Rights of Way Improvement Plan Funding Programme (RFP) 2015/16

Summary Report

This report about the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Funding Programme (RFP) 2015/16, has two main purposes. It summarises the key outputs and key learning points from the programme and details some of the types of work and exemplar projects undertaken during the eighth year of the RFP.


Background

Since 2008, Welsh Government has provided a major boost to the improvement of Rights of Way across Wales through the RFP. NRW administers this funding on behalf of WG.

In 2015/16 the programme was allocated £1million bring the total allocation since 2008/09 to £10.9million
Key achievements of the funding in 2015/16

a) Practical improvements on the ground

£762,183 was spent across Wales to improve existing access. This practical work contributed to increasing the proportion of the network that’s easy to use. Actions included improving path furniture such as bridges and gates; installing benches at key view points; and surface improvements, for example improving path drainage.

Photo: Ty Llwyd Quarry, Lake Vyrnwy, Powys County Council

Actions to improve linear access included:

- Surface improvement work to upgrade footpath to bridleway;
  Photo: NRW Library Photo

- Access improvements to footpaths including a new sleeper bridge and changing stiles for kissing gates;
  Photo: Peacehaven, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

- Removal of stiles and barriers that impeded access for users along both promoted routes and routes of local significance;
  Photo: Beafort, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

- Installation of signage and way marking, and self-closing gates to replace stiles;
  Photo: City of Cardiff Council

- Green Dog Walker - providing information to dog walkers using public access;
  Photo: NRW Library Photo

- Improving access to multi user routes allowing people with mobility issues to access routes more easily.
  Photo: NRW Library Photo
b) Improvements that benefit more than one user group - including walkers, cyclists and horse-riders:

The trend to improve rights of way for more than one user type continued. Projects that had a “general benefit to all users” and projects that were “multi-benefit” (together accounted for £514,623 of the total value of projects.

Photo: Pontnewydd, Cwmbran, Torfaen County Borough Council

The largest single user group likely to benefit from multi benefit actions are walkers;

Photo: Bridgend CB Council 'Love2Walk' tweet

All Local Authorities had to include at least 1 action that benefited ‘Low Use‘ groups defined as “groups that disproportionately make low use of the countryside”;

Photo: NRW Library Photo

Low use groups were also represented in other actions not specifically aimed at low use groups.

Photo: Discover Carmarthenshire Promotional Walks Leaflet
c) Improvements to make outdoor access easier for people who find it difficult

Whilst there was no requirement to deliver a specific project for ‘low use groups’ the access authorities complied with the principles of least restrictive access. 16 specific projects were aimed at making access easier for groups that make disproportionately low use of the countryside, the funding for these specific projects totalled £90,217.

Photo: Loggerheads Country Park, Denbighshire County Council.

Work undertaken to promote better access for those who make a disproportionately low use of the countryside included:

Across Wales more gates than styles were installed promoting least restrictive access for as many people as possible.

Photo: Longfellow Road, Monmouthshire County Council

Design and consenting work for a multi user route (walkers, wheelchair, and cyclists) at Ty Moelwyn, Porthmadog

Photo: NRW Library Photo

Providing visual signage and confidence markers, benches and seats and site route information boards.

Photo: Abercych Permissive Paths, Pembrokeshire County Council

Car park provision with sealed surface route, passing places, benches and seats providing scenic route above the haven waterway.

Photo: Pembroke Ferry Circular Path, Pembrokeshire County Council
d) Status of routes and improved infrastructure:

907km of the rights of way network is now easier to use following improvements which the RFP and other funding sources contributed to in 2015-16.

The majority of the routes improved in 2015-2016 were either footpaths or bridleways but all types of routes saw some improvement.

Photo: The official opening of Govilon Bridge, Bridgend County Borough Council

Length of Route the RFP helped make ‘Easy to Use’ during 2015-2016 (including contributions from other sources of funding):

- **634km of Footpath**
  - Photo: Longfellow Road, Monmouthshire County Council

- **28km of Cycle Track**
  - Photo: NRW Library Photo

- **181km of Bridleway**
  - Photo: NRW Library Photo

- **36km of Restricted Byways**
  - Photo: NRW Library Photo

- **28km of Byway Open to All Traffic**
  - Photo: Treadlightly Leaflet, Denbighshire Council
Bridgend Borough Council were once again involved in the 2015 Love2Walk Festival which was organised in partnership with the Bridgend Local Access Forum.

The Rights of Way team also provided direct funding from the RoWIP Funding Programme to promote the Festival. As a result the event returned to its 9-day format. This resulted in more than 25 walks being held and more than 280 people taking part in the event.
Exemplar Project: Access for all

Powys County Council - Priory Groves, Footpath Extension

Powys County Councils Countryside & Outdoor Recreation Service were able to extend the all-inclusive access footpaths in the Priory Groves, Brecon, and complete a circular walk.

This circular walk linked up to already established footpaths that are situated on land adjacent to the woodland, which allows access to Brecon Cathedral and the Pendre & Beechgrove housing estates directly into the Priory Groves woodland.

**Before** – The river side pathway prior to this year’s work was badly eroded and narrow in places with steep drops from the raised footpath down to the river.

**After** – The pathway is now 1200mm wide and the path has been moved away from the drops, the pathway which was originally undulating has now been levelled to allow easier access to this area within Priory Groves.