

Submitted to Northumberland County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035  
Submitted on 2024-10-18 09:51:53

## About you

1 Please tell us in what capacity you are completing this consultation (tick all that apply):

I am a resident of Northumberland, I represent a Town, Parish or Community Council

If other, please specify::

If you are responding to the consultation on behalf of a Town, Parish, Community Council or a user group or public sector organisation please tell us which group you belong to.:

Carham Parish Council

2 Do you use public rights of way in Northumberland?

Yes

3 Please tell us about your use of the public right of way network. Which of the following activities do you undertake on public paths in Northumberland (tick all that apply):

Walking

If other, please specify:

4 How often do you make use of public rights of way in Northumberland?

On only a few occasions in a year

## Your comments on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan

5 Do you think that the objectives set out on page 14 of the draft plan are of sufficient scope?

No

6 If you think that the objectives set out on page 14 could include more, please describe the changes you would like us to consider.

Suggested objective amends:

We think that Objective 7 should read: "Conserve and reinstate the rich heritage of routes ..." Reinstating the old paths that used to connect settlements to each other, and registering them on the DMS, would advance the plan in line with Policies 5 and 7.

7 Do you think that the nine proposed policies set out an appropriate framework for rights of way improvement in the county over the coming years?

No

8 If you think the policies should change or include additional elements, please summarise these here:

Policy suggestions:

Policies 1, 6, 8. We think it unlikely that volunteers will make much of an impression on the county's PROW, but we welcome their deployment on key routes if it frees up resources. We think the plan should put more emphasis on the Council's relationship with landowners, and on it finding a way of working with them on a formal basis. Policy 2. We disagree with the proposal to give higher priority to evidence-based claims, particularly with the wording "now being prevented from using a route." The word "now" is problematic, as it doesn't take into account the historical obstruction of routes. Some old routes have been obstructed for decades, which has caused them to fall out of use, making it impossible for evidence-based claims to be submitted. Policy 5. With regard to connectivity, we don't agree that riders and cyclists should be given priority over other users, and we observe that this is at odds with the policy which reads "Improve connectivity of the network for all users."

9 The County Council holds records on the status and location of public rights of way, what additional information would you like us to provide that would be of benefit to you?

Additional ROW information suggestions:

It would be helpful to have online information about the county's permissive paths - their routes, the date they were established, and when the agreement that established them expired, or is due to expire.

10 Where are there gaps in the public rights of way network in Northumberland and how do you think these could best be addressed?

Gaps in network:

Here, the gaps are where the old paths between settlements have been lost, so residents and visitors must either walk on the road (longer and more dangerous) or drive to reach other communities. Reinstating the old paths would address this, as would bringing the old railway lines into use as PROW.

11 Should the County Council prioritise the addition and creation of new public rights of way?

Yes

12 Are there routes you are aware of where accessibility improvements should be considered?

Yes

If yes, please summarise where the County Council could bring about accessibility improvements:

1) Some of the public footpaths in Wark on Tweed, particularly those around Wark Castle (210/002, 210/013, 210/014 and 210/029), are either inaccessible or only easily walked by those who are nimble. Although the only visible part of the castle is the ruins of the keep, Wark Castle is historically one of the most important on the border and of interest to residents and visitors alike.

2) Bridleway 210/006 (Piperdean Lane), which used to be a drove road, is practically impassable in summer, because it becomes overgrown, and in winter because of the deep muddy ruts created by large farm vehicles using it. If this was cleared down to its original surface, which we believe is a hard surface, this PROW could be used and enjoyed by everyone.

13 Are there individuals or groups in your community that would like to be or should be more involved in managing, maintaining, monitoring and making decisions about the PROW network?

Yes

Please provide details of volunteer or community groups that the County Council could consider involving in rights of way management, maintenance or improvement.:

We have one individual who organises walks on the parish's PROW network, who reports back to the Parish Council and to the Council and who is willing to help with waymarking. We have tried to gather volunteers to help with path maintenance, but without success.

14 Do you currently undertake voluntary work relating to public access to the countryside in Northumberland?

No

Are there ways that the County Council could enhance volunteer engagement and support in its management and maintenance of public rights of way?:

We know how difficult it is to engage volunteers from within the community. We wonder whether the Council could directly or indirectly - via JLAF, for example - deploy corporate volunteers (employees of large companies).

15 Should we place greater emphasis on routes that support and promote tourism?

Yes

If you think there is more that the County Council could consider in terms of its management of public rights of way in order to support tourism, please provide some details.:

We'd like visitors to be able to walk straight out of their holiday accommodation to enjoy their surroundings. Many sites of interest (hillforts, battlefield sites and so on) are shown on the OS map but are on private land, are not on PROW, and are therefore not accessible. As well as facilitating the reinstatement of old paths between settlements, which would provide visitors with circular routes to and from their accommodation, could the Council work with landowners to arrange access to these sites of interest - ideally by creating new PROW to reach them?

16 Have we adequately addressed the challenges arising as result of climate change and the role that PROW can play in encouraging and supporting active travel?

Yes

If you think there is more that the County Council could consider in terms of its management of public rights of way in order to address climate change, please provide some details.:

17 Have we missed any opportunities to help resource improvements to Northumberland's PROW network?

Yes

Please provide details of any additional resources the County Council could consider utilising.:

We think that finding a way of working with landowners on a formal basis, to maintain PROW, would ease the pressure on resources.

18 Other than the methods set out on page 47 of the draft plan, how might we be able to effectively monitor and evaluate delivery?

Please provide details.:

If JLAF is to be a source of information, it must either establish contact with parish councils across the county, to ensure that it has a complete picture; or obtain the surveys, correspondence and other information supplied by parish councils to the Council. (This may already happen.)

19 Are there any further comments you wish to make?

Further comments: