

CABINET

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PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK HIERARCHY

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1. BACKGROUND AND EXPLANATION OF ISSUES

Carmarthenshire's PROW network consists of 3176 individual routes and extends to over 2400km in length (see appendix 1).

The last performance indicator survey results for the network (5% random network sample), completed in 2018, showed 52.3% of the routes on the PROW network are open.

Within this extensive network there are a large number of supporting structures which the County Council has a responsibility for. In the absence of a 100% network survey the total number of structures is unknown. To date, it has been established that the Council has 664 bridges, it is likely there are many more.

With a small team and limited resources, the Countryside Access service faces a few challenges in improving the management and condition of the PROW network such as :

- There is increasing use of the network year on year. During periods lockdown for COVID19, use of the PROW network has grown placing additional pressure on the service from users and landowners.
- The Carmarthenshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2019-2029 introduced actions and policies intended to see network improvements throughout the term of the Policy. These include re-opening, improving and effectively maintaining the PROW network in accordance with our statutory duty.
- There is a need to manage the potential risk posed by the structures present on the network both to the public and to the authority.

The introduction of a risk- based methodology to prioritise the PROW network is one method that would allow available resources to be more strategically targeted to areas of highest risk and most prominent need.

A network hierarchy would also provide a consistent, defensible risk-based means of categorising our 3,176 routes by awarding each category an appropriate degree of priority.

2. HIERARCHY DEVELOPMENT

A project group of officers from the Countryside Access team has developed the network hierarchy shown below. Professional expertise, individual knowledge of the PROW network and ROWIP content was taken into consideration in developing the hierarchy.

Priority				
A - High	B – Med/High	C - Medium	D – Med/Low	E - Low
<p>Long Distance Walks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wales Coast Path St Illtyd's Walk Heart of Wales Line Trail Landsker Borderlands Trail <p>All Ability Routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routes particularly suited for less able users. <p>High Utility / High Use: Paths (normally tarmacked) which provide alternative to short car trips – such as home to school, commuting, retail, key community facilities.</p>	<p>Promoted Routes / County Walks Routes that are promoted on the Discover Carmarthenshire website.</p> <p>Multi-user PROWs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridleways Restricted Byways Byways Open to All Traffic 	<p>Linking Paths Paths forming a valuable link to an A or B classified route.</p> <p>T&CC Priority Paths Town / Community Council maintained or prioritised paths.</p> <p>Community Value Paths Routes to key attractions / significant amenity benefit.</p>	<p>Otherwise Uncategorized Paths Paths not classified A, B, C or E.</p> <p>Open Access Link Routes linking to Open Access Land.</p>	<p>Cul-de-sac Paths (unless amenity use can be identified)</p> <p>Purposeless Paths Paths with no obvious purpose.</p>

Factors taken into account in determining the criteria for each category included:

- Level of promotion of PROW
- Likely footfall
- Accessibility
- Type of user
- Likely Purpose/Usefulness/Value of PROW

In considering the criteria set out above, the project group were able to determine the level of potential risk associated with certain PROWs/groups of PROWs and therefore where they should feature within the hierarchy.

Detail of the routes within the hierarchy criteria is set out as follows:

Priority A (High)

Long Distance Walks.

The Wales Coast Path (www.walescoastpath.gov.uk)

Wales is one of only a few countries in the world to have a continuous coastal path along its entire coastline. It is 1400km long and was developed with the support of the Welsh Government and was launched in 2012. **96km** of the path falls within Carmarthenshire. It is managed by Natural Resources Wales, in conjunction with Local Authorities. It has distinct way markers and is marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

St Illtyd's Walk

Saint Illtyd's Walk is a 103 km waymarked long-distance footpath in South Wales, **19km** of which travels through Carmarthenshire. It runs from Pembrey Country Park, west of Burry Port, through rural eastern Carmarthenshire and Neath Port Talbot to end at Margam Country Park, south of Port Talbot. The walk is named after Illtyd (or Illtud), a late-fifth / early-sixth century Welsh saint. It has distinct waymarkers and is marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

Heart of Wales Line Trail (www.heart-of-wales.co.uk/experiences)

The Heart of Wales Line Trail is a long distance walk that weaves between stations along the line. It opened in Spring 2019 across Shropshire, Powys, Carmarthenshire, Brecon Beacons National Park, and the City & County of Swansea. The route has distinct waymarkers and is anticipated to be marked on future Ordnance Survey maps. **58km** of the Heart of Wales Line Trail travels through Carmarthenshire.

Landsker Borderlands Trail

The Landsker Borderlands trail is a 92km [long distance](#), looped walking route in [West Wales, 16km of which falls in Carmarthenshire](#). Landsker is an old Norse word for frontier. The route explores the rural area on the Pembrokeshire/Carmarthenshire border from Llanboidy and Efailwen in the north via Canaston Bridge on the Daugleddau to Landshipping and Lawrenny in the south, returning via Reynalton and Ludchurch. The route is on OS maps and is waymarked.

All Ability Routes

These PRowS tend to be fairly level routes that have relatively smooth or sealed surfaces, and good accessibility that lend themselves to access with mobility aids such as wheelchairs and mobility vehicles. The number of All Ability Routes is limited but they provide a high value amenity to all users and particularly those with mobility impairments.



2 - Swiss Valley Reservoir access



1 - Swiss Valley Reservoir path surface

High Utility / High Use

Paths which provide alternative to short car trips – such as home to school, commuting, retail, key community facilities. They are normally tarmacked, and often will appear similar in nature to adjacent footways/pavements.

Priority B (Med/High)

Promoted Routes / County Walks

These include the routes that are promoted on the Discover Carmarthenshire website: www.discovercarmarthenshire.com/explore/walking-in-carmarthenshire/

Multi-user PRowS

90% of Carmarthenshire's total PRow network is made up of public footpaths that provide public access for pedestrians (including mobility vehicles where possible) only. It is therefore important to ensure that the remaining 10% of the County's PRowS which are multi-user are effectively prioritised. These routes comprise:

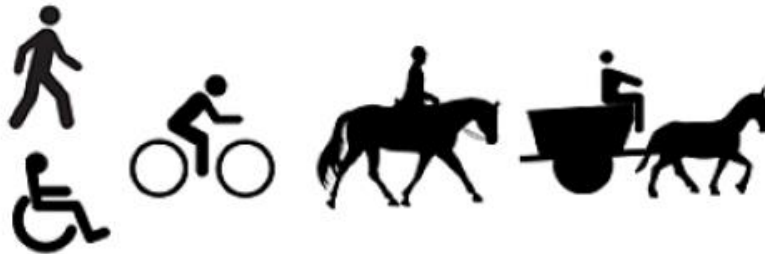
Bridleways

Bridleways give access to the following classes of user:



Restricted Byways

Restricted byways give access to the following classes of user:



Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs)

BOATs give access to the following classes of user:



Priority C (Medium)

Linking Paths

Paths forming a valuable link to a Priority A or B route.

Town & Community Council Priority Paths

Paths that have been identified by the Town / Community Council as a priority within the area.

Community Value Paths

Routes to key attractions or those which have significant amenity benefit.

Priority D (Med/Low)

Otherwise Uncategorised Paths

Paths not classified A, B, C or E.

Open Access Link

Routes linking to Open Access Land (e.g designated forestry, common land etc).

Priority E (Low)

Cul-de-sac Paths (unless amenity use can be identified)

Dead-end routes, such as those leading to a facility that is no longer in use.

Purposeless Paths

Paths that serve little purpose as more popular alternatives are available, or there is no current demand for the route.

Certain PROWs have been excluded from the draft Network Hierarchy due to alternative management arrangements which satisfactorily ensure maintenance and enforcement is carried out. Those outside of the hierarchy are shown below.

Classification	Identification	Maintenance
<u>Highway (6km)</u>	Those routes that are dual-registered as Highway and PROW.	These will be maintained by the Highways Dept.
<u>Cycleway (30km)</u>	PROWs which have been identified as forming part of a recognised Cycle Network.	Maintenance responsibility of these routes to be undertaken by the Highways and Transportation Division.
<u>Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) (223km)</u>	PROWs within the boundary of the BBNP.	These are maintained by the BBNP under a Delegation Agreement.

3. CONSULTATION

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 placed a statutory duty on every highway and National Park authority to set up and maintain a Local Access Forum (LAF) in its area. The LAF are set up to advise local authorities, Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government on access developments.

The LAF has been consulted on the draft document.

Subject to approval, all Town and Community Councils (T&CCs) will be consulted in order to fully implement the Network Hierarchy.

In order to populate '*Priority C; Town and Community Council Priority Paths*' each T&CC will be asked to determine the priority routes in their area and submit them to the Authority. The routes identified can then be embedded in the Countryside Access mapping system for future prioritisation.

4. CONCLUSION.

The categorised PROWs have been added to the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) on a trial basis to test the effectiveness of the hierarchy in prioritising the PROW network from the point of view of day-to-day network management.

There is work still to do in prioritising a proportion of the network that cannot be immediately categorised due to the generic status of certain routes. However, those routes that have been awarded a classification in accordance with the draft hierarchy are now easily identified and assigned an appropriate priority in all aspects of PROW management.

Additionally, the draft document has been used to prioritise improvement and capital projects for 2021-22 onwards.

Given the success of the trial period in assisting the service to move to a strategic, risk-based management approach, it is recommended that the hierarchy should now be formally adopted by the authority and used as a management tool going forward.

3. OTHER OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND THEIR PROS AND CONS

Not adopt the draft Network Hierarchy

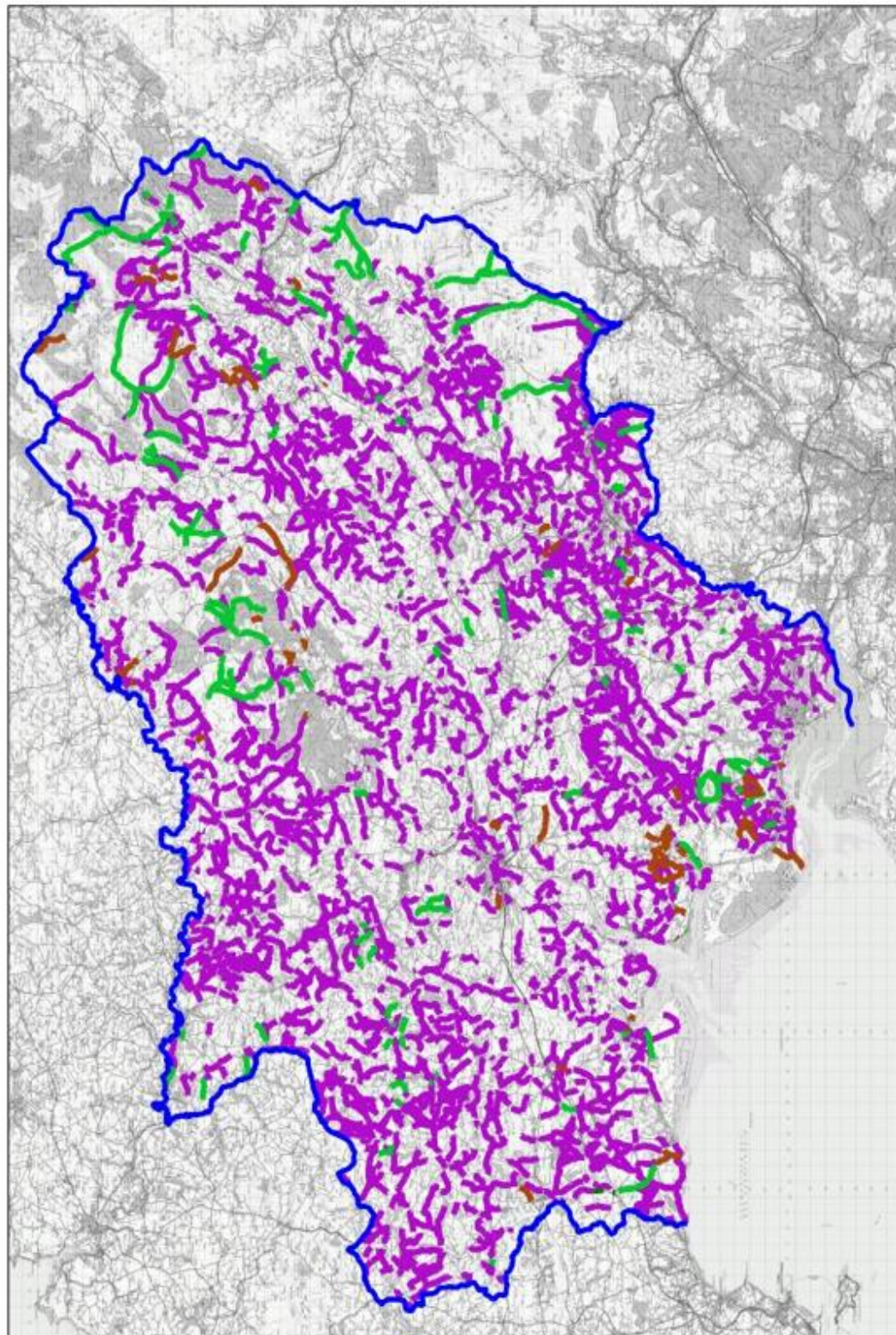
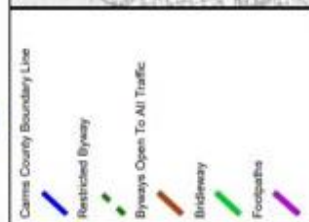
Should the authority decide not to adopt the draft hierarchy we would continue to work with an un-categorised, unprioritised PROW network. This would prevent the effective prioritisation of network management in a well-informed, defensible way which takes account of risk.

This would leave the authority more vulnerable to injury claims. It would also leave the authority unable to justify network management decisions or respond to a Notice served on the authority to, for example, to secure obstruction removal or surface repair.

Appendix 1



Llybwrâu Cyhoeddus Sir Gâr/Carmarthenshire's Public Rights of Way



Graddfa
Scale
1:250000

Canol y Map
Map Centre
[253266.2, 222405.2]

Dyddiad
Date
14/10/2021

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