

Consultation report – Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025

Statement of need statutory stakeholders consultation 2024



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1 Executive summary

Responses were sought from key stakeholders to inform a new draft improvement plan. As this was a targeted survey, response numbers were anticipated to be low (below 100). This figure was exceeded with 131 respondents providing 139 submissions. More than half the responses came from parish councils. Rural residents were most likely to be positively impacted by rights of way.

Common themes across different users included:

- well maintained routes
- more routes
- accessible routes

Other needs and priorities included:

- improved enforcement
- more information and signage
- improved facilities, such as toilets and car parking

The needs of rights of way users with disabilities, particularly physical and sensory impairments, were highlighted specifically. Both issues and mitigations were identified, in fact some were only distinguished by the way they were phrased. For example, some respondents said poorly maintained paths had a negative impact, others said that maintaining paths and clearing vegetation was a solution to the adverse impact. Comments are therefore jointly presented.

The results will be taken forward in used to draft the next public rights of way improvement plan. This document will be subject to public consultation in 2025.

2 Introduction

Our 2007 Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) expired in 2012. Legislation and guidance states that plans must be reviewed after 10 years. Our aim is to publish a new RoWIP in 2025. There are multiple stages to this process and this report relates to statement of need consultation undertaken in summer 2024 with key stakeholders.

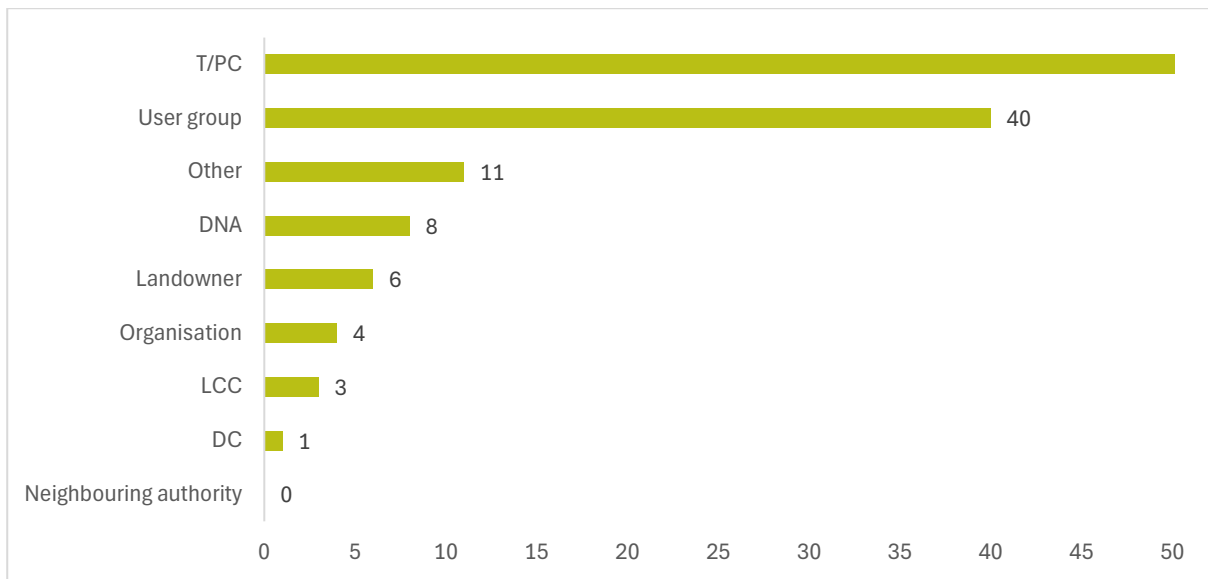
3 Stakeholders

Key stakeholders included:

- councils (county, district, town and parish and neighbouring authorities)
- user and interest groups and those representing them
- protected characteristics representative groups
- landowners and those representing them
- environmental bodies

The survey had 139 submissions, which was more than anticipated; 131 respondents told us in which capacity they were responding:

- five in ten responses came from town or parish councils (67, 50.4%)
- a further three in ten were from user and interest groups (40, 30.5%)



4 Methodology

- targeted survey (not on the Let's talk Lincolnshire home page) covering:
 - capacity in which responding
 - name of group
 - questions about needs, priorities and protected characteristic impacts and mitigations to build in Let's talk for monitoring and reporting purposes
- the service emailed contacts directly to share the link and offer access in different formats
- the engagement team sent the link direct to county councilors, to town and parish councils via newsletter/database and provided contacts for relevant seldom heard groups
- open text comments were tagged to enable mention analysis. Numbers in brackets will not add up to the same figure as many comments are detailed and receive more than one tag

5 Findings

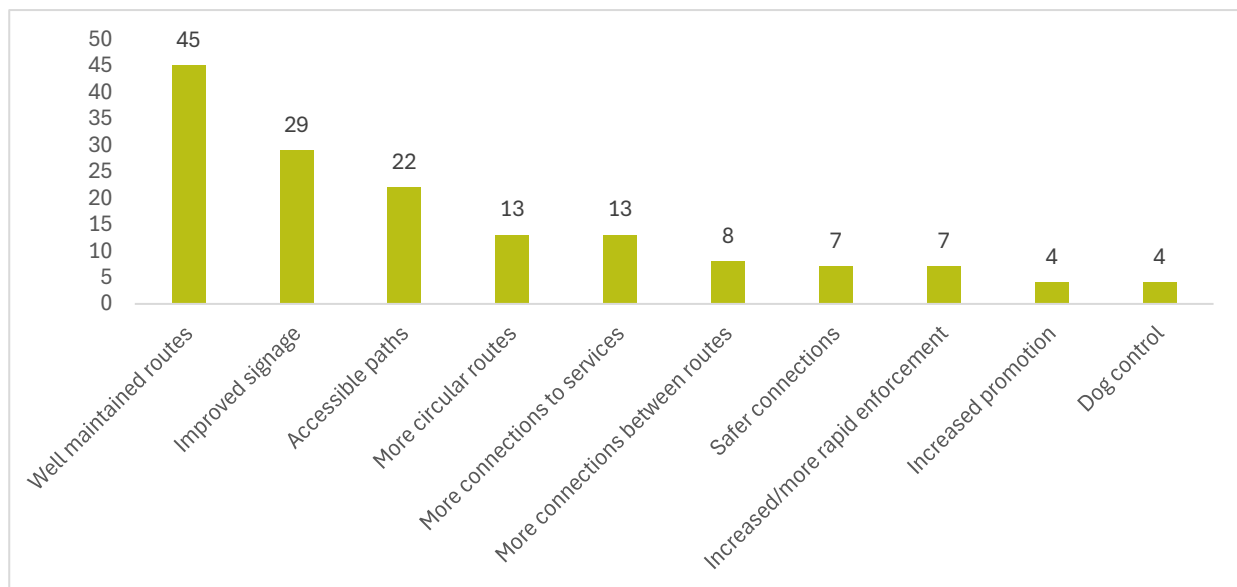
The top user and landowner issues were:

5.1 Walking

Walkers (94 comments) most frequently mentioned the need for:

- Well-maintained routes (45) including
 - vegetation clearance (15)
 - Adequate width (4)
 - litter picking (2)
 - good surfacing (1)
 - level surfaces (1)
- Improved signage (29) including;
 - including clear signage (27)
 - destination / distance signs (2)
 - increased signage (1)
 - signposted walks (1)
- Accessible paths (22) including
 - Stile removal (6)

- 4) More circular routes (13)
- 5) More connections to villages and local services, including work & schools (13)
- 6) More connections between existing routes (8)
- 7) Safer connections to the rights of way network (7)
- 8) Increased or more rapid resolution of enforcement issues (7)
- 9) Increased promotion (4)
- 10) Dog control (4)



From a landowner perspective, the survey highlighted needs to reduce crop damage and reduce the impact on privacy and security. The response also highlighted concerns with the safety of farm animals against unrestrained dogs.

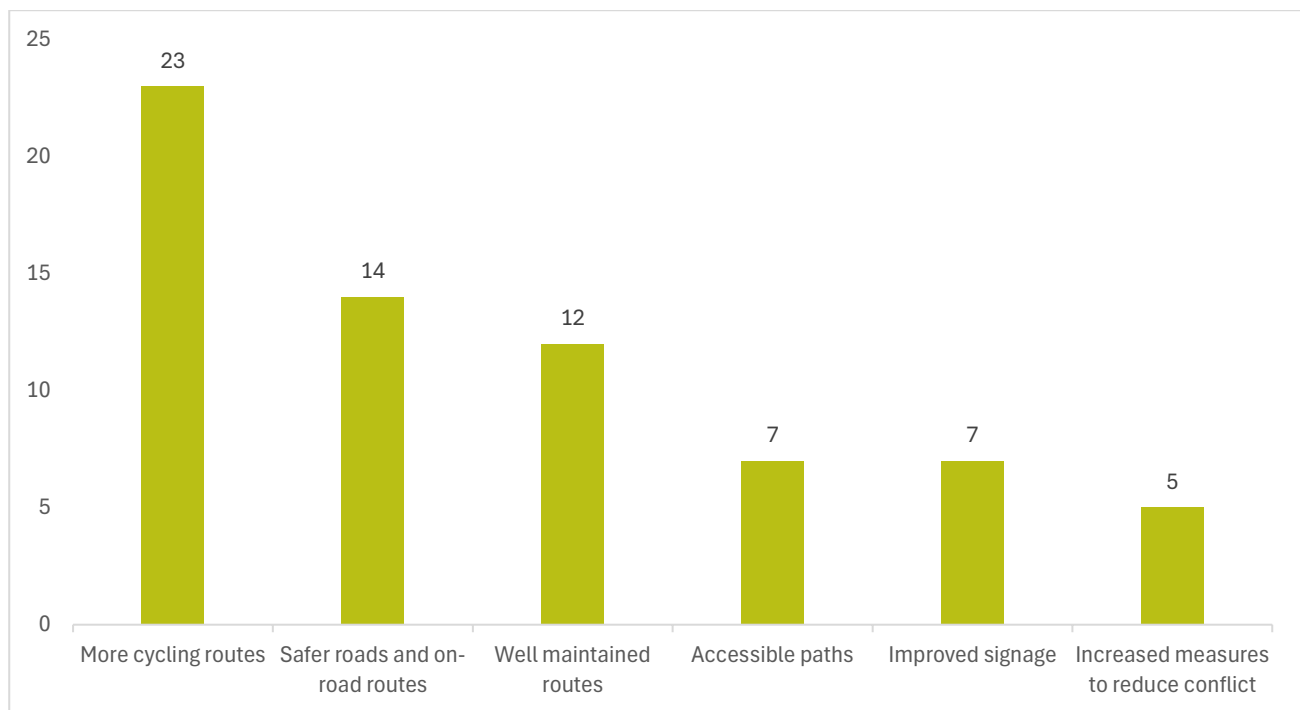
5.2 Cycling

Cyclists (46) most frequently mentioned the need for:

- 1) More cycling routes (23) including
 - a) More access to existing and new off-road routes (15)
 - b) More connections to villages and local services, including work & schools (8)
 - c) Safer connections to the rights of way network (7)
 - d) More connections between existing routes, including avoiding dead ends or cropped fields (7)
 - e) More use of quiet lanes for cycling (3)
 - f) More circular routes (2)
 - g) Utilise disused railways (1)
 - h) Upgrade footpaths to bridleways to enable cycling (1)
- 2) Safe roads and safe, well maintained on-road routes (14)
- 3) Well-maintained routes (12) including
 - a) Good surfaces for cycling (6)
 - b) Vegetation clearance (4)
 - c) Obstruction-free routes (4)
 - d) Adequate widths (2)
 - e) Improved surfaces (1)
- 4) Accessible paths (7), including

- a) improved barriers that are designs to allow cyclists (1)
- 5) Improved signage (7) including
 - a) Clear signage (6)
 - b) Increased signage (2)
- 6) Increased measures to reduce user conflict (5) including
 - a) Segregated paths (3)
 - b) Preventing illegal cycling on footpaths (1)

Eight responses from a cycling perspective repeated the responses given for walkers.



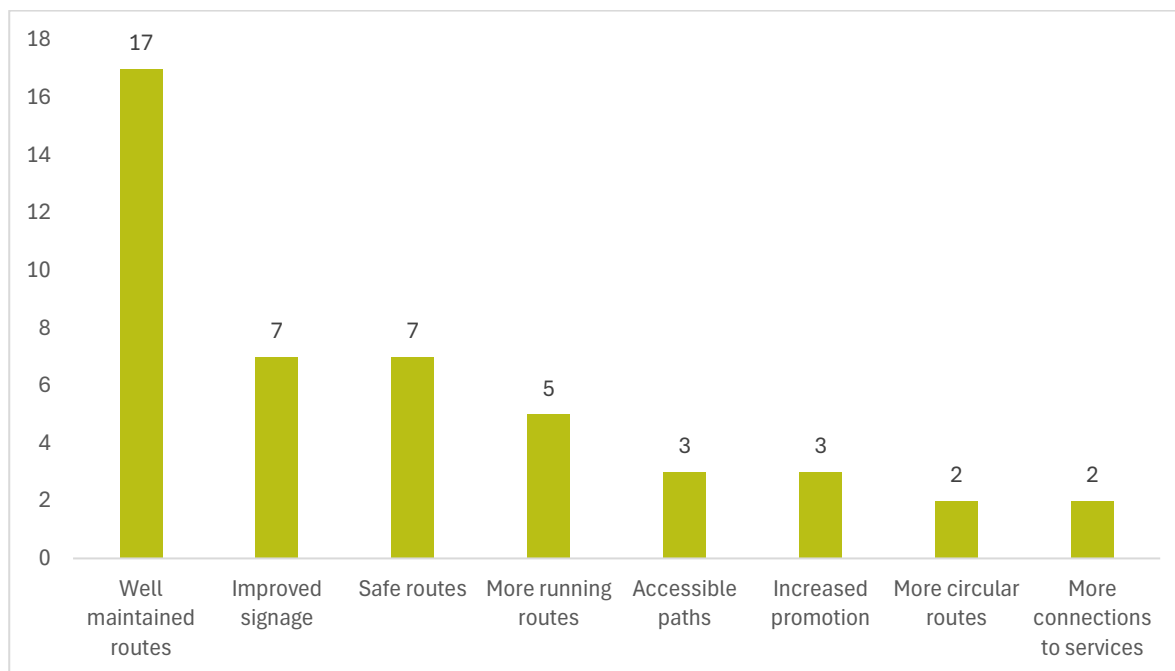
5.3 Running

Runners (45) most frequently mentioned the need for:

- 1) Well-maintained routes (17) including
 - a) vegetation clearance (11)
 - b) adequate width (2)
 - c) good surfacing (1)
 - d) level surfaces (1)
 - e) improved surfaces (1)
- 2) Improved signage (7) including;
 - a) including clear signage (4)
- 3) Accessible paths (3) including
 - a) Stile removal (1)
- 4) Safe routes (7) that are away from traffic/off-road and reduce the risk of accidents
- 5) More running routes (5)
- 6) Increased promotion of routes (3) including
 - a) Provision of more route information (3)
 - b) Designate running routes (2)
 - c) Promotion of running/cycling (1)
 - d) Local route maps (1)

- 7) More circular routes (2)
- 8) More connections to villages and local services (2)

Thirteen responses from a running perspective repeated the responses given for walkers.



5.4 Disabled users

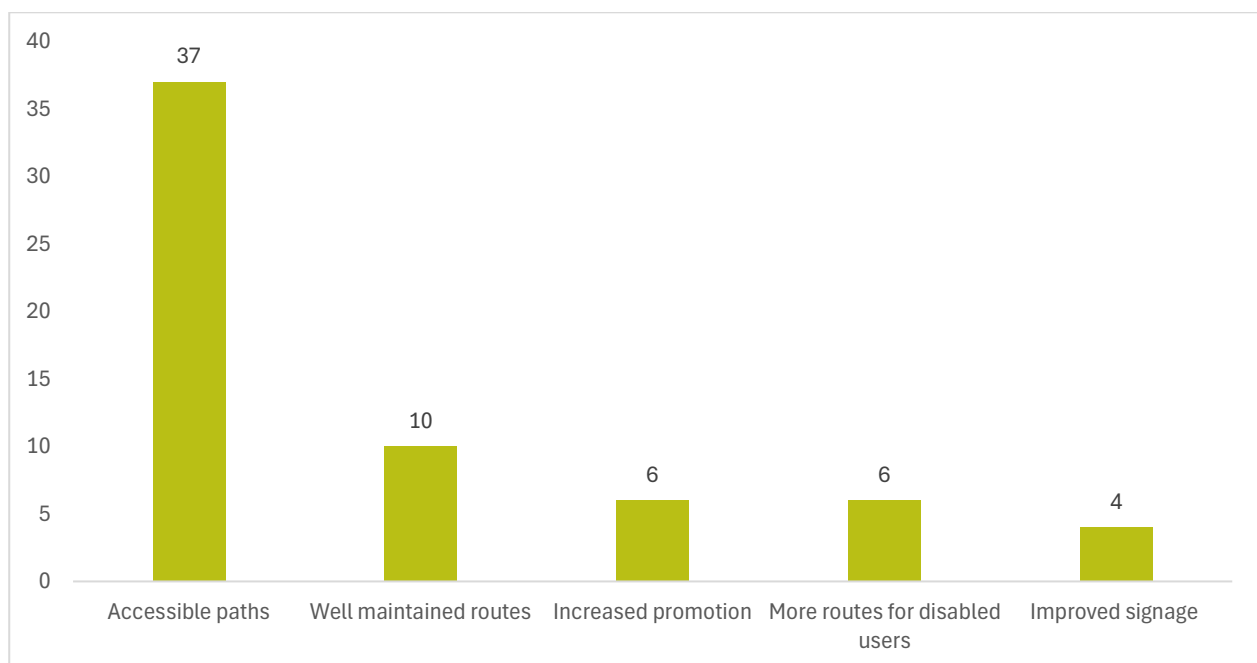
Disabled users (46) most frequently mentioned the need for:

- 1) Accessible paths (37) including
 - a) Improved surface (12)
 - b) Stile removal (9)
 - c) Adequate width (7)
 - d) Level surface (6)
 - e) Accessibility improvements to Gates / Stiles / Fences (6)
 - f) Smooth / sealed surfaces (3)
 - g) Rest points including benches and facilities (2)
 - h) Obstruction-free routes (2)
 - i) Safe connections to the network (2)
 - j) Reduced slopes (1)
 - k) Soft surface (1)
 - l) Car parking facilities (1)
- 2) Well-maintained routes (10) including
 - a) Vegetation clearance (10)
 - b) Good surface (2)
 - c) Well lit (1)
 - d) Litter bins (1)
- 3) Increased promotion (6) including
 - a) Advertise accessibility suitable routes (2)
 - b) Create more promoted routes (1)
 - c) Create more circular routes (1)
- 4) More routes for disabled users (6) including

- a) More connections to villages and local services and within villages (3)
- b) More off-road routes (1)
- 5) Improved signage (4), including
 - a) Clear signage (4)
 - b) Improved signage (4)
 - c) Accessibility signs (3)
 - d) Increased signage (1)
 - e) Destination / Distance signs (1)
 - f) Cycling / Dog Walking notice signs (1)
 - g) Large font signs (1)
 - h) Braille signs (1)

Three responses raised concerns regarding on-road footway routes.

Six responses from a disabled user perspective repeated the responses given for walkers.

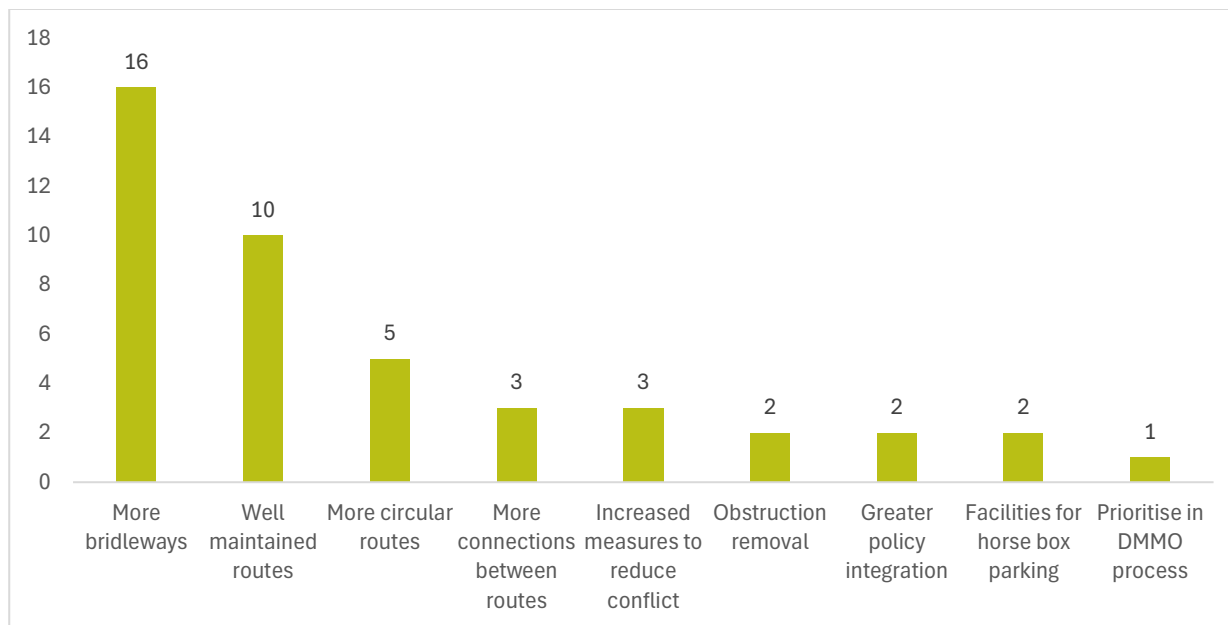


5.5 Horse riders

Horse riders (38) most frequently mentioned the need for:

- 1) More bridleways (16) including
 - a) More off-road routes (9)
- 2) Well-maintained routes (10) including
 - a) Clear signage (7)
 - b) Adequate width (6)
 - c) Improved gates (6)
 - d) Clearance – vegetation (5)
 - e) Improved signage (3)
 - f) Improved surface (2)
 - g) Good surface, appropriate for horse use (3)
 - h) Level surface (1)
- 3) More circular routes (5)
- 4) More connections between existing routes (3)

- 5) Measures to reduce user conflicts between horse riders and other users (3)
- 6) Removal of obstructions along existing bridleways (2)
- 7) Greater policy integration with planning and the ROWIP/LCWIP/LTPs (2)
- 8) Facilities for horse box parking (2)
- 9) Priority given to bridleway claims in the DMMO process to reopen lost routes on the ground (1)



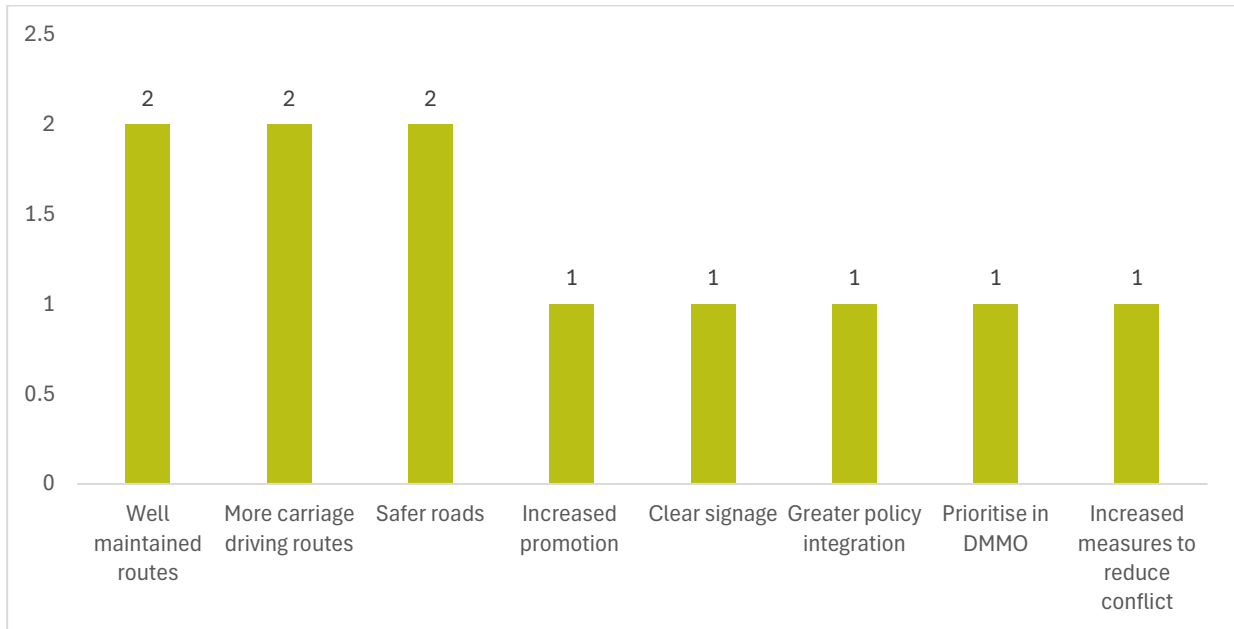
From a landowner perspective, the survey highlighted needs to reduce crop damage and reduce the impact on privacy and security. The response also highlighted concerns with unrestrained dogs on both farm animals and causing safety users for horses.

5.6 Carriage driving

Carriage drivers (4) most frequently mentioned the need for:

- 1) Well-maintained routes (2) including
 - a) Good surfaces for carriage driving (2)
 - b) Obstruction free routes (2)
 - c) Adequate width (1)
- 2) More carriage driving routes (2) including
 - a) Safe connections to routes (2)
 - b) More off-road routes (1)
 - c) More circular routes (1)
- 3) Safer roads for carriage driving (2) including
 - a) More use of quiet lanes for carriage driving (1)
- 4) Increased promotion of routes (1)
- 5) Clear signage (1)
- 6) Greater policy integration with planning and the ROWIP/LCWIP/LTPs (1)
- 7) Priority given to restricted byway claims in the DMMO process to reopen lost routes on the ground (1)
- 8) Measures to avoid conflict with other path users (1)

1 response from a carriage driving perspective repeated the responses given for horse riders.



5.7 Off-road motor vehicles

Off road vehicles comprise two and three wheeled motor cycles and four wheeled vehicles. Whilst the needs and ability to use routes are similar, the two groups do have different needs and have therefore been separated into two sections for the purpose of the statement of need consultation.

5.7.1 Off-road motorcycling

Off-road motorcyclists (6) most frequently mentioned the need for:

- 1) More routes for off-road motorcycling use (2) including
 - a) More connections for off-road users in the network (1)
 - b) Creation of more off-road routes for motorcycling (1)
- 2) Well-maintained routes (2) including
 - a) Clear signage (2)
- 3) Increased measures to reduce user conflict (2) including
 - a) Increased education and promotion of responsible use (1)
 - b) Reducing the risks of anti-social behaviour (2)

5.7.2 Off-road 4-wheeled users

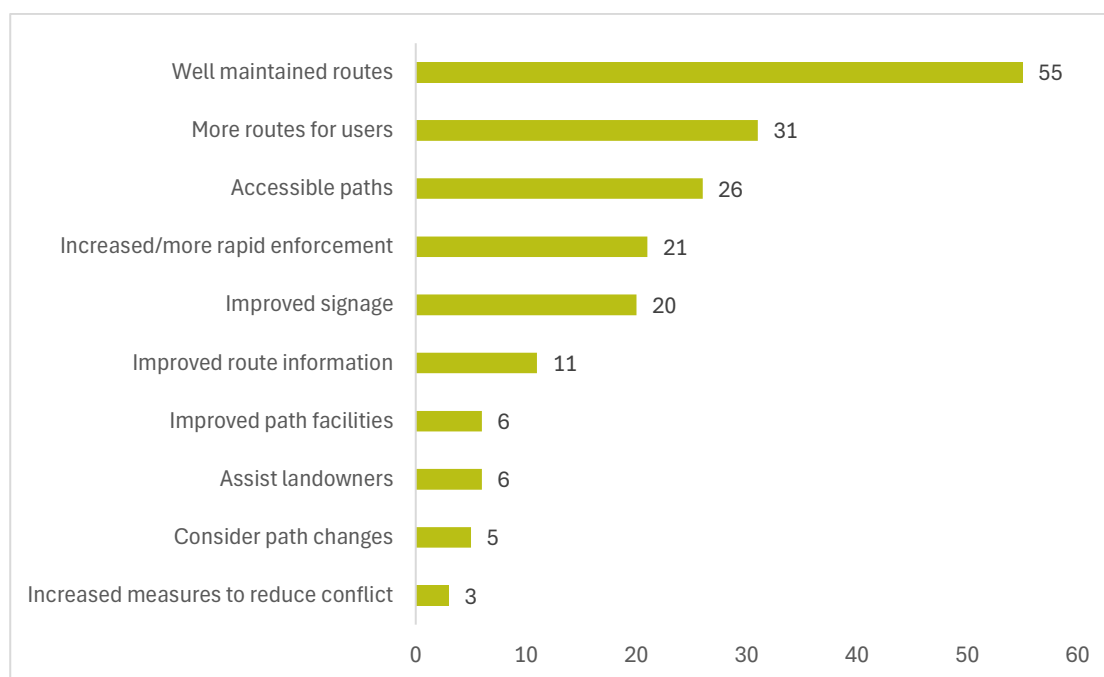
Off-road vehicle users (3) most frequently mentioned the need for:

- 1) Increased measures to reduce user conflict (2) including
 - a) Increased education and promotion of responsible use (2)
- 2) More off-road motor vehicle routes (1)
- 3) Good surfaces suitable for off-road motor vehicle use (1)

1 response from an off-road vehicle user perspective repeated the responses given for off-road motorcycling.



5.8 Top 10 Priorities for the 2025 improvement plan were identified by 120 respondents as



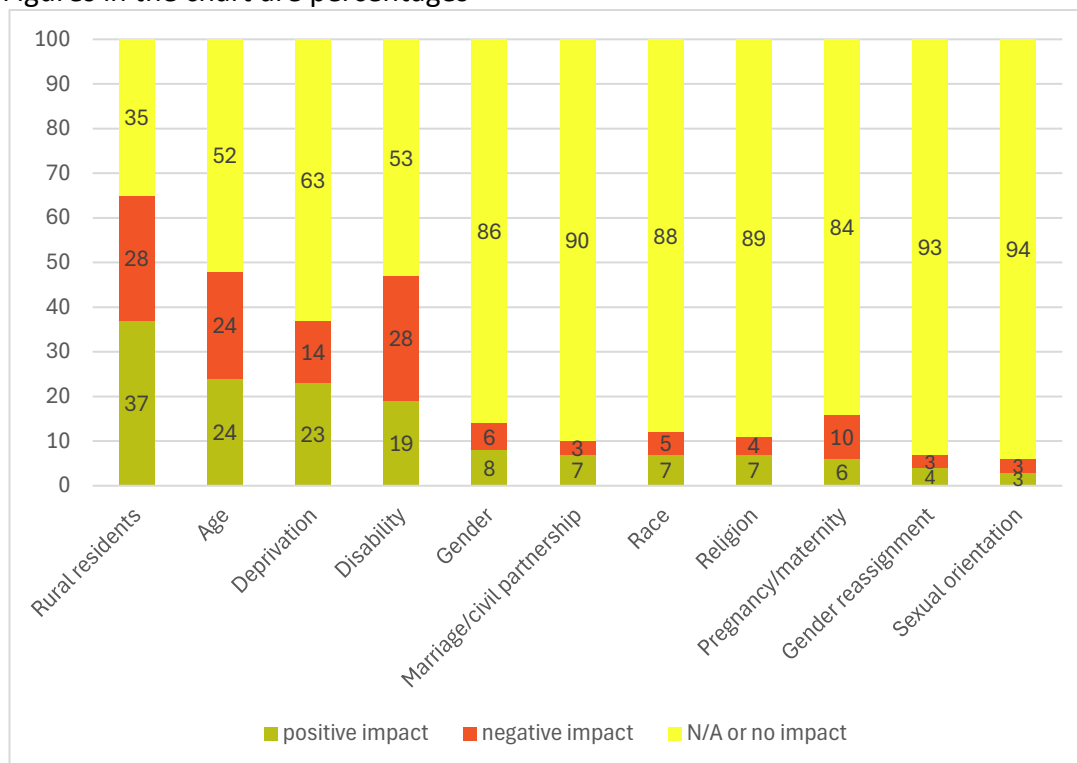
- 1) Well-maintained routes (55) including
 - a) Vegetation clearance (31)
 - b) Good and improved surfaces (10)
 - c) Bridge maintenance (3)
 - d) Better drainage (1)
 - e) Litter picking (1)
- 2) More routes for users (31) including
 - a) Connecting existing routes (15)
 - b) More connections to villages and local services, including work & schools and within villages (13)
 - c) More circular routes (9)

- d) Safer connections to the rights of way network (9)
- e) More walking routes (7)
- f) More cycling routes (5)
- g) More bridleways (5)
- h) Reinststate historic routes (5)
- i) More off-road routes (4)
- j) Creation of more permitted paths (3)
- k) Connect with local public transport options (1)
- 3) Accessible paths (26) including
 - a) Obstruction free routes (6)
 - b) Stile removal (6)
 - c) Provision of benches (1)
- 4) Increased or more rapid enforcement (21)
- 5) Improved signage (20) including
 - a) Clear signage (16)
 - b) Accessibility signs (1)
 - c) Cattle warning signs (1)
 - d) Interpretation boards (1)
- 6) Improved route information (11) including
 - a) Increased promotion of routes and the network (8)
 - b) Improved maps (7)
 - c) Creation of local route maps (2)
- 7) Provide assistance to landowners (6) including
 - a) Increased liaison with landowners and farmers (3)
 - b) An easier legal process for path changes (2)
 - c) Extinguish unused routes (1)
- 8) Improved path facilities (6) including
 - a) Improved gates / stiles/ fences on the network (6)
 - b) Dog-friendly barriers (2)
 - c) Car parking facilities (1)
 - d) Street lighting / Provision of well lit paths (1)
- 9) Consider path changes (5), including
 - a) Diversions (5)
 - b) Use of alternative routes to avoid cattle etc (3)
 - c) Less cross-field paths (2)
 - d) Extinguish unused routes and historic unused routes in favour of more suitable alternative routes (2)
- 10) Increased measures to reduce user conflict (3) including
 - a) Dog control (2)
 - b) Tackling vehicular damage to surfaces (2)
 - c) Combat illegal use of paths (2)
 - d) Increased education and promotion of responsible use (1)

5.9 When asked about impacts due to protected characteristics:

- most felt there was no impact or the question was not relevant to them (34.5% rural residents and 51.7% for age-94.5% for sexual orientation)
- negative impacts ranged from 2.7% for sexual orientation to 28.4% for disability
- more respondents (37.2%) felt that rights of way had a positive impact on rural residents (proximity/access, health and wellbeing) than any protected characteristic. Conversely, they were also seen to be the second most likely group to see a negative impact (28.3%)
- more respondents (28.4%) felt people with a disability were likely to be negatively impacted (harder to access, route/surface suitability) than any other characteristic

Figures in the chart are percentages

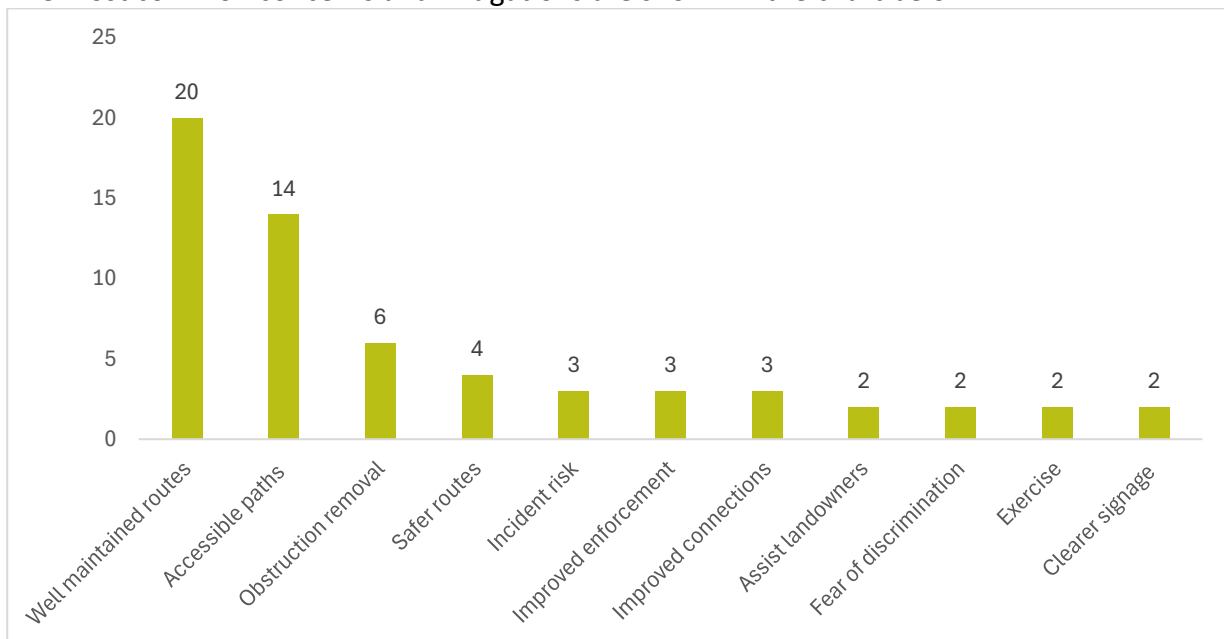


There were 45 comments about the impact and mitigation. The list below includes both:

- **well maintained routes (20)** including
 - appropriate surfaces (4) are needed for people with mobility needs
 - obstructions need to be removed (4) to allow access for those with mobility issues and chair users. This includes overgrown vegetation and stiles for example
- **accessible paths (14)** including
 - well maintained routes (7 of the above 20 comments) so they are accessible to all, particularly wheelchair (4) and push chair users
 - obstruction-free (4) to allow equal access to all (2)
- **obstruction-free (6)** as per the points made above
- **safer routes (4)** including
 - clear surfaces (2) to allow safe access for those with limited mobility
 - road safety (1) for younger and older people
 - reducing anxiety (1) for improved wellbeing
- **incident risk (3)** including from
 - livestock (1)

- falls (1)
- road traffic (1)
- improved enforcement (3) including
 - ensuring routes are not blocked (2) to allow access
 - not dealing with serious concerns and complaints (1)
 - use local champions (1) with access to an LCC rep to escalate complaints
- improved connections (3) relating primarily to age including
 - better safety (2) by connecting routes so users don't need to cross busy roads
 - allow improved access to services
- assist landowners (2) to help them understand and improve accessibility
- intimidation (2) based on direct experiences leads to fear of discrimination and feeling unable to use routes
- enable exercise (2) which has physical and mental health benefits
- clear signage (2) to inform users of the route's suitability depending on dis/ability

The most common concerns and mitigations are shown in the chart below



6 Conclusions and next steps

This report identifies several priorities for the next rights of way improvement plan. The purpose of engaging key stakeholders was to enable drafting of Lincolnshire's 10 year plan. This will now commence with an informed user perspective. The draft plan will then be subject to public consultation itself in 2025.