities on their doorstep

People are far more likely to use the network when they know where to go and feel confident getting there. By improving signage, simplifying digital access and celebrating local and long-distance routes, Dorset will make its rights of way easier to use, better understood and more widely enjoyed.

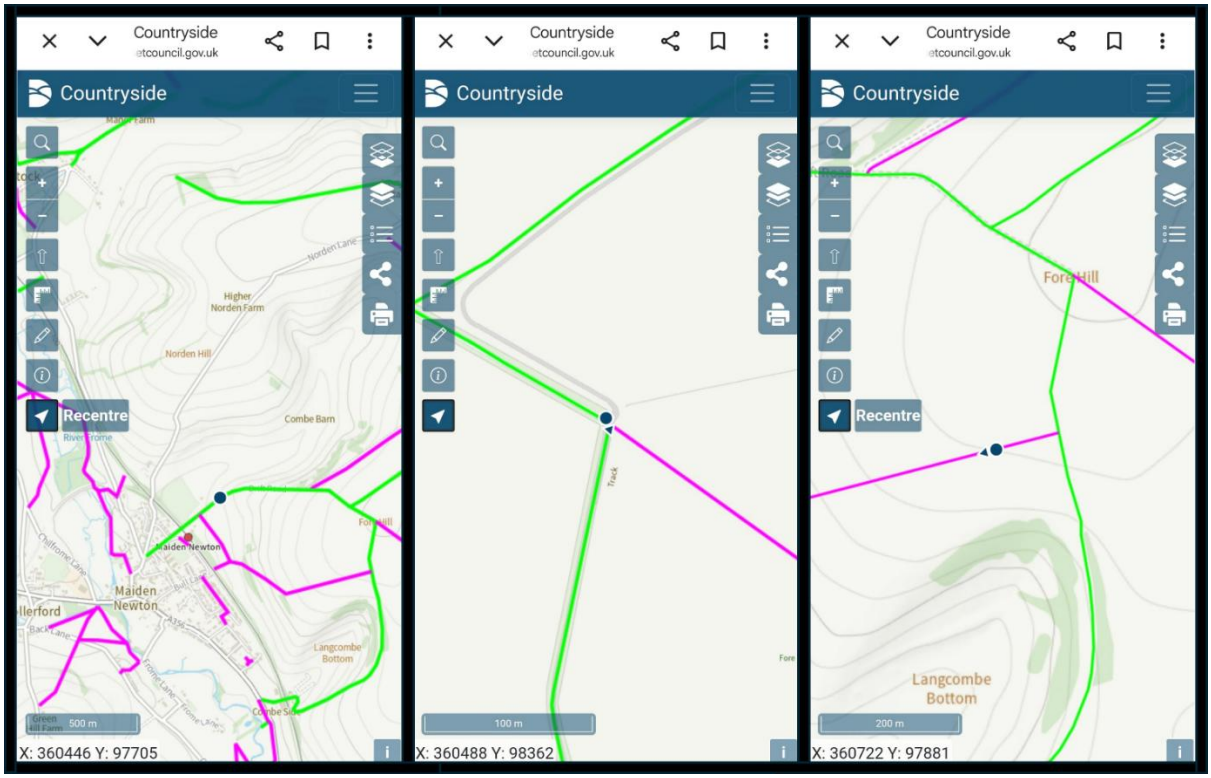


Figure 7: Dorset Explorer on a mobile device using the tracking function, helping users stay on public rights of way and giving them confidence to explore new routes. The blue dot above shows live tracking, effecteively a free "sat nav" for our rights of way.

Case Study 2 - Priority Signing

Dorset Council's Ranger Teams have worked in partnership with parish and town councils over many years to deliver enhanced public rights of way signage through a shared "Priority Signage" approach. (photo below). This partnership model combines local funding and council expertise to deliver higher-quality, more informative directional signage across the network. Improved signage includes clearer signs with named destinations and more consistent direction markers, making routes easier to follow and understand. This is especially important where routes leave the metalled carriageway, i.e. roads. Standard statutory signage does not show a destination, just the classification of the PROW, e.g. footpath or bridleway.

As a result, this approach helps reduce both physical and psychological barriers to using the network.

Users are more confident navigating routes, leading to increased use for recreation, everyday journeys and access to local services.

The success of Priority Signage demonstrates the value of working collaboratively with local councils to deliver practical improvements on the ground. Dorset Council will seek to expand this approach, working with all parish and town councils to extend high-quality signage across a wider proportion of the network.

By improving route legibility and user confidence, this partnership approach supports increased use of the network while delivering wider benefits for health, wellbeing, local economies and sustainable travel.

Figures 8 and 9 show two different examples of the priority signage that currently exists on the network in North Dorset.



Figure 8: Staff member and a volunteer installing a 'priority sign' in north Dorset.



Figure 9: Oak 'priority' fingerpost in North Dorset.

Case Study 3: Sturminster Newton Walkabouts

Every community has its own well-loved local routes. By identifying, promoting and improving these, we can help more people discover and enjoy the rights of way network.

In Sturminster Newton, the Town Council has worked in partnership with Dorset Council's Ranger team to create a series of eight circular "Walkabout" routes. These routes start from the town and explore the surrounding Blackmore Vale, using a combination of Public Rights of Way and permissive paths.

The routes vary in length from 1.5 to 5.5 miles, offering a range of options suitable for a range of abilities and time commitments. They are supported by clear information, with downloadable maps and printed leaflets available locally through community venues or printable at home.

This approach makes it easier for residents and visitors to access and confidently use the network, removing uncertainty about where to go and how to navigate routes. By presenting simple, clearly promoted circular walks, the Walkabouts encourage regular use, support physical activity and help people connect with their local environment.

The Sturminster Newton Walkabouts demonstrate how working with town and parish councils can successfully promote local routes. Dorset Council will build on this model to support other communities in developing and showcasing their own "Walkabout" networks across the county.

See the appendix for Sturminster Newton Walkabout leaflet 1.

Find all of **Dorset Council's Walkabout leaflets on our website**, including routes around our nature reserves. While some of these sites do not contain public rights of way, they are publicly accessible and connect to the wider rights of way network.



Figure 10: Walkabout leaflet for Thorncombe Wood Nature Reserve.

Policy 3: Making our network more accessible

Dorset will provide a rights of way network that is more accessible, inclusive and easier to use for a wider range of people. By improving physical infrastructure alongside the quality of information available, the council will enable more residents and visitors to confidently access the network.

Dorset Council will adopt the principle of Least Restrictive Access wherever practicable, applying the requirements of BS 5709:2018 and relevant national guidance, including Outdoor Accessibility Guidance and By All Reasonable Means. The Council will favour gaps over gates and gates over stiles, seeking to remove unnecessary barriers wherever possible. Improvements will be informed by engagement with disabled users, including people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, to ensure the network is accessible to the widest possible range of users.

“We have pathways but are unable to use them as we can’t use stiles, five bar gates or kissing gates” Disability Action Group, Child Okeford.



Figure 11: Offroad wheelchair or 'tramper mobility scooter' using a bridleway in East Dorset.

We will:

- **develop and promote accessible routes**, including creating a dedicated layer on Dorset Explorer showcasing at least 10 high-quality accessible circular routes across the county
- **work with disabled users** and representative organisations to co-design accessible promoted routes and publish accessibility information that enables users to make informed choices before travelling.
- **improve physical accessibility** by removing or reducing barriers where possible, including replacing stiles with accessible gates, improving bridge access, and addressing restrictive infrastructure
- **promote inclusive access to the network**, working with communities and partners to understand and address barriers faced by underrepresented groups and encourage wider and more confident use of the rights of way network
- **provide clearer information to users**, including detailed route descriptions, gradients, surfaces, distances and potential obstacles, enabling people to make informed decisions about route suitability
- **improve links to supporting infrastructure**, including accessible parking, signage, and links to facilities such as toilets, seating and refreshment points
- **maximise the use of trailways and well-surfaced routes** to create accessible circular routes linking communities, services and green spaces
- **target investment in surfacing and infrastructure improvements**, using internal and external funding to support year-round use and expand opportunities for everyday journeys such as walking and cycling to school
- **work with partners and landowners** to improve access across the network, supporting practical, deliverable solutions that benefit a wide range of users
- **improve access to Open Access Land and Registered Common Land** by creating or enhancing connections to the existing rights of way network and improving route information, particularly where legal access exists but practical access is currently limited
- **Seek opportunities to improve accessibility** through the removal of unnecessary barriers, the replacement of restrictive infrastructure with the least restrictive option appropriate to the route, surfacing improvements where appropriate, and the enhancement of routes to enable use by the widest possible range of people, consistent with the character of the countryside, heritage interests and environmental sensitivities.

Accessibility is not just about physical infrastructure, it is also about information, confidence and choice. Dorset recognises that users have different needs and abilities, and there is no single definition of what makes a route accessible. Instead, we will focus on providing high-quality, accurate information so individuals can decide what works for them.

As part of this approach, we will develop a countywide accessible routes database, supported by user groups. These routes will include appropriate infrastructure such as improved surfaces, accessible gates, rest points and clear signage, and will be supported by photographs and route-level detail.

Dorset's extensive network of Greenspaces, Country Parks and Trailways provides a strong foundation for delivering accessible routes. These routes often already benefit from good access, facilities and proximity to communities, making them ideal starting points and examples for an expanded accessible network.

Dorset Council is committed to the principles of equality and will continue to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Improving accessibility will help ensure that more people - regardless of age, ability or background, can enjoy the benefits of being active outdoors, supporting healthier, more independent lives. This policy directly supports the **Dorset Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy** by seeking to reduce barriers to accessing the countryside and ensuring that the benefits of Dorset's rights of way network can be enjoyed by people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

While it is recognised that not every route will be accessible to all, the overall aim is to create a network that offers a greater range of accessible options, supported by clear information and improved infrastructure.

Trailways and former railway paths will play a key role in this approach. Their width, gradients and surface quality often make them inherently more accessible, and they provide valuable opportunities to create connected, multi-user routes linking towns and villages.

A consistent theme identified through consultation is the importance of circular routes. These routes are particularly attractive as they provide a complete experience, are easier to navigate, and naturally return users to their starting point. Dorset will work with Town and Parish Councils to prioritise the development of well-designed circular routes that are accessible, engaging and connected to local communities.

Case Study 4: North Dorset Trailway

Improving accessibility and connectivity can support everyday journeys as well as recreation. Enhancing links between communities and nearby towns enables more people to walk, cycle and ride with confidence, reducing reliance on cars and supporting healthier lifestyles.

The North Dorset Trailway is a key example of this approach in practice. Following the former Somerset and Dorset railway line, the route provides an approximately 11-mile multi-user corridor suitable for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Its gentle gradients, wide paths and largely traffic-free alignment make it particularly accessible to a wide range of users, including families, less confident cyclists and those using mobility aids.

The trailway connects a number of rural communities, linking villages such as Shillingstone, Sturminster Newton and Spetisbury with the surrounding countryside and local services. It also provides access to heritage features, including the restored Shillingstone Station, helping to celebrate Dorset's history while encouraging visitors to explore the area.

Importantly, the accessible nature of the route means it can be used not only for recreation but also for everyday journeys. The trailway is used by local residents for walking and cycling between communities, including journeys to school and local facilities, offering a safer alternative to road-based travel. It is also used for organised health walks and informal exercise, supporting both physical and mental wellbeing.



Figure 12: Horses and bicycles sharing the path on the North Dorset Trailway.

The development of the trailway has been supported through strong partnership working, including Dorset Council, parish councils, community groups and volunteers. Local communities have played a key role in promoting and using the route, highlighting the importance of accessible infrastructure that meets local needs.

By providing a safe, attractive and inclusive route, the North Dorset Trailway reduces both physical and psychological barriers to accessing the countryside. Its design allows more people, including those who may be less confident or have mobility limitations, to enjoy the network and take part in outdoor activity.

The trailway demonstrates how investment in accessible infrastructure can deliver wide-ranging benefits. It improves connectivity between communities, supports healthy lifestyles, enhances access to heritage and green space, and contributes to a more sustainable transport network.

The development of the North Dorset Trailway has also supported wider promotion and partnership working. Visit Dorset has developed dedicated online content to promote the Trailway, alongside additional digital and social media content highlighting routes such as the White Hart Link.

These initiatives have helped raise awareness of the area as a visitor destination and provided a catalyst for the formation of the North Dorset Tourism Partnership. This partnership brings together towns and organisations across North Dorset to promote collaboration, increase visitor numbers and strengthen the local economy.

Dorset Council will continue to build on this approach, extending and enhancing trailways and similar routes to provide inclusive, accessible connections across the county.

Case Study 5: Electric Bikes and Expanding Access to the Network

The increasing use of electric bikes, also known as Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (EAPCs), is changing how people access and use Dorset's public rights of way network. Nearly 10% of new bicycle sales are now electric, reflecting a growing shift in how people travel and recreate.

E-bikes can make the network more accessible to a wider range of users, including older people, those with lower fitness levels, and those travelling longer distances or on more challenging terrain. This has the potential to increase use of the bridleway network for both leisure and everyday journeys, supporting healthier lifestyles and more sustainable travel choices.

In the UK, EAPCs are subject to specific legal requirements. To be used on public rights of way where cycling is permitted, such as bridleways, restricted byways and Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs), an e-bike must have pedals capable of propelling the cycle, a maximum continuous motor output of 250 watts, and motor assistance that cuts off at 15.5 mph (25 km/h). Where these criteria are met, the e-bike is legally treated as a bicycle and may be used in the same way under existing legislation.

However, non-compliant e-bikes - such as those with higher power outputs, throttle-only operation, or modified speed settings are classified as motor vehicles. These cannot be used on bridleways and are restricted to roads where legal requirements such as registration, insurance and licensing apply.

While the growth in e-bike use presents clear opportunities to widen access and encourage sustainable travel, it also requires careful management. Increased speeds and higher levels of use may create conflicts on shared routes, particularly where paths are narrow or heavily used by walkers and horse riders. This highlights the importance of maintaining high-quality infrastructure, clear signage, and promoting responsible behaviour through the Countryside Code.

Dorset Council will continue to support the appropriate use of EAPCs as part of a modern and inclusive access network, while ensuring that safety, shared use, and the character of the countryside are carefully managed.



Figure 13: Electric bike using a public right of way.

Case Study 6: Improving Routes with appropriate Surfacing

Dorset Council has improved the usability and accessibility of sections of the public rights of way network by introducing compacted stone surfacing. This cost-effective approach creates a firmer, more even surface that is suitable for a wide range of users, including walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

These improvements significantly enhance year-round access, particularly during wetter conditions when unsurfaced routes can become muddy and difficult to use. By carefully selecting appropriate materials and locations, we can balance accessibility with the rural character of the countryside.

The example below shows a bridleway where compacted stone surfacing has improved the reliability and inclusivity of the route.



Figure 14: Before and after pictures of a path where contractors used compacted stone surfacing to improve the network for all users.

Policy 4: Empowering Communities to help improve their Public Rights of Way Network

Dorset Council will work in partnership with local communities to care for, improve and promote the rights of way network. By supporting parish and town councils, volunteers and community organisations, the Council will enable greater local involvement in shaping and maintaining the network.

Public rights of way will form part of the "Community Conversations", helping to strengthen relationships between DC and parish / town councils and third sector organisations. This will support a more collaborative approach, encouraging co-design and co-delivery of services, including greenspace and access to nature. Local communities make a vital contribution to the management and improvement of Dorset's rights of way network. Volunteers provide local knowledge, identify issues, support practical improvements and promote responsible access.

This approach supports Dorset Council's commitment to working closely with communities, ensuring local knowledge and effort plays a key role in delivering improvements on the ground and supports the ambitions of the **Dorset Health and Wellbeing Strategy** by encouraging social connection, volunteering and community-led initiatives that improve access to nature and opportunities for physical activity.

Rights of Way Liaison Officers (RoWLO), community volunteers and user groups play a vital role in monitoring the network, identifying local priorities and supporting improvements. Dorset Council will continue to strengthen these partnerships through training, information sharing and recognition of volunteer contributions



Figure 15: Local community volunteers working alongside Dorset Council rangers to open up a new section of bridleway, creating an important link within the wider network.

We will:

- **work in partnership with parish and town councils** to improve and promote local routes, including maintenance and capital improvements that reflect local priorities, including a “ROWIP road show” visiting PC’s and TC’s to engage and promote joint working and supporting each PC and TC to have a Rights of Way Liaison Officer (RoWLO) on the council.
- **more Rights of Way Liaison Officers** Increase the number of parish and town councils participating in the RoWLO scheme and provide regular training opportunities for volunteers.
- **support the role of Rights of Way Liaison Officers (RoWLO)**, strengthening links between communities and the Ranger Team and helping to identify issues and opportunities at a local level and engaging their help with condition surveys.
- **expand Service Level Agreements (SLAs)** and the development of local “walkabout” routes, enabling communities to take an active role in maintaining and promoting well-used routes
- **grow and support a strong volunteer network**, providing opportunities for people to contribute to path maintenance, vegetation clearance, waymarking and monitoring route condition. Volunteers currently work on PRoW across Dorset every day, this will be expanded to maximise the benefit
- **provide training, guidance and support** to volunteers, parish councils and community groups, ensuring work is delivered safely, effectively and to a consistent standard
- **encourage community-led improvements**, supporting local groups to identify missing links, enhance circular routes and develop projects that improve access and connectivity, such as removing stiles in favour of accessible gates
- **support access to funding and external grants**, working with partners to help communities bring forward deliverable projects that improve the network
- **promote local stewardship of the network**, encouraging a sense of ownership and pride in Dorset’s rights of way as a shared community asset
- **support local rights of way priorities** by encouraging communities to develop projects and action plans that complement and support delivery of the county-wide ROWIP
- **provide training opportunities** for volunteers and students - encouraging participation and supporting countryside access as a career path
- **engage elected members and stakeholders** through briefings, events and regular communication to promote the ROWIP and opportunities for joint working

Community involvement is central to the long-term success of the rights of way network. By combining local knowledge with our support and professional expertise, Dorset will deliver a more responsive, better maintained and widely used network.

This approach also supports Dorset Council’s wider health and wellbeing ambitions. Through initiatives such as “Dorset Health Walks”, we will work with partners to enable more people to be active in their local area, with the rights of way network playing a key role in providing accessible opportunities for everyday movement.

Improving local routes, signage and surface quality, alongside supporting community ambassadors and volunteers, will help create places where being active is a natural and easy choice.

Case Study 7: Community Led Creation of a New Bridleway at Chideock

Local communities play a vital role in identifying opportunities to improve the rights of way network and helping to bring forward projects that meet local needs.

At Chideock, a new bridleway has been created following a request from the local community group, supported by the Parish Council. The project identified the need for safer, off-road access for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and other users, addressing a gap in the existing network.

Crucially, the new route provides a safe alternative to the A35, allowing users to climb Quarr Hill without needing to use this busy and hazardous road. This has significantly improved safety and accessibility for local residents and visitors.

Dorset Council worked in partnership with the Parish Council, the Bridport to Lyme Link (BLLINK) group and other stakeholders to develop and deliver the project. Funding support was secured through the National Landscapes team, enabling the route to be brought forward.

A key element of the project was the generous donation of land by a local landowner, demonstrating the positive outcomes that can be achieved through strong relationships and collaborative working.
The new bridleway provides an important addition to the local network, offering a safer and more accessible route for riders, walkers and cyclists. It improves connectivity between existing paths, reduces reliance on road sections and enhances access to the surrounding countryside.

This project demonstrates how community-led initiatives, supported by partnership working and landowner cooperation, can deliver practical improvements to the rights of way network. It highlights the importance of local knowledge, collaboration and shared ownership in shaping a network that is safer, more accessible and better connected for all users.

The path was opened in 2025 and is dedicated to the memory of Winston ‘Meash’ Maskell who was the driving force behind making this ambition, a reality.



Figure 16: View from the newly surfaced and fenced bridleway looking towards Chideock, where the improved path and boundary fencing enable public access while protecting adjacent grazing land.



Figure 17: View west across the path and pasture towards the coast, demonstrating the scenic landscapes that the public rights of way network make accessible.

Case Study 8: Community-Led Upgrade of a Disused Railway Path between Portesham and Abbotsbury

In Abbotsbury a disused railway line forming part of the bridleway network had become difficult to use for many people. The uneven surface limited access for a wide range of users, including children on small bikes, people using pushchairs or wheelchairs, and older residents.

Following a request from the Parish Council, Dorset Council worked in partnership with the local community, the Dorset National Landscapes team and the landowner to develop and deliver improvements. The Ranger team designed an appropriate specification and installed a new, high-quality surface along the route, carefully considering the needs of both public users and farm vehicles that continue to use the route.

The enhanced path, approximately 1.2 miles in length, now provides a reliable and accessible route for everyday use. Seating has been installed along the route, allowing people to rest and use the path in shorter sections, making it more inclusive for a wider range of users.

The improvements provide a safe, off-road route for children travelling to school and improve access to local facilities such as the village shop, reducing the need to use the main road. The scheme also enhances connectivity within the local network, supporting both recreational and everyday use.
There is now an ambition to extend the route towards the coast, further improving connectivity and creating a longer, continuous corridor for walking, cycling and wider access.

This project demonstrates how community-led initiatives, supported by partnership working, funding and landowner cooperation, can deliver practical and lasting improvements to the rights of way network. It highlights the importance of local knowledge, collaboration and shared ownership in shaping a network that is accessible, relevant and well used.



Figure 18: New benches installed as part of the path work allow for rest, breaking long journeys into manageable stages.

Policy 5: Building the Dorset Economy through our Public Rights of Way Network

The rights of way network contribute significantly to the Dorset economy by supporting tourism, recreation and active travel. Opportunities will be sought to improve connections between the public transport network and the rights of way network, enabling residents and visitors to access the countryside without reliance on private cars.

Dorset will use its rights of way network as a key asset to support the local economy. By promoting high-quality routes, improving access to destinations and working with local businesses, the Council will help increase visitor numbers, extend stays and encourage spending across the county.

Dorset's landscapes, heritage and extensive network of paths provide a strong foundation for a thriving visitor economy. From the Jurassic Coast to the county's trailways and rural routes, the rights of way network enables people to experience Dorset in a healthy and sustainable way.



Figure 19: Walkers using the English Coast path in Dorset.

We will:

- **promote Dorset as a leading destination for walking, cycling and riding**, working in partnership with Visit Dorset and other organisations to showcase the county's network and landscapes
- **improve access to key destinations**, ensuring routes link towns, villages, visitor attractions and local businesses such as cafés, pubs and accommodation providers
- **encourage greater use of the network**, supporting local economies by increasing footfall in rural communities and market towns
- **develop and promote themed and circular routes**, including heritage trails, coastal walks and local "walkabout" routes that encourage visitors to explore and stay longer
- **support local businesses** by encouraging connections between the rights of way network and services that enhance the visitor experience

- **promote the network through digital and physical channels**, including Dorset Explorer, social media, printed materials and partnerships with tourism platforms
- **align with Policy 2 (raising awareness of public rights of way)**, ensuring consistent and high-quality information, mapping and signage to improve navigation and user confidence

Dorset already demonstrates the economic value of its rights of way network. The South West Coast Path attracts around 9 million visitors annually, generating approximately £500 million in visitor spend across the whole route. **Economy - South West Coast Path**. Dorset's 89 mile section alone contributes an estimated 1 million visits and £55 million in annual spend, highlighting the impact of accessible, well-promoted routes. Visit Dorset's 2023 visitor survey found that 19% of visitors are motivated by outdoor activity, 70% go walking during their stay, while only 2% cycle, and 40% would like more free activities.

The Dorset coast path follows the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, providing almost continuous access to one of the UK's most significant natural landscapes. This combination of high-quality access and internationally recognised heritage creates a distinctive offer that supports tourism and the wider economy.

This approach aligns with the emerging Dorset Destination Management Plan for the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), which sets an ambition to establish Dorset as a flagship destination for access to the outdoors and one of the nation's premier walking counties. The rights of way network will play a key role in delivering this ambition by improving access, promoting high-quality routes and supporting local businesses, contributing to economic growth, community wellbeing and sustainable transport.

Walking and outdoor recreation help extend the tourism season, attracting visitors throughout the year and supporting sustainable economic growth. Increased participation in walking and cycling benefits not only tourism, but also the wider economy through improved health, productivity and reduced pressure on public services.

Despite this strong offer, many residents and visitors remain unaware of the extent and quality of Dorset's rights of way network. Increasing awareness and improving access will help unlock further economic benefits, ensuring more people can easily discover, use and enjoy the network.
By combining effective promotion with targeted improvements to infrastructure and connectivity, Dorset will strengthen its position as a leading destination for outdoor recreation while supporting local businesses and communities across the county.

Case Study 8: South West Coast Path part of the King Charles III England Coast Path

Dorset's 89-mile section of the South West Coast Path, with some sections forming part of the King Charles III England Coast Path, represents one of the most economically significant assets within the county's rights of way network. These routes provide internationally recognised access to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and play a vital role in supporting Dorset's visitor economy.

Walking tourism associated with long-distance routes such as the Coast Path is particularly valuable. Visitors tend to stay longer, travel between communities, and spend money on accommodation, food, transport and local services. This creates sustained economic benefits for coastal towns and rural areas, many of which rely on tourism income. Long-distance walking routes also help to extend the tourism season, attracting visitors throughout

the year and supporting business viability outside peak summer months.
Investment in coastal access delivers strong economic returns. Evidence suggests that every £1 invested can generate up to £8 in wider economic benefit, demonstrating the value of continued investment in infrastructure, maintenance and promotion of the network (SWCPA, 2026).

Unlocking Funding through the King Charles III England Coast Path

The ongoing delivery of the King Charles III England Coast Path, a new 2,700-mile National Trail around the entire English coastline, presents a major opportunity for Dorset.
As new sections of the Coast Path are approved and opened, Dorset Council is able to work in partnership with Natural England to secure external funding for:

- route establishment and improvement (including surfacing, drainage and structures)
- signage and waymarking
- accessibility enhancements
- environmental mitigation and habitat improvements
- ongoing maintenance support

This funding, typically provided through DEFRA and Natural England, supports both the planning and delivery of coast path infrastructure. In many cases, the cost of developing and establishing new routes can be fully externally funded, reducing the direct financial burden on the Council while delivering significant improvements to the network.
Importantly, the Coast Path programme acts as a catalyst for wider investment. The process of bringing new sections into use creates opportunities to upgrade existing public rights of way, improve links to inland routes, enhance connections into towns and villages, and develop high-quality circular routes. These improvements benefit both residents and visitors and strengthen the wider network.

A Flagship Asset within a Wider Network

While the South West Coast Path part of the King Charles III England Coast Path represent one of the most significant contributors to Dorset's visitor economy, they are part of a much wider and equally important rights of way network across the county.

Dorset's extensive inland network of footpaths, bridleways and trailways plays a vital role in supporting tourism, connecting communities and distributing economic benefit beyond the coast. The Coast Path often acts as a gateway into Dorset, attracting visitors to the county, while the wider network enables them to explore further, linking coastal destinations with inland towns, villages and attractions.

Together, this combined network creates a diverse and resilient offer that encourages visitors to stay longer, return more frequently and explore more widely. This approach helps ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are shared across Dorset, supporting rural communities as well as coastal destinations.



Figure 20: Walkers enjoying a newly surfaced section of the South West Coast Path on Portland.

Policy 6: Ensuring the Countryside Code and access legislation is followed, and Landowners are respected

Dorset Council recognises that successful management of the rights of way network relies on the shared responsibilities of users, landowners and public authorities. Information and guidance will be promoted to encourage understanding of statutory responsibilities, good land management practices and responsible countryside access.

Dorset will promote responsible use of the rights of way network by encouraging all users to follow the Countryside Code and understand the importance of respecting landowners, the natural environment and other users.

We will take a balanced approach, combining education, engagement and proportionate enforcement to ensure the network is safe, welcoming and well managed.

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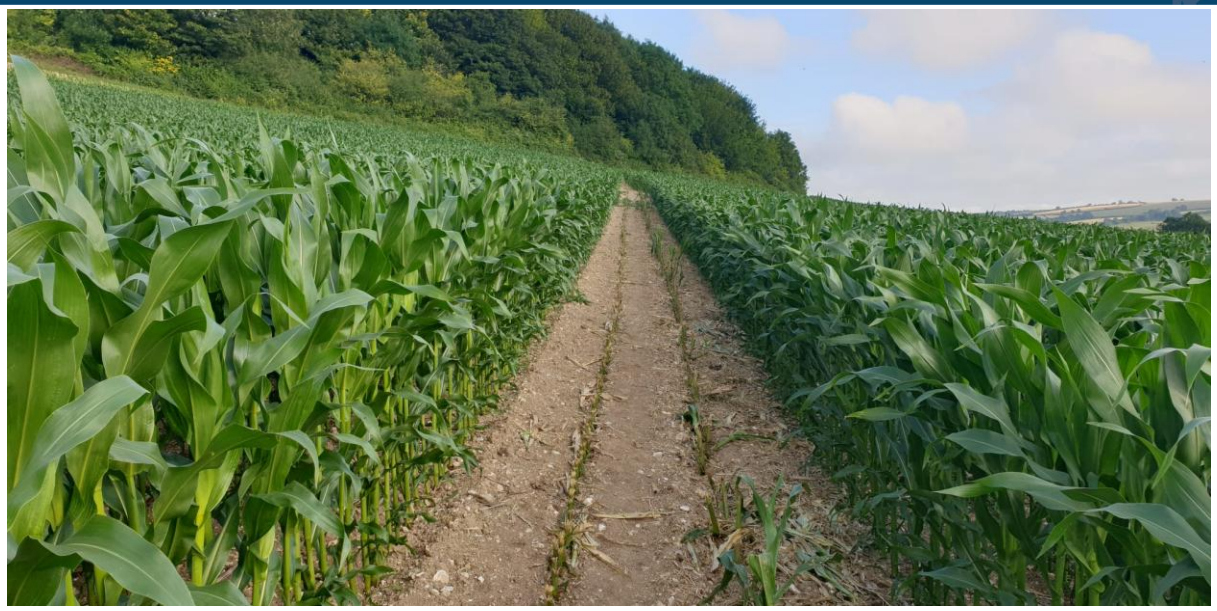


Figure 21: Public footpath maintained through a growing maize crop, demonstrating good land management and continued access for path users.

We will:

- **promote the Countryside Code**, ensuring clear, consistent messaging is available to residents and visitors through signage, digital platforms and promotional materials
- **provide simple, accessible guidance**, including a concise summary of the Countryside Code for users and landowners, supported by digital content such as videos and online resources
- **promote responsible dog ownership**, encouraging users to keep dogs under effective close control, particularly around livestock and wildlife, and to follow Countryside Code guidance including keeping dogs on leads where required and taking mess home.
- **Enforcement** Continue to use available enforcement powers where necessary to address unlawful obstructions, cropping, ploughing and other activities that prevent the lawful use of public rights of way.
- **work with schools, colleges and community groups** to raise awareness of responsible behaviour when using the network, helping to embed good practice from an early age
- **support positive relationships with landowners**, recognising their essential role in managing the landscape and maintaining access across the network
- **provide advice and guidance to landowners**, helping them understand their rights and responsibilities, including vegetation management, obstruction removal and maintenance of routes to the required standard
- **reduce conflict between users and land managers**, supporting appropriate diversions of routes away from farmyards, working areas and sensitive locations where this delivers clear benefits
- **work in partnership with the Police and other agencies** to address anti-social behaviour and misuse of the network, including illegal vehicle use and other forms of disturbance

- **use proportionate enforcement where necessary**, ensuring that rights of way are kept open, safe and available for public use
- **encourage shared use of the network**, promoting awareness of different user groups and supporting respectful behaviour between walkers, cyclists, horse riders and others

Promoting the Countryside Code and improving understanding of land management will help reduce issues such as littering, dog control, damage to crops, disturbance to livestock, and anti-social behaviour. It will also support the long-term sustainability of the network by encouraging users to care for the environment they are enjoying.

Landowners play a vital role in maintaining Dorset's rights of way network. We will continue to work collaboratively with farmers and land managers to ensure routes remain open and usable, while recognising the operational needs of working landscapes. In some cases, this may include working with landowners who wish to divert routes to more suitable alignments that improve safety and reduce conflict.

At the same time, we will ensure that legal standards are met across the rights of way network. This includes keeping routes free from obstructions, such as fencing, buildings or other barriers, and ensuring vegetation is cut back to maintain appropriate clearances.

We will also uphold requirements relating to the ploughing and reinstatement of paths, ensuring routes are restored to a safe and usable condition within the required timescales. Where standards are not met, the Council will work with landowners to resolve issues and use education as the first tool but, where necessary, take proportionate enforcement to maintain access.

By combining education, partnership working and enforcement, Dorset will support a rights of way network that is respected, well used and valued by all.

Case Study 9: Managing Increased Use and Promoting Responsible Behaviour



Figure 22: Keeping dogs under close control around livestock is essential to protect animal welfare and support positive relationships between users and land managers.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant increase in the use of local outdoor spaces, as more people sought opportunities for exercise and wellbeing close to home. In Dorset, this resulted in a notable rise in the number of people using the rights of way network. While this brought clear health and wellbeing benefits, it also highlighted a range of challenges, including anti-social behaviour, increased pressure on sensitive landscapes, and concerns from landowners.

Feedback from public consultation and engagement with land managers identified dog-related issues as a particular concern. These included dogs not being kept under close control, disturbance to and chasing of livestock, and dog fouling. These issues were compounded by an increase in dog ownership during the pandemic, resulting in more dogs being walked on the network. This can have serious consequences for farming operations, animal welfare, and the relationship between users and landowners.

In response to these challenges, Dorset Council has taken a proactive approach to promoting the Countryside Code and improving understanding of how people are expected to behave when using the network, alongside raising awareness of the role of landowners.

We will continue to work with local communities, schools and partner organisations to promote responsible behaviour. This includes developing accessible and engaging resources, such as the Council's Guidance for Rights of Way booklet, available in print and online. Social and digital media will also be used, including videos such as **Follow Doggy Do Code - Dorset Dogs** to communicate key messages in a clear and relatable way, particularly around responsible dog ownership.

Alongside public education, strong working relationships with landowners have been maintained and will continue to be strengthened. The Council provides guidance and support to farmers and land managers, helping them manage access across working landscapes while ensuring routes remain open and usable.

Where appropriate, Dorset Council has supported the diversion of routes away from working farmyards and other sensitive areas. These diversions improve the experience and safety for users, reduce conflict, and provide greater security for landowners, while ensuring suitable alternative routes are maintained to the required legal standard.

This combined approach of education, partnership working and practical network management has helped to reduce conflict and improve understanding. By promoting responsible behaviour and supporting land managers, Dorset Council is helping to create a safer, more respectful and more sustainable rights of way network for both residents and visitors.

Case Study 10: Supporting Landowner Responsibilities

Most landowners and occupiers play an active role in maintaining public rights of way that cross their land, including cutting back hedges and vegetation to keep routes clear and accessible. This work is essential to ensuring that paths remain safe and usable for the public.

Where issues arise, such as overgrown routes or obstructed paths, Dorset Council will first seek to engage with the landowner to resolve the matter informally. This includes providing advice and guidance to help landowners understand their responsibilities. In most cases, positive dialogue and support are sufficient to achieve a timely outcome.

However, where problems persist and routes remain obstructed, the council may take further action. This can include the use of formal notices and, where necessary, enforcement powers to ensure that legal responsibilities are met and public access is protected.

This approach balances support and partnership working with the need to uphold access rights, helping to maintain a well-managed and accessible rights of way network.



Figure 23: Well-maintained field-edge vegetation helps keep public rights of way clear, safe and accessible for all users.

Policy 7: Using new housing development and the Local Plan to enhance Public Rights of Way

New development presents opportunities to strengthen the rights of way network through the provision of green infrastructure, active travel corridors and new public access routes. Development should contribute positively to network connectivity and avoid placing additional pressure on existing routes without mitigation. Development proposals should demonstrate how existing public rights of way, bridleways and other access routes have been considered at an early stage and how opportunities have been taken to improve connectivity for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding.

New development should deliver direct, safe and attractive walking, wheeling and cycling links to neighbouring communities, schools, employment areas, public transport facilities, greenspace and the wider rights of way network. Opportunities to create strategic greenways and active travel corridors should be maximised through the development process. Where appropriate, it should contribute towards the delivery of the **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** through the provision of green infrastructure, accessible natural green space and biodiversity enhancements alongside rights of way improvements.

New development should support the delivery of Local Transport Plan 4 by providing safe, attractive and direct walking, wheeling and cycling connections to existing rights of way, public transport services, schools, employment areas and local facilities.

Dorset will ensure that new development protects, enhances and contributes positively to the rights of way network. By embedding high-quality access and connectivity into the planning process, the Council will secure long-term improvements that support sustainable travel, healthy communities and access to the countryside. Relevant planning officers will work together with the Ranger team to maximise the opportunities of the Planning system.

We will:

- **protect existing public rights of way**, ensuring they are retained, safeguarded and appropriately integrated within development proposals, in accordance with Dorset Council's guidance **Public rights of way and new development: a guide for developers.**
- **seek opportunities** through development to secure contributions towards off-site rights of way improvements, strategic missing links and wider active travel networks where these will improve connectivity and deliver public benefit.
- **require a Public Rights of Way Management Plan** for developments above an agreed threshold, ensuring that access is considered at an early stage of design and not treated as an afterthought. The Management Plan will include:
    - existing definitive and permissive routes within and adjacent to the development site
    - quality and appropriate temporary diversions during construction
    - proposals to retain, improve or divert existing PRoW
    - minimise road severance and aim to resolve historic severance where possible
    - measures to ensure user safety where routes remain open during works
    - details of temporary route provision, including surfacing, signage and management
    - landscaping proposals affecting or enhancing PRoW
    - design and construction of new routes, including dedication of new public rights of way where appropriate
    - path width, surfacing and long-term maintenance standards
    - timescales for closures, diversions and legal processes
- **ensure developers understand that** planning permission does not grant rights to alter or obstruct public rights of way, and that separate legal processes are required for diversions or closures.
- **secure appropriate financial contributions (S106 / CIL)** to protect, improve and extend the rights of way network, ensuring investment is directed to routes that serve both the development and the wider community.
- **strategically important routes** should be created as public rights of way where appropriate and ensure that new development delivers safe and attractive non-motorised user connections between homes, services, employment and greenspace.
- **provide clear design standards and specifications**, ensuring routes delivered through development are fit for purpose, durable, accessible, designed for long-term use and made PRoW where appropriate. Development must enhance, not simply retain, public rights of way.
- ROWIP and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP)

- priorities should be embedded during site master-planning.
- **require strong connectivity**, ensuring new developments link directly to the existing rights of way network, local services, schools, employment areas and green spaces, supporting everyday walking, cycling and riding.
- **promote sustainable travel**, using the rights of way network to reduce reliance on private cars and support healthier, more active lifestyles.
- **use digital tools and mapping (as set out in Policy 2)** to help developers identify opportunities to connect into the wider network and understand local access priorities.
- **support the delivery of multifunctional green infrastructure**, ensuring that rights of way form an integral part of wider green infrastructure networks, delivering benefits for recreation, biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing.
- **Heathland Mitigation programme and the Stour Valley Park project** can help PRoW where integrated delivery can maximise benefits for access, biodiversity, and community wellbeing
- **Seek opportunities** to deliver rights of way improvements alongside green infrastructure projects, biodiversity net gain initiatives and nature recovery schemes where these provide public benefit and are compatible with environmental and conservation objectives.

New development presents a significant opportunity to improve Dorset's rights of way network. With planned housing growth across the county, there is strong potential to embed high-quality walking, cycling and riding routes into new developments, connecting communities and creating lasting infrastructure.

Public Rights of Way are a key component of green infrastructure. They support accessible recreation, active travel and connections between places, while also contributing to climate change mitigation and environmental enhancement. Well-designed access networks can make developments more attractive, improve quality of life for residents and support long-term sustainability.

By ensuring that rights of way are considered from the earliest stages of development, Dorset will secure a network that is better connected, more accessible and aligned with the needs of both existing and future communities.

This policy contributes to the objectives of the **Dorset Housing Strategy** by helping to create sustainable communities with strong walking, wheeling and cycling connections to services, employment, schools, green infrastructure and the wider countryside.

Case Study 11: Planning contributions supporting the rights of way network



Figure 24: A new footpath connecting communities created through developer contributions secured via a Section 106 agreement.

New development can place additional pressure on the rights of way network, both where routes pass directly through sites and through increased levels of use. Dorset Council works to ensure that development contributes positively to the network by securing funding for improvements and future maintenance.

Planning applications in Stalbridge demonstrate how developer contributions can support delivery of new and improved routes. At Thornhill Road (Application 2/2017/1095/OUT), funding of £55,585 has been secured towards the delivery of new sections of the North Dorset Trailway, extending north towards Henstridge in Somerset and south towards Sturminster Newton. This funding will support a range of works, including legal processes, vegetation clearance, fencing, surfacing, and any necessary diversions. A further £11,970 has been secured to enhance public rights of way within the parish, including surfacing improvements, replacing stiles with gates, and improved signage.

At Lower Road (Application 2/2017/0741/OUT), £79,367 has been secured towards delivery of the North Dorset Trailway, along with £23,449 for improvements to public rights of way within the parish. These enhancements will improve accessibility and provide greater opportunities for people to explore the surrounding countryside.

The Dorset Council Local Plan consultation in 2025 identifies a number of potential housing allocations across the county. Many of these sites either include existing rights of way or are

likely to increase use of nearby routes. Securing appropriate developer contributions will help ensure that the network, including Trailways and public open spaces, is enhanced and maintained to meet future demand.

Policy 8: Maximise the PROW network's contribution to health and wellbeing

Regular access to nature and opportunities for physical activity are recognised as important contributors to physical and mental wellbeing. The rights of way network support healthy lifestyles by providing free opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding and other forms of outdoor recreation.

This policy directly supports the **Dorset Health and Wellbeing Strategy** by increasing opportunities for everyday physical activity, improving access to nature and helping to reduce health inequalities across Dorset.

Dorset will use its rights of way network to support healthier, more active communities. By improving access to high-quality routes, encouraging everyday movement and reducing barriers to use, the council will help people of all ages and abilities to be more active as part of daily life.

This approach aligns with Dorset's Physical Activity Strategy, *"***A Movement for Movement***"*, which aims to make movement easy, normal and accessible for everyone by creating environments where people naturally walk, cycle and use green spaces more often.

We recognise that increasing physical activity delivers wide-ranging benefits, including improved physical and mental health, reduced pressure on health services, stronger communities and a more productive local economy. Enabling more people to use and benefit from rights of way will contribute to the council's wider support for delivering the NHS 10 Year Plan objective to shift from treatment to prevention.



Figure 25: Dorchester Strollers - a volunteer-led group offering free guided walks with trained leaders to help people explore the local area.

We will:

- **improve access to high-quality routes and greenspaces**, ensuring the network is well maintained, clearly signposted and usable throughout the year
- **reduce barriers to participation**, prioritising improvements in areas with poor access to greenspace or higher levels of health inequality
- **promote everyday use of the network**, encouraging walking and cycling for journeys to school, work and local services.
- Work with other Council departments and partners to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits of the rights of way network supporting delivery of **Dorset's Physical Activity Strategy**.
- **support targeted engagement**, working with communities and partners to increase use of the network by all members of our community
- **embed the network within health and wellbeing initiatives**, including social prescribing and community-based activity programmes to reduce barriers and support residents to move more such as Dorset Councils **Health and Activity programme**
- **support community-led activities**, such as walking groups, wellbeing routes and local challenges that encourage regular use of the network
- **integrate with wider strategies**, including the Local Transport Plan, Active Travel Infrastructure Plan and public health programmes, to support a joined-up approach to increasing physical activity
- **improve access to information**, using digital mapping and tools to highlight routes suitable for everyday use and physical activity
- **work with schools and employers**, promoting the use of the rights of way network for active travel and daily movement
- **develop a better understanding of usage and barriers**, working with partners to gather data, improve monitoring and target interventions effectively
- **support social prescribing initiatives** by promoting suitable routes and

greenspaces.

- **encourage the development of circular routes,** health walks and community-led activities close to where people live.
- **improve the availability of seating** and rest points on priority recreational routes where appropriate.
- **focus on young people** the Council will support opportunities for children and young people to experience nature through, safe and accessible local routes to school. Plus, increase opportunities for outdoor learning, use of Dorset explorer and family-friendly recreational routes. Programmes and activities which encourage active lifestyles and engagement with the Rights of Way network, supporting the **Dorset Babies, Children, Young People and Families Plan**.

Dorset's Public Rights of Way network plays a vital role in supporting health and wellbeing. It provides access to nature, opportunities for exercise, and connections between communities, services and local facilities. These functions help prevent ill health, support people to live well, and contribute to reducing health inequalities across the county.

Physical activity is essential for maintaining good health. While many residents are active, a significant proportion of adults and children remain inactive, and increasing activity levels across all ages remains a key priority. The rights of way network provide a free, accessible and flexible way for people to incorporate movement into their daily lives through recreation and everyday journeys.

Contact with nature is also strongly linked to improved mental wellbeing. In Dorset, 51% of residents are estimated to have good access to nature within 300 metres walk of their home. In many parts of Dorset, particularly rural areas, the rights of way network provides the primary means of accessing nature. Increasing the accessibility and use of the network will help more people experience the mental health benefits associated with time spent outdoors.

The network also supports social connection by enabling people to meet, interact and take part in shared activities such as walking groups and volunteering, e.g. the **Dorset Health Walk programme.** These interactions help strengthen communities and improve overall wellbeing. However, access to these benefits is not equal. Some groups - including older people, those with poor health, and individuals from underrepresented communities are less likely to access natural spaces. Improving the accessibility, quality and connectivity of the network will help address these inequalities and ensure more people can benefit from Dorset's natural environment.

By improving infrastructure, promoting use, and working with partners to reduce barriers, Dorset will create a rights of way network that supports healthier, more active and more connected communities.

Case Study 12: Supporting Health and Activity Through the Rights of Way Network

Dorset Council's Health and Activity team promotes accessible, entry-level activities across the county, many of which make use of the rights of way network. These activities are designed primarily for people aged over 50 and those living with long-term health conditions, providing opportunities to become more active in a supportive and welcoming environment.

Activities are delivered close to local communities, offering an important first step into physical activity. Participants can then be supported to progress to further opportunities as their confidence and ability develop.

A key example is the "Get Back in the Saddle" cycling programme. Rides delivered in locations such as Shillingstone, Weymouth and Ferndown make use of the North Dorset Trailway, the Rodwell Trail and the Castleman Trailway. These well-maintained, traffic free routes provide a safe and accessible environment for participants to build confidence while exercising as part of a group.

Volunteer led health walks also make extensive use of the rights of way network across Dorset, from sections of the South West Coast Path to rural footpaths in North and West Dorset. These walks provide regular opportunities for people to improve their physical health while enjoying the natural environment.

In addition, a programme of Nordic walking sessions uses rights of way to support both physical and mental wellbeing. These sessions are inclusive, catering for a wide range of abilities, including individuals referred through healthcare services and those living with conditions such as Parkinson's. Being outdoors in a supportive, informal group setting helps to reduce barriers to participation and encourages more people to engage with the network.

Through these initiatives, the rights of way network play a vital role in supporting healthier communities, improving wellbeing, and enabling more people to access and enjoy Dorset's countryside.



Figure 26: Nordic walking sessions use Dorset's rights of way to support physical and mental wellbeing.

Policy 9: Maximise our PROW for Sustainable transport linking communities and active travel

Public Rights of Way make an important contribution to Dorset's wider active travel network. In addition to recreation, routes can provide access to schools, workplaces, shops, public transport and community facilities. Improving connectivity and reducing missing links will help increase everyday use of the network and support healthier travel choices.

Dorset will maximise the potential of its rights of way network to support sustainable and active travel. By aligning the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) with the **Active Travel Infrastructure Plan (ATIP)** and the **Local Transport Plan (LTP4),** the Council will create a more connected network that enables people to walk, cycle and ride for everyday journeys. This policy contributes to the objectives of the **Dorset Housing Strategy** by ensuring that existing and future communities are connected through safe, sustainable and accessible routes that reduce reliance on private car travel.

Public Rights of Way also support wider public and community transport networks. Many journeys involve a combination of walking, wheeling, cycling and public or community transport. By improving links between communities, bus stops, transport interchanges and local services, the rights of way network can help reduce transport disadvantage, particularly in rural areas where access to services can be more challenging. This supports Dorset Council's ambition to improve accessibility whilst reducing reliance on private car travel.



Figure 27: 'Get Back in the Saddle' group in Shillingstone using the connected Trailway network, supporting links to sustainable transport routes.

We will:

- **integrate the rights of way network with active travel routes**, linking footpaths, bridleways and trailways to walking and cycling corridors, including those delivered through programmes such as the Transforming Cities Fund, LTP4, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and ATIP
- **work with transport, planning and active travel** partners to identify opportunities where rights of way can contribute to the delivery of Local Transport Plan 4 priorities and wider active travel objectives.
- **create continuous, safe and attractive routes**, connecting housing areas with schools, workplaces, town centres and public transport hubs
- **improve accessibility and connectivity**, upgrading surfaces, drainage and signage to support a range of users, ensuring routes are appropriate for their most frequent use
- **develop green corridors**, connecting rural and urban areas, reducing reliance on the private car and delivering wider benefits for biodiversity and climate resilience
- **promote sustainable travel**, encouraging more short journeys to be made on foot or by cycle through a well-maintained and connected network
- **support active travel to school and work**, embedding rights of way within school travel plans and commuter routes to reduce congestion and emissions
- **provide high-quality digital tools and mapping**, enabling users to identify routes that connect with cycle networks, public transport and key destinations, including accessibility information where available
- **align delivery with wider transport and climate strategies**, ensuring rights of way improvements contribute to reducing car use and supporting Dorset's environmental objectives
- **secure funding and partnerships**, making effective use of external funding opportunities such as Active Travel Fund and partnership working with health and transport organisations
- **work with communities and stakeholders**, supporting co-designed routes, encouraging local use and promoting walking and cycling initiatives to increase uptake
- **contribute to the delivery of Local Transport Plan 4 and Active Travel England objectives** by developing a connected network of routes that supports walking, wheeling and cycling.
- **support completion of strategic trailway projects** and other green transport corridors that improve walking, cycling and equestrian connectivity across Dorset.
- **secure funding and partnership opportunities**, supporting the delivery of strategic routes and network improvements
- **promote integration** of rights of way with public transport and community transport services wherever practical, helping people combine walking, wheeling and cycling with wider travel options.
- **explore opportunities** for Unclassified County Roads (UCR's) to help link the PRoW network where they can link communities.
- **work with Transport Planning and community transport providers** to identify and prioritise rights of way and active travel connections to bus stops, transport hubs, community transport pick-up points, healthcare facilities and other key destinations

The rights of way network plays an important role in Dorset's transport system. While traditionally used for recreation, it already provides valuable connections between communities and local services.

Strengthening these links will enable more people to choose active and sustainable modes

of travel, helping to reduce congestion, improve air quality and support healthier lifestyles. By improving connectivity, infrastructure and awareness, Dorset will create a network that supports both everyday movement and longer-distance journeys, contributing to more sustainable and resilient communities.

Case Study 13: The Castleman Trailway as a Commuter Route



Figure 28: Senior Ranger Sophie Isaacs on one of the many new recycled plastic bridges on the Castleman Trailway, helping future proof access for years to come.

The Castleman Trailway provides a strong example of how the rights of way network can support everyday journeys as well as recreation. Running between Poole and Ringwood, the Trailway follows a former railway line and offers a largely traffic-free, well-surfaced route connecting communities, employment areas and local services.

While popular for leisure use, the trailway is increasingly used for commuting and utility trips, enabling people to travel by foot or cycle between residential areas and nearby towns. Its alignment, consistent gradients and separation from traffic make it particularly suitable for regular journeys, offering a safe and attractive alternative to car travel.

Importantly, the trailway links into a wider network of cycle routes and active travel infrastructure across East Dorset, including on-road cycle routes and urban walking and cycling corridors. These connections help integrate the route with the highway network, allowing users to continue journeys into town centres, workplaces, schools and public transport hubs.

This demonstrates the wider potential of Dorset's trailways and rights of way network to form part of a connected, multi-functional transport system. By supporting both leisure and utility use, the Castleman Trailway contributes to increasing levels of active travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles, and delivering benefits for health, congestion and the environment.

Policy 10: To uphold the council's legal duties to provide an up-to-date definitive map and statement which is accessible to the public

A complete and accurate Definitive Map and Statement underpins effective management of the rights of way network and provides certainty for the public and landowners. Dorset Council will seek to reduce the backlog of legal order applications and improve transparency around progress and priorities.

Dorset will uphold its legal duty to maintain and provide access to an up-to-date Definitive Map and Statement of public rights of way, in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
The Definitive Map and Statement form the legal record of public rights of way in Dorset. They are essential in protecting public access, providing certainty for landowners and supporting planning, development and land management decisions.

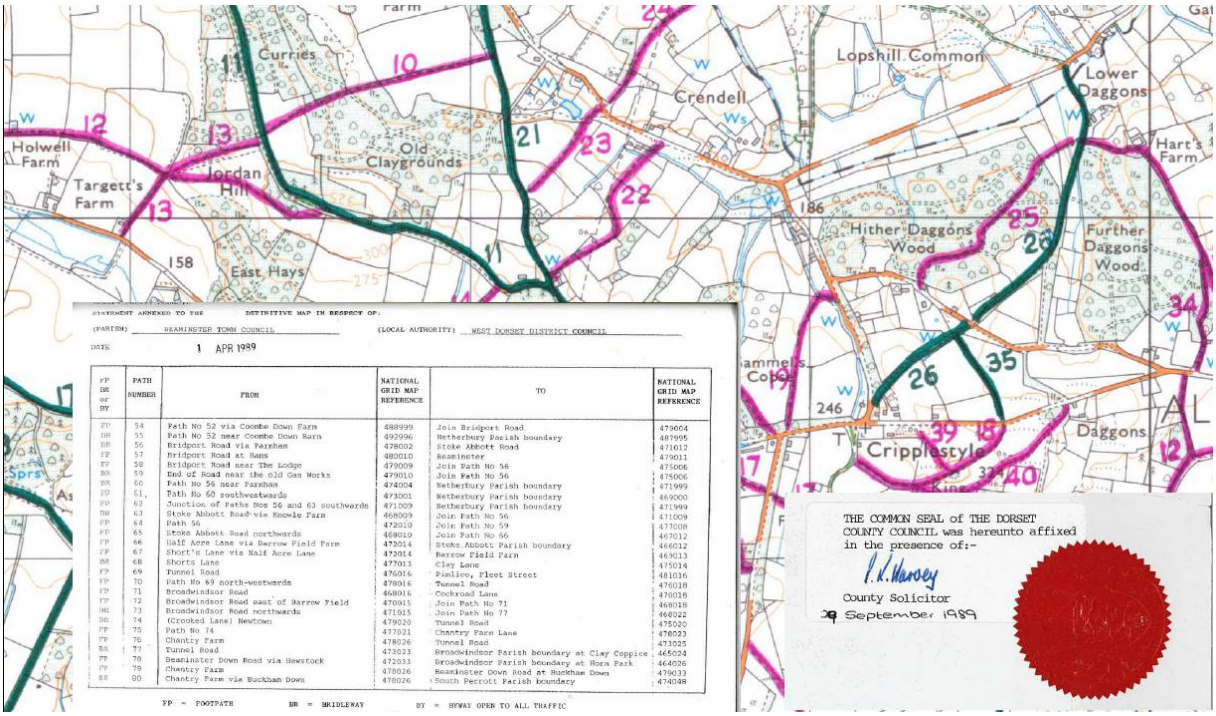


Figure 29: Extract from the definitive map.

We will:

- **maintain the Definitive Map and Statement as the legal record of public rights of way**, keeping it under continuous review and updating it through statutory processes
- **publish regular information on Definitive Map Modification Order progress**, priorities and performance as resources allow.
- **process Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs)** to record changes such as additions, deletions or amendments to the status of routes, based on user or documentary evidence and aim to reduce back log by increasing capacity within the

team where possible.

- **process Public Path Orders (PPOs)** to manage diversions, creations and extinguishments of routes where appropriate
- **ensure the Definitive Map and Statement are accessible to the public**, including:
    - Physical access at County Hall, Dorchester, by appointment
    - Digital access through Dorset Explorer, providing an up-to-date working copy for general use (not legally conclusive)
- **provide a transparent and accountable service**, publishing legal orders and decisions and maintaining a public register of applications
- **investigate applications and claims in accordance with statutory requirements**, ensuring a fair and evidence-based approach
- **provide clear guidance and support**, helping members of the public, applicants and landowners understand legal processes and their rights and responsibilities
- **consult with stakeholders and the public** on proposed changes to the network, ensuring appropriate engagement in decision-making
- **continue to improve digital access and usability**, making it easier for people to view and understand the rights of way network
- **work to manage applications efficiently**, recognising the importance of maintaining an accurate and up-to-date legal record
- **provide guidance to landowners on protecting their land from public rights of way claims**, including advice on legal mechanisms such as landowner deposits helping to ensure clarity and prevent unintended dedication of routes

The Definitive Map and Statement were sealed in 1989 and have been updated since through ongoing legal processes. Maintaining an accurate and accessible record is essential to ensuring that public rights are protected and that the network can continue to respond to changing use, evidence and development pressures.

By maintaining a clear, accurate and accessible legal record, Dorset will ensure that its rights of way network remain robust, transparent and fit for the future.

5. ROWIP Implementation and investment Plan 2026 to 2036

This implementation plan sets out how the ROWIP will be delivered over the period 2026 to 2036. It provides a clear and flexible framework for improving Dorset's public rights of way network, ensuring it meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.
The programme will support access to the countryside, healthier lifestyles, stronger connections between communities, and increased opportunities for sustainable and active travel.

Delivery Approach

Dorset Council will develop and maintain a Delivery Plan to support implementation of the ROWIP. Progress against key actions, targets and performance measures will be monitored and reported periodically, enabling the plan to respond to changing priorities, funding opportunities and emerging challenges.

Delivery of the ROWIP will be ongoing and responsive, reflecting local priorities, available funding and partnership opportunities. We will focus on:

- maintaining and improving the condition of the existing network
- addressing priority maintenance and accessibility issues
- delivering infrastructure improvements, including bridges, surfaces, signage and access points
- strengthening connections between communities, services and transport links
- progressing strategic projects, including Trailways and key connectivity routes
- supporting increased use of the network for everyday journeys as well as recreation

A pipeline of projects will be developed and progressed as opportunities arise, including schemes supported through external funding and new development.

Local Priorities

Delivery will reflect the differing characteristics, pressures and opportunities across Dorset. While all policy objectives apply across the county, the following areas highlight where particular emphasis is likely to be placed:

- **West Dorset**: Managing high visitor use and improving coastal access, including delivery of the King Charles III England Coast Path, alongside infrastructure and resilience improvements
- **Central Dorset**: Improving access around key settlements, supporting everyday use such as travel to school, and enhancing links to green spaces
- **North Dorset and Purbeck**: Strengthening rural connectivity, extending the North Dorset Trailway, and improving links between communities and local services
- **East Dorset**: Integrating rights of way with urban walking and cycling networks, supporting commuter routes, and managing higher levels of use and development pressures

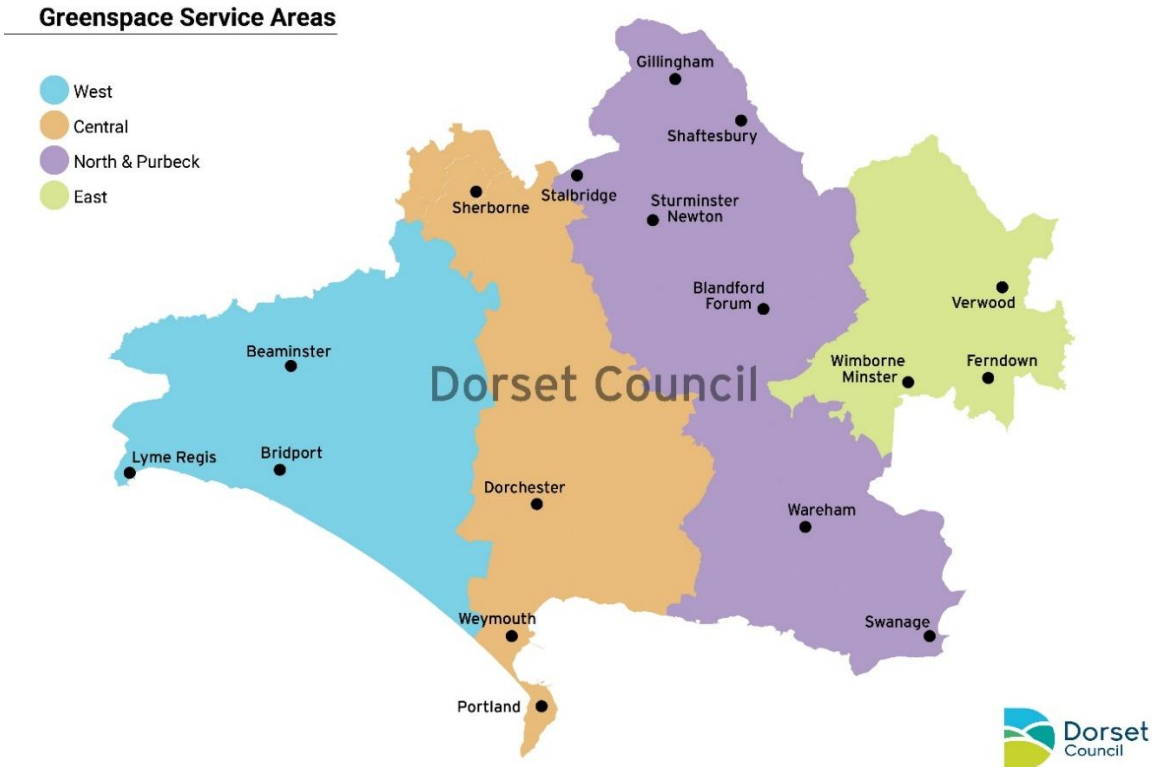


Figure 30: Dorset Greenspace team areas.

Funding and Resources

Delivery will require sustained investment and strong partnership working. Funding will be secured through a combination of:

- Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding
- Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy contributions
- DEFRA and Natural England programmes, including coastal access funding
- external grants and partnership funding

Over £2 million is expected to be invested in the first five years, with ongoing annual Local Transport Plan funding anticipated to exceed £300,000 per annum, supplemented by additional external funding.
The Dorset Council Ranger service plays a central role in delivery, providing day-to-day management and maintenance of the network and working closely with landowners, communities and stakeholders to keep routes open, safe and accessible.

Monitoring and Review

Progress will be monitored to ensure the ROWIP delivers measurable improvements. Indicators will include:

- condition of the network
- infrastructure improvements delivered
- accessibility improvements (for example, replacing stiles with gates)
- usage levels where data is available
- customer feedback and reported issues
- PC/TC engagement
- Contribution to Local Transport Plan 4 outcomes including active travel participation, connectivity improvements and access to sustainable transport networks.

The plan will be reviewed every five years to ensure it remains responsive to changing needs, funding opportunities and Council priorities.

Investment Programme (Year 1: 2026/27)

Initial priorities include:

- Bridleway bridges: £250,000
- Footpath bridges: £180,000
- Surfacing improvements: £100,000
- South West Coast Path capital investment: £517,000
- Natural England maintenance funding: £40,000

Further detail is provided in Appendix 7.3 and will be updated as delivery progresses.

6: Conclusion

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2026-2036 sets out a clear vision for a high quality, well maintained, climate resilient and accessible rights of way network that supports the needs of residents, businesses and visitors across Dorset. Building on the strong foundations established by the previous ROWIP, the plan recognises that public rights of way are not simply recreational routes, but an essential part of Dorset's green infrastructure, supporting sustainable travel, healthier lifestyles, thriving communities, environmental stewardship and economic prosperity.

The previous ROWIP's greatest achievement was in shifting the focus from managing individual paths to recognising the wider contribution that the network makes to quality of life. The 2026-2036 ROWIP takes this vision further by responding to contemporary challenges including climate change, biodiversity recovery, changing demographics, accessibility expectations and the growing importance of active travel. It strengthens links with the Dorset Council Plan, Local Transport Plan 4, the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan for Dorset, public health priorities and the Council's climate and ecological objectives and identifies these as potential sources for investment for improved PROW.

The plan places renewed emphasis on creating better connected networks that enable people to travel safely and sustainably between homes, schools, workplaces, services, open spaces and the wider countryside. By improving accessibility, addressing barriers such as road severance, maintaining existing assets and enhancing connections between communities, the network can play a larger role in reducing car dependency, supporting active travel and improving physical and mental wellbeing.

Successful delivery will depend on continued partnership working with local communities, landowners, volunteers, user groups, public bodies and other stakeholders. Through targeted investment, evidence-led decision making and ongoing engagement, Dorset Council will continue to meet its statutory duties as Highway Authority while adopting a proactive approach to improving, promoting and protecting the network.

By maintaining and enhancing Dorset's rights of way and strengthening the connections between people, places and nature, this ROWIP will help create a network that is fit for the future. It will support healthier and more active communities, contribute to the local economy, improve resilience to climate change and ensure that current and future generations can continue to enjoy and benefit from Dorset's outstanding landscapes and natural spaces. This plan represents not only an investment in access, but an investment in Dorset's environmental, social and economic wellbeing for the decade ahead.

7. Appendices

7.1 Pre-Draft Consultation and Evidence Gathering

Prior to preparing the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026-2036, Dorset Council undertook a programme of engagement and evidence gathering to understand the needs, priorities and challenges associated with Dorset's rights of way network.

This engagement informed the development of the draft ROWIP and helped identify the key issues that the Plan should address. The findings reflected the views of network users, landowners, local communities, partner organisations and other stakeholders, together with evidence gathered through service experience and network analysis.

The key findings from this pre-draft consultation are summarised below. Each finding informed the development of one or more policies within the draft ROWIP and continues to provide an important part of the evidence base for this Plan.

Finding 1: Maintaining the existing network is the highest priority

Across all user groups, maintaining the existing network was identified as the top priority. The most common issues raised were vegetation overgrowth, poor path surfacing, deep mud, and the condition of structures such as gates and stiles.

Overgrown vegetation was consistently identified as the biggest barrier, preventing access particularly for those with lower mobility. Poor waymarking and missing signs were also widely reported, making routes difficult to follow and reducing user confidence. The network is also used frequently, with many respondents accessing it daily or several times per week, highlighting the importance of keeping routes open and usable at all times.

These findings demonstrate that improving the quality and usability of the existing network will deliver the greatest immediate benefit to the largest number of users.

This finding is addressed through Policy 1 and Policy 2.

Actions to deliver this:

- target maintenance activity on routes with the highest user demand and greatest reported issues
- work with town and parish councils to develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to improve service delivery for priority routes
- continue to replace and improve the condition and specification of path infrastructure, including gates, bridges and surfaces
- improve the usability and responsiveness of reporting systems to ensure issues are addressed more efficiently
- work with parish and town councils, landowners and volunteers to support maintenance activities
- work with landowners to improve understanding of their responsibilities for path maintenance, particularly in relation to vegetation management such as hedges and trees

Finding 2: Not everyone is able to access or benefit equally from the network

The consultation identified clear differences in how people access and benefit from Dorset's rights of way network. People with disabilities, those with mobility impairments, and some groups within the community were less likely to use the network. The proportion of respondents identifying as having a disability or from ethnic minority backgrounds was significantly lower than the wider Dorset population, suggesting that these groups may face barriers to access and participation.

Barriers identified included poor path surfacing, vegetation overgrowth, lack of accessible infrastructure, and limited links to local facilities. Older users and those with mobility challenges also highlighted difficulties with stiles and uneven surfaces.

These findings indicate that while Dorset has an extensive network, it is not equally accessible to all users, and targeted improvements are required to create a more inclusive network.

This finding is addressed through Policy 3 and Policy 8**.**

Actions to deliver this:

- identify and prioritise routes where accessibility improvements will deliver the greatest benefit to users with mobility needs
- continue the programme of replacing stiles with gaps or gates to improve accessibility
- improve path surfacing where appropriate to support a wider range of users
- work with partners in public health and community organisations to promote inclusive access and increase participation

Finding 3: Connectivity and road safety are key barriers to use

The consultation highlighted road severance as a barrier to using the network. Many users identified that routes are disconnected, with unsafe or difficult crossings preventing continued journeys.

This affects all user groups but is particularly significant for vulnerable users such as walkers, cyclists and horse riders, who are at greater risk when interacting with traffic. A lack of safe connections between routes also limits the ability to use the network for everyday journeys, such as travelling to school, work or local services, despite a significant proportion of users already relying on the network to access these destinations.

Improving connectivity and reducing the impact of road severance is important to unlocking the full potential of the network.

This finding is addressed through Policy 3, Policy 7, and Policy 9.

Actions to deliver this:

- identify and prioritise locations where improved crossings and connections will address the greatest need
- develop traffic-free and safer routes to connect communities and improve access to existing safe road crossings.
- work with National Highways and Dorset Highways teams to improve integration between the rights of way network and the wider transport network
- support the development of routes that enable sustainable travel and reduce reliance on private vehicles
- work with developers to address road severance and integrate safe crossings and route connections within new developments

Finding 4: Demand exists for new and improved routes

The consultation identified demand for improvements to the network, including new routes, better connections, and enhancements to existing paths. Over 300 suggestions for improvements were submitted, with a strong emphasis on connecting routes, reducing road use and improving accessibility.

Users expressed a desire for more circular routes, better connections between communities, and routes that link to key destinations and services.

This demonstrates that, alongside maintaining the existing network, there is a clear opportunity to enhance and expand it in a targeted and strategic way.

This finding is addressed through Policy 1 and Policy 3, supported by Policy 5 and Policy 7.

Actions to deliver this:

- prioritise improvements that create better connections between existing routes
- develop circular and multi-user routes that meet a range of user needs
- align network improvements with wider transport, planning and green infrastructure strategies
- use external funding and developer contributions to deliver larger-scale improvements
- work with developers to ensure there is a net gain in access provision at a local level

Finding 5: Responsible use and land management

Both landowners and users identified issues relating to behaviour on the network. Landowners reported concerns including dogs not being kept under control, disturbance and chasing of livestock, dog fouling on paths and agricultural land, gates being left open, littering, and other anti-social behaviours.

At the same time, users highlighted the importance of clear waymarking and information to help them stay on the correct routes and understand their responsibilities. These issues have become more pronounced following increased use of the network, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a significant rise in people accessing the countryside.

Improving awareness and promoting responsible behaviour is essential to maintaining good relationships with landowners and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the network.

This finding is addressed through Policy 6, supported by Policy 4.

Actions to deliver this:

- promote the Countryside Code and responsible use of the network, with a particular focus on responsible dog ownership
- improve signage and waymarking to reduce confusion and unintentional misuse/trespass
- work closely with landowners to manage routes effectively and reduce conflict
- support appropriate diversions where they improve safety and reduce impacts on land management
- work with partners, including the Police, to address anti-social behaviour where necessary
- make greater use of social media and communications campaigns to promote responsible use of the network.

Finding 6: Information, signage, and awareness.

The consultation identified that many users lack confidence in navigating the network. Issues included unclear or missing signage, lack of waymarking, and limited awareness of how to report problems or access information.

There is also a shift in how different groups access information, with younger users more likely to rely on digital tools, while older users tend to use traditional maps and local knowledge. This highlights the need to provide information in a range of accessible formats.

Improving the availability, quality and accessibility of information will help users to better understand and use the network.

This finding is addressed through Policy 2, supported by Policy 4 and Policy 6.

Actions to deliver this:

- improve waymarking and signage across the network, particularly at key locations such as path intersections and from the metalled highway
- enhance digital information, including mapping and route planning tools, and promote their use through the Dorset Council website and social media
- provide information through non-digital channels, including printed materials, to reach those with limited digital access
- improve awareness and usability of reporting systems
- promote the network through targeted communications and campaigns, including engagement with schools and younger users
- work with parish and town councils, partners, and volunteers to support local knowledge and promotion

Finding 7: Access to the Definitive Map and legal records is not well understood

The consultation found that many users were unaware of how to access or use key legal information such as the Definitive Map and Statement. Only a limited proportion of respondents felt that these records were well publicised or easy to use.

This lack of awareness limits the ability of users to understand their rights and responsibilities and reduces engagement with the legal record of public rights of way. Improving access to and understanding of the Definitive Map and Statement will support better use of the network and more effective long-term management.

This finding is addressed through Policy 10, supported by Policy 4.

Actions to deliver this:

- improve information and understanding of the Definitive Map and Statement through the Dorset Council website
- promote Dorset Explorer as a publicly accessible digital mapping tool showing the rights of way network

- improve communication and awareness of the purpose and value of the Definitive Map and Statement

Finding 8: Improve awareness of the online reporting system

The consultation identified that many users were unaware of how to report problems on the rights of way network. A significant proportion of respondents did not know how to use the Council's online reporting system, and those who had used it indicated that feedback and resolution times could be unclear.

This reduces the effectiveness of the reporting process and can lead to unresolved issues, reduces user confidence, and missed opportunities to address problems quickly and efficiently.

Improving the usability, accessibility and responsiveness of reporting systems will support better maintenance of the network and improve the overall user experience.

This finding is addressed through Policy 1 and Policy 2, supported by Policy 4.

Actions to deliver this:

- improve awareness and promotion of the reporting system for rights of way issues
- enhance the usability and accessibility of the online reporting tool
- improve communication and feedback to users on the status of reported issues
- use reporting data to better inform maintenance priorities and decision-making

7.2 Consultation on the DRAFT Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Dorset Council undertook public consultation on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026-2036 between 21 July and 12 October 2026. A total of 507 responses were received, of which 92.7% were from members of the public. Respondents were predominantly regular users of the Public Rights of Way network, with over 82% using rights of way daily or several times each week.

The consultation demonstrated strong support for the proposed vision of creating a modern, accessible and well-connected rights of way network that supports health, communities, the economy and the environment. Overall, 90.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the vision, while all ten proposed policies received majority support, ranging from 80.9% to 96.3% agreement. The highest levels of support were recorded for maintaining an up-to-date Definitive Map and Statement, supporting responsible use and respect for landowners, empowering communities, and maintaining and improving the existing network.

When asked to rank priorities, respondents clearly identified maintenance and improvement of the existing network as the most important issues. Accessibility was the second highest priority, followed by ensuring the Countryside Code and access legislation are followed and that landowners are respected. Building the Dorset economy through the rights of way

network ranked lowest, indicating a strong preference for investment in core network quality and accessibility before wider economic or promotional objectives.

Consultation responses highlighted a number of consistent themes. The most frequently raised concerns related to overgrown vegetation, poor path surfaces, inadequate maintenance, blocked or obstructed routes, poor signage and waymarking, and gaps in network connectivity. Respondents also called for improved accessibility, the removal of unnecessary barriers such as stiles, safer routes for walking, cycling and horse riding, and stronger action where rights of way are obstructed or poorly maintained.

Experience of the existing network was more mixed. While 35.9% of respondents considered rights of way easy or very easy to use, 32.3% found them difficult or very difficult to use. Similar findings were recorded regarding access to information about routes. Most respondents were confident navigating the network, but more than one quarter were unaware of how to report problems on paths, highlighting the need for improved communication and public awareness.

The most commonly reported barriers to using rights of way were blocked or restricted access to paths (70.3%), poor path condition (62.8%), poor signage or information (50.1%), accessibility barriers (25.7%) and a lack of local routes (20.6%). These responses demonstrate the importance users place on routes being open, well maintained, clearly signed and well connected to communities, services and destinations.

Detailed responses from stakeholder organisations, including the Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Joint Local Access Forum, Ramblers, Dorset Greenways Alliance, public health representatives, parish councils and individual respondents, broadly supported the direction of the draft ROWIP. Stakeholders also identified opportunities to strengthen the Plan through greater emphasis on climate resilience, improved connectivity between communities, enhanced accessibility, clearer monitoring and performance measures, stronger support for Rights of Way Liaison Officers and volunteers, increased use of planning and developer contributions, promotion of active travel, and delivery of strategic trailway and greenway projects.

Overall, the consultation demonstrated strong public and stakeholder support for the draft ROWIP and its vision. The findings reinforced the importance of maintaining and improving the existing network, increasing accessibility, enhancing connectivity, supporting health and wellbeing, strengthening community involvement, and ensuring Dorset's rights of way continue to meet the needs of residents, visitors and businesses over the next decade. The consultation also provided valuable feedback on the draft Plan and identified areas where respondents wished to see greater emphasis, clarification or additional action. This feedback has been carefully considered in preparing the final ROWIP and has informed refinements to policies, supporting text, delivery actions and the implementation framework where appropriate.

The findings presented above relate specifically to consultation on the draft ROWIP. They should be considered alongside the earlier evidence gathering and pre-draft engagement that informed the development of the draft Plan and provided the wider evidence base on which the ROWIP is founded.

7.3 Strategic Opportunities for Future Delivery

The projects described below represent a range of potential opportunities that may contribute towards delivery of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan over the lifetime of the strategy. Many are dependent on the level of capital funding that is available.

Inclusion within this list does not represent a commitment to deliver any individual scheme, nor does it imply that funding has been secured or that all necessary approvals have been obtained. All projects remain subject to public support and feasibility assessment, landowner agreement, statutory processes, consultation, environmental considerations and the availability of resources.

The list is not exhaustive and will continue to evolve throughout the life of the ROWIP as new opportunities emerge.

Linking Communities

Project	Lead and Partners
Portesham to Abbotsbury	Dorset Council, National Landscapes
Piddle Path	Dorset Council
ND Trailway Stalbridge to Henstridge (Somerset)	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
ND Trailway Stalbridge to Sturminster Newton	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
ND Trailway Spetisbury to Sturminster Marshall	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
ND Trailway Sturminster Marshall to Corfe Mullen	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
SWCP Lulworth to Kimmeridge (through the MOD Ranges)	Dorset Council. SWCPA and MOD
West Dorset Trailway – Completion of route from Maiden Newton to Bridport	Dorset Council and PC/TC and private landowners
Upton Trailway	Dorset Council and NDTN
Pimperne to Blandford (France Firs)	Dorset Council and private landowners

Creating (at least) 10 Accessible Routes

Project	Lead and Partners
Re-surface the South West Coast Path on the west coast of Portland to link communities to the coast and to facilities – such as Atlantic Academy	Dorset Council, South West Coast Path Association, Court Leet, Natural England
Linking Portesham to Abbotsbury	Dorset Council, National Landscapes
ND Trailway Stalbridge to Henstridge (Somerset)	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
ND Trailway Stalbridge to Sturminster Newton	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
ND Trailway Spetisbury to Sturminster Marshall	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
ND Trailway Sturminster Marshall to Corfe Mullen	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
Pimperne to Blandford (France Firs)	Dorset Council and private landowners
Purbeck Park to Corfe Castle	Dorset Council and NDTN and private landowners
Wareham River path	Dorset Council, EA and private landowners
NT RoW across Purbeck	DC-SWCP-NT

Improving and Investing in Bridleways and Trailways

Project	Lead and Partners
Bridleway Bridges being upgraded from softwood specification to long lasting GRP bridges.	Dorset Council
Improve access from Abbotsbury to the Coast via non-road route	Dorset Council
Horse box parking for ND Trailway	Dorset Council NDTN
Alners Gorse (Hazlebury Bryan)	Dorset Council and private landowners
Clay Lane (Bourton)	Dorset Council and private landowners
Gypseys Drove (Sturminster Newton)	Dorset Council
Dolmans Hill (Lytchett Matravers)	Dorset Council and private landowners
UCR's County wide	Dorset Council (Greenspace and Highways)

Many opportunities identified in this section originate from local communities, user groups, Parish Councils elected members and stakeholder organisations. Before any scheme progresses, Dorset Council will undertake appropriate feasibility work, engagement and consultation to ensure proposals are deliverable, environmentally appropriate and supported by those affected.

Monitoring Success

Progress will be monitored through a range of performance indicators, including:

- percentage of the rights of way network assessed as easy to use
- number of accessibility improvements delivered
- number of barriers replaced with less restrictive structures
- length of new or improved multi-user routes created
- progress against agreed strategic Trailway projects
- number of active volunteers and volunteer hours contributed
- progress in reducing the Definitive Map Modification Order backlog
- customer satisfaction levels and user feedback
- contribution towards Dorset Council and Local Transport Plan objectives.

7.4 Glossary and Definitions

Accessibility
The extent to which routes and facilities can be used by people with a wide range of abilities and needs. This may include improvements such as better surfaces, gates, gradients, signage and information.

Active Travel
Everyday journeys made by walking, wheeling, cycling or horse riding, either for recreation or to reach destinations such as schools, workplaces, shops and services.

Bridleway
A public path open to walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Motor vehicles are not permitted.

Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)
A highway over which the public has a right of way for all types of traffic, although it is mainly used for walking, cycling and horse riding. Many BOATs are rural tracks or lanes.

Definitive Map and Statement
The official legal record of public rights of way. It shows the location and status of footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic.

Footpath
A highway where the public has a legal right to walk. Footpaths may cross farmland, woodland, open countryside or urban areas.

Green Lane
An unsurfaced rural track or lane, often used for walking, cycling, horse riding and, in some cases, motor vehicle use.

Least Restrictive Access
A principle that seeks to provide the easiest and most accessible route possible while meeting land management, safety and legal requirements.

Multi-user Route
A route designed for use by more than one group of users, such as walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders.

Open Access Land
Land where the public has a legal right to walk freely, as established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This includes mapped mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land.

Permissive Path
A route that a landowner allows the public to use but which is not a public right of way. Permission may be withdrawn by the landowner.

Public Path
A route available for public use. This may include public rights of way and other publicly accessible routes.

Public Rights of Way (PROW) sometimes shortened to ROW
Highways over which the public has a legal right to pass and repass. These include

footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic.

Restricted Byway
A route open to walkers, cyclists, horse riders and non-motorised vehicles, such as horse-drawn carriages. Motor vehicles are not allowed.

Rights of Way
A general term for paths and tracks over which the public has legal rights of access.

Stile or Gate
Structures that allow people to pass through or over boundaries while helping to control livestock. Where practicable, less restrictive options should be used to improve accessibility.

Trailway
A largely traffic-free route, often created from a former railway corridor, that provides opportunities for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding.

Waymarking
Signs, markers or symbols used to guide people along a route or trail.

Wheeling
A term used to describe journeys made using wheeled mobility aids or equipment, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, adapted cycles, pushchairs and similar devices.

Dorset's Public Rights of Way network.

PRoW Type	For Use By	Symbol	Sign	Total Length	Number of Paths
Footpath	Walkers			1,745 miles (2,809 km)	4,951
Bridleway	Walkers, horse riders, and cyclists			1,090 miles (1,754 km)	1,754
Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)	Walkers, Horse riders, cyclists, horse drawn carriages, and motor vehicles			20 miles (48 km)	48
Restricted Byway	Walkers, horse riders, cyclists, horse drawn carriages			30 miles (48 km)	31

Figure 31: Summary table showing Dorset public rights of way types, permitted users, route lengths and number of paths.

Promoted Routes

Dorset has a wide range of promoted routes used by residents and visitors. These include local circular routes as well as longer-distance trails, many of which are managed by the Dorset Council Ranger team.

Key examples include:

- the 89 mile Dorset section of the South West Coast Path / King Charles III England Coast Path
- The Wessex Ridgeway (62 miles)
- The Stour Valley Way (64 miles)
- Dorset Walkabouts – locally developed circular routes
- The Jubilee Trail

These routes help promote the network, support tourism and encourage wider use.

Trailways

Trailways are routes developed from former railway lines and represent a significant opportunity to provide high-quality, multi-user access across Dorset. Their gentle gradients, durable surfaces and separation from traffic make them particularly suitable for walking, cycling and horse riding, supporting both everyday use and recreation.

As well as providing accessible routes, Trailways help to preserve and celebrate Dorset's industrial and transport heritage. Former railway features such as bridges, stations and signage can be retained and enhanced, contributing to the character of the route and creating a distinctive user experience.

Where former railway alignments remain intact, they offer valuable opportunities to connect communities, services and visitor destinations. In many locations, however, routes are fragmented. Ongoing work with landowners and partners is therefore essential to secure permissive or permanent access, and to identify alternative alignments where gaps exist.

Trailway development also provides opportunities for wider benefits, including links to local businesses, visitor facilities such as cafés and cycle hire, and improved access to green

space. As such, they form a key component of Dorset's long-term access and sustainable transport network.

Access Land

Access Land was introduced under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and provides a right of access on foot for open-air recreation. It includes areas of "open country", such as heath, moor, downland, and registered common land.

Unlike public rights of way, access is not restricted to defined paths, allowing people to move more freely across the landscape, subject to certain restrictions and land management considerations. This is sometimes referred to as a "right to roam", although access is controlled and not unrestricted.

In Dorset, Access Land covers over 9,000 hectares, much of it associated with heathland and downland landscapes. These areas provide important opportunities for informal recreation and connection with nature.

There is ongoing potential to improve access to, and awareness of, Access Land, particularly in areas close to towns and larger settlements, where it can support health and wellbeing and reduce pressure on more heavily used routes.

Coastal Access

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 introduced a long-term programme to improve public access to, and enjoyment of, the English coastline. This is being delivered through the creation of the King Charles III England Coast Path, providing clear and consistent public rights along the coast for walking and other forms of open-air recreation on foot.

The programme secures and enhances existing coastal access while also creating new routes in locations where access did not previously exist. It includes the ability to realign routes inland where coastal erosion occurs, ensuring a continuous and resilient route over time.

In Dorset, one of the first sections to be established was the 'Weymouth Bay' stretch, between Portland and Lulworth, completed in time for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic sailing events. This created approximately 30 km of coastal path, together with associated access land.

Over time, coastal access rights will be extended to cover the full Dorset coastline, creating a continuous route around the county. This approach ensures long-term access along a dynamic and evolving coastline, allowing routes to adapt where necessary while maintaining public access.

ROWLO

Rights of way Liaison Officer – a parish or town council volunteer with a particular remit for PROW in their area and liaison with the DC ranger team and landowners.

Cycling

Cycling access in Dorset is provided through a combination of dedicated cycle routes, shared-use paths and public rights of way, particularly bridleways. While some areas (especially in the south east of the county) have more developed infrastructure, provision across the county is generally fragmented.

Not all bridleways are suitable for cycling due to surface condition, gradient or drainage, which can limit usability for some users. Improving the quality and connectivity of routes is therefore an important opportunity to support cycling as both a recreational activity and a form of everyday travel.

Better integration between rights of way, Trailways and local transport networks will help create more coherent and accessible cycling opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.

Unclassified County Roads (UCRs)

Unclassified County Roads (UCRs) are highways that are not designated as A, B or C roads. They are recorded on the highway authority's "List of Streets" and may be surfaced or unsurfaced, ranging from tarmac to gravel, grass or natural surfaces.

UCRs are highways maintainable at public expense; however, the exact public rights associated with them are not always formally recorded. In practice, many UCRs are used by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motor vehicles, but the level of public access can vary depending on the legal status of each route.

In Dorset, UCRs often function as important links between public rights of way, helping to extend off-road access and improve connectivity across the wider network. The condition and usability of UCRs varies considerably depending on surface type, levels of use and available maintenance resources. As a result, they present both an opportunity to enhance network connectivity and a challenge in terms of long-term management and maintenance.

Countryside Code

The Countryside Code provides guidance for everyone enjoying the outdoors in England and Wales. It promotes responsible access to the countryside and helps balance the interests of visitors, local communities, landowners and the natural environment.

The Code is based on three simple principles:

Respect everyone
Users should be considerate of people living and working in the countryside, leave gates and property as they find them, follow local signage and share routes responsibly with other users.

Protect the environment
Visitors should leave no trace of their visit by taking litter home, keeping dogs under effective control, disposing of dog waste responsibly, avoiding disturbance to wildlife and livestock, and helping to protect Dorset's landscapes and habitats.

Enjoy the outdoors
People should plan ahead, follow local safety advice, take responsibility for their own actions and enjoy the countryside responsibly so that it remains welcoming and accessible for everyone.
These principles support Dorset Council's aim of promoting responsible use of the public rights of way network and maintaining positive relationships between users, communities and landowners.

A simple way to remember the Countryside Code is:
Respect everyone, Protect the environment, Enjoy the outdoors.

7.5 Review of Previous Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The previous Dorset ROWIP was a strong document for its time. Rather than focusing solely on statutory rights of way maintenance, it successfully repositioned the network as a key contributor to transport, health, the local economy, climate change mitigation, community wellbeing and green infrastructure. That strategic approach remains one of its greatest strengths and is highly relevant to the new draft ROWIP.

Biggest Successes of the 2011-2021 ROWIP

1. Moving Rights of Way Beyond a Maintenance Function
The most significant achievement was establishing rights of way as part of Dorset's wider social, environmental and economic infrastructure, rather than simply a highway maintenance responsibility. The plan clearly linked access improvements with:

- Public health and wellbeing
- Sustainable transport
- Climate change objectives
- Tourism and economic growth
- Green infrastructure
- Community development
- Equality and accessibility

A particularly strong theme was the links between transport, tourism, health, climate change, and community development.
In 2011, ROWIP1, was based upon what people told us were the most important issues and priorities for the ROWIP network in the future. The objectives of ROWIP1 were designed to be aspirational and conveyed the optimism and ambitions of that time. It helped raise the profile of our ROW work, secure funding for improvements, encourage partnership-working and generate a greater appreciation of the network.

The successes of ROWIP1 can be found below.

Partnership Working

The last fifteen years have seen strong partnerships help deliver important projects and improvements to the PROW network across the County. Partnerships include, Dorset, and Cranborne Chase - National Landscape teams, Ramblers Society, British Horse Society, Natural England, South West Coast Path Association, (SWCPA), and housing developers. Dorset Council Sustainable Transport Team and Parish and Town councils.

PRoW and New Development

The Ranger Team have begun securing Section 106 & Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for new and improved paths as part of new planning applications. The Team is now fully integrated into the development management and design process and when new developments are being designed, they are much more likely to respect existing or new PROW routes in housing developments. In addition, policies in the Dorset Plan and its supporting documents (including Policy 7 in this ROWIP) place requirements on developers to ensure PROW are prioritised in new developments. This has enabled the Team to take a more proactive approach to planning applications.

PRoW Infrastructure repair and maintenance

The Greenspace team through restructuring and combining similar teams, now rectify 1,000's more maintenance issues per year than happened in 2011 when there was a more focused but much smaller ROW team. Therefore, the teams output and productivity have been much improved. The team have created new Trailways, replaced hundreds of signs, changed stiles to gates and increased accessible surfacing in locations across Dorset, improving access to the countryside. A good example of a project in which this occurred was at Child Okeford where a network of stiles was replaced with more accessible gates. In Child Okeford and elsewhere across the County, negotiating with landowners was a key part of the process which enabled a satisfactory outcome for all users. This has ensured the PROW network is accessible for a wider range of users. Policy 3 of this Plan seeks to continue to improve accessibility for a wider range of users by creating 10 accessible routes in 10 years.

The new ROWIP will reflect the successful elements of the previous council ROWIP but will reflect a long-term strategic vision by reflecting the current and future needs of stakeholders and local communities. The new ROWIP strengthens the value of Dorset's rights of way to many areas of Dorset council and makes ROW more central in the delivering better outcomes across all areas of society. Whilst preparing the first draft, we have carried out extensive external stakeholder engagement to ensure that the new ROWIP is a plan for the people of Dorset.

7.6 Relevant strategies

Local Strategies

ROWIP2 supports a range of Dorset Council strategies and local partnerships, contributing to wider objectives including public health, sustainable travel, environmental management and economic growth.

Babies, Children, Young People and Families Plan

The Babies, Children, Young People and Families Plan aims to improve outcomes for children and young people by supporting health, wellbeing, education, safety and opportunities to thrive. ROWIP2 contributes by improving safe access to outdoor spaces, supporting active travel to school, promoting outdoor learning opportunities and encouraging children and young people to experience and enjoy Dorset's natural environment.

Dorset Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy

The council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and is working to reduce carbon emissions and enhance biodiversity. ROWIP2 supports these objectives by encouraging sustainable travel, improving access to green infrastructure and promoting responsible use of the natural environment.

Dorset Council Plan

The Council Plan sets out Dorset Council's overall vision and priorities, including creating stronger, healthier communities and protecting the natural environment. ROWIP2 contributes by improving access to green space, supporting active lifestyles, and helping connect

communities to services and opportunities.

Dorset Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Dorset Health and Wellbeing Strategy focuses on improving physical and mental health, reducing inequalities and enabling people to live healthy, independent lives. ROWIP2 contributes by providing free and accessible opportunities for physical activity, supporting access to nature, promoting social connection and helping to reduce health inequalities through improved access to high-quality outdoor spaces.

Dorset Housing Strategy

The Dorset Housing Strategy seeks to create sustainable communities with access to services, employment, recreation and green infrastructure. ROWIP2 supports these objectives by ensuring that new housing developments are connected to high-quality walking, wheeling, cycling and riding routes, helping residents access services, open spaces and the wider countryside while reducing reliance on private vehicles.

Dorset Local Plan

The Local Plan sets out the framework for future development, including housing growth and infrastructure provision. ROWIP2 supports this by ensuring that high-quality rights of way infrastructure is designed into new developments, improving connectivity and integrating new communities with the wider network.

Dorset Local Visitor Economy Plan - Destination Management Plan

The Destination Management Plan establishes Dorset as a leading visitor destination, with an ambition to become a flagship area for access to the outdoors and a premier walking destination. ROWIP2 plays a key role in delivering this ambition by improving access to key destinations, promoting high-quality routes and supporting local businesses and the visitor economy.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy promotes fairness, inclusion and equal access to opportunities and services for all residents. ROWIP2 supports these objectives by seeking to reduce barriers to access, improving accessibility across the rights of way network, engaging with underrepresented groups and ensuring that people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can benefit from Dorset's countryside and green spaces.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy identifies priorities and opportunities for restoring and enhancing habitats, increasing biodiversity and improving ecological connectivity across Dorset. ROWIP2 supports these aims by improving responsible access to nature, connecting communities with natural spaces, promoting biodiversity awareness and, where appropriate, helping to deliver habitat and nature recovery projects through integrated access and environmental improvements.

Local Transport Plan (LTP4)

The Local Transport Plan promotes sustainable and integrated transport, with a focus on walking, cycling and reducing reliance on private vehicles. ROWIP2 supports these objectives by improving connectivity between settlements, enhancing access to services and enabling more journeys to be made on foot, by bike or on horseback.

Physical Activity Strategy (Movement for Movement)

Movement for Movement is Dorset's place-based approach to increasing physical activity, focusing on making it easier for people to move more in their everyday lives and addressing health inequalities. ROWIP2 directly supports this approach by providing free, accessible opportunities for walking and outdoor activity, particularly close to where people live, and by reducing barriers to participation through improved infrastructure and information.

Public Health Policies and Strategies

Dorset Council's Public Health policies and strategies focus on increasing physical activity, reducing health inequalities, improving wellbeing and supporting healthier lifestyles. ROWIP2 contributes by providing free, accessible opportunities for everyday physical activity, particularly close to where people live, helping to address inactivity and improve wellbeing.

National Strategies

ROWIP2 supports a range of national strategies and policy frameworks that promote physical activity, sustainable travel, improved access to nature and public health outcomes.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act)

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on local highway authorities to prepare and review a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. ROWIP2 has been produced in accordance with these requirements and seeks to identify how Dorset's rights of way network can better meet the present and future needs of the public.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – 25 Year Environment Plan

The 25 Year Environment Plan sets out a commitment to connect people with the natural environment to improve health and wellbeing, while protecting and enhancing landscapes and biodiversity. ROWIP2 plays a key role by enabling access to Dorset's natural environment in a managed and sustainable way.

Department for Transport – Gear Change

Gear Change sets out the Government's vision for making walking and cycling the natural first choice for short journeys. ROWIP2 contributes by improving connectivity between communities, services and green spaces, helping to support safer and more convenient

active travel routes.

Natural England – Coastal Access

Coastal Access aims to improve public access to England's coastline through the establishment and maintenance of the King Charles III England Coast Path and associated coastal access rights. ROWIP2 supports these objectives by improving access to Dorset's coastline, helping residents and visitors enjoy the coast safely and sustainably whilst supporting recreation, health and wellbeing, tourism and the local economy.

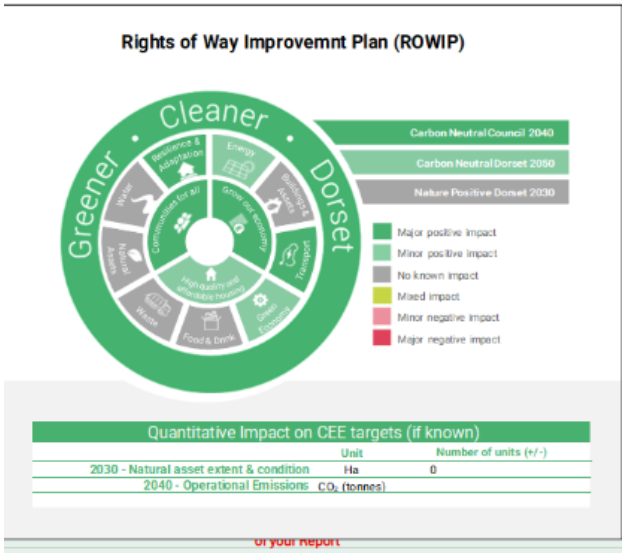
Office for Health Improvement and Disparities - Everybody Active, Every Day

This national framework sets out an evidence-based approach to increasing physical activity levels through creating environments that make it easier for people to move more in their daily lives. ROWIP2 supports this by improving local access to green space, enabling people to be active close to where they live, and reducing barriers to participation.

Sport England - Uniting the Movement

Sport England's 10-year strategy aims to transform lives and strengthen communities through increased participation in sport and physical activity, with a focus on tackling inequalities. ROWIP2 contributes to this vision by improving access to safe, attractive and accessible routes that support everyday physical activity, particularly walking and cycling.

Dorset Council - Climate Emergency colour Wheel – positive impact



of your report

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	minor positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	minor positive impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact
Corporate Plan Aims	**Impact**
Grow our economy	strongly supports it
High-quality and affordable housing	minor positive impact
Communities for all	strongly supports it

7.7 Front cover of the Sturminster Newton Walkabout Leaflet.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The area around **Gotts Corner** was occupied by Flemish refugees, who established the textile industry here, having been driven from their homeland by religious persecution.



At the top of the field, before turning to cross Bath Road, there is a **splendid panorama** of the river and its valley.



With such a variety of **bird and insect life** here, occasionally you may see a Kestrel, Buzzard or Heron flying overhead.



The **Butts Pond Meadows** were given to the Town in 2004, and are now managed as a Nature Reserve and amenity area.



The low-lying area is home to all **three species of British newt** – including the protected Great Crested Newt.



The path from the Meadows back to the car park, which passes the site of the **Old Creamery**, is the 'Jubilee Path', created as a traffic-free route for walkers and cyclists.



Photo credits: Helen Baggott, John Lewis, Giles Nicholson, Sturminster Newton Museum, Jan Wardell, Wildstock

STURMINSTER NEWTON WALKABOUTS

WALKABOUT 1

Gotts Corner / Honeymead Lane / Butts Pond Meadows

A varied walk with features of interest in Sturminster Newton, both past and present (approx. 1.5 miles).

This is one of a series of circular walks from Sturminster Newton which take in the surrounding area of the Blackmore Vale. They are mainly on Public Rights of Way, with some on paths with access permitted by the landowners.

These walks are intended to encourage exploration and appreciation of the variety and beauty of the countryside in this locality, on foot. Cyclists are not permitted to ride on public footpaths and by law must give way to walkers and horseriders on bridleways.

When walking, please remember the Countryside Code, particularly:

- respect the local community, farmland and others enjoying the countryside
- leave gates and property as you find them
- leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- keep dogs under effective control
- keep to the marked paths and cause no damage to crops, livestock or wildlife

Appropriate footwear is recommended, since wet or muddy conditions can be encountered at any time.

The Sturminster Newton Walkabouts have been developed by the Sturminster Newton Town Council in association with Dorset County Council and are available from Sturquest Community Office, Sturminster Library, the Museum and Sturminster Mill or can be downloaded from **www.dorsetforyou.com/walkabouts**

Further information can be obtained from the Town Council on 01258 475136.

Sturminster Newton Town Council

Dorset County Council

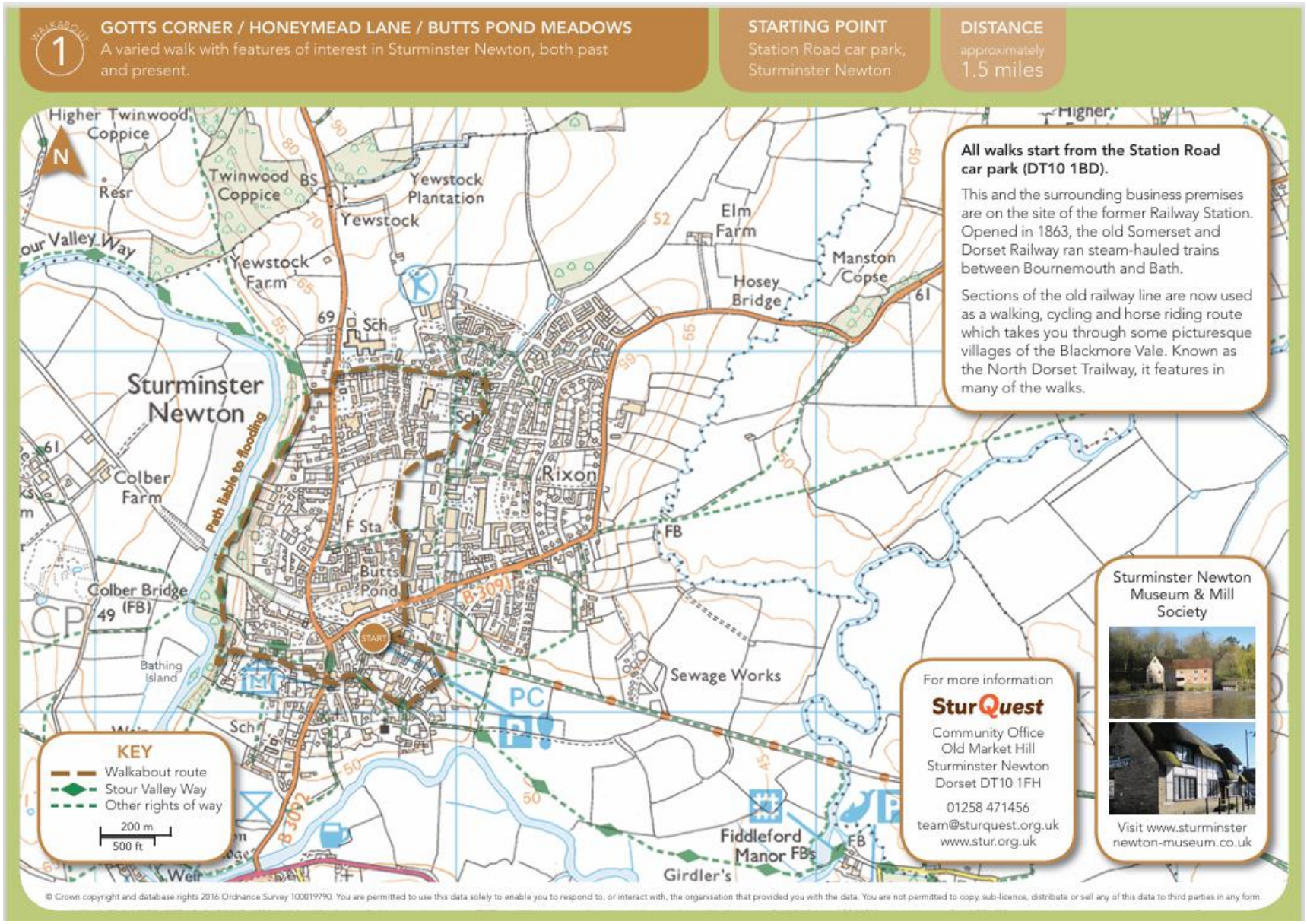
WALKABOUT 1 APPROX. 1.5 MILES

STURMINSTER NEWTON WALKABOUTS

Gotts Corner / Honeymead Lane / Butts Pond Meadows



Back cover of the Sturminster Newton Walkabout Leaflet.



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Rights of Way Implementation Plan 2026 Consultation

Consultation response analysis report produced by the Consultation and Engagement Team – Dorset Council

Report produced October 2026

Consultation Response Report

What was the consultation about?	Dorset Council, as the Local Highway Authority, has a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The ROWIP outlines this duty whilst aiming to set out a broader and more ambitious vision for how Dorset's public rights of way (PROW) network will contribute to the county's communities, economy and environment over the next decade. The ROWIP sets out how Dorset Council will develop a modern, accessible and better-connected network of public rights of way that supports everyday walking, cycling and access to natural green and blue spaces.
Over what period did the consultation run?	The consultation ran from 21/07/26 to 12/10/26.
What consultation methods were used?	This consultation was available through an online survey and a paper version of the survey.
How many responses were received overall?	507 responses were received.
How representative is the response to the wider population?	92.7% (470) of responses were from members of the public; 3.4% (17) were from the town or parish council. 0.8% (4) were from other, 0.6% (3) were from elected members, and 0.4% (2) were from businesses. 56.0% (275) of respondents were female, compared to 38.7% (190) that were male. 0.8% (4) of respondents were aged 24 and under, 22.2% (110) aged 25-49, 35.5% (176) aged 50-64, and 36.5% (181) were 65 plus. 10.9% (54) declared they had a disability.
Where will the results be published?	Results will be published on the council's website www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk and on Dorset Council's consultation platform
How will the results be used?	Results from this survey will be used to inform the next steps of the process.
Who has produced this report?	Consultation and Engagement Team, Dorset Council, October 2026

Background

Dorset Council is required to prepare and maintain a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP), setting out the strategic framework for managing, improving and promoting the Public Rights of Way network. Since the previous ROWIP was adopted, there have been significant changes in recreation, public health, active travel, climate change and access to the countryside. A refreshed plan is therefore needed to ensure the network continues to meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

The new ROWIP aims not only to maintain the network but also to maximise its wider social, environmental and economic benefits. This includes supporting active travel, improving access to nature, promoting healthier lifestyles, enhancing connectivity between communities, and contributing to Dorset Council's ambitions for climate action, biodiversity recovery and sustainable transport.

This report presents the findings of the public consultation on the draft ROWIP. It analyses feedback received from residents, user groups, landowners, local councils and other stakeholders, combining quantitative survey results with qualitative comments. The findings will help inform the final ROWIP and ensure it reflects the views, needs and priorities of those who use, manage and benefit from Dorset's public rights of way network.

The Consultation

The consultation survey was open to Dorset Council residents, organisations and other stakeholders with an interest in Dorset's Public Rights of Way network. It invited respondents to comment on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026-2036, including the proposed vision and policy framework, and to identify priorities, challenges and opportunities for improving the network over the next ten years.

Analysis Method

Responses to closed questions were collated and summarised, with the number of respondents for each question shown in the report. All consultation questions and their results are included.

Open-ended responses were reviewed and analysed. Where a large number of comments were received, responses were coded and grouped into common themes to identify key issues raised by respondents. Where only a small number of comments were received, responses have been presented verbatim to accurately reflect respondents' views.

Demographic analysis was undertaken to identify whether views differed between respondent groups. Findings have been reported where notable differences were identified and were considered to add meaningful context to the interpretation of the results.

Note: Figures may not always total precisely due to rounding.

Executive Summary

Dorset Council consulted on its draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026-2036 between July and October 2026. A total of 507 responses were received, with the majority coming from members of the public (92.7%, 470). Respondents were more likely to be female and from older age groups. The findings demonstrate strong support for both the overall vision and the proposed policies, while also highlighting areas where respondents would like to see improvements to the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network.

- Respondent profile: Respondents were more likely to be female (56.0%, 275) than male (38.7%, 190), and 72.0% (357) were aged 50 or over, indicating that older residents were more strongly represented in the consultation.
- Respondents were regular users of the Public Rights of Way network, with 50.4% (255) using rights of way daily and a further 31.8% (161) using them a few times a week.
- There was strong support for the proposed vision, with 90.7% (459) agreeing or strongly agreeing that Dorset should have a modern, accessible and well-connected Public Rights of Way network. Only 3.4% (17) disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- All ten proposed policies received high levels of support, with agreement ranging from 80.9% (110) to 96.3% (105).

  The most strongly supported policies were:

  - Definitive Map and Legal Record: 96.3% (105) agreement.
  - Responsible Use and Landowners: 94.2% (128) agreement.
  - Empowering Communities: 93.8% (121) agreement.
  - Maintaining and Improving the Existing Network: 93.5% (303) agreement.
- When asked to identify priorities for the future network, respondents ranked maintaining and improving the existing network as the most important priority (ranking score 2.37), followed by improving accessibility (0.87) and promoting responsible use and respect for landowners (0.54).

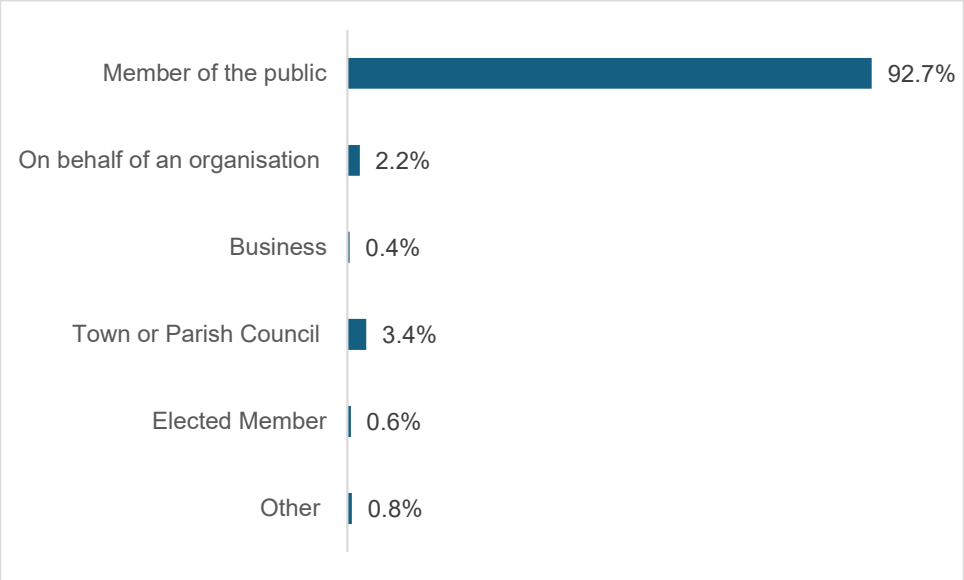
- Views on the current network were more mixed:
    - 35.9% (179) found rights of way easy or very easy to use.
    - 32.3% (161) found rights of way difficult or very difficult to use.
- Access to route information was also mixed:
    - 35.5% (177) found it easy or very easy to find information about routes.
    - 27.0% (135) found it difficult or very difficult.
- Most respondents were confident navigating the network, with 71.3% (357) reporting that they were fairly or very confident.
- Views on reporting problems on paths were mixed; 32.8% (164) of respondents found the process easy or very easy, while 25.2% (126) were not aware of how to report an issue.
- The most commonly reported barriers to using rights of way were:
    - Blocked or restricted access to paths: 70.3% (348).
    - Poor path condition: 62.8% (311).
    - Poor signage or information: 50.1% (248).
    - Accessibility barriers: 25.7% (127).
- Open-text responses highlighted consistent calls for:
    - Improved maintenance and vegetation management.
    - Better signage, mapping and route information.
    - Improved accessibility for all users.
    - Stronger action where paths are obstructed.
    - Better connectivity between communities and destinations.
- Overall, the consultation demonstrates strong support for the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan and its proposed policies, while highlighting a desire for continued investment in maintenance, accessibility, signage, connectivity and the removal of barriers across Dorset's Public Rights of Way network.

Data Analysis

Section 1: About You

Q1. I am responding as:

Base: n-507



Option	Total	Percent
Member of the public	470	92.7%
On behalf of an organisation - please specify below	11	2.2%
Business	2	0.4%
Town or Parish Council - please specify below	17	3.4%
Elected Member	3	0.6%
Other – please specify below	4	0.8%

Overall, the majority of respondents were members of the public, 92.7% (470), demonstrating strong engagement with local residents and individuals. Smaller responses were received from town and parish councils, 3.4% (17); respondents on behalf of an organisation, 2.2% (11); elected members, 0.6% (3); and 'Other ', 0.8% (4).

This distribution demonstrates that engagement with The Rights of Way Implementation Plan was predominantly driven by individual members of the public with some input from local organisations and representative bodies.

Other comments
I use to be a volunteef walk leader and I work for

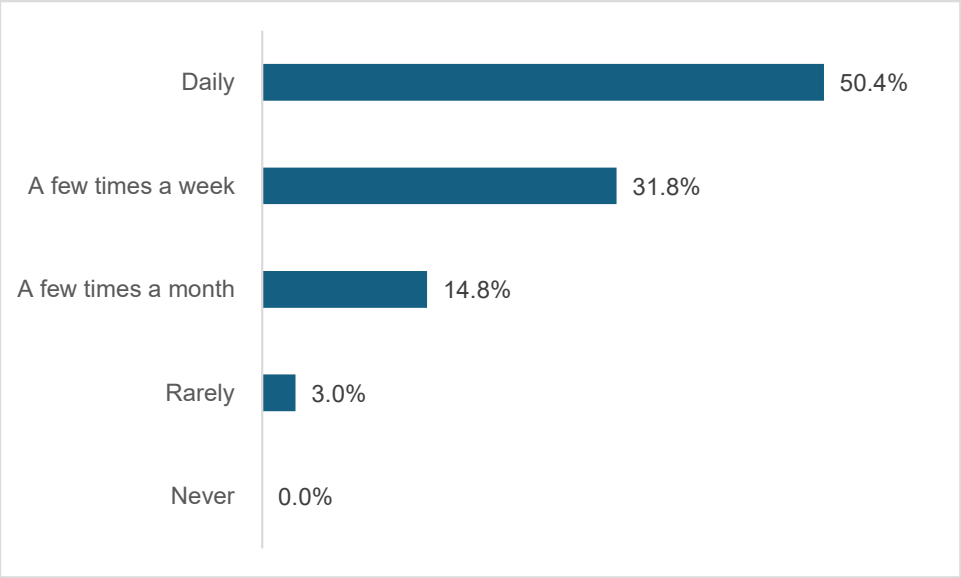
myself as a dog walker
Horse rider
I am a horse rider
Volunteer.. Friends of Breach Common
Shaftesbury Walking Group
I live at [redacted] and would be affected the most
Local
RoWLO for Trent Parish
Loders' Resident and Landowner
Chair of SuSAC
Loders Village Hall

Town/Parish council or an organisation
Winterbourne Abbas and Winterbourne Steepleton PC
Murley's Mutts
Monitor for Monarch's Way
Portland
Use to volunteer for shaftesbury walking for health
Cerne valley parish council
Love Dogs West Dorset and the Environment
The British Horse Society
Bridport
I am a Parish Councillor but this response is by me as an individual and not on behalf of the PC
Shillingstone and District Riding Club (BHS)
Loders Transport Group
St Martin Parish Council
Cllr Mark Williams
studland parish council
Chideock
Loders, Bridport
Motcombe Parish Council/Chair White Hart Link
Bishops Caundle parish council
Marnhull Ramblers
The Loders Arms
Toller Porcorum Parish Council
Poole Harbour Trails
Iwerne Courtney and Stepleton parish council
Active Dorset
Loders Parish Council
Toller Porcorum Parish Council
Poole Harbour Trails
Iwerne Courtney and Stepleton parish council
Active Dorset

Loders Parish Council
Lytchett Minster and Upton
Netherbury Parish Council
Queen Thorn Parish Council
Sturminster Marshall Parish Council
Cllr Mark Williams, Portland TC, Tophill East
North Dorset Railway, Shillingstone
No Trailway Through The Village (A sizeable group of Loders residents)
Cheselbourne
Shaftesbury Town Council
Sustainable Shaftesbury Advisory Committee (SuSAC) to Shaftesbury Town Council
North Dorset Trailway Network
Verwood Town Council
Poole Harbour Trails Community Group
Stalbridge Town Council, ROWLO
Alderholt Parish Council

Q2: How often, if at all, do you use public rights of way in Dorset?

Base: n-506



Option	Total	Percent
Daily	255	50.4%
A few times a week	161	31.8%
A few times a month	75	14.9%
Rarely	15	3.0%
Never	0	0.0%

The findings show that respondents were regular users of public rights of way in Dorset, with 50.4% (255) reporting using them daily, and a further 31.80% (161) used public rights of way a few times a week. A smaller proportion of respondents reported that they use public rights of way a few times a month at 14.9% (75), while 3.0% (15) respondents reported that they rarely use public rights of way. No respondents indicated that they never use public rights of way.

Respondents with a disability were more likely to report using public rights of way rarely (16.7%, 9) than those without a disability (1.5%, 6). In contrast, respondents without a disability were more likely to use public rights of way a few times a week (33.8%, 136 compared with 20.4%, 11) or a few times a month (16.4%, 66 compared with 7.4%, 4). This suggests that, while many respondents with a disability are frequent users of public rights of way, a greater proportion use the network less regularly than respondents without a disability.

Female respondents were more likely to report using public rights of way daily (54.2%, 149) than male respondents (41.1%, 78). This indicates that female respondents were more frequent users of the Public Rights of Way network.

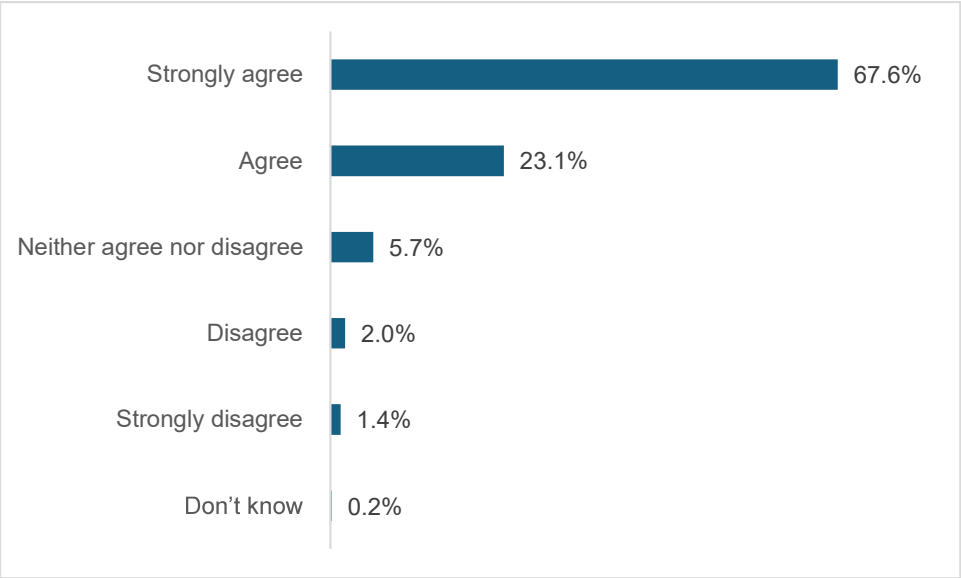
Respondents aged 49 and under were more likely to report using public rights of way daily (59.7%, 68) than respondents aged 50-64 (46.0%, 81) and those aged 65 and over (45.9%, 83). This suggests that younger respondents were more frequent users of the Public Rights of Way network.

Section 2: Vision

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this vision?

Base: n-506

The vision of the plan is to create a modern, accessible and well-connected rights of way network that supports health, communities, the economy and the environment.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	342	67.6%
Agree	117	23.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	29	5.7%
Disagree	10	2.0%
Strongly disagree	7	1.4%
Don't know	1	0.2%

The findings show strong support for the vision of the plan. Over two-thirds of respondents, 67.6% (342), strongly agreed with the vision, while a further 23.1% (117) agreed, demonstrating broad support for the ambition to create a modern, accessible and well-connected rights of way network.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 5.7% (29), neither agreed nor disagreed with the vision. In contrast, 3.4% (17) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 0.2% (1) selected 'Don't know', indicating that very few respondents opposed the vision or were uncertain about it.

Q4. Do you have any other comments about the proposed vision?

Base: n-293

Responses centred on maintaining and improving the existing rights of way network, particularly through better maintenance, enhanced accessibility, improved connectivity, and increased provision for horse riders and cyclists.

Theme	Description	Total
Maintenance and upkeep	Calls for better upkeep of current footpaths, bridleways and rights of way; overgrowth, mud, fallen trees, broken infrastructure, mend signage.	62
Supports visions	Supports vision (add words, protect and maintain, resilient).	30
Requests for more bridleways etc	Requests for more bridleways/footpaths, better connectivity, horse-friendly maintenance and safer riding opportunities.	24
Dorset locations mentioned	Suggestions for named locations, villages or specific rights of way improvements. (Bradpole, Loders, Buckhorn Weston, Corfe Mullen, Portland, Monarchs Way, Brudport and Langdon Hill, North Chideock, Lytchett Matravers, Gillingham, Shaftesbury).	24
Connectivity of communities/towns/villages	Calls for routes to join up communities, destinations or existing rights of way.	20
Wider accessibility issues	Accessibility - wheelchair user footpaths/stiles difficulty, more access for disabled residents.	18
Requests for cycle routes	Requests for more cycle routes, safer cycling links, better-connected cycling network. More buses (greener policies).	17
Obstruction of PROW	Rights of way blocked by farm animals'/farmer land/landowners.	16
Safety concerns general	Safety concerns for drivers/pedestrians/cyclist.	16
Dog walking/facilities	References to dog walking, dog access, dog facilities. And horses, dog only zones.	15
Accessibility requests	Requests for wheelchair, mobility scooter, disabled access; replacement of stiles/kissing gates; accessible surfaces.	12
Positive comments/general	General positive comments supporting the vision and objectives.	12

Support for young families	Include access for pushchairs/supporting families with young kids.	11
Enhance footpaths	Upgrade footpaths to bridleway status, more paths.	8
Finances, implementation, execution of vision, and doubts	Doubts about implementation, resources, budgets and whether the vision will be achieved (disruption to traffic, parking).	8
Enforcements	Requests for stronger enforcement where paths are blocked, cropped over, fenced or neglected.	7
Facilities requested/lack of facilities	Parking, benches, bins, rest points and other supporting facilities, parking trailers.	7
Rural authenticity maintained	Maintain character/ against resurfacing.	6
Maps and navigation	Better wayfinding, digital maps, apps, route information and signage, Strava for runners' better connection.	6
Community	Communicate with communities.	5
Keep footpaths & maintain paths	Keep footpaths/ not widen paths.	5
Safety for off-road	Desire for safer off-road alternatives and safer crossings due to traffic dangers. (narrow roads)	5
Safety for horses	Safety of routes for animals (horses).	4
Motor vehicles and BOATS comments	Comments relating to off-road motorcycling, 4x4s and maintaining BOAT access.	4
Wildlife maintenance and safety	Protecting wildlife, habitats, natural materials and landscape character.	4
Does not support vision	Does not support vision (lack of bylaws, finances).	3
Active travel	Encourage people to use routes to get to work.	3
Modern language concerns	Concerns about surfacing, urbanisation, "modern" language, protecting countryside character.	3
Motor vehicles	Motorbikes damaging paths, dogs, cyclists, damaging.	3

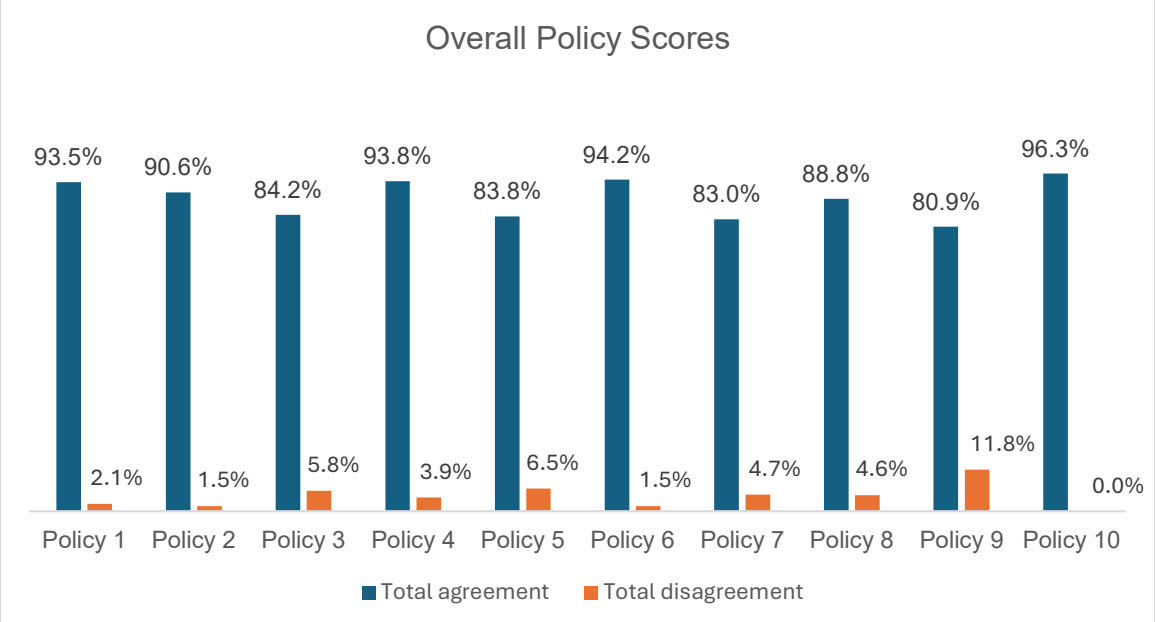
Education for responsible behaviour	Education for path users, responsible behaviour, rights and responsibilities.	3
Disapproval of vision/general	Passive comments on the vision.	2
Safe routes for pedestrians	Requests that walkers, cyclists, horse riders, disabled users and others are treated fairly.	2
Broader countryside PROW	Requests for broader countryside access beyond existing rights of way and communicating with farmers in the process.	2
Other comments	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	86

Section 3: Policies

Responses to the draft policies were generally positive, with most policies receiving high levels of agreement and relatively low levels of disagreement. While views varied across the individual policies, the results indicate broad support for the proposed approach set out in the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The following sections provide a detailed analysis of responses to each policy.

Base: Policy 1 (T2B n-303, B2B n-7), Policy 2 (T2B n-124, B2B n-2), Policy 3 (T2B n-160, B2B n-11), Policy 4 (T2B n-121, B2B n-5), Policy 5 (T2B n-78, B2B n-6), Policy 6 (T2B n-128, B2B n-2), Policy 7 (T2B n-88, B2B n-5), Policy 8 (T2B n-95, B2B n-5), Policy 9 (T2B n-110, B2B n-16) Policy 10 (T2B n-105, B2B n-0)*

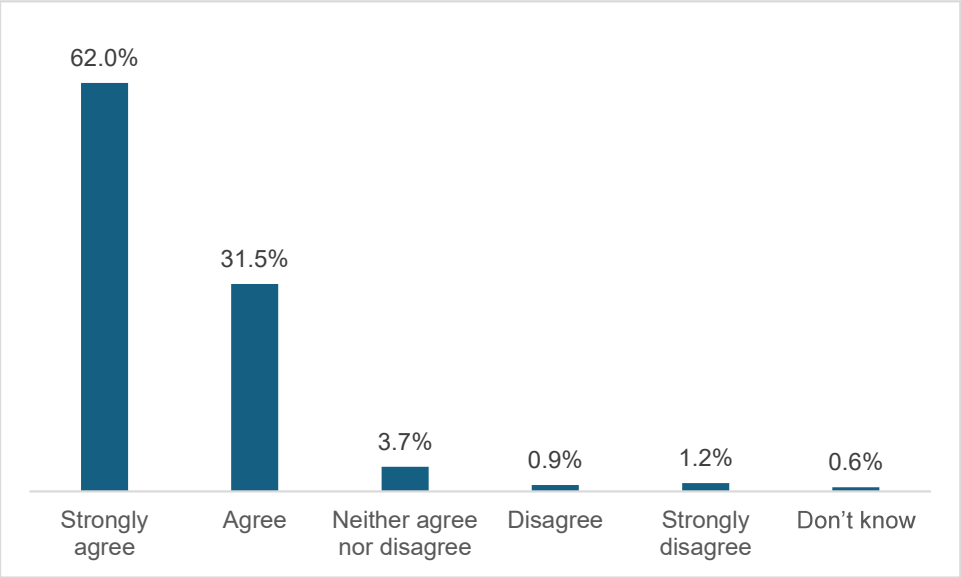
**Note: T2B refers to total agreement and B2B refers to total disagreement*



Policy 1 – Maintaining and improving the existing Public Rights of Way network

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-324



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	201	62.0%
Agree	102	31.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	12	3.7%
Disagree	3	0.9%
Strongly disagree	4	1.2%
Don't know	2	0.6%

Responses to this policy were overwhelmingly positive. Nearly two-thirds of respondents, 62.0% (201), strongly agreed with the policy, while a further 31.5% (102) agreed, indicating strong support for maintaining and improving the existing Public Rights of Way network.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 3.7% (12), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. In contrast, 2.2% (7) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 0.6% (2) selected 'Don't know', suggesting that opposition to the policy was limited.

Q6. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-203

Feedback focused primarily on the maintenance and condition of existing routes, particularly vegetation management, alongside improvements to bridleways, route connectivity, and the protection of existing rights of way.

Theme	Description	Total
Maintenance and Vegetation Management	Concerns about overgrown paths, brambles, nettles, fallen trees, drainage issues, poor surfaces, and general lack of maintenance and in accessibility.	59
Bridleway Quality and Horse Access	Requests for improvements to bridleways, horse-friendly gates, vegetation clearance, drainage, and safer off-road riding opportunities.	31
Route Connectivity and Network Expansion	Requests to create missing links, connect towns and villages, extend trailways and cycle routes, and improve active travel networks.	20
Protection of Existing Rights of Way	Concerns about path closures, diversions, loss of routes to development, and preserving existing access.	20
Positive Feedback / Support for Policy	General agreement with the policy or praise for existing staff, wardens, reporting tools, or improvements.	19
Infrastructure Improvements	Requests for bridges, gates, stiles, benches, crossings, fencing, surfacing, and other physical improvements.	19
Geographic/Location-Specific Issues	References to specific routes, villages, parishes, bridges, or named locations requiring attention.	19
Signage and Waymarking	Concerns regarding missing, inadequate, or inconsistent signage and route-marking.	18

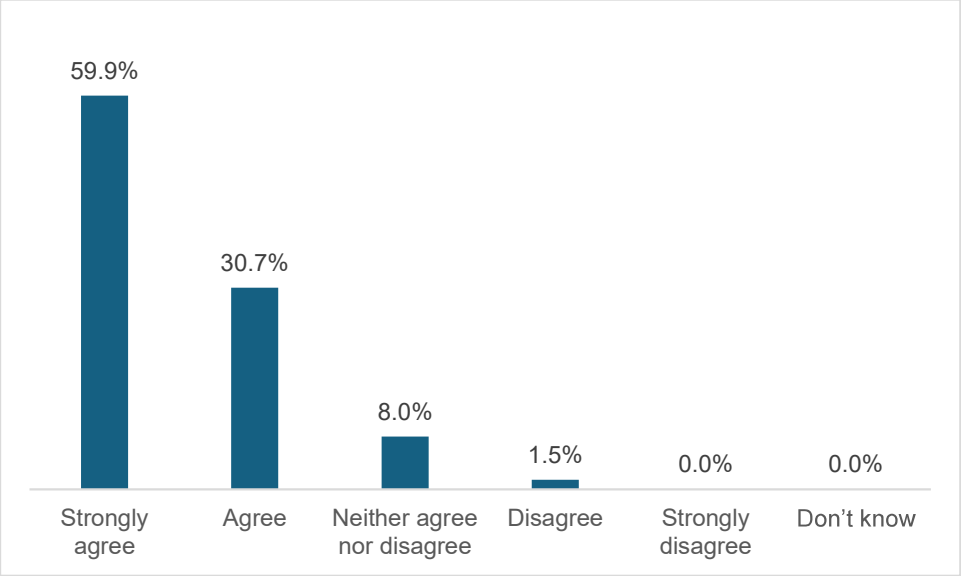
Funding and Resources	Doubts about funding availability, staffing levels, and Dorset Council's capacity to deliver improvements.	17
Reporting Systems and Response Times	Comments about awareness and use of problem-reporting tools, suggestions for improving reporting mechanisms, and concerns relating to response times, follow-up communication, and resolution of reported issues.	14
Landowner Responsibilities and Enforcement	Calls for stronger enforcement of landowners' legal duties to maintain rights of way and prevent obstructions.	12
Multi-user Conflicts	Concerns about conflicts between walkers, cyclists, horse riders, motorcyclists, 4x4 vehicles, and other user groups.	10
Prioritisation and Decision-Making	Questions about how routes will be prioritised and concerns and consultation suggestions, and clarification.	9
Safety Concerns	Comments relating to user safety, road crossings, livestock, visibility, dangerous routes, and lone walker safety.	9
Environmental and Landscape Concerns	Concerns about protecting countryside character, biodiversity, surfacing choices, and avoiding overdevelopment.	7
Accessibility and Inclusion	Requests for improved accessibility for disabled users, mobility scooter users, older people, and those with limited mobility. Including improving badly sited barriers, poorly maintained surfaces, etc.	6
Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) and Motor Vehicle Management	Views relating specifically to BOATs, green lanes, off-road vehicles, restrictions, or retention of vehicle access. Maintaining BOATs.	6

Cycling Infrastructure and Safety	Support for off-road cycling opportunities, cycle route improvements, and cyclist behaviour concerns.	5
Volunteer and Community Involvement	Suggestions for engaging local volunteers, parish councils, user groups, and communities in maintenance and monitoring. Listening to community needs.	5
Prioritisation and Decision-Making	Maintain less-used paths and routes.	5
Railway Line	Usage of old railway line.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	21

Policy 2 – Raise awareness of Public Rights of Way

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-137



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	82	59.9%
Agree	42	30.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	11	8.0%
Disagree	2	1.5%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

Support for this policy was also high, with 59.9% (82) of respondents strongly agreeing and a further 30.7% (42) agreeing with the proposal. This reflects a positive response towards the proposed policy of raising awareness of Public Rights of Way.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 8.0% (11), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. Just 1.5% (2) of respondents disagreed, while no respondents strongly disagreed or selected 'Don't know', suggesting very limited opposition or uncertainty towards the policy.

Respondents with a disability were more likely to strongly agree with the policy (85.7%, 12) than those without a disability (64.7%, 66). All respondents with a disability either agreed or strongly agreed with the policy, indicating particularly strong support for measures to raise awareness and improve information about Public Rights of Way.

Q8. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-85

Key themes included improving signage and wayfinding, enhancing the accuracy of digital mapping tools, and increasing awareness of rights of way through wider promotion and information sharing.

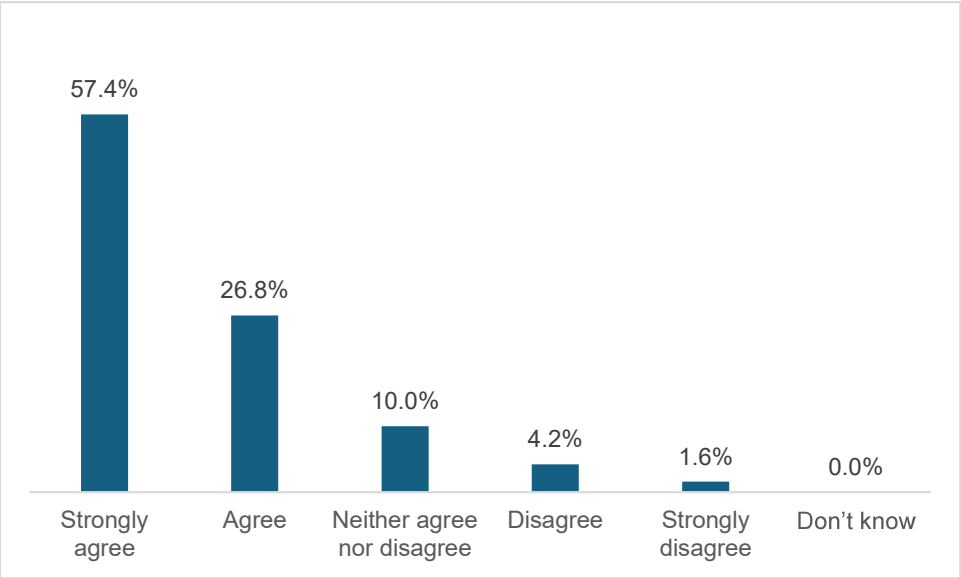
Theme	Description	Total
Improved signage and wayfinding	Update signs, update blue discs, repair stiles, named signage with destination locations, improved mapping.	27
Digital Mapping and Technology accuracy improvements	Hiking apps, Dorset Explorer, accurate maps, Google Maps, OpenStreetMap, create app that doesn't need Wi-Fi, highlight routes in colour.	23
Increased awareness and physical promotion of rights of way	Comms and parish councils, update key routes, QR codes on routes, libraries, village halls, local people use facilities, word-of-mouth.	16
Other- mental health benefits, young people	Countryside code, bylaws, respecting nature, dog walkers, cyclists.	14
Route Connectivity and Circular Routes, new practical routes	Connecting railways and bus routes for towns and villages, new practical routes, rural isolation of young people.	11
Awareness and Promotion	Feedback on routes, digital promotion.	9

Concerns	Rural isolation, areas that lack footpaths, accurate signage, focus on promotion should not be exclusively digital, concerns about finances.	7
Area mentioned	Loders and Bradpole, Gillingham, Cattistock.	7
Maintenance and Enforcement	Staff needed to enforce countryside code/help maintain the paths for safety etc.	5
Connectivity improvement	Improve coverage of networks (phone reception and Wi-Fi across).	4
Safety of routes	Dangerous roads, safe alternatives	4
Community and Volunteer Involvement	Bridport Banter, TIC, next door, parents/children, village shops.	4
Cyclist	Cyclist impacting residents, speed of cyclist around corners.	3
Animals mentioned, access	Dogs, horses.	3
Encourage not using cars	Against car usage.	2
Accessibility and Inclusion	Safety of kids.	2
User Information and Education	Education/information for residents/tourist.	2
Farmers/landowners blocking land/gates	Landowners/farmers obstructing paths and the effects of this.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	4

Policy 3 – Making our network more accessible

Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-190



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	109	57.4%
Agree	51	26.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	19	10.0%
Disagree	8	4.2%
Strongly disagree	3	1.6%
Don't know	0	0.0%

Support for this policy was strong, with 57.4% (109) of respondents strongly agreeing and a further 26.8% (51) agreeing with the proposal. These results suggest that respondents were generally supportive of efforts to make the Public Rights of Way network more accessible.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 10.0% (19), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. In contrast, 5.8% (11) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while no respondents selected 'Don't know', indicating that opposition and uncertainty towards the policy were relatively limited.

Respondents with a disability were more likely to strongly agree with the policy (71.4%, 20) than those without a disability (61.3%, 84). This suggests particularly strong support among respondents with a disability for measures aimed at improving accessibility across the Public Rights of Way network.

Q10. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-146

Feedback focused primarily on improving accessibility and inclusion, including the removal of physical barriers, enhanced access for disabled users, and better provision for horse riders, cyclists, and other network users.

Theme	Description	Total
Accessibility Improvements & Inclusion	General support for improving accessibility and inclusivity of the network.	60
Stiles, Gates & Physical Barriers	Replacing stiles, improving gates, removing kissing gates and other barriers.	36
Bridleways & Equestrian Access	More bridleways, upgrading footpaths, safer equestrian access and horse-rider needs.	36
Wheelchair, Mobility Scooter & Disability Access	Comments specifically relating to wheelchair users, mobility scooters, disabled users and accessibility aids.	31
Cycling Infrastructure & Route Development	More cycle routes, cycle commuting routes, trailways and cycling provision.	28
Road Safety & Off-Road Alternatives	Safer alternatives to busy roads for walking, cycling and riding.	26
Route Connectivity & Network Links	Joining up routes, linking communities and reducing network gaps.	24
Maintenance & Vegetation Management	Overgrown routes, cutting back vegetation, repairs and maintenance issues.	24
Women's, Children's & Vulnerable User Safety	Safety considerations for women, families, children and vulnerable users.	18
Support for Loders-Bradpole / Former Railway Route	Specific support for the proposed off-road route and railway alignment.	16
Surface Improvements	Requests for better surfaces, smoother routes and accessible surfacing.	13
Landowner Responsibilities & Cooperation	Comments regarding landowners maintaining routes and supporting improvements.	12

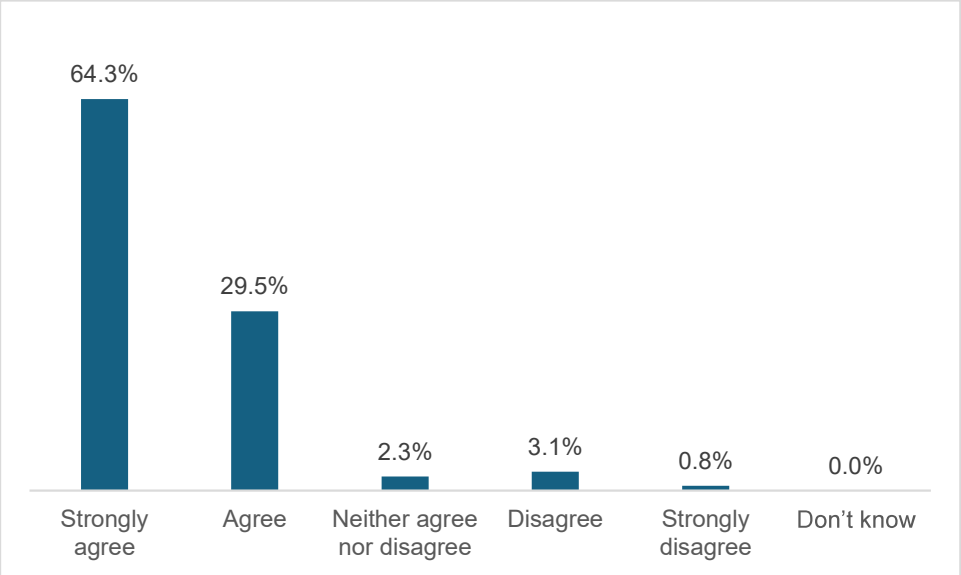
Signage, Mapping & Route Information	Better wayfinding, route maps, signposting and accessibility information.	11
Concerns About Cyclists / E-Bikes	Cyclist behaviour, speed, shared-use conflicts and e-bike concerns.	10
Concerns About Surfacing / Tarmacking	Concerns that upgrades may urbanise routes or make them unsuitable for horses.	10
Parking & Access to Routes	Lack of car parking and transport access barriers.	9
Horse-Friendly Gates & Infrastructure	Horse-accessible gates, infrastructure and British Horse Society standards.	8
Funding, Cost & Deliverability Concerns	Questions about funding, value for money and practicality.	8
Environmental & Rural Character Concerns	Protecting countryside character, wildlife and avoiding over-urbanisation.	7
Community, Health & Active Travel Benefits	Benefits for health, community connectivity, sustainable travel and independence.	7
Separate Routes for Different Users	Requests for dedicated routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.	6
Motor Vehicle Access Rights	Requests to retain or improve access for motorised users on BOATs/UCRs.	6
Seating & Rest Facilities	Requests for benches, resting places and facilities.	5
General Support / Positive Comment	General support without substantial additional comment.	5
Equality & Diversity Commentary	Comments relating to equality, inclusion or diversity rationale.	4

Opposition to Loders-Bradpole Route	Objections to routing proposals through Loders village.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	21

Policy 4 – Empowering Communities to help improve their Public Rights of Way Network

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-129



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	83	64.3%
Agree	38	29.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	2.3%
Disagree	4	3.1%
Strongly disagree	1	0.8%
Don't know	0	0.0%

Respondents expressed high levels of support for this policy, with 64.3% (83) of respondents strongly agreeing and a further 29.5% (38) agreeing with the proposal. Responses suggest that respondents were positive about empowering communities to help improve their local Public Rights of Way network.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 2.3% (3), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. In contrast, 3.9% (5) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while no

respondents selected ‘Don’t know’, indicating that opposition and uncertainty towards the policy were minimal.

Respondents with a disability were more likely to strongly agree with the policy (78.6%, 11) than those without a disability (66.3%, 63). This suggests particularly strong support among respondents with a disability for greater community involvement in improving the Public Rights of Way network.

Q12. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-80

Respondents highlighted the importance of community involvement, partnership working, and the use of local knowledge in improving and managing the rights of way network.

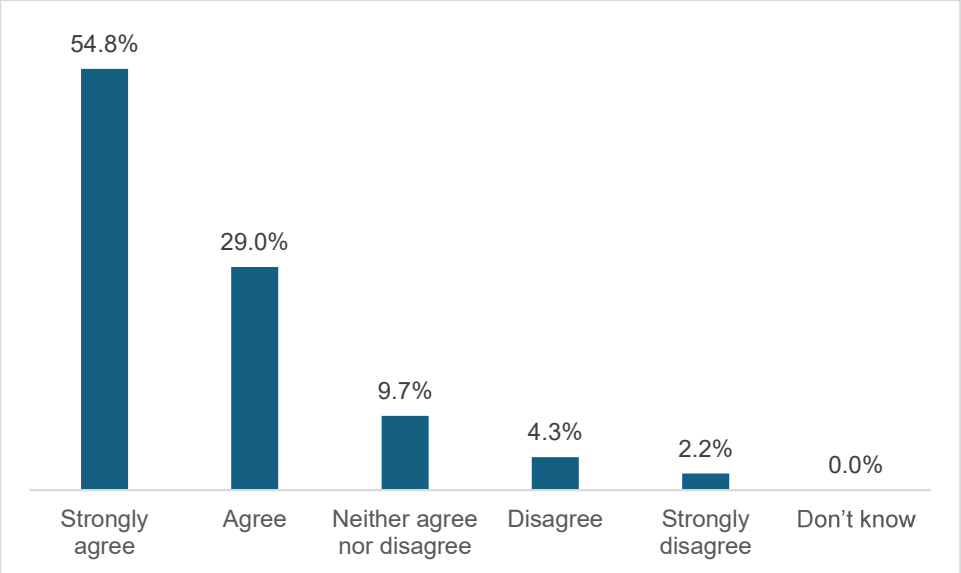
Theme	Description	Total
Community involvement and use of local knowledge	Local knowledge, community-led groups in villages/, listen to community concerns, riding club.	29
Partnership working with parish councils and local groups	Support community groups campaign, council must listen to communities, improve links to Parish councils, employ staff, volunteers for designated paths.	20
Volunteer recruitment, coordination and support	Action, growing network, volunteer initiatives, involving students, funding, encourage community to clean rights of way.	18
Funding, training and resources	Rewards for volunteers, lack of staff, flexible hours.	7
Maintenance and accessibility of rights of way	Signage and cleaning tasks.	6
Walking, cycling and bridleway connectivity, safe paths	Coombe Road, schools to advise parents on children’s health, safe paths.	6
Communication, engagement and reporting	Local advertising, awareness improvement.	5
Council leadership, responsiveness and accountability	Council to have more accountability and respond to matters within a business week.	5

Reducing barriers to volunteering	Reduce paperwork, designate an officer for bridleway.	3
Landowner obstruction and enforcement	Chiswell, Portland.	3
Join existing PROW	Join up routes for the benefit of the wider community.	2
Improve accuracy of maps	Reporting issues of maps/ paths that are obstructed.	2
Consultation question	Minority viewpoints etc.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	28

Policy 5 – Building the Dorset Economy through our Public Rights of Way Network

Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-93



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	51	54.8%
Agree	27	29.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	9	9.7%
Disagree	4	4.3%
Strongly disagree	2	2.2%
Don't know	0	0.0%

Views on this policy were generally positive, with 54.8% (51) of respondents strongly agreeing and a further 29.0% (27) agreeing with the proposal. Responses suggest

that respondents were supportive of using the Public Rights of Way network to help contribute to Dorset's economy.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 9.7% (9), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. In contrast, 6.5% (6) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while no respondents selected 'Don't know', indicating that opposition to the policy remained relatively low.

Q14. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-62

Key themes included the economic and tourism benefits of the rights of way network, together with improved connectivity and sustainable transport links.

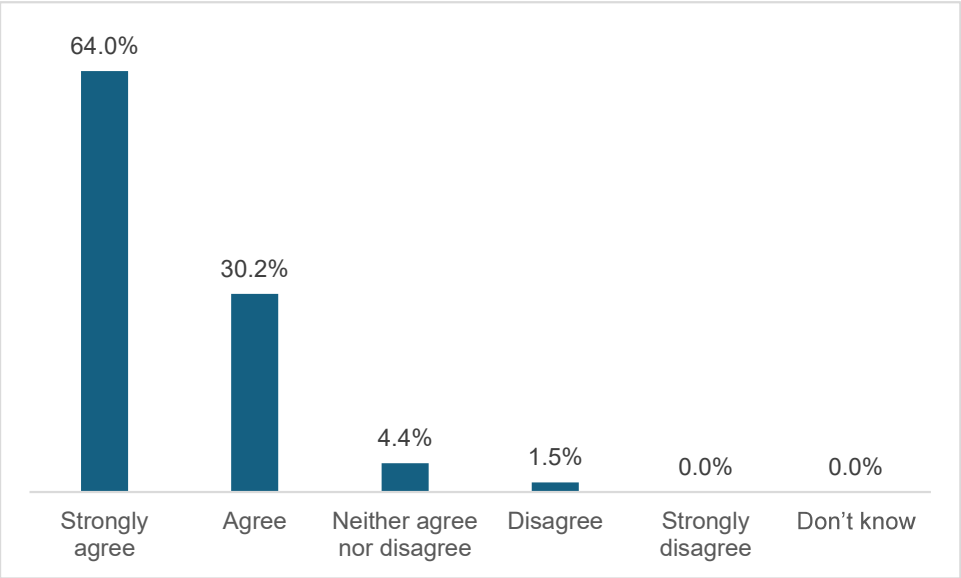
Theme	Description	Total
Local Economy & Business Benefits	References to supporting local businesses, pubs, cafés, shops, jobs, tourism enterprises and the wider rural economy.	12
Sustainable Transport & Connectivity	Better links between settlements, services, employment, schools and transport hubs.	11
Tourism Promotion & Visitor Economy	Support for encouraging tourism, extending the tourist season and promoting Dorset as a destination.	10
Concerns About Over-Tourism	Concerns that increased promotion could lead to overcrowding, erosion, environmental damage or loss of tranquillity.	7
Health, Wellness & Active Travel	Support for cycling as transport, commuting and reducing traffic. Encourage improving health by walking and cycling.	7
Community Benefits & Local Services	Benefits to schools, village halls, pubs and community facilities.	7
Rights of Way Network Improvements First	Improvements to the network should take priority before promotion or economic development.	6

Support for Former Railway / Long Distance Routes	Support for cycleways or routes along former railway alignments and strategic routes.	6
Parking & Public Transport Access	Need for parking provision and public transport to enable access to routes.	5
General Support / Positive Comment	General support without substantial additional detail.	5
Environmental Protection & Rural Character	Importance of protecting Dorset's natural environment, landscape and remoteness.	4
Loders-Bradpole / Bridport Route Support	Specific support for improved connectivity between Loders, Bradpole and Bridport.	3
Signposting & Promotion of Local Businesses	Better signposting to businesses and amenities near rights of way.	3
Definitive Map Process / Access Creation	Concerns regarding the process for adding routes to the network or reopening historical routes.	3
Tourism Growth Should Be Spatially Balanced	Support for tourism and economic benefits being distributed across all parts of Dorset.	3
Commuting & Everyday Travel Prioritisation	Support for routes and connections that enable daily travel to work, education, services and transport hubs.	3
Cycling Should Not Be Prioritised	Concerns that cyclists are prioritised over other users.	2
Bridleways & Equestrian Economy	Recognition of the economic contribution of horse riding and the need for a good bridleway network.	2
Path Maintenance & Quality	Well-maintained paths seen as essential to attracting users and visitors.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	8

Policy 6 – Ensuring the Countryside Code and access legislation is followed, and Landowners are respected

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-136



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	87	64.0%
Agree	41	30.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	6	4.4%
Disagree	2	1.5%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

Respondents expressed high levels of agreement with this policy, with 64.0% (87) strongly agreeing and a further 30.2% (41) agreeing with the proposal. Feedback indicates that respondents were supportive of measures to encourage compliance with the Countryside Code and access legislation while respecting the interests of landowners.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 4.4% (6), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. Just 1.5% (2) of respondents disagreed, while no respondents strongly disagreed or selected 'Don't know', indicating very limited opposition or uncertainty towards the policy.

Q16. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-88

Comments most commonly related to landowner responsibilities, rights of way maintenance, enforcement, and responsible use of the network.

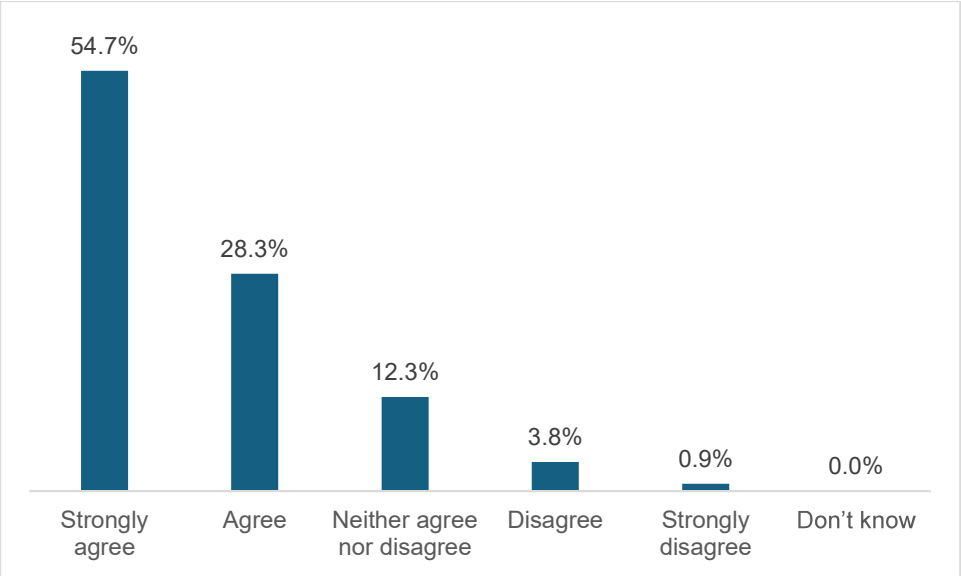
Theme	Description	Total
Landowners obstructing paths/relationship with landowners	Supporting collaborative approaches with landowners and farmers to maintain routes, improve access and develop solutions together; repeat offences of landowner violations.	31
Rights of Way Maintenance and Accessibility	Keeping footpaths, bridleways, gates, stiles and signage open, well-maintained, clearly marked and accessible year-round.	22
Stronger Enforcement and Accountability	Greater enforcement of responsibilities for both landowners and users, including action against obstructions, misuse and repeat offenders.	16
Wildlife, Livestock and Environmental Protection	Safeguarding wildlife, birds, livestock, habitats and the wider countryside through responsible access and behaviour.	16
Countryside code knowledge	Educating residents in countryside code knowledge; lack of knowledge.	15
Motorised Vehicle and E-bike Misuse	Tackling the impacts of off-road vehicles, illegal e-bikes and e-scooters on safety, route condition and user experience.	10
Location mentioned	Castleman Trailway, Clayford Estate, Redbridge, Whitecliff Park (Poole), Cranbourne Common, Wraxall Lane, Loders and Bradpole, Salwayash.	7
Mutual Respect Between Landowners and Users	Promoting a balanced, two-way relationship where both landowners and the public respect each other's rights and responsibilities.	7
Responsible Dog Ownership	Encouraging responsible behaviour around livestock, keeping dogs under control, and reducing dog fouling.	7
Respectful User Behaviour	Addressing issues such as littering, leaving gates open, straying from paths, disturbing livestock, failing to follow countryside guidance, and dog poo.	7
Communication and Information Sharing	Providing better information on route conditions, livestock presence, reporting issues, and clarifying responsibilities between councils and landowners.	7

Managing Conflicts Between Different User Groups	Improving shared use of routes between walkers, cyclists, horse riders and other users through courtesy, awareness and considerate behaviour.	5
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	24

Policy 7 – Using new housing development and the Local Plan to enhance Public Rights of Way

Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-106



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	58	54.7%
Agree	30	28.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	13	12.3%
Disagree	4	3.8%
Strongly disagree	1	0.9%
Don't know	0	0.0%

The proposed policy received a positive response from respondents, with 54.7% (58) strongly agreeing and a further 28.3% (30) agreeing with the proposal. Responses suggest that respondents were generally supportive of using new housing development and the Local Plan to enhance the Public Rights of Way network.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 12.3% (13), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. In contrast, 4.7% (5) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while no respondents selected 'Don't know', indicating relatively low levels of opposition and uncertainty towards the policy.

Q18. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-74

Comments most commonly related to strengthening developer accountability, protecting existing rights of way, and ensuring development contributes to improved access and network connectivity. Respondents also highlighted the importance of integrating rights of way considerations into the planning process from an early stage.

Theme	Description	Total
Stronger developer accountability and enforcement	Developers supporting the community. Community consent, on-site inspections, improved applications. Developers should be legally required to deliver agreed rights-of-way improvements. Planning conditions, Section 106 agreements and approved proposals must be enforced. Requests for penalties, inspections, stronger oversight and prevention of developers avoiding obligations.	38
Protection of existing rights of way	Strong concern about existing paths being built over, diverted, lost, severed or undermined by development. Calls to retain, protect and improve existing rights of way within and around development sites. Requests to prevent unnecessary path closures and ensure existing network continuity.	22
Expansion of the rights of way network and creation of new links	Calls for additional rights of way to accompany housing growth. Support for creating missing links and expanding local and strategic route networks. Suggestions for new routes between villages, towns and key destinations. (towns/villages).	14
Concerns about housing growth outpacing infrastructure provision	Concerns that housing growth is occurring before supporting infrastructure is delivered. References to pressures on healthcare, roads, drainage and wider services. Some comments prioritise wider infrastructure improvements alongside access improvements. East Dorset, North Dorset, Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Mosterton are mentioned.	12

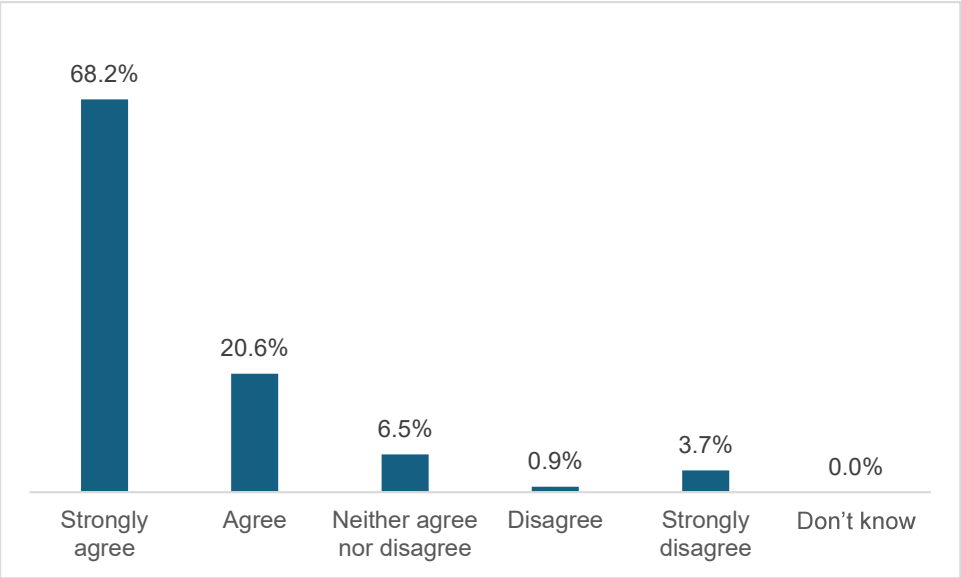
Improved walking, cycling and riding connectivity	Support for better links for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Calls to eliminate gaps, road sections and barriers within existing networks. Emphasis on creating safe off-road connections between communities and destinations.	8
Better maintenance, signage and long-term management of routes	Concerns about poor maintenance, overgrown paths, unclear routes and inadequate signage. Calls for ongoing management plans and dedicated funding for maintenance. Importance of wayfinding in and around new housing developments.	7
Direct links between new housing and local services, schools and public transport	New developments should provide direct walking and cycling connections to schools, shops, employment areas, medical facilities and public transport. Residents should have easy access to nearby rights of way and open spaces. Support for reducing the need for car journeys.	7
Use of Section 106, CIL and developer funding for access improvements	Strong support for using developer contributions to fund rights of way enhancements. Requests to allocate funding for maintenance, Trailways, strategic projects and local access improvements. Suggestions to explore additional funding sources where development contributions may be insufficient.	6
Completion of access routes early in the development process	New paths and access routes should be delivered at the beginning of construction rather than after completion (schools, medical centres expansion). Development-related closures should be minimised and alternative routes clearly provided.	5
Community and parish involvement in route planning	Requests for parish councils, local communities, user groups and Rights of Way Liaison Officers to be involved in planning (planning officers). Local knowledge is seen as important in shaping route design and priorities.	5
General positive comment	Positive comments about opportunities to improve access through development were done well.	4

Protection of green spaces, countryside access and wildlife corridors	Desire to retain green spaces and countryside access despite development pressures. Support for keeping paths as wildlife corridors and protecting natural environments. Concerns about loss of green routes and countryside character.	4
Need for stronger planning policies, monitoring and compliance measures	Reduce costs of diversion orders; need for planning officers and committees to give greater weight to rights of way considerations.	4
Early consideration of rights of way in planning and design	Rights of way and active travel routes should be embedded from the earliest stages of development planning. Access requirements should be clear and mandatory before planning approval is granted. Developers should plan around existing and future route networks at the design stage.	3
Support for trailways and strategic active travel corridors	Strong support for the North Dorset Trailway and former railway corridors. Requests for better access to Trailways from new developments. Support for long-distance, strategic walking and cycling routes linking communities.	2
Resolving historic severance and reconnecting communities	Requests to address long-standing disconnections caused by roads, development and historic route changes.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	19

Policy 8 – Maximise the PROW network's contribution to health and wellbeing

Q19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-107



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	73	68.2%
Agree	22	20.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	7	6.5%
Disagree	1	0.9%
Strongly disagree	4	3.7%
Don't know	0	0.0%

High levels of agreement were recorded for this policy, with 68.2% (73) of respondents strongly agreeing and a further 20.6% (22) agreeing. Responses suggest that respondents recognised the important role that the Public Rights of Way network can play in supporting health and wellbeing.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 6.5% (7), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. In contrast, 4.6% (5) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while no respondents selected 'Don't know', indicating limited opposition or uncertainty towards the policy.

Support for the policy was higher among male respondents, with all male respondents (100.0%, 35) either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the policy, compared with 82.0% (50) of female respondents. Despite this difference, support for the policy remained high among both groups.

Q20. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-72

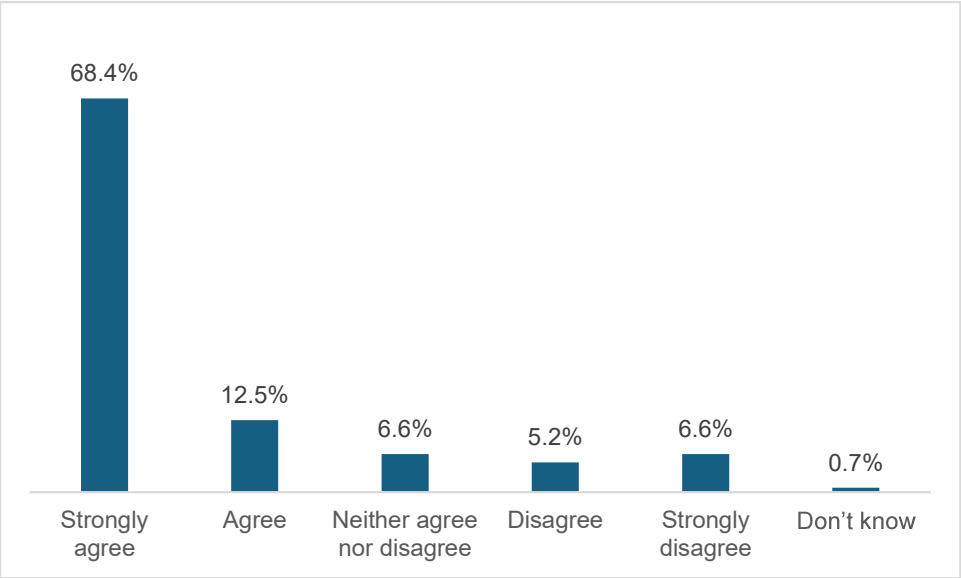
Comments most commonly related to the health and wellbeing benefits of access to the countryside, alongside the importance of active travel, connectivity, safety improvements, and maintaining accessible rights of way.

Theme	Description	Total
Health and wellbeing benefits	Countryside access, outdoor recreation and physical activity improve health for children; dust from traffic.	28
Active travel and connectivity	Walking, cycling and wheeling routes linking communities, schools, workplaces and services.	18
Location mentioned	Nether Compton, Sherborne, A30, Puddletown, Wareham, Little Coll, Great Coll, Winterborne Kingston, Charisworth, Marrowbone Lane, Bothenhampton.	17
Safety and infrastructure improvements	Everyday journeys, particularly for children and vulnerable users, Traffic.	17
Maintenance and accessibility of rights of way	Surfacing, vegetation clearance, usability and year-round access.	12
Car dependency versus active travel	Mixed views on reducing car use in a rural county.	9
Inclusive access for all users	People with disabilities, horse riders, and motorised users.	8
Investment, promotion and long-term delivery	Funding, signage, mapping, maintenance and community engagement.	6
Access to paths	Obstructed paths, bridleways, footpaths and the difficulties this can have.	3
Countryside and environmental protection	Balancing access improvements with preserving rural character.	2
Managing competing user needs and conflicts	Between different groups using the network.	2
Support for specific route improvements	The proposed Loders–Bradpole and A35 corridor links.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	17

Policy 9 – Maximise our PROW for Sustainable transport linking communities and active travel

Q21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-136



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	93	68.4%
Agree	17	12.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	9	6.6%
Disagree	7	5.2%
Strongly disagree	9	6.6%
Don't know	1	0.7%

Support for the proposed policy was strong overall, with 68.4% (93) of respondents strongly agreeing and a further 12.5% (17) agreeing with the proposal. These findings suggest broad backing for the policy among respondents, with more than four in five expressing a positive view.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 6.6% (9), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. In contrast, 11.8% (16) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 0.7% (1) selected 'Don't know'. Although support for the policy remained substantially higher than opposition, this policy recorded the highest level of disagreement across all of the proposed policies.

Support for the policy was higher among male respondents, with 91.3% (42) either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the policy, compared with 79.5% (58) of female respondents. Female respondents were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the policy (15.1%, 11) than male respondents (2.2%, 1).

Respondents aged 50-64 were less likely to agree or strongly agree with the policy (76.7%, 33) than respondents aged 49 and under (90.0%, 27) and those aged 65 and over (87.2%, 41). Respondents aged 50-64 were also more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the policy (16.3%, 7) than the other age groups.

Q22. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-102

Comments covered a range of issues, most commonly relating to safer active travel routes, improved connectivity, and enhancements to the rights of way network.

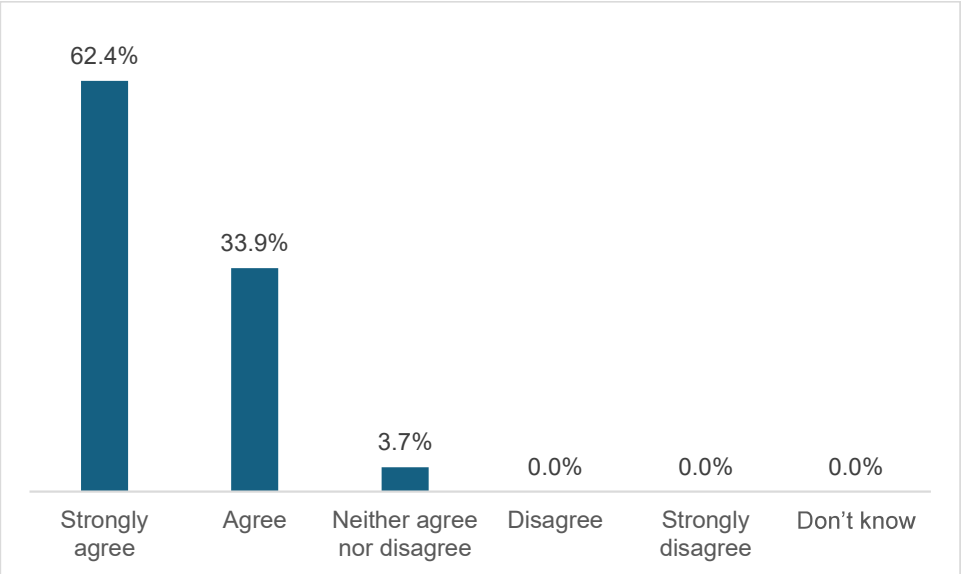
Theme	Description	Total
Safer walking, cycling and wheeling routes, particularly on rural roads	Dangerous rural roads, Safe routes for children and school travel, Safety for vulnerable users and mobility aid users, Women's safety, lighting and visibility.	46
Connectivity and Access	Linking villages, towns and communities, Access to schools, employment, healthcare and leisure facilities, better access to rail stations and bus services, reducing rural isolation.	24
Public Rights of Way (PROW) and Network Enhancement	Better use of PROWs, bridleways and UCRs, linking existing routes together, closing gaps in the network, improving everyday journey opportunities.	16
Concerns About Trailway Impacts	Increased parking and congestion, Impacts on villages and local residents, Effects on wildlife and rural character, Concerns about visitor numbers and tourism pressures.	9
Support vs Opposition to Active Travel Proposals	Strong support for active travel expansion, Conditional support subject to safeguards, Opposition to specific routes or locations, Concerns about impacts outweighing benefits in some areas.	7
Infrastructure Quality and Accessibility	High-quality surfaces and route standards, Accessibility for all users, Maintenance, drainage and flooding issues, Integration with new housing developments.	6
Funding, Delivery and Prioritisation	Project costs and funding availability, Need for clear route proposals and implementation plans, Long-term maintenance and resources, Prioritisation of schemes and investment.	5

Support for active travel to reduce car use, carbon emissions and improve health	Reducing car dependency, lowering carbon emissions and pollution, improving physical and mental health, supporting sustainable tourism.	4
Trailways and Former Railway Routes	Support for converting former railway lines, extending and completing trailway networks, creating traffic-free routes, Support for specific schemes (e.g. Loders-Bradpole, Maiden Newton-Bridport).	2
Community Consultation and Local Support	Engagement with affected communities, Local agreement on route alignments, Consideration of site-specific issues, balancing benefits and impacts.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	23

Policy 10 – To uphold the council's legal duties to provide an up-to-date definitive map and statement which is accessible to the public

Q23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policy?

Base: n-109



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	68	62.4%
Agree	37	33.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	4	3.7%
Disagree	0	0.0%

Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

Views on this policy were overwhelmingly positive, with 62.4% (68) of respondents strongly agreeing and a further 33.9% (37) agreeing with the proposal. Responses indicate strong support for the council maintaining an up-to-date definitive map and statement that is accessible to the public, with almost all respondents expressing agreement.

A small proportion of respondents, 3.7% (4), neither agreed nor disagreed with the policy. Notably, no respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal, and no respondents selected 'Don't know'. This policy received the highest overall level of agreement across all proposed policies, highlighting particularly strong consensus among respondents.

Q24. Do you have any other comments about this proposed policy?

Base: n-54

Comments covered a range of themes, with the most frequently mentioned relating to accurate and up-to-date mapping and access information.

Theme	Description	Total
Up-to-date access all the time/ Accurate and up-to-date mapping	Maintaining and updating the Definitive Map, maps available in library/community areas.	24
Enforcement/legal protection requested	Ensuring landowners abide by the rules/law; more staff needed to enforce.	8
Accessibility improvement	Maps helpful for disabled residents, horse riders, residents with no cars, etc.	7
Maintaining and updating the Definitive Map.	Maps that are user-friendly, widely available, and easy to navigate.	5
Improved wayfinding and signage on the ground,	Rural areas where routes can be difficult to follow.	5

Engagement with local communities and parish councils	Improve awareness, accuracy, and understanding of rights of way.	5
Enhanced digital tools and reporting systems	Simple ways to report issues, track progress, and receive updates.	4
General support for maintaining and improving the current mapping service	Maps not up to date.	4
Maintenance of routes alongside mapping improvements	Ensuring mapped routes remain clear, accessible, and passable.	2
Promotion and awareness of Dorset Explorer and mapping resources	Respondents were unaware of available tools.	2
Need for adequate resourcing and staffing	Backlogs, process changes, and maintaining mapping accuracy.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	19

Section 4: Priorities

Q25. Which of the following are most important to you? (Rank up to 3)

Item	Ranking
Maintaining and improving the existing Public Rights of Way network	2.37
Making our network more accessible	0.87
Ensuring the Countryside Code and access legislation is followed, and Landowners are respected	0.54
Raise awareness of Public Rights of Way	0.49
Maximise our PROW for Sustainable transport linking communities and active travel	0.41
Empowering Communities to help improve their Public Rights of Way Network	0.37
To uphold the council's legal duties to provide an up-to-date definitive map and statement which is accessible to the public	0.29

Maximise the PROW network's contribution to health and wellbeing	0.21
Using new housing development and the Local Plan to enhance Public Rights of Way	0.14
Building the Dorset Economy through our Public Rights of Way Network	0.11

Respondents identified 'maintaining and improving the existing Public Rights of Way network' as the highest priority, achieving a ranking score of 2.37. This was substantially higher than any other priority, indicating a clear preference for investment in the maintenance and improvement of the existing network.

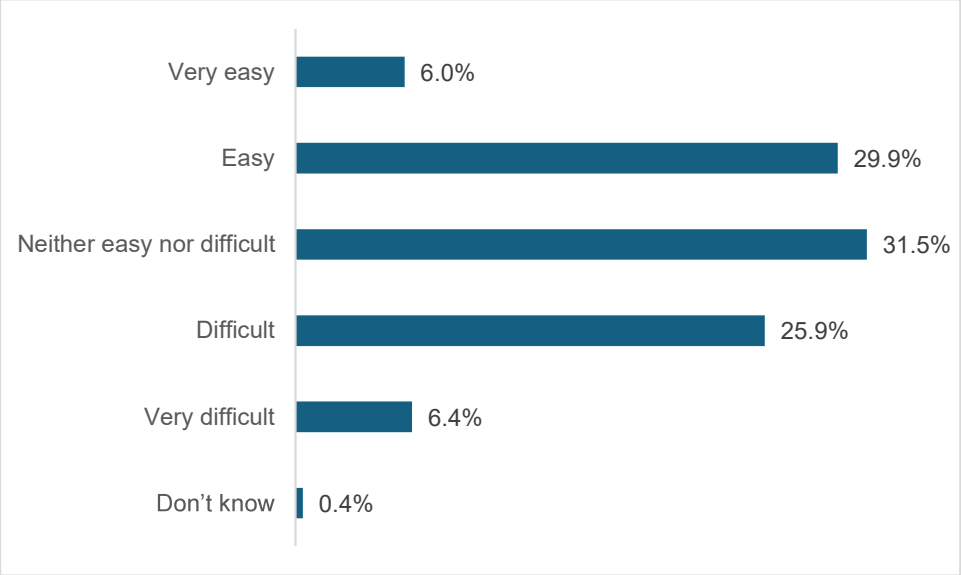
'Making our network more accessible' (0.87) was the second-highest ranked priority, followed by 'ensuring the Countryside Code and access legislation is followed, and landowners are respected' (0.54) and 'raising awareness of Public Rights of Way' (0.49).

Priorities relating to 'health and wellbeing' (0.21) and 'housing development' (0.14) received lower scores, while 'building the Dorset economy through our Public Rights of Way network' ranked lowest overall (0.11).

Section 5: Your experience of the network

Q26a. How easy or difficult is it to use rights of way in Dorset?

Base: n-499



Option	Total	Percent

Very easy	30	6.0%
Easy	149	29.9%
Neither easy nor difficult	157	31.5%
Difficult	129	25.9%
Very difficult	32	6.4%
Don't know	2	0.4%

Responses were mixed regarding how easy or difficult it is to use rights of way in Dorset. Around a third of respondents, 29.9% (149), reported that they find rights of way easy to use, while 6.0% (30) said they are very easy to use.

A similar proportion, 31.5% (157), felt that rights of way were neither easy nor difficult to use, indicating that many respondents did not perceive the network as either particularly simple or particularly challenging to use.

In contrast, 25.9% (129) of respondents reported that rights of way are difficult to use and 6.4% (32) said they are very difficult to use. Just 0.4% (2) selected 'Don't know', indicating that almost all respondents were able to provide a view on this issue.

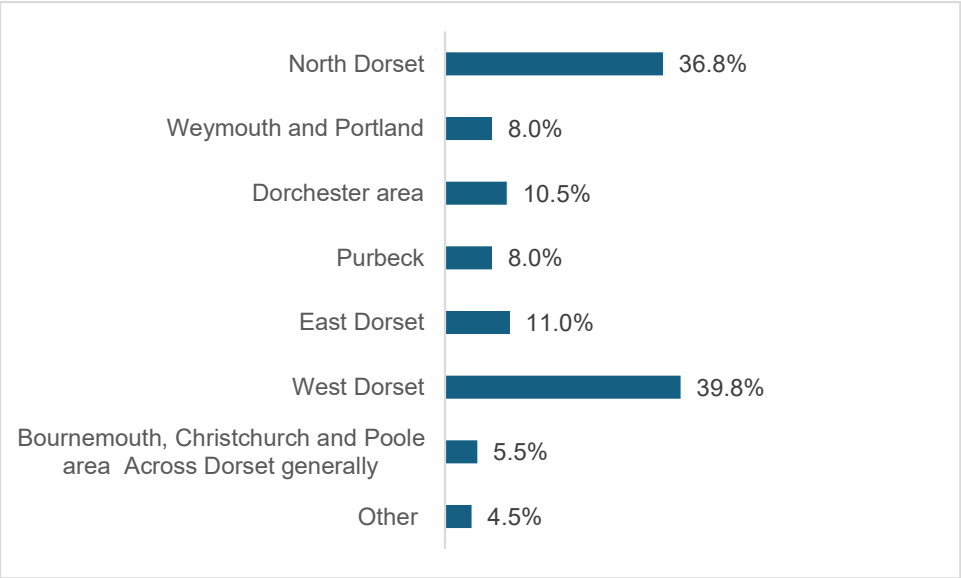
Respondents with a disability were more likely to report that rights of way are difficult or very difficult to use (47.2%, 25) than respondents without a disability (30.7%, 123). This suggests that respondents with a disability were more likely to experience challenges when using the Public Rights of Way network

Female respondents were more likely to report that rights of way are difficult or very difficult to use (36.9%, 101) than male respondents (25.0%, 47). This suggests that female respondents were more likely to experience challenges when using the Public Rights of Way network.

Respondents aged 49 and under were more likely to report that rights of way are difficult or very difficult to use (41.2%, 47) than respondents aged 50-64 (29.1%, 51) and those aged 65 and over (30.3%, 54), indicating lower perceived ease of use among younger respondents.

Q26b. If you answered "Difficult" or "Very difficult" above, which area(s) of Dorset were you thinking about?

Base: n-201



Option	Total	Percent
North Dorset	74	36.8%
Weymouth and Portland	16	8.0%
Dorchester area	21	10.5%
Purbeck	16	8.0%
East Dorset	22	11.0%
West Dorset	80	39.8%
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) area /across Dorset generally	11	5.5%
Other (please specify)	9	4.5%

Respondents who reported that rights of way were difficult or very difficult to use were most likely to identify West Dorset (39.8%, 80) and North Dorset (36.8%, 74) as areas where they experienced challenges using the network.

Smaller proportions of respondents identified East Dorset (11.0%, 22), the Dorchester area (10.5%, 21), Weymouth and Portland (8.0%, 16) and Purbeck (8.0%, 16). A further 5.5% (11) of respondents referred to the BCP area or Dorset generally, while 4.5% (9) selected ‘Other’.

These findings indicate that concerns about the ease of using rights of way were reported across Dorset, although respondents were most likely to identify West Dorset and North Dorset when reflecting on their experiences.

Other comments:

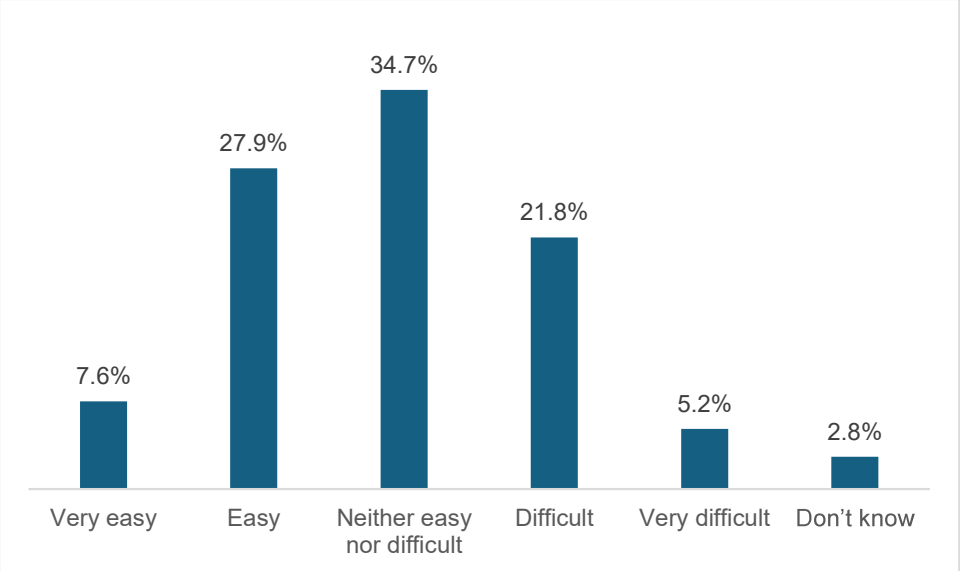
Due to the small sample size, comments are presented verbatim.

Other comments:
South West
It's easy if you understand maps and understand the deffinitve map & statement.

all round
Lytchett Matravers area
A public footpath close to me ([redacted]) is used daly by walkers. When it is dry in the summer, there are no problems. In the winter and during wet weather abuse of the footpath by horses makes it impassable on many occasions.
Un maintained bridleways
erosion of cliff/coastal paths
Previous question for rating of 1, 2, or 3 failed to work!
Netherbury Parish and Salwayash and Dottery area
West Dorset, Dorchester area is the worse maintained.
Areas around Alderholt
Osmington area
Personally I am concerned that many more years will pass by before anything is done to make the loders Bradpole railway link complete.
Some are easy, some not. Depends on the soil type, vegetation, sun, rain etc etc.
Due to lack parking
Out of Poundbury only.
E54/31

Q27. How easy or difficult is it to find information about routes?

Base: n-499



Option	Total	Percent
Very easy	38	7.6%
Easy	139	27.9%
Neither easy nor difficult	173	34.7%
Difficult	109	21.8%
Very difficult	26	5.2%

Don’t know	14	2.8%

Responses were mixed regarding how easy or difficult it is to find information about routes. Around a third of respondents, 27.9% (139), reported that finding route information is easy, while 7.6% (38) said it is very easy.

The most common response was neither easy nor difficult, selected by 34.7% (173) of respondents, indicating that many did not perceive finding information about routes as either particularly simple or particularly challenging.

In contrast, 21.8% (109) of respondents reported that finding route information is difficult and 5.2% (26) said it is very difficult. A further 2.8% (14) selected ‘Don’t know’, suggesting a small proportion of respondents were unsure or had not sought route information.

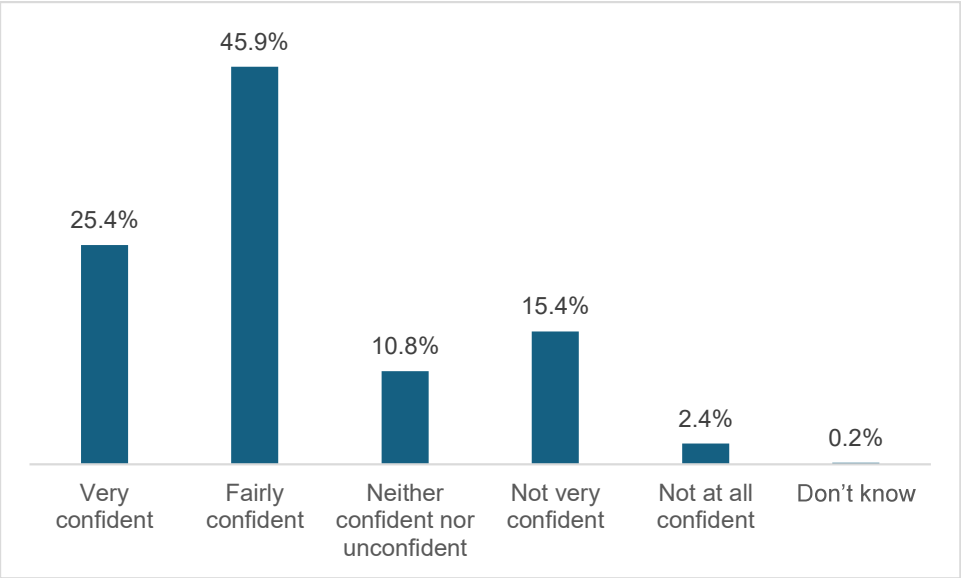
Respondents with a disability were more likely to report that finding information about routes is difficult or very difficult (35.9%, 19) than respondents without a disability (25.9%, 104). This suggests that respondents with a disability may experience greater challenges accessing information about Public Rights of Way routes.

Female respondents were more likely to report that finding information about routes is difficult or very difficult (31.1%, 85) than male respondents (21.7%, 41). This suggests that female respondents experienced greater difficulty accessing information about Public Rights of Way routes.

Respondents aged 49 and under were more likely to report that finding information about routes is difficult or very difficult (33.3%, 38) than respondents aged 65 and over (24.2%, 43). This indicates that younger respondents were less positive about the ease of finding route information.

Q28. What is your level of confidence when navigating public paths and routes?

Base: n-501



Option	Total	Percent
Very confident	127	25.4%
Fairly confident	230	45.9%
Neither confident nor unconfident	54	10.8%
Not very confident	77	15.4%
Not at all confident	12	2.4%
Don't know	1	0.2%

Respondents were generally confident when navigating public paths and routes. Nearly half of respondents, 45.9% (230), reported being fairly confident, while a further 25.4% (127) said they were very confident.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 10.8% (54), reported being neither confident nor unconfident, indicating that they did not hold a particularly strong view about their ability to navigate public paths and routes.

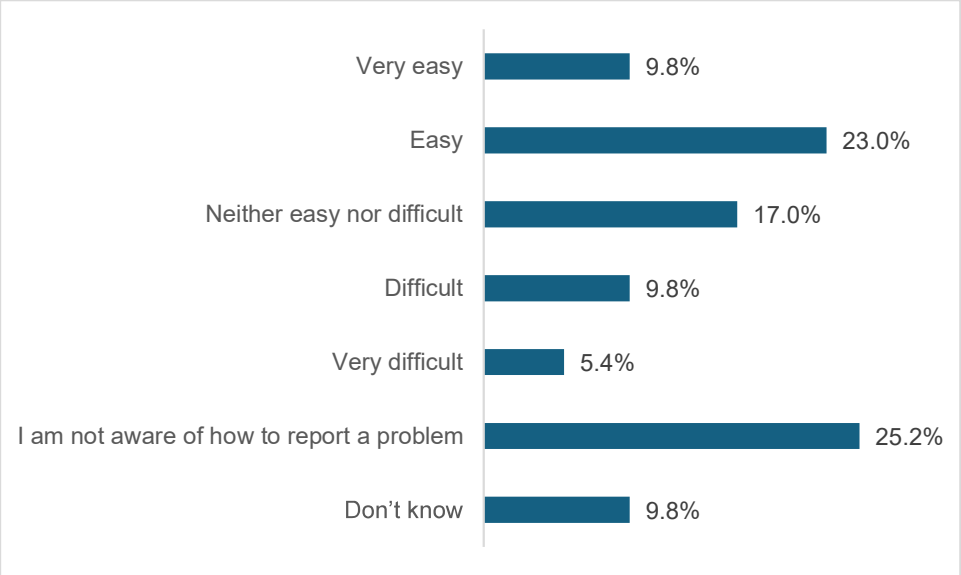
In contrast, 15.4% (77) of respondents reported that they were not very confident and 2.4% (12) said they were not at all confident. Just 0.2% (1) selected 'Don't know', suggesting that almost all respondents were able to provide a view on their confidence when navigating the network.

Respondents with a disability were more likely to report being not very confident or not at all confident when navigating public paths and routes (22.6%, 12) than respondents without a disability (16.9%, 68). This suggests that respondents with a disability were less confident when navigating the Public Rights of Way network.

Female respondents were more likely to report being not very confident or not at all confident when navigating public paths and routes (21.5%, 59) than male respondents (12.7%, 24). This suggests that female respondents were less confident when navigating the Public Rights of Way network.

Q29. How easy or difficult is it to report a problem on a path?

Base: n-500



Option	Total	Percent
Very easy	49	9.8%
Easy	115	23.0%
Neither easy nor difficult	85	17.0%
Difficult	49	9.8%
Very difficult	27	5.4%
I am not aware of how to report a problem	126	25.2%
Don't know	49	9.8%

Respondents expressed a range of views on how easy or difficult it is to report a problem on a path. Around a third of respondents, 23.0% (115), reported that reporting a problem is easy, while 9.8% (49) said it is very easy.

A further 17.0% (85) of respondents reported that reporting a problem is neither easy nor difficult, indicating that they did not perceive the process as either particularly simple or particularly challenging.

In contrast, 9.8% (49) of respondents reported that reporting a problem is difficult and 5.4% (27) said it is very difficult. A notable proportion of respondents, 25.2% (126), indicated that they were not aware of how to report a problem, while a further 9.8% (49) selected 'Don't know'. This suggests that a considerable proportion of respondents were unable to assess the process for reporting problems, highlighting a potential gap in awareness of the available reporting mechanisms.

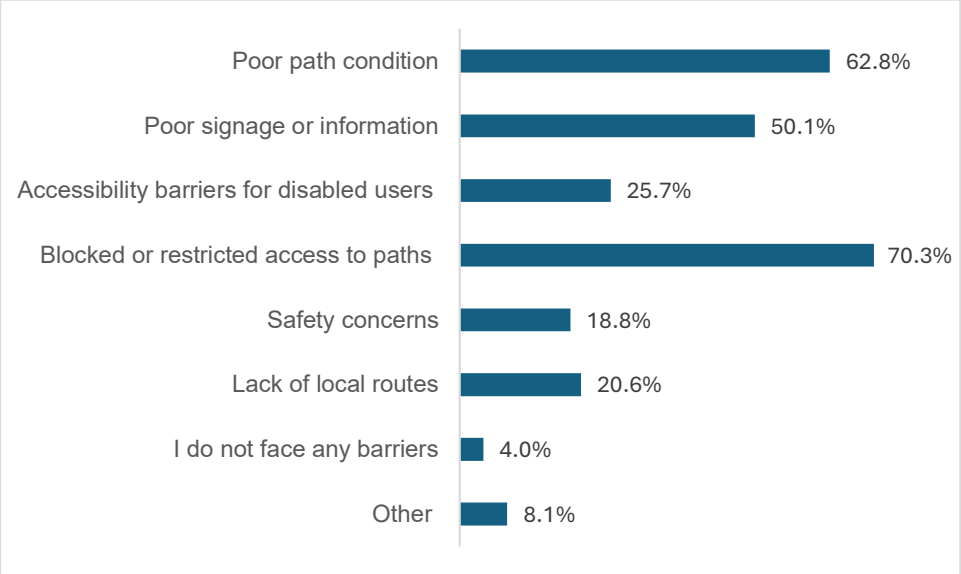
Consistent with this finding, respondents with a disability were more likely to indicate that they were not aware of how to report a problem on a path (32.1%, 17) than

respondents without a disability (23.9%, 96), suggesting lower awareness of the process for reporting Public Rights of Way issues among respondents with a disability.

Respondents aged 49 and under were more likely to indicate that they were not aware of how to report a problem on a path (31.6%, 36) than respondents aged 50-64 (26.3%, 46) and those aged 65 and over (19.7%, 35). While perceptions of the reporting process were broadly similar across the age groups, awareness of how to report a problem was lower among younger respondents.

Q30. What barriers, if any, do you experience when using rights of way in Dorset?

Base: n-495



Option	Total	Percent
Poor path condition	311	62.8%
Poor signage or information	248	50.1%
Accessibility barriers for disabled users (for example: stiles, rough or uneven surfaces, steep slopes)	127	25.7%
Blocked or restricted access to paths (for example: locked gates, closed paths, overgrown routes)	348	70.3%
Safety concerns	93	18.8%
Lack of local routes	102	20.6%
I do not face any barriers	20	4.0%
Other (please specify)	40	8.1%

Other comments

The other barrier comments focused largely on the maintenance and accessibility of the rights of way network, particularly vegetation management, access infrastructure, and route connectivity.

Theme	Description	Total
Vegetation and Path Maintenance	Overgrown paths, brambles, nettles and vegetation, Fallen trees and blocked routes, Muddy, boggy and waterlogged paths, General lack of maintenance of footpaths, bridleways and green lanes.	25
Access Infrastructure Issues	Broken or poorly maintained stiles, Broken bridges and footbridges, Difficult, poorly designed or poorly maintained gates, Lack of dog gates and dog-friendly access features.	23
Poor Connectivity and Fragmented Networks	Routes that do not link together, Bridleways and footpaths ending abruptly, Lack of circular routes, Missing links between sections of the network.	13
Livestock and Safety Concerns	Cattle, bulls and livestock causing intimidation, Safety concerns when crossing fields with animals, Livestock restricting access to routes, Path damage caused by livestock and horses.	11
Road Safety and Hazardous Connections	Need to use busy roads to connect rights of way, Dangerous Road crossings, Lack of safe off-road alternatives, Narrow roads with limited verges.	9
Cycling Infrastructure Gaps	Lack of off-road cycling routes, disconnected cycle networks, cycle lanes ending at unsafe locations, Limited safe cycling routes for commuting and school travel.	8
Signage, Mapping and Route Information	Poor or missing signage, Difficulty identifying routes in unfamiliar areas, Reliance on maps rather than waymarking, Concerns about inaccuracies in the Definitive Map.	8

Environmental and Nuisance Issues	Dog fouling, Vegetation obstructing views, Poor-quality surfacing materials and debris, Noise and disturbance from increased traffic and development.	8
Parking and Access to Routes	Insufficient parking provision, Lack of parking near popular routes, Dependence on cars to access the network, Limited access points to trails and routes.	7
Accessibility and Inclusion	Poor access for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs, Stiles creating barriers for users with dogs, Lack of resting places and seating, Accessibility issues during wet weather.	5
Landowner, Enforcement and Closures	Obstructed or diverted paths, Landowners failing to keep routes clear, Long-term route closures, Slow resolution of reported issues, Concerns about extinguishment of rights of way.	5
Seasonal and Surface Condition Issues	Winter inaccessibility, Flooding and storm damage, agricultural crops obstructing routes, Surface deterioration from vehicle and horse use.	2
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	4

Respondents identified a range of barriers when using rights of way in Dorset. The most commonly reported barrier was blocked or restricted access to paths, selected by 70.3% (348) of respondents. This was followed by poor path condition (62.8%, 311) and poor signage or information (50.1%, 248).

Around a quarter of respondents, 25.7% (127), identified accessibility barriers for disabled users, while 20.6% (102) cited a lack of local routes and 18.8% (93) reported safety concerns.

Only 4.0% (20) of respondents indicated that they did not face any barriers when using rights of way in Dorset, suggesting that barriers are experienced by the vast majority of respondents. A further 8.1% (40) selected ‘Other’, providing additional comments on barriers not captured by the listed response options.

Respondents with a disability were more likely to identify accessibility barriers for disabled users, such as stiles, rough or uneven surfaces, and steep slopes (49.1%, 26) than respondents without a disability (21.5%, 85). This suggests that physical accessibility remains a more prominent issue for respondents with a disability when using the Public Rights of Way network.

Female respondents were more likely to identify blocked or restricted access to paths (73.8%, 200 compared with 66.7%, 124) and safety concerns (21.0%, 57 compared with 13.4%, 25) as barriers when using rights of way in Dorset, suggesting that these issues were of greater concern to female respondents.

Respondents aged 49 and under were more likely to identify a lack of local routes as a barrier when using rights of way in Dorset (34.5%, 39) than respondents aged 50-64 (16.9%, 29) and those aged 65 and over (16.5%, 29). In contrast, respondents aged 65 and over were more likely to identify accessibility barriers, such as stiles, rough or uneven surfaces, and steep slopes (34.1%, 60), than younger age groups (20.4%, 23 and 20.4%, 35 respectively).

Section 6: Final comments

Q31. Do you have any comments Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)?

Base: n-237

Comments covered a range of issues, most commonly relating to route maintenance, connectivity, safety, and accessibility.

Theme	Description	Total
Maintenance of Existing Routes	Overgrown vegetation on footpaths and bridleways, Poor path surfaces, mud, drainage and boggy routes, Broken stiles, gates, bridges and access infrastructure, calls to prioritise maintenance before creating new routes, Perception that reported issues are not resolved quickly.	44

Route Connectivity and Missing Links	Routes that end abruptly or do not connect, need to reduce reliance on busy roads between paths, Support for linking communities through traffic-free routes, Requests for strategic county-wide connections.	32
Safety on Roads and Crossings	Dangerous road crossings and road links between routes, Need for traffic-free alternatives, Concerns about routes ending on fast or busy roads, Requests for crossings, warning signs and safer connections.	31
Accessibility and Inclusion	Better access for wheelchair users, mobility scooter users and pushchairs, Removal of unnecessary barriers and restrictive infrastructure, more resting places and seating, Improved accessibility information for users, need to balance accessibility improvements with preserving natural character.	30
Bridleways and Horse Rider Access	Need for more connected bridleway networks Overgrown and impassable bridleways, difficult gates requiring riders to dismount, dangerous road sections between bridleways, Requests to upgrade some footpaths to bridleways, Calls for safer road crossings and horse-friendly infrastructure.	24
Funding and Delivery	Concerns about whether sufficient funding is available, Requests for clear implementation plans and measurable targets, Desire for faster delivery and visible outcomes, concerns that plans may remain aspirational without resources.	20

Cycling Infrastructure and Connectivity	Demand for more off-road cycle routes, Safer routes connecting towns and villages, Improved commuting and school travel routes, Requests for conversion of former railway lines into cycleways, need for better integration with active travel networks.	18
Consultation and Governance	Positive feedback on the ambition of the ROWIP, Requests for clearer, shorter consultation documents, Concerns about consultation accessibility and engagement, Requests for stronger collaboration with neighbouring authorities and local councils.	17
Landowner Responsibilities and Enforcement	Overgrown, blocked or inaccessible paths on private land, Farmers not maintaining stiles, gates and path corridors, Locked gates, narrowed paths and obstructions, need for stronger enforcement and compliance.	14
Shared Use and User Conflicts	Tensions between walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorised users, Concerns about e-bikes and speeding cyclists, Desire for balanced access for all user groups, Differing views on shared-use paths versus separate provision.	13
Environment and Countryside Character	Importance of preserving the rural character of Dorset, Concerns about over-development or urbanisation of routes, need to balance access improvements with environmental protection, Consideration of biodiversity and wildlife impacts.	13

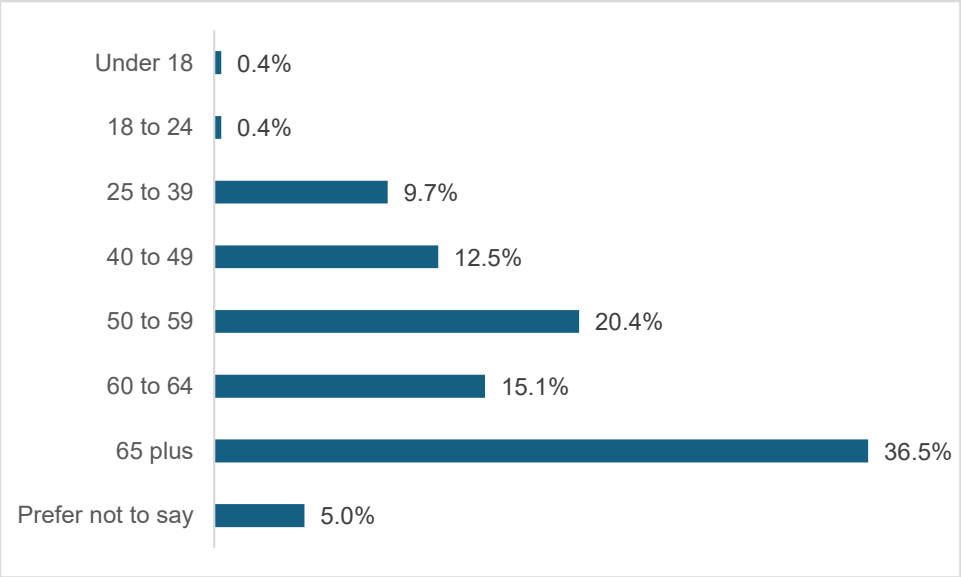
Monitoring, Reporting and Response	Frustration that reported issues remain unresolved, Desire for better tracking of maintenance requests, Calls for regular route inspections, Requests for greater accountability and progress monitoring.	12
Rural Access and Community Links	Desire for better connections between villages, Safer routes to schools, shops and local services, Reduced dependency on cars, Support for active travel in rural areas.	12
Signage, Mapping and Information	Better waymarking and route information, improved online mapping and route condition information, more public awareness of rights of way, Suggestions for QR codes and digital information.	11
Volunteer and Community Involvement	Support for volunteers, rangers and parish councils, Suggestions for local route champions and monitoring groups, Desire for stronger engagement with local communities.	11
Livestock and User Safety	Concerns about cattle, bulls and horses on routes, need for safer management of livestock near public access routes, Requests for fencing, warning signs and designated safe routes.	6
Parking and Supporting Infrastructure	Need for parking at popular route access points, better integration with public transport, Consideration of toilets and visitor facilities for larger schemes.	6
Motorised Vehicle Access	Requests to retain access to byways and unsurfaced roads, Concerns about restrictions on motorised users, Calls for clearer information on legal vehicle access.	4

Former Railway and Trailway Projects	Strong support for North Dorset Trailway extensions, Significant support for the Loders-Bradpole former railway route, Support for Maiden Newton-West Bay connections, Some local objections regarding route alignments, safety and impact on communities.	3
Other	Unique comments not fitting the main themes.	69

Section 7: Demographics

Q32. Please select your age group.

Base: n-496



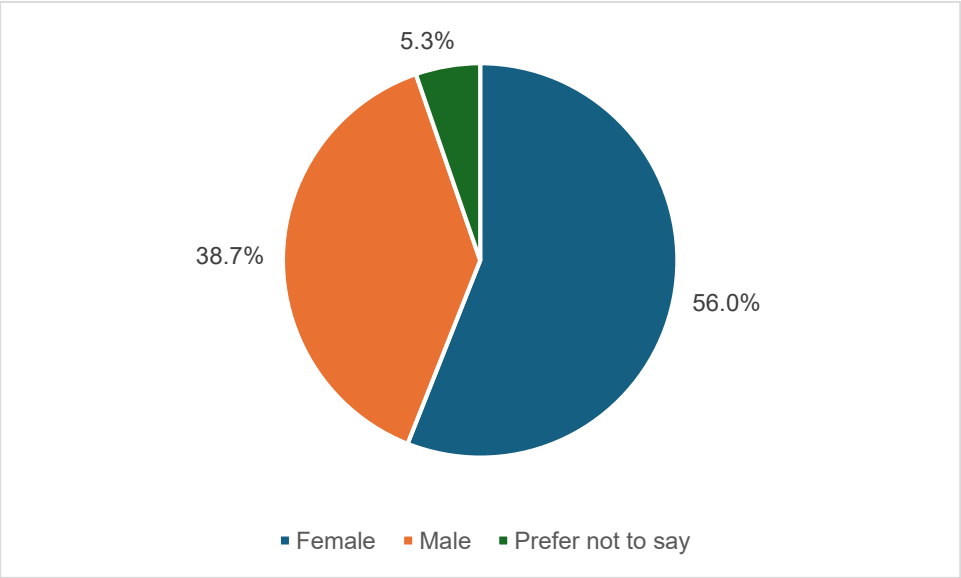
Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	2	0.4%
18 to 24	2	0.4%
25 to 39	48	9.7%
40 to 49	62	12.5%
50 to 59	101	20.4%
60 to 64	75	15.1%
65 plus	181	36.5%
Prefer not to say	25	5.0%

Respondents were predominantly older adults aged 50 to 65 plus in age. Respondents aged 49 and under accounted for 23% (114) of responses;

respondents aged 50 to 64 accounted for 35.5% (176), and those aged 65 plus accounted for 36.5% (181).

Q33. What is your sex?

Base: n-491



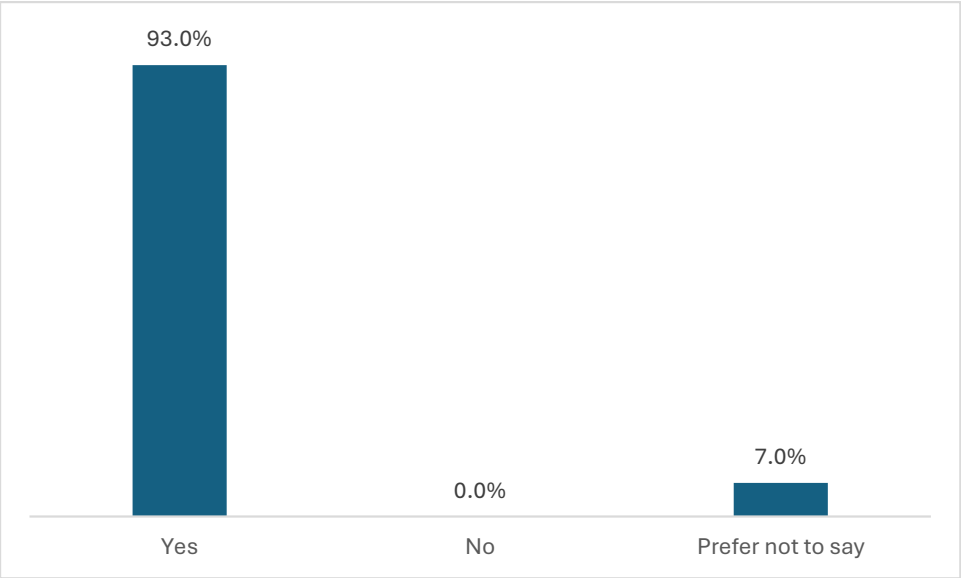
Option	Total	Percent
Female	275	56.0%
Male	190	38.7%
Prefer not to say	26	5.3%

The majority of responses were female at 56.0% (275) compared to male responses at 38.7% (190).

This shows that two-thirds of the survey responses were accounted for by females compared to male responses, indicating a higher participation rate among female respondents than male respondents.

Q34. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

Base: n-488



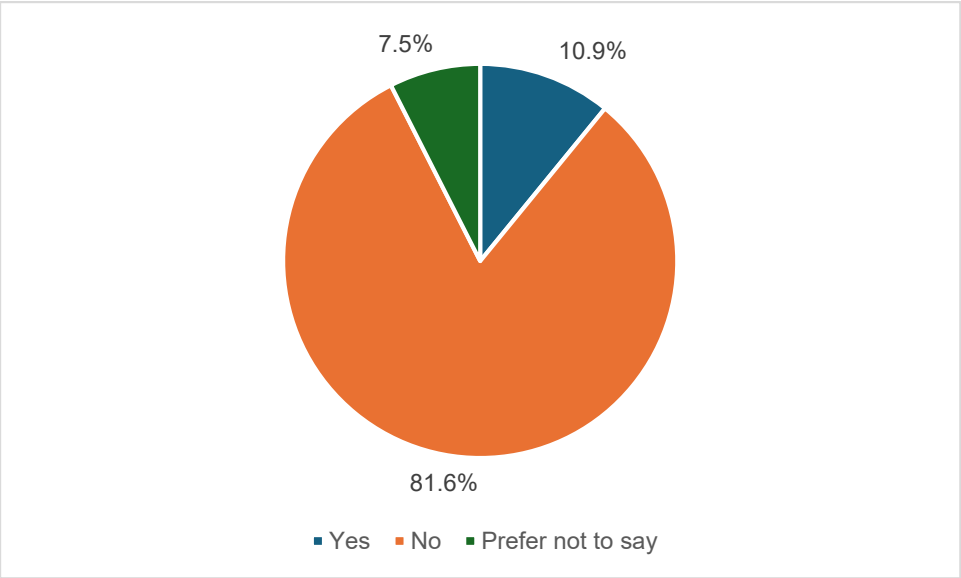
Option	Total	Percent
Yes	454	93.0%
No	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	34	7.0%

The vast majority of respondents indicated that the gender they identify with as the same sex registered at birth at 93.0% (454). A further 7.0% (34) preferred not to say.

Q35. The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed.

Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

Base: n-494

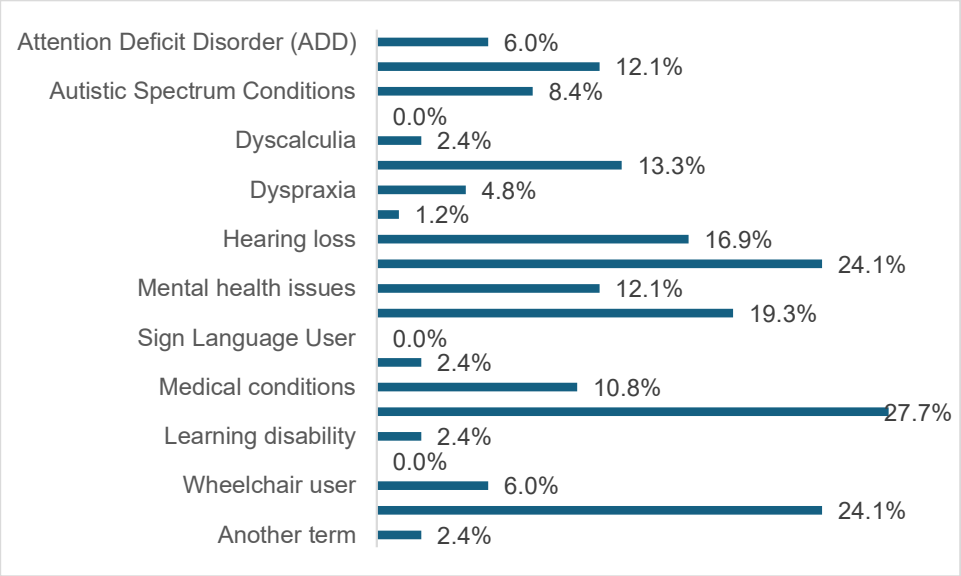


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	54	10.9%
No	403	81.6%
Prefer not to say	37	7.5%

Overall, 10.9% (54) of respondents identified as disabled under the Equality Act 2010, whilst 81.6% (403) indicated that they were not disabled.

Q36. If at the previous question you stated you consider yourself to have a disability, please state the type of disability which applies to you.

Base: n-83



Option	Total	Percent
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)	5	6.0%
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	10	12.1%

Autistic Spectrum Conditions	7	8.4%
Blind	0	0.0%
Dyscalculia	2	2.4%
Dyslexia	11	13.3%
Dyspraxia	4	4.8%
Deaf	1	1.2%
Hearing loss	14	16.9%
Long term health condition	20	24.1%
Mental health issues	10	12.1%
Physical impairment	16	19.3%
Sign Language User	0	0.0%
Visually impaired	2	2.4%
Medical conditions	9	10.8%
Mobility issues	23	27.7%
Learning disability	2	2.4%
Specific learning differences	0	0.0%
Wheelchair user	5	6.0%
Prefer not to say	20	24.1%
If you prefer to use another term, please write in the box below	2	2.4%

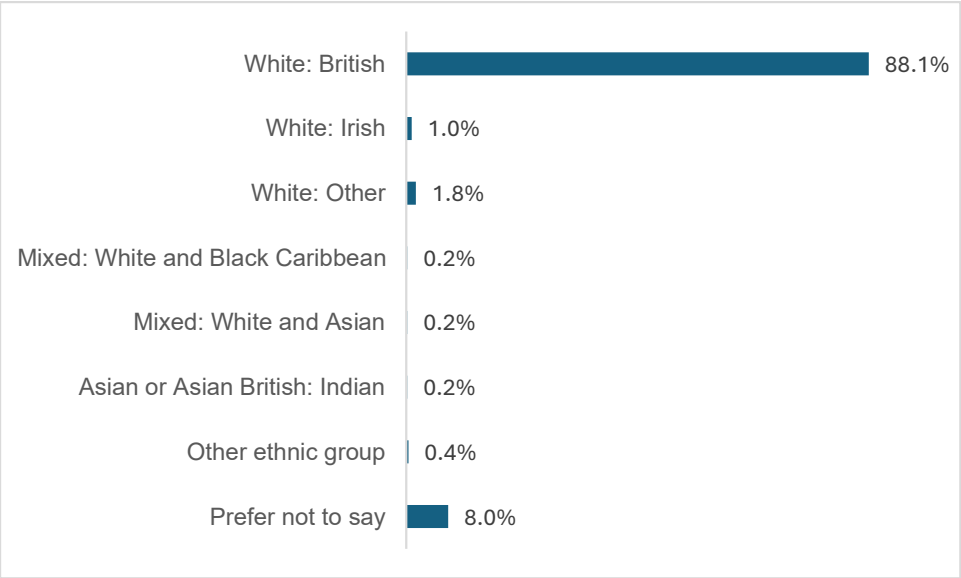
Amongst residents who do indicate as disabled under the Equality Act 2010, a few of the most reported disability types were mobility issues 27.7% (23), long-term health conditions 24.1% (20), physical impairment 19.3% (16) and hearing loss 16.9% (14).

Autistic spectrum conditions, mental health issues, medical conditions and other conditions were also reported.

Other – disability type
Cancer
A visual problem which stops me driving
Reduced mobility and balance due to age. Prone to tripping and falling.
My daughter is autistic and we live right where the proposal is and I have a bad back I was born deformed down my spine and do not want a slippery horrible path in the winter
i also have a heart condition and POTS
CFS
Old age

Q37. What is your ethnic group?

Base: n-489



Option	Total	Percent
White: British	431	88.1%
White: Irish	5	1.0%
White: Gypsy	0	0.0%
White: Irish Traveller	0	0.0%
White: Other	9	1.8%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1	0.2%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Asian	1	0.2%
Mixed: Other	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	1	0.2%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistan	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Chinese	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Other	0	0.0%
Black or Black British:	0	0.0%
Arab	0	0.0%
Other ethnic group	2	0.4%
Prefer not to say	39	8.0%

The overall respondent population identified as White British at 88.1% (431), with White Other following at 1.8% (9) and White Irish at 1.0% (5). Other ethnic groups accounted for less than 0.5%.

Ethnicity – other
Dual nationality (uk and eu)
English
white english
english

white English
Responding as Alderholt Parish Council

Appendix

Appendix A, Dorset Greenways Alliance response –

Dorset Greenways Alliance

Response to Dorset Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan Consultation

Dorset Greenways Alliance was formed in January 2026 to connect groups which are working to create, maintain and extend traffic-free greenways across Dorset; to raise awareness of the benefits of a connected and inclusive network; to share knowledge and experience; and to advocate for the creation, connection and enhancement of greenway infrastructure throughout Dorset.

As we represent a number of organisations, we are submitting this detailed written response rather than completing the online consultation form and it is from the specific perspective of these organisations representing ‘shared-use’ routes.

Dorset Greenways Alliance strongly agrees with the plan's vision to create a modern, accessible and well-connected rights of way network that supports health, communities, the economy and the environment.

Proposed Policies

Policy 1 – Maintaining/Improving the Existing Network

Strongly Agree

We strongly agree with Policy 1 to maintain and improve the existing network. For this to be meaningful, it must include complete routes. A number of trailways throughout Dorset are partially complete or not yet started, including the North Dorset Trailway, the Maiden Newton to Bridport Trailway, the Loders to Bradpole Greenway, and the Chideock to Bridport Path. These are either routes to nowhere or have significant gaps that force people onto dangerous roads.

The Chideock to Bridport Path is highlighted as a case study in the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan. What has been created is a wonderful example of a community project. Unfortunately, this route stops at the top of the A35, with one landowner preventing it from connecting on to Bridport. What could be a safe, inclusive active travel link between Chideock and Bridport currently requires people

either to travel on the A35 directly to Bridport, to cross the A35 and take a longer, indirect route to Bridport via quieter lanes, or to follow Quarr Lane, which leads to a hollow way, impassable for those with limited mobility. It is a route to nowhere for its most vulnerable users. This is an example of a route with the potential to be transformative once complete, but progress has stalled indefinitely.

At present, routes are built on a section-by-section basis, with gaps left where landowner agreement has not been reached. Dorset Greenways Alliance is calling for Dorset Council to commit that, once a route has been approved as infrastructure providing significant public benefit, the Council will complete the full route within an agreed timescale – using path creation orders, or compulsory purchase orders as a last resort, where negotiation has failed. This would ensure that Dorset has a meaningful network of rural active travel infrastructure that maximises public health, environmental and economic benefits, built within a reasonable timeframe and importantly meets the needs of users.

Policy 2 – Raise Awareness

Agree

While we support this policy, the priority **must** be a fully connected, inclusive network of routes ahead of raising awareness. Fully completed routes will encourage more people to use the network for active travel and recreation.

Policy 3 – Making the Network More Accessible

Strongly Agree

Dorset Greenways Alliance encourages Dorset Council to adopt Wheels for Wellbeing's principle of mobility justice: targeting resources to create or improve journey-making options for those who currently have the least access to transport and mobility, redressing existing inequalities by prioritising those who are currently excluded. The routes being promoted by the members of the Alliance are prime examples of these.

Policy 4 – Empowering Communities

Strongly Agree

Trailway community groups are often the starting point for identifying the need for new greenways or extensions to existing routes. These volunteer groups contribute hundreds of hours researching, raising awareness and campaigning for these networks, and once routes are in place they provide a vital resource that helps maintain and promote them. After over a decade of austerity and reduced council budgets, these voluntary groups play an increasingly important role in maintaining and promoting the rights of way network.

However, volunteers can become disheartened when projects stall for years or even decades, which risks losing their vital contribution. A council commitment to completing routes within a defined timescale would sustain volunteer motivation and reduce the risk of disengagement due to lack of progress. Seeing a genuine commitment to completing entire routes will inspire and reinforce volunteers' continued involvement in these projects.

Policy 5 – Building the Dorset Economy

Agree

There is a growing evidence base that active travel networks benefit the local economy. The existing, incomplete network of trailways already brings economic benefit, but this would be significantly greater if the partial routes were completed to create a genuinely connected trailway network that facilitates active travel.

Policy 6 – Countryside Code / Landowners

Agree

We support working collaboratively with landowners, this collaboration is essential for our greenway network. Trailway groups already promote the Countryside Code at events, on their websites and through social media, and are an important resource for encouraging responsible behaviour. Trailway groups also organise volunteers to help support the Dorset Council Rangers maintain the routes.

Policy 7 – Housing Development and the Local Plan

Agree

Section 106 funding from housing developments has been used to fund and maintain trailway development in Dorset. Dorset Greenways Alliance supports Active Travel England's Rural Design Guide, which states:

> *"Walking, wheeling and cycling networks, both on and off-site, should enable and encourage people living in and travelling to and from new developments in rural areas to make everyday journeys by walking, wheeling and cycling including as part of longer journeys using public transport, such as commuting, education, retail, leisure and recreational trips… Developments in rural areas should also enable people, including existing communities, to reach the wider countryside for recreation. Often the countryside is inaccessible for walking, wheeling and cycling from a built-up area, and new developments on the edge of the settlement can open up new paths for leisure and recreation. By providing good off-site networks and supporting facilities for active travel, the health, social and environmental impacts of increased levels of traffic from developments will be reduced."*

The precise nature and function of the contribution should be clearly stated in the planning documents.

Policy 8 – Health and Wellbeing

Strongly Agree

Dorset Greenways Alliance strongly agrees with the health and wellbeing benefits set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. A network of complete trailways will provide both physical and mental health benefits and help avoid social isolation. Connecting rural and urban communities will enabling people to incorporate active travel into their everyday journeys.

Policy 9 – Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

Strongly Agree

We strongly support the intention to integrate the rights of way network with active travel routes. Creating inclusive, continuous routes is key to building an effective active travel network that promotes sustainable travel and encourages short journeys to be made by walking, wheeling or cycling. A primary barrier to active travel is the lack of safe, direct and connected routes. An integrated greenway network would support rural active travel for school, work and recreation.

Policy 10 – Definitive Map Duties

Agree

Dorset Greenways Alliance acknowledges that the Definitive Map is essential in protecting public access, providing certainty for landowners, and supporting planning, development and land management decisions. We support the aim to reduce the backlog by increasing capacity within the team where possible.

Further Points

In addition to the ten policies set out in the consultation, Dorset Greenways Alliance encourages Dorset Council to aim to improve its Active Travel Capability rating from Level 1 to Level 2 which will increase Dorset's active travel funding.

We also note the absence of a monitoring framework within the plan. Without a clear mechanism for tracking delivery against the plan's own policies – for example, measuring progress on completing partial routes under Policy 1, or on improving accessibility under Policy 3 – neither the Council nor the public will be able to assess whether the plan's aims are being achieved. We recommend that a monitoring framework, with clear indicators and regular reporting, be built into the final plan. In preparation for this, we suggest an evaluation of the outcomes of the 'Themes' and their objectives from ROWIP 1.

Summary

In summary, Dorset Greenways Alliance asks Dorset Council to:

- Commit to completing approved routes in full within an agreed timescale, using compulsory purchase orders as a last resort where landowner negotiation fails
- Adopt Wheels for Wellbeing's mobility justice principle in prioritising resources
- Aim to improve Dorset's Active Travel Capability rating from Level 1 to Level 2
- Introduce a monitoring framework to track delivery against the plan's policies

Dorset Greenways Alliance
9 October 2026

Appendix B, Dorset Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Joint Local Access Forum (DLAF) response –

Response of the Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Joint Local Access Forum (DLAF) to Dorset Council's draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2026 to 2036

Introduction

1. This is the formal response of the Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Joint Local Access Forum (DLAF) to the draft ROWIP. The DLAF is a statutory body established under section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 with a remit to advise its appointing authorities, Dorset Council and BCP Council, and other statutory bodies, as to the improvement of public access to the countryside for the purposes of open-air recreation, the enjoyment of the area, and sustainable transport. By virtue of section 61 of the CRoW Act a LAF is a statutory consultee during the assessment made in preparation for writing a ROWIP and because of our statutory role and the detailed comments we wish to make on the draft plan we have produced this document rather than completing the online survey.

Sections 1, 2, and 3 (Executive Summary, Vision for ROWIP2 and Scope of ROWIP2 2026 to 2036

There is much repetition in these sections and they should be edited so that they are more focused.

On p.6 Dorset Council's strategic priorities are set out but without context or explanation of their relevance to the ROWIP..

The aspiration to make Dorset "one of the nation's premier walking counties" is buried in Section 2 and not carried through consistently. A sharper, repeatable vision statement would give the document a stronger identity.

There is no mention of climate change in the vision section (p.8): the potential impact of climate change on the network should be mentioned here.

In section 3 (Scope of ROWIP2 from 2026 to 2026), the 5th bullet point should be amended to read:

- Open Access Land, Registered Common Land and Coastal Access Land This is

because Registered Common Land is different to open access land.

Also within the Scope section we suggest an amended wording to the paragraph about the Equality Act:

"We will ensure that we comply with our duty under the equality Act 2010, recognising the needs of all users, especially those with mobility or visual impairment challenges, and of children and young people in accordance with Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR).."

The wording of the policies as set out in the contents list on p,3 isn't consistent with the wording on p.6.

Section 2 (p.8) should say more about the consultation process and refer to the appendix where the findings are set out.

Policy 1: Maintaining and improving the existing PRoW network

For a plan running to 2036, adaptation to climate change (flooding, coastal erosion and surface damage from wetter winters) is underdeveloped. Surrey's ROWIP (see here: Surrey Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025 to 2035) explicitly commits to identifying climate-vulnerable structures and working with a dedicated flood and climate resilience team. A specific climate vulnerability commitment would strengthen Policy 1.

There is no specific mention of the widespread issue of users having to use country roads with no footways to move between unconnected rights of way. Could this be mentioned in the 8th bullet point?

There is no recognition in this policy that most walks for daily activity and exercise are taken close to home and that therefore greenspaces and routes in towns and villages are of paramount importance in supporting healthier lifestyles, stronger communities and a more sustainable future. Natural England carries out the Nature and People survey which provides evidence of this activity (see here: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-surveys-forhttps://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-surveys-for-england-data-tables-and-publications-from-adults-survey-year-6-april-2025-march-2026england-data-tables-and-publications-from-adults-survey-year-6-april-2025-marchhttps://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-surveys-for-

england-data-tables-and-publications-from-adults-survey-year-6-april-2025-march-20262026).

We therefore suggest that the second paragraph under Policy 1 be amended to read:

" … focusing investment on the routes and greenspaces that matter most to local communities, close to where they live, and where they can make the most difference to everyday use."

P.15, Figure 6 is a useful reminder of the scarcity of bridleways in parts of the county: Is there a way the ROWIP could set a framework for some targeted upgrading of footpaths to bridleways, subject to surface conditions being upgraded where necessary? This would be of value to cyclists as much as equestrians and would meet the demand expressed in Finding 4 (p. 52) for new and improved routes.

Policy 2: Raise awareness of Public Rights of Way

The initiatives set out under this policy heading are welcome, although we do not consider that developing 'virtual walks' should be given any priority when there is so much to be done.

P. 22-23 (Case Study 5) What is described here is very commendable, but it raises the question of how cyclists can identify those routes which can be used by a bike with fairly standard tyres rather than needing a heavy-duty mountain bike to tackle them. Is there any option to create a layer on Dorset Explorer to identify reasonably well surfaced routes? (Clearly they would need to be identified on the ground in the first instance.)

Policy 3: Making our network more accessible

We suggest that specific reference be made to supporting those who are visually impaired. Guidance has been produced by the Sensory Trust on this and related issues (see here: Advice and guidance – Sensory Trust Guides). P.19, 2nd bullet point:

We suggest amending this to read:

- *improve physical accessibility by removing or reducing barriers where possible, including removing or replacing stiles with accessible gates, improving bridge access, and addressing restrictive infrastructure*

We have added the words 'removing or' because BS5709 (the British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles) makes it clear that a gap is preferable to any structure (and is also cheaper).

P. 20, 6th bullet point:

The mention of improving access to open access land is welcome. The ROWIP should set a target of achieving access to a specific number of sites. The research for this has already been done by DLAF, identifying nine priority routes.

Suggested form of words:

- **Improve access to Open Access land and Registered Common Land** by working with the Local Access Forum to identify and create at least nine paths to provide access to inaccessible areas of Open Access land.

However, we query whether this is the most appropriate Policy heading for this work. Possibly it would sit more comfortably under Policy 1.

The first bullet point under Policy 3 commits to just 10 accessible routes in 10 years across 2,855 miles of public rights of way. Given the consultation finding that disabled and ethnic minority users are underrepresented, this target could be more ambitious and should be accompanied by a commitment to engage those communities in co-designing routes.

We applaud the profile given to accessibility both for those who access the countryside by means of trampers or trikes and those who accompany them, those pushing buggies, and those with all kinds on mobility problems. Added together these groups make up a large proportion of the population.

Policy 4: Empowering Communities to help improve their Public Rights of Way Network

We welcome the commitment expressed here of reinvigorating the Rights of Way Liaison Officer (ROWLO) network. This is something which the DLAF has been advocating for some time.

P. 25 We suggest that there should be some form of target to increase the proportion of parishes with a trained ROWLO to x% by 2031 and to y% by 2036? (We don't know the present coverage and so are unable to suggest figures.)

P. 25 We also recommend that there be a specific mention of training for RoWLOs, in addition to the more general training mentioned at bullet point nine. Rather than a county-wide gathering, this should be organised in sectors, bringing together neighbouring councils and the relevant senior ranger

P. 25 We suggest that part of the training, guidance and support for parish/town councils should be a dedicated page on the DC website, setting out the powers which parish and town councils have in respect of public rights of way. Experience indicates that some parish and town councillors and clerks have little working knowledge and understanding of rights of way law and practice, yet the state of the rights of way network is a key element of community wellbeing.

P. 25 We suggest that parish and town councils be encouraged to produce their own "mini-ROWIPS". This would encourage those councils to budget for some

works. We recommend that you consider the approach advocated in the North Somerset Council ROWIP (see here: North Somerset Council Rights of way improvement plan 2022-32, then Appendix A). Here parish and town councils have been invited to nominate routes for improvement, providing a direct mechanism for local input and scaling down of the plan to the parish/town council level. Those parish and town councils which have Neighbourhood Plans in place would be able to draw on the information already in those plans when producing their mini-ROWIPs, or nominating routes for improvement.

P.25 Service Level Agreements should be explained.

Policy 5: Building the Dorset Economy through our Public Rights of Way Network

The DLAF recommends that the ROWIP includes reference to promoting public transport as a means of accessing rights of way network. Policy 5 might be the place for this to be mentioned. We are aware of at least two services which specifically provide such access: the Purbeck Shuttle takes people from Wareham Station to the RSPB reserve at Arne and the West Bay Shuttle takes people from Bridport to West Bay. Both services are run by Dorset Community Transport.

Policy 6: Ensuring the Countryside Code and access legislation is followed, and Landowners are respected

The first paragraph should mention landowners as well as users. So something along the following lines should be added to that paragraph: "Dorset Council will also promote good practice and an understanding of the law amongst landowners and land managers."

Ploughing and cropping should be specifically mentioned in the first bullet point at the top of p.33.

Case Study 9 (p.34) could usefully make reference to the work of Dorset Dogs (which produces the Doggy Do code): Dorset Dogs …Love Dogs…Love Nature, and explain that the initiative is supported by Dorset Council.

Case Study 10 (p.38), isn't a case study, it's just further text. An example of a success or of good practice would be helpful.

Policy 7: using new housing developments and the Local Plan to enhance Public Rights of Way

The DLAF is particularly pleased to see this policy which complements the new advice on rights of way for developers which has recently been produced. Although not something for inclusion in the ROWIP, we strongly recommend that this be moved to the planning pages of the website as it's very unlikely that developers will be looking at the rights of way pages. The information would then also be more readily available to planning officers.

Would it be possible for the proposed Public Rights of Way Management Plan, mentioned at bullet point 2 on p.36 to be one of the documents which planning officers require applicants to produce (in effect making it mandatory)?

P. 37: Could there be some mention of avoiding non-motorised users having to use roads with no footways when new developments are built on the outskirts of villages and towns.

P. 37 Could there be a statement to the effect that where new non-motor vehicle access routes are created within housing developments the default assumption is that they will be dedicated as public rights of way?

Policy 7 is probably the appropriate place to mention SANGS. The concept of SANGS is understandable but their value is degraded if it is necessary for those who are expected to use them to have to use cars to reach them. They need to be easily accessible. We suggest an additional bullet point:

- Ensure that all new green spaces created under the Heathland Mitigation Programme (SANGs) are accessible for use all year round.

We are suggesting this because we are aware that some SANGs are prone to flooding which renders them unusable.

Policy 8: Maximise the PROW network's contribution to health and wellbeing

We suggest that in either policy 7 or policy 8 there be a commitment to prioritising circular routes close to where people live which would provide opportunity for exercising for health.

The first bullet point could be amended to read:

- *improve access to high-quality circular routes and greenspaces, ensuring the network is well maintained, clearly signposted and usable throughout the year, providing seating where appropriate and avoiding the use of stiles as far as possible.*

The second bullet point (p.40) could be amended to read:

- *support community-led activities, such as walking and cycling groups, wellbeing routes and local challenges that encourage regular use of the network*

The text for Policy 8 could usefully include reference to the Dorset Health cycle Rides: Get Back in the Saddle - Dorset Council.

Policy 9: Maximise our PROW for Sustainable transport linking communities and active travel

We suggest that under this heading mention could be made of the Active Travel England Capability Rating. Dorset has held a Level 1 rating in 2023, 2024, and 2025, while neighbouring BCP Council has already reached Level 3. Level 2 requires

demonstrating strong local leadership, clear network plans forming the basis of an emerging network, and a track record of delivery. The ROWIP already contains much of the evidence needed. The key gap is framing this as a coherent planned network rather than individual projects. The "Linking Communities" implementation table on p.56 is well-placed to do this if explicitly framed in those terms. Oxfordshire County Council moved from Level 2 to Level 3 in 2025 by explicitly tying their Active Travel England rating to their corporate strategic plan. Several other rural county councils also improved their ratings in the 2025 cycle for the first time.

We therefore suggest an additional Policy 9 bullet point:

- **We will work towards achieving an Active Travel England Capability Rating of Level 2**, demonstrating strong local leadership, clear network plans and a track record of delivery across the county.

It would strengthen the ROWIP if an explanation was included, wherever the primary discussion of trailways is set out within the ROWIP (Policy 1 or Policy 9), of the powers which are available to the council for path creation where negotiation fails. There are several trailways across Dorset where landowners have blocked progress on this vital infrastructure for decades. We therefore suggest that the following wording be considered:

- **Support delivery of trailways** that provide safe, direct, attractive corridors for active travel ; the council is aware of cases which are stalled because agreement with landowners cannot be reached. Where negotiation with landowners fails to deliver strategically important trailway links and where significant public benefit is being withheld, Dorset Council will consider the use of powers such as those provided by section 26 of the Highways Act 1980 to expedite matters where appropriate.

A further matter for consideration, possibly under this policy heading, is the introduction of slower speed limits on roads which are likely to be recreational routes. This was a concept advocated by the Countryside Commission/Countryside Agency; other counties have introduced their own interpretation of this idea and CPRE has its own guidance on the subject (see About quiet lanes | Oxfordshire County Council; Quiet Lanes Suffolk | What is a Quiet Lane? and quiet_lanes_1.pdf. Such routes are particularly useful to cycling groups.

Finally under the Policy 9 heading, we suggest amending the fourth bullet point to read:

- Develop green corridors as laid out in the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework 2023, connecting rural and urban areas, reducing reliance on the private car and delivering wider benefits for biodiversity and climate resilience

The word ‘green’ is used by some to describe places which are covered with grass and surrounded by trees but it is also used to describe activities which do not burn

fossil fuels. Encouraging active travel is much easier where it is a pleasant experience along shaded tree-lined routes, rather than along concrete or tarmac routes.

Policy 10: To uphold the council's legal duties to provide and up-to-date definitive map and statement which is accessible to the public

P. 45 We welcome the mention in bullet point 2 of the "aim to reduce back log by increasing capacity within the team where possible" but we think, at the very least, there should be an indication of the target turnaround times for DMMO applications.

Without any measurable outcomes or indicators, the bullet points for Policy 10 are little more than a list of what Dorset Council is required to do by law.

5. ROWIP Implementation and investment Plan 2026 to 2036

We question whether this section of the ROWIP is sufficiently robust, in particular, the section on Monitoring and Review. Current indicators such as "condition of the network" and "usage levels where data is available", are too vague to support a meaningful five-year review. We therefore recommend reviewing the approaches taken by Leicestershire County Council (see here: Rights Of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035 Action Plan) and Surrey County Council (see here: Surrey Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025 to 2035), both strong recent examples. Leicestershire separates its Action Plan into a standalone appendix with named leads and trackable statuses, and explicitly names operational data already collected (e.g. number of signposts provided) as formal indicators. Surrey established measurable baselines through a major public survey (4,273 responses), meaning they can demonstrate change at review.

Dorset Council could:

- treat the current consultation responses as a baseline measurement – recording, for example, what percentage of respondents rated the network as satisfactory or had used Dorset Explorer.
- create a stand-alone Action Plan document with Red/Amber/Green status columns.
- commit to publishing a monitoring framework (although this should not impose more work on officers). A simple annual report capturing named indicators, drawn from the data rangers already collect: stile replacements, bridge works, outstanding maintenance report volumes, number of routes created (access to access land routes, and lengths of trailway created, number of new SLAs set up, etc) presented to the LAF and to the Place and Resources Committee.

- The Greenspace Team will already have a work plan, a list of future projects and an ongoing planned maintenance programme which could be incorporated into an action plan for the ROWIP along with any monitoring suggestions from the LAF.

It should be noted that s.60(1)(b) of the CRoW Act does specify that the ROWIP should include "a statement of the action they [the authority] propose to take for the management of local rights of way, and for securing an improved network of local rights of way, with particular regard to the matters dealt with in the assessment".

7. Appendices

There are several different appendices within this section: they need numbering.

Consultation Findings and Strategic Responses

There is a list of actions under each finding and there is reference to which policy is intended to address which finding. However, the "actions" described under each finding and the "we will" lists under each policy do not match up and the actions are lost in the Findings appendix. It is difficult for a reader to distinguish between what seem to be aspirational "we will" lists and the "actions". This is why a specific standalone Action Plan is needed.

Finding 3: Connectivity and road safety are key barriers to use

The first bullet point here is:

- identify and prioritise locations where improved crossings and connections will address the greatest need

The last bullet point is:

- work with developers to address road severance and integrate safe crossings and road connections within each new development

The draft ROWIP says that the Finding 3 issues are addressed through Policy 3 and Policy 7 but the issue of, in particular, bridleway road severance is not listed in either of these policies. This is something the DLAF has frequently discussed. We suggest that it should be specifically mentioned and that it would make a lot more impact if it was accompanied by a list of the more notorious severance cases. We suspect that this would show that most of these cases are well away from any likely development sites, so the funding needed to tackle them is unlikely to come from the developer community.

Rights of Way Implementation Plan

At the top of p.56, it says "Below Is an extract from the implementation and delivery plan". The Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities in England on ROWIPs states that the improvement plan should specify where detailed plans will be set out and how progress will be monitored.

Would it be possible to mention the missing links in the Maiden Newton to Bradpole Trailway? In Maiden Newton it links with the SUSTRANS Route 26 and so could provide a safe and level route for cyclists from Dorchester to Bridport (as well as pedestrians and equestrians).

Another potential route for Trailway status is that between Portesham and Broadway (part of the old Weymouth to Abbotsbury route). This already exists between Portesham and Abbotsbury where is part of the Hardy Way.

Issues which are not addressed which need consideration within the ROWIP

- Other than mention of access-to-access land under policy 3, there is little discussion of the opportunities provided by access to open country or green spaces in our towns and how rights of way provide links between them.
- Unclassified county roads (UCRs) and BOATS There should be discussion of the value of the UCR network as adjunct to the rights of way network, possibly by adding them to the list of different types of routes and land with which the plan covers. The LAF did some work on this back in 2018 and there is documentation on the project available. At the moment the only reference to UCRs is in the definitions section at the back of the document where it is somewhat lost. Appendices frequently go unread.
- Additionally, while various forms of signage are discussed throughout the draft, there should be specific signage on BOATS and dual status routes, informing non-motorised users that they may encounter motorised users along these pathways. This would help enhance safety and reduce conflict for everyone using the routes.
- There is nothing in the plan for motorised users of public rights of way. The network for them is disjointed and the smaller it gets, the more likely for conflict to arise through illegal use.
- We suggest that the Dorset Nature Recovery Strategy 2025 should be on the "Other relevant strategies list" on p. 64-66. Nature connection is one of the priorities in that document which says "Nature recovery needs to be at the heart of every community, with collective action bringing the biggest gains. More people knowing, loving, appreciating and doing something for nature will lead to more nature positive behaviours. A thriving nature-based local economy can also help boost local employment and incomes. Each person, business, organisation, landowner, farmer, school, group is part of the solution to make nature more abundant, connected and resilient in Dorset." Rights of way clearly support that connection.

Definitions (pages 59 – 62)

The definitions should be in alphabetical order and need rationalising. For example, do you need to have **Rights of Way** and **Public Rights of Way**? This only serves to confuse the reader. And there is reference to **Open Access Land** on page 59 and then **Access Land** on p.61.

Page 63 Partnership Working correction needed: this should read Ramblers' Association (or just Ramblers), not Society.

Other relevant strategies

Add:

Green Infrafstructure Framework 2023 (Natural England)

The NPPF defines green infrastructure as “A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity." The Green Infrastructure Framework has been created by Natural England (with input from policy makers, local authorities, academics, industry experts, and business) to provide clear guidance to support the greening of England's towns and cities, and developments.

Finally, there is some inconsistency is how the phrase “public rights of way” is written. Sometimes it’s abbreviated to PRoW but sometimes it’s written out in full and sometimes it starts with upper case letters and sometimes not. Upper case isn’t necessary.

Appendix C, Ramblers Dorset response –

RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN VERSION 2

(ROWIP2)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Dorset Council’s Draft ROWIP2. We have decided not to respond on-line, but instead in this way, which we trust will be acceptable and our comments helpful and constructive. As this ROWIP is intended to cover at least 10 years, it is important that it should be ‘fit for purpose’.

Our submission is divided into two sections, the first being feedback relating to the general presentation of ROWIP2, errors (typing etc) and layout, and the second concentrating on the content itself.

LAYOUT, PRESENTATION AND ERRORS

1 Overall we feel that the presentation of the document is heavily biased towards Dorset Council 'Corporate' Message, rather than focussing on the purpose of a ROWIP, as defined in the statutory guidance from DEFRA[1]. (See also Content)

2 A general comment in respect of the first pages (1 through to 11) is that there is a considerable amount of extraneous material and repetition, and a lack of focus. There needs to be a relevant concise Introduction, which includes briefly what the document is for, as for example in the first ROWIP[2] (page 9 of the print version).

3 Following on from this, we suggest that the Glossary should be edited, presented in alphabetical order, and brought to the beginning of the document, together with a summary of the outcomes/lessons learnt from ROWIP(1) which would then lead in to ROWIP2.

4 Typos/corrections: we have identified the following (highlighted):

a. P.5: about 1/3rd of the way down the page. Should read: "Dorset's public rights of way network delivers benefits far beyond recreation"

b. P.8: final paragraph: should read "Through this plan, Dorset Council will ensure that the rights of way network remains accessible, relevant and resilient …"

c. P.11: first full paragraph should read "It has been informed by the first round of public and stakeholder consultation …".

d. P 58: last line of table, just above Glossary, should read UCRs (No apostrophe)

e. P.63: Partnership working: Correction needed: our organisation is the Ramblers (or more formally the Ramblers' Association). Please remove 'Society'.

f. General: there is inconsistency throughout the document about how the phrase "public rights of way" is written. Sometimes it is abbreviated to PRoW and sometimes it is written with the initial letter in upper case and sometimes not.

5 We have identified what we believe to be potentially an error in the description on page 38, under Fig 24, which states: "A new footpath connecting communities created through developer contributions secured via

[1] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-authority-rights-of-way-improvement-plans

[2] https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-rights-of-way-improvement-plan-rowip-2011-2021

a Section 106 agreement" The path shown is part of the North Dorset Trailway route through Stourpaine, where the route has to divert from the old trackbed. The path was originally a footpath (E18/6 but in 2015, following a consultation in respect of a slight diversion it was subsequently dedicated as a bridleway, to enable the path to become a multi-user path, which included resurfacing. The surfacing carried out is also shown on page 24, Figure 14: Before and after pictures of a path where contractors used compacted stone surfacing to improve the network for all users.

6 Finally, a general comment on some of the photographs, which appear to be very dated. The first ROWIP used those generated by a photographic competition: would it be possible to use some of those?

CONTENT

As stated above, we feel the emphasis of the document to be on the 'Corporate Message', rather than focussing on the purpose of a ROWIP, as defined in the statutory guidance from DEFRA and the underpinning legislation, sections 60 and 61 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act). The front page of ROWIP2 promotes "*Working together – ambitious for Dorse*t" which is continued as the tagline throughout the document. But this could apply to any topic, whereas the first ROWIP's tagline was *"…on foot, with paw, on hoof, by wheel …".* We submit that a ROWIP should *support* the Corporate Message but not be governed by it.

We will address each Policy in turn, but wish to make a general comment as follows: each policy has a "We will …" list which whilst being commendable, is in some cases vague e.g. under Policy 6 "*promote responsible dog ownership encouraging users to keep dogs under effective close control*" but there is no indication as to how this will be achieved, and how is it different from promoting the Countryside Code? The main point being, is that many of the bullet points in the "We will" lists could be rationalised as they cover very similar issues and some topics appear in more than one list. In addition, in the first Appendix which covers the Consultation Findings and Strategic Responses, there are further 'Actions' to deliver the findings. The "We will" lists and the 'Actions' need to be brought together.

1. Policy 1: Maintaining and improving the existing PRoW network

The first paragraph mentions a "*rights of way network that is … ready for the future …*". We therefore suggest that the list should include reference to

mitigation against/dealing with the effects of climate change. (This has had a dramatic impact on the coast path in particular.) Therefore this should include for example: *Identify paths and structures which are vulnerable to climate-change damage, taking appropriate measures to protect and, where necessary, repair paths and associated furniture*.

We welcome the points made with regard to improving waymarking and accessibility, but again there is repetition across several of the points. And how will the commitment to improve waymarking "*by increasing high-quality waymarking including signs with destinations and distances*" be carried through?

We suggest revising the bullet point relating to connectivity to read:

Strengthen connectivity by developing links between communities, services and green spaces, including providing off-road links between rights of way and settlements, including investment in bridleways and multi-user routes.

Another priority should be an improvement in measures to assist users of the network to cross busy roads. There are 'severance' issues at many locations (e.g. bridleways E53/18 and 16 crossing the A350) and these should be identified in the ROWIP.

2. Policy 2: Raise awareness of public rights of way

There does appear again to be a great deal of repetition here, and some overlaps with Policy 1. In addition we do not believe that resources should be spent on developing virtual walks: that is not improving the rights of way network in accordance with the CRoW Act.

We do agree that "*People are far more likely to use the network when they know where to go and feel confident getting there. By improving signage, simplifying digital access and celebrating local and long-distance routes, Dorset will make its rights of way easier to use, better understood and more widely enjoyed*." But how is this different from Policy 1, to improve waymarking etc?

3. Policy 3: Making our network more accessible

We propose an additional bullet point, which should include an unequivocal adoption of the "least restrictive option" (as set out in the British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles) for all new hedge and fence crossing points (e.g., when a landowner applies for a new gate or stile under s.147 HA 1980), and a rolling programme of improvements to achieve the least restrictive option wherever possible, in particular on routes close to towns and villages and other settlements.

We suggest that the point relating to Open Access land would be better suited under Policy 1, as it is more about improving the extent of the network. A suggestion would be "*Improve access to Open Access land, working with the Local Access Forum to identify and provide access routes to inaccessible areas of Open Access land."*

4. Policy 4: Empowering communities to help improve their public rights of way network

In the preamble to the bullet points, it is stated: "*Public rights of way will form part of the "Community Conversations", helping to strengthen relationships between DC and parish/town councils and third sector organisations. This will support a more collaborative approach, encouraging co-design and co-delivery of services, including greenspace and access to nature*." How will this be achieved?
'Community Conversations' are a new initiative – will they still be functioning in 10 years' time?

We agree in principle with this Policy, however RoWLOs need to be given far more support and training. We suggest revising the bullet point to read:

Support the role of Rights of Way Liaison Officers (RoWLOs) encouraging each PC and TC to appoint a RoWLO; provide training for RoWLOs and strengthen the links between the Ranger Team and RoWLOs and their communities, identifying issues and opportunities at a local level and engaging their help with condition surveys.

One of the bullet points is to: ***expand Service Level Agreements (SLAs)….***". without explaining what these are, which we suggest is an oversight.

This section suffers from repetition.

5. Policy 5: Building the Dorset Economy through our Public Rights of Way Network

We feel that the wording of the title of this policy again focuses on the corporate message, and should be reversed e.g.: *Using the Public Rights of Way to grow the Dorset Economy*. We do not have the expertise or figures to comment on this policy, but we feel that in the more rural parts of the county, already not as well served as the conurbations, access to 'promoted' routes is not easy without private transport. We would like to suggest the addition of something like: *promote the use of public transport as a means of accessing the public rights of way network, country parks and other green spaces*

6. Policy 6: Ensuring the Countryside Code and access legislation is followed, and Landowners are respected

The first paragraph of this section reads:

Dorset will promote responsible use of the rights of way network by encouraging all users to follow the Countryside Code and understand the importance of respecting landowners, the natural environment and other users. We suggest (from experience) that in the rural areas of the county, it is far more likely that users will encounter a PROW obstructed by crops, or ploughing, than they will a cleared one as shown in Fig 24. Therefore the onus should not be placed on users alone. There needs to be a mention of landowner/land manager responsibilities, and we suggest. adding at the end of the paragraph. "*Of equal importance will be promoting good practice and understanding of rights of way law amongst landowners, land managers and contractors."*

We also suggest at the end of bullet point 7*, "reduce conflict between users and land managers, supporting appropriate diversions of routes away from farmyards, working areas and sensitive locations where this delivers clear benefits* ***to both land managers and path users****."*

The following should also be included in any actions:

- enforcing the law regarding ploughing and cropping and other obstructions
- ensuring that any practical or financial assistance to landowners/occupiers and farmers carries a proviso that all rights of

way (including furniture) on that landholding must be in first class condition

✸ ensuring that farms in the ownership of Dorset Council are exemplar in terms of the condition of public rights of way and access to access land.

7. Policy 7: Using new housing development and the Local Plan to enhance Public Rights of Way

We applaud the inclusion of this policy, and support all of the points made. Ideally, in the case of applications for large developments, a Public Rights of Way Management Plan, should be a document required by the Planning Team. When developments are built on the outskirts of towns/villages, there should be the requirement that footways should be integrated to avoid non-motorised users having to use roads, and importantly to minimise the need for the use of motorised transport.

8. Policy 8: Maximise the PROW network's contribution to health and wellbeing

Whilst welcoming this policy, we submit that again there is repetition and duplication of other policies within the 'bullet points'. As in Policy 5, 'aligning with Policy x' could be employed.

9. Policy 9: Maximise our PROW for sustainable transport linking communities and active travel

We suggest that this policy could better highlight the need to prioritise the provision and use of 'off-road' multi-user routes to "***align delivery with wider transport and climate strategies***, *ensuring rights of way improvements contribute to reducing car use and supporting Dorset's environmental objectives."*

10. Policy 10: to uphold the council's legal duties to provide an up-to-date definitive map and statement which is accessible to the public

We note that this is simply stating what the Authority is required to do by law.

Resources are the key, and there are many outstanding long-term intractable rights of way obstructions which need resolutions. There are definitive paths which simply cannot be used, thus negating the assertion made in Policy 2, Figure 7*: "Dorset Explorer on a mobile device using the tracking function, helping users stay on public rights of way and giving them confidence to explore new routes"*. A programme should be developed to resolve them, by way of diversions and creations if necessary.

GENERAL

We note that many of the Case Studies are not really case studies at all, for example Case Study 10. It simply lays out what is done.

Section 5: ROWIP implementation and investment plan 2026 to 2036

We suggest that the Monitoring and Review section on p.48 is too vague.

Monitoring and Review

Progress will be monitored to ensure the ROWIP delivers measurable improvements.

Indicators will include:

- condition of the network
- infrastructure improvements delivered
- accessibility improvements (for example, replacing stiles with gates)
- usage levels where data is available
- customer feedback and reported issues
- PC/TC engagement

The plan will be reviewed every five years to ensure it remains responsive to changing needs, funding opportunities and Council priorities.

There needs to be a method of measuring progress, reporting and monitoring. Targets need to be set, which are measurable and achievable.

For example:

- Policy 1 includes in the 'we will' list: **resolve maintenance issues.** Currently there is a timescale given for *inspection* but not for resolution, and some reports date back years. 'Easy' tasks are dealt with quickly, which tends to distort the statistics. The MNT reports are marked as 'resolved' when in fact they are not.

- Policy 3 includes: *"**develop and promote accessible routes**, including creating a dedicated layer on Dorset Explorer showcasing at least 10 high-quality accessible circular routes across the county*". What are these routes, and are they the ones to be 'enhanced' under Policy 1? If so, what is the target date(s) for these, and how will this be monitored?

- Policy 3, dealing with access to access land could include a target for creating a specific number of links.

- Policy 4: could set a target for recruitment of RoWLOs e.g. 90% coverage of parishes.

The **Conclusion** states:

"Building on previous plans, this ROWIP responds to changing needs and opportunities, placing greater emphasis on accessibility, connectivity and the use of the network for everyday journeys, as well as recreation. It supports Dorset Council's wider priorities, including sustainable travel, climate resilience and improving quality of life."

We trust that this will be deliverable.

Ramblers, Dorset Area (Footpath Committee).

Appendix D, member of public response –

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the current 2026-2036 ROWIP consultation.

I am responding by letter rather than the online consultation form as I feel that this format allows me to make the points below clearly.

Although I sit on the Loders Parish Council I am replying in my personal capacity - I have shared my response with it for information.

I have highlighted below my suggestions in yellow for ease of identification.

Referencing the different sections in the draft ROWIP:

2. Vision for ROWIP2

Regarding the penultimate paragraph, I don't feel that Dorset Council has complied with section 61.1(b) of CROW 2000.

> 61 Rights of way improvement plans: supplemental.
>
> (1) Before preparing or reviewing a rights of way improvement plan, and in particular in making any assessment under section 60(1)(a) or (3)(a), a local highway authority shall consult—
>
> (b) each district council, and each parish or community council, whose area is within their area;

I understand that Dorset Council considers that the "2021 Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review Consultation" discharged this obligation. However, this process, whilst useful in gathering the public's views on certain Rights of Way topics (re CROW 2000 60(2)), and which informs section 7 of the ROWIP, doesn't meet the expectations set out in the Gunning Principles / Dorset Council's own "Consultation and Engagement Policy - Consultation principles and legislation" :

Gunning principles:

- Consultation must take place when the proposal is at a formative stage
- Sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal to allow for intelligent consideration and response
- Adequate time must be given for consideration and response
- The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account

The second of these requirements was elaborated by the High Court and the Court of Appeal in R (Breckland DC) v Boundary Committee [2009] EWCA Civ 239, in which it was held that consultation could not be conducted in a vacuum, and that it was necessary for there to be some form of proposal to which consultees could

respond, and that the relevant information must be presented in a form which is digestible for those to whom it is addressed.

This is just by way of explaining why some of the points raised below were not been raised when the ROWIP was at a more formative time and so could have more easily been considered.

4. Policies of the ROWIP 2026 to 2036

In general, each policy includes a list of objectives – however there is no discussion in the ROWIP of the process whereby an initial suggestion for action is assessed, the relevant criteria considered and the considerations through to implementation.

Active Travel England's publication of Active Travel England - Rural Design Guide, sponsored by the DoT was published on 14 July 2026.

This guidance builds on LTN 1/20 and extends its principles to rural areas, to enable people to walk, wheel and cycle.

As it will be applicable to all current and future relevant projects that haven't yet progressed past the strategic stage, and as it clearly sets out in detail the assessment, consultation and delivery process, I would encourage Dorset Council to include within the ROWIP an overview of the steps required, including impact assessments, defining objectives, local consultation etc and referencing this document.

Explaining the process will help assuage the concerns that there is a disconnect between Dorset Council and local communities, and that larger projects are pushed through with little consideration of the impact on local parishes.

I would ask that you include a Policy to the effect that projects will be completed in accordance with this guidance.

Performance indicators

To evidence that the actions proposed and undertaken are achieving the purposes at set out by government, you need base data, for example short car journeys in Dorset; where, by whom and for what purpose. Then you will have the baseline to be able to measure the effectiveness of projects to decarbonise in the future, you will know where the low hanging fruit is, and it also enables you to spend taxpayers money most effectively.

Re policies 3, 8 and 9, there are a number of references to the perceived benefits, but no information on how they will quantify the impact of the improvements achieved. This is particularly relevant for **active travel** vs **health and wellbeing.** Without very clear data before and after any improvements it will be the very difficult

to assess whether increased usage has had a positive or negative impact on car usage and whether we are meeting our climate change objectives.

It would also help ensure that limited resources (both financial and man management) are focussed on those projects that maximise Dorset Council's targets regarding tackling climate change, supporting communities and enabling sustainable economic development.

The Dorset Local Transport Plan - Implementation Plan 2026 to 2031 – Annex P sets out the performance indicators that Dorset Council will use more broadly, including "Carbon emissions from transport", "Air quality" and "Levels of walking, wheeling and cycling".

I would encourage Dorset Council to include this Annex P and the stated measurables in the ROWIP, and explain how they are used to measure the effectiveness of projects.

7. Appendices

Crow 2000 60 (1) requires that Dorset Council include within its ROWIP, an assessment of the matters in 60(2), and also a statement of the action they propose to take.

I understand that 7 Appendices sets these out:

Consultation Findings and Strategic Responses (pages 50-55) is the assessment of matters in
60(2) and the statement of action is detailed on pages 56-58 under three headings; "Linking Communities", "Accessible Routes" and "Improving and Investing in Bridleways and Trailways".

So, the 2021 consultation informs the findings, which then drive the actions.

My concerns are that the statement of actions read as a list of activities underway (the heading "implementation and delivery plan" is unhelpful in this regard), whereas Dorset Council have previously confirmed that a number are still aspirational / strategic.

From personal experience this can lead to misunderstanding and mistrust of Dorset Council, as it suggests projects are already in their implementation stage without any prior consultation, impact assessments or sizing of the benefit to the community.

I would encourage Dorset Council to provide some further explanation around the tables on page 56-58; how they flow from the consultation findings and clarifying Dorset Council's obligations regarding local consultation and compliance with Active Travel England - Rural Design Guide.

Other matters for consideration

National Cycle Routes 2 and 26 both go through Dorset – where they are on road, there is a presumption in XXX that they will be on quiet lanes.

Whilst I appreciate that they are not “Rights of way” I would encourage Dorset Council to actively work towards making any road elements not already due to be changed to 20 mph, into quiet lanes.

Regards

[Redacted]

Appendix E, Dorset Council Public Health staff response –

[Outlook, email]

Dear [redacted],

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft RoWIP, and for involving us in its development prior to the consultation. It's an important document that will deliver benefits across Dorset and we're very happy to support it.

The PROW network is a key asset for Dorset that supports health and wellbeing, whilst also contributing across Doret Council's wider strategic priorities. Footpaths and bridleways enable physical activity, contact with nature, access to vital services like employment and education and can support sustainable travel avoiding carbon emissions. The network is already delivering across these outcomes and can do more - as the plan demonstrates.

One of the most significant opportunities lies in enabling more people to build physical activity into their daily lives, particularly people who are the least active or inactive. The evidence base for this is becoming ever clearer. During the course of this consultation, the UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines have been updated to state that any amount of physical activity, of any intensity, is beneficial and helps prevent ill health. Importantly, the most significant health gain from physical activity is experienced by the least active people.

We know increasing physical activity for the least active is not easy , but availability of high quality and inclusive infrastructure is an important enabler. Supporting the least active people in Dorste to move more will help prevent ill health and avoid or delay the significant pressure on Dorset Council services and the wider health system from conditions like cardiovascular disease, dementia, frailty/falls and more.

'Policy 8: Maximise the PROW network’s contribution to health and wellbeing provides' provides a strong basis for this, particularly the proposals to:

- reduce barriers to participation, prioritising improvements in areas with poor access to greenspace or higher levels of health inequality
- promote everyday use of the network, encouraging walking and cycling for journeys to school, work and local services
- develop a better understanding of usage and barriers, working with partners to gather data, improve monitoring and target interventions effectively

It would strengthen the plan even further if the ROWiP's vision could reflect these aims including:

- an intent to reduce health inequalities by promoting inclusive access for all
- focusing on people who are least active/inactive
- and populations who are less able to access and benefit from the network

We'd welcome the opportunity to continue working with you and your team on these aims, particularly how we can improve access for people who face the greatest barriers to using the network to reduce health inequalities.

Best wishes,

[Redacted]

Place and Resources Overview Committee
Draft Work Programme

19 November 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
RoWIP - Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Following the full public consultation of this document, the committee will have the opportunity to comment on draft RoWIP.	Giles Nicholson, Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace Russell Goff, Greenspace Manager Cllr Jack Jeanes, Place Services	Pre-consultation discussion, may return to Place and Resources Overview in July post consultation ahead of final decision by Cabinet
Parking Standards Guidance for Developers and Travel Plan Guidance for Developers		Daniel Washington- Transport Planner, Development Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement	Postponed until 2027
Community Conversation feedback	Following the community conversation work with town and parish councils the findings will be shared along with next steps.	Nel Stoneham- Delivery Lead, Community. Matt Bell, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	

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9 December 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Crisis Resilience Fund	Review the policy to back up the Crisis and Resilience Fund Governance, providing direction and recommendations to Cabinet	Laura Cornette, BP - Communities & Partnerships Cllr Matt Bell, Cabinet member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	
ECERM Capital Delivery Programme 2027-2032	To review the planned approach to the programme and recommend to Cabinet	Matthew Penny, Service Manager Flood & Coastal Erosion Cllr Jack Jeanes, Cabinet member for Place Services	
Highways Capital Programme 2027 to 2030	To review the planned approach to the programme and recommend to Cabinet	Laura Russ, Implementation Team Manager Cllr Jack Jeanes, Cabinet member for Place Services	

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Informal work of the committee:

Date	Topic	Format	Councillors	Lead Officers	Other Information
19 May 2026	Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order	Briefing	All committee invited	Janet Moore, Service Manager Environmental Protection	Pre consultation conversation,
18 June 2026	RoWIP - Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Briefing	All committee invited	Russell Goff, Greenspace Manager	Pre consultation conversation

Work being and to be scoped-

Community working- unblocking town and parish councils. Work to be informed by the meeting 19 November 2026 (proposed by Cllr Jesperson)

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The Cabinet Forward Plan - December 2026 to March 2027
(Publication date – 3 NOVEMBER 2026)

Explanatory Note:
This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Cabinet and Council. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions
Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions of the Cabinet which are likely to -

a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (***Thresholds - £500k***); or
b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of *"significant"* for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Cabinet Members and Portfolios 2026/27

Nick Ireland	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding
Richard Biggs	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets
Jack Jeanes	Place Services
Shane Bartlett	Planning and Planning Enforcement
Simon Clifford	Resources& Finance
Matt Bell	Public Health, Prevention & Communities
Steve Robinson	Adult Social Care & Health
Clare Sutton	Children, Families & Education
Gill Taylor	Housing & Homelessness
Ben Wilson	Transformation, Customer & Workforce

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
2026					
December 2026					
Transformation Update **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** Transformation update: Update on transformation portfolio delivery, benefits realisation, portfolio performance and investment position.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Transformation, Customer & Workforce	*Nina Coakley, Head of Transformation and Design nina.coakley@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery (Lucie Laker)*
Enterprise Resource Programme (ERP) Update **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** ERP Programme delivery, progress to date, programme governance, budget position key risks and next steps.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Transformation, Customer & Workforce	*Nina Coakley, Head of Transformation and Design nina.coakley@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Lisa Cotton, Corporate Director for Transformation and Customer Experience lisa.cotton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery (Lucie Laker)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Annual ILACS Self Evaluation and Test of Assurance Checklist **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The ILACS Self Evaluation set out Dorset Council's assessment against the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Service es. The test of Assurance checklist is used as part of the council's continuous improvement and self-evaluation process. It provides assurance to senior leaders, elected members, partners and inspectors the effective arrangements are in place and regularly reviewed.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	*Madeleine Hall, Operations and Oversight Manager* *madeleine.hall@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)*
Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To consider the adoption of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**	Place and Resources Overview Committee 19 Nov 2026	Cabinet Member for Place Services	*Russell Goff, Senior Ranger* *russell.goff@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
Mid year performance update **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To provide an update on mid-year progress in council plan delivery and broader organisational health.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	*Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy* *liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Chris Heighway, Performance and Analytics Team Manager* *chris.heighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Chief Executive*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Adult Directorate CQC Inspection Findings and Improvement Plan **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To provide Cabinet with an overview of the recent CQC inspection of Adult Services and the directorates ambitions for improvement.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	*Amy-Jane White, Quality Assurance and Programme Lead amy-jane.white@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)*
Wareham Arc Landscape Recovery **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** Wareham Arc Landscape Recovery is a well-developed proposal for a 20 year, Defra-funded programme of landscape transformation for nature in the West Purbeck, Lytchett Matravers & Upon, Southeast Purbeck and Wareham wards.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	*Tom Munro, Dorset National Landscape Manager tom.munro@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
MEMO Portland **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To report the progress of MEMO Portland and the continuing development of the project.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets	*Matthew Piles, Strategic Director - Weymouth 2040 matthew.piles@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Temporary Accommodation Rent Setting Policy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** SWAP Audit made a recommendation for Dorset Council to develop a rent setting policy in relation to temporary and emergency accommodation used for homelessness services.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	*Sharon Attwater, Head of Housing* *sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Iain Sim, Interim Corporate Director for Housing* *iain.sim@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)*
Discretionary Rate Relief - Policy Review **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** This item provides a review of our Business Rates, Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.	**Decision Maker** **Dorset Council**	**Decision Date** **11 Feb 2027**	Cabinet 8 Dec 2026	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Katie Hale, Head of Revenues and Benefits* *katie.hale@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Sean Cremer, Councillor Ben Wilson*
Mosaic contract extension spend - retrospective notification **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** An emergency spend approval for the Mosaic contract extension was required in September. The report is to give Cabinet sight of this emergency approval.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Glen Conroy, ICT Operations Manager* *glen.conroy@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Catherine Howe, Lucie Laker*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan Review (2019-2034) **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** Report relating to the "making" (adoption) of the plan review following its independent examination.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement	*Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Anna Lee, Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement anna.lee@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026 **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - Open Report relating to the "making" (adoption) of the plan review following its independent examination.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement	*Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Anna Lee, Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement anna.lee@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
Parking contracts and procurement **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To seek Cabinet approval for a procurement exceeding £500k, plus delegated authority to procure new contracts for aspects of parking services (enforcement, permits, cash, app).	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Place Services	*Michael Westwood, Service Manager for Parking Services michael.westwood@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
FutureCare Closedown Report **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The FutureCare programme set out, over eighteen months from January 2025, to help more people in Dorset avoid an unnecessary hospital stay or return home and regain independence more quickly, and in doing so to release bedded capacity, improve outcomes and deliver financial benefit across the system. This followed a diagnostic activity completed by Newton in the summer of 2024. This report provides an evaluation of the progress achieved through the completion of the FutureCare Programme.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	*Sue Evans, Head of Specialist Services* *sue.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)*
Safeguarding Families Together: approval of commissioning expenditure and Contractual Arrangements **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** Cabinet endorsement of safeguarding families together approach and approval of commissioning expenditure.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	*Tracey Old, Strategic Commissioner* *tracey.old@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Information, Advice and Guidance Commissioned Grant Extension **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** Authorisation required to extend the Commissioned grant held by Citizen's Advice for Information, Advice and Guidance for either 12 or 18 months whilst the Community Conversations programme reaches its conclusion and a future way of working with the VCS and infrastructure provision is worked up.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	*Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships* *Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)*
Council Tax Premiums **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** Council Tax Premium policy review	**Decision Maker** **Dorset Council**	**Decision Date** **11 Feb 2027**	Cabinet 8 Dec 2026	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Katie Hale, Head of Revenues and Benefits* *katie.hale@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)*
LiveWell Dorset digital Procurement **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Fully exempt** Key decision about procurement of the LiveWell Dorset CRM and CMS	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	*Jane Horne, Consultant in Public Health* *jane.horne@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Weymouth 2040 Regeneration Programme **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Part exempt** A progress report on the Weymouth 2040 Regeneration Programme.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets	*Matthew Piles, Strategic Director - Weymouth 2040 matthew.piles@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
Dorset Council - Procurement of Hotel and Guest House Managing Agents **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Part exempt** Report seeking approval to award the contract for the management of Dorset Council Hotel and Guest Houses following the recent procurement.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets	*Julian Wain, Strategic Property Advisor Julian.wain@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
Rough Sleeper grant agreements **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Fully exempt** To approve the award of grant agreements to organisations providing support to rough sleepers.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Dec 2026**		Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	*Paul Derrien, Housing Enabling and Delivery Manager paul.derrien@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Melissa Johnson, Programme Manager melissa.johnson@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)*
February 2027					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Crisis and Resilience Fund **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The policy to back up the Crisis and Resilience Fund Governance.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **2 Feb 2027**		Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	*Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships* *Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery (Lucie Laker)*
December 2026 Quarter 3 financial management plan 2026/2027 **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To consider the Quarter 3 financial management plan 2026/27.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **2 Feb 2027**		Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)* *sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer* *sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)*
Southwest Fostering Hub Proposals **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** Report for oversight and decision making by Cabinet to extend the role of Southwest fostering hub in the recruitment and assessment of foster carers in line with DfE guidance.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **2 Feb 2027**		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	*Jane Maclennan, Head of Service Care Leavers, Fostering and Adoption* *jane.maclennan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Review of Financial Assessment and Care Contributions Policy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The policy was due to be reviewed and to update the policy in line with some legal challenges to the Care Act 2014 since its implementation. In doing so we have also amalgamated the Financial Assessment and Care Contributions policy and the Deferred Payment Agreement Policy and the two impact significantly on each other.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **2 Feb 2027**	People and Health Overview Committee 18 Jan 2027	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health, Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	*Nicola Fowler, Financial Assessments Team Manager* *nicola.fowler@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)*
Budget & Medium term financial plan strategy report (MTFP) **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To consider the medium Term Financial (MTFP) and budget strategy.	**Decision Maker** **Dorset Council**	**Decision Date** **11 Feb 2027**	Cabinet 2 Feb 2027	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)* *sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer* *sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer*

Private/Exempt Items for Decision
Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
   (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
   (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.