



Rights of Way Improvement Plan research 2007

(report by The Access Company)

Key findings

Note on figures: All figures relate to responses to the questionnaire; numbers and percentages relate to the number or percentage of LHAs responding to the question not to the percentage of LHAs in total.

- 84% (113 out of 136) Local Highway Authorities preparing ROWIPs responded to the questionnaire.
- **Two thirds (66%)** of those authorities had written a final ROWIP by November but some of these were still awaiting council approval before publication.
- 45% of authorities had published their final ROWIP by the November 2007 statutory deadline.
- 16% of authorities have yet to publish a draft ROWIP.
- 30% of authorities reported that the ROWIP has already resulted in improved access to resources. Figures of up to £700,000 have been secured from a range of sources primarily the LTP and section 106 agreements.
- Just over half (54%) of all authorities have started implementing their ROWIP (whether they have published a final ROWIP or not).
- Three quarters of ROWIPs (76%) prioritise increasing accessibility.
- The ROWIP process has been a positive one for most authorities – 96% of authorities which have written a draft or final ROWIP report at least one positive benefit from the process.

- Almost half of all authorities report the ROWIP has resulted in more effective working within the authority.

Questionnaire results

Questionnaires were sent out to 136 Local Highway Authorities including Outer London Boroughs in England.

The findings of the questionnaire will contribute to a bigger study into the ROWIP process and published ROWIPs. The final report will be written in March 2008 . This report only addresses the questions covered by the questionnaire, and investigates the differences between regions and between shire and unitary authorities. The final report will relate these findings to the quality of published ROWIPS, and to the impact the ROWIP process has had on the management of access and the culture of authorities.

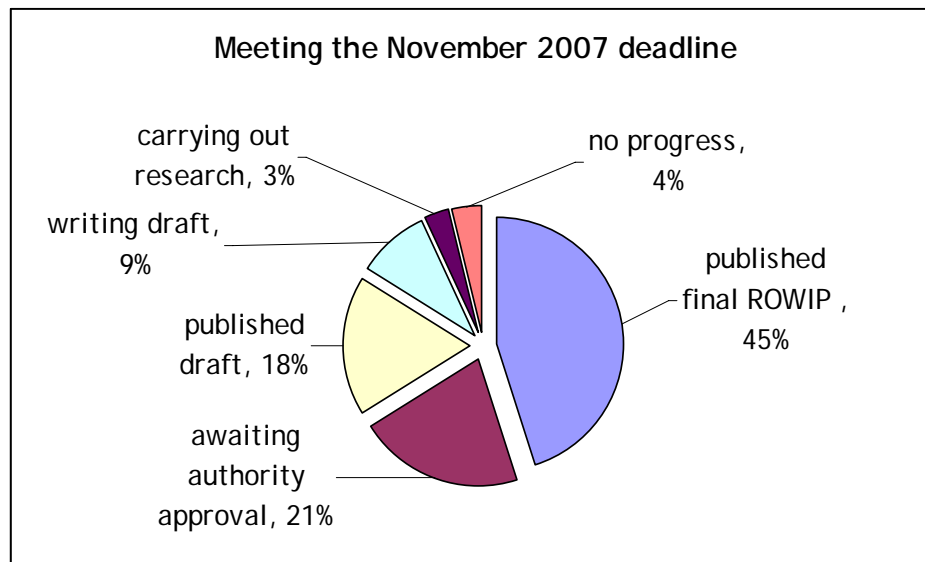
The response rate for the questionnaire was 84%.

All figures in this report relate to the responses received. As the research to assess the quality of ROWIPs progresses additional facts and figures will be collected to improve the accuracy of the information in this report, in particular relating to the number of published ROWIPs.

The region with the poorest response was London with only 60% of outer London Boroughs responding, reflecting the low priority given to rights of way and ROWIPs in some London Boroughs.

1 Meeting the November 2007 deadline

The deadline date for the questionnaire was the end of November 2007 - by which point authorities should have published their final ROWIP in time to meet their statutory duty.



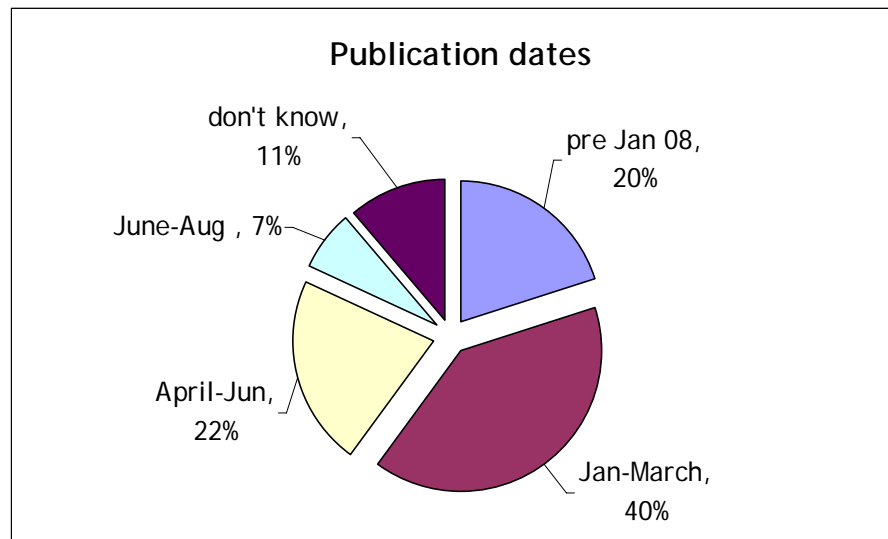
- 51 (45%) of the 114 authorities responding to the questionnaire have published a final ROWIP (either alone or as part of a joint ROWIP)
- 24 (21%) are awaiting authority approval to publish the final ROWIP
- 20 (18%) have published a draft and are either in the consultation phase or are writing the final ROWIP
- 10 (9%) are still writing the draft plan
- 3 (3%) are carrying out research
- 5 (4%) have made no progress

- 16% have yet to publish a draft ROWIP

1.1. Predicted Publication Dates

Of the 55 authorities still to publish their final ROWIP :

- 11 (20%) expect to publish their final ROWIP before January 2008
- 22 (40%) expect to publish between January and March 08
- 12 (22%) between April and June 08
- 4 (7%) between June and August
- 6 (11%) don't know.



However it is likely that several of these authorities will publish their ROWIP after the predicated dates, as a number are still at a vey early stage in the process, yet predict they will be published with 3 months.

2. Joint ROWIPS

5 of the ROWIPs are joint with Highway Authorities (5 ROWIPs covering 17 authorities):

- Lancashire County Council joint with Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen
- Poole joint with Bournemouth
- Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership covering Merseyside LTP partnership area, including Knowsley MBC, Liverpool CC, Sefton MBC, St Helens MBC & Wirral MBC
- Tyneside Joint ROWIP covering Tyne and Wear LTP area and including Gateshead, Newcastle, Sunderland, North Tyneside and South Tyneside.
- The West of England Partnership ROWIP covering Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire.

4 are joint with National Park Authorities :

- Redcar and Cleveland joint with North York Moors National Park
- Cumbria County Council including the Lake District National Park Authority & the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
- Devon County Council joint with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Park Authorities

- North Yorkshire County Council including North York Moors National Park and the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Other ROWIPs include sections of National Parks but either did not mention this in their questionnaire response, or did not respond to the questionnaire. For example the areas covered by the Peak District National Park is included in 7 different ROWIPs : Derbyshire, Barnsley , Oldham, Cheshire, Staffordshire and Sheffield as well as Kirklees who have yet to publish their ROWIP.

The question was aimed at ROWIPs joint with other authorities and was not designed to find out about national park overlap so it is of no significance that national parks were not mentioned at this stage.

2.1. Structure of Joint ROWIPS

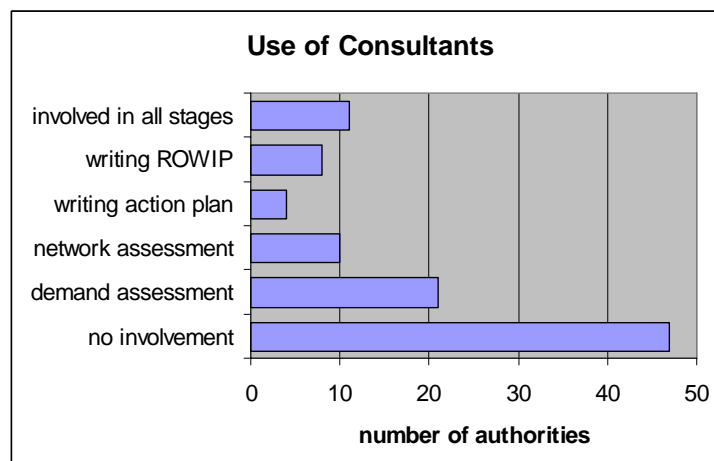
All joint ROWIPs have been written as a single ROWIP covering the whole area, rather than a series of mini-ROWIPs.

All carried out joint research for the assessment stages. Some are being implemented jointly, in others implementation is managed by the individual authorities, the majority have a flexible approach with some elements being delivered together and others separately.

3. Use of consultants

Out of the 98 ROWIPs covered by the authorities' responses :

- 47 (48%) authorities have not used consultants in any part of the process.
- 11 (11%) involved consultants in the whole process, in addition :
 - 25 (26%) involved consultants in the assessment stages
 - 8 (8%) involved consultants in writing the ROWIP



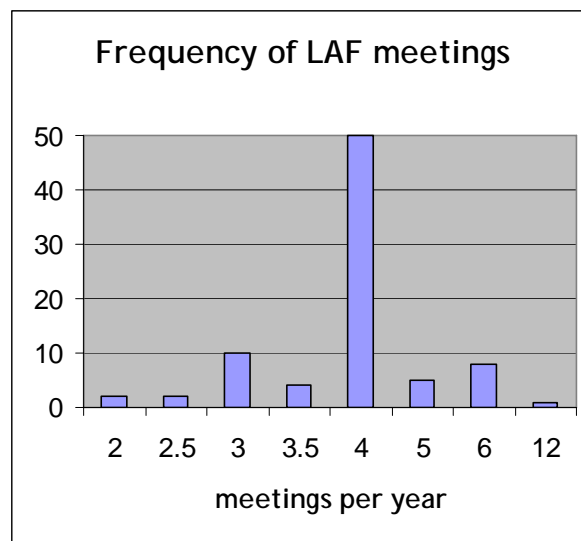
4. Local Access Forum Involvement

4.1. Number of LAFs

- 73 (73%) of ROWIPs have been written with the help of 1 LAF.
- 9 LHAs have worked with 2 LAFs
- 2 LHAs have worked with 3 LAFs

- 14 report they have not been involved with any LAFs
 - 11 of these are London Boroughs which are not required to establish a LAF
 - 2 outside London yet to work with a LAF include :
 - Southend-on-Sea which has struggled to establish a LAF.
 - Hull City Council which has only just started work on the ROWIP but has plans to work with the LAF.

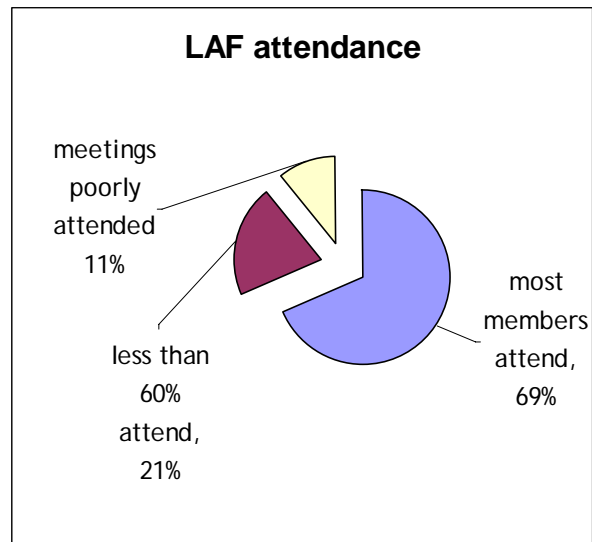
4.2. Frequency of meetings



Most LAFs meet 4 times per year, with some meeting as often as every 1 or 2 months, and some as little as twice per year.

Several authorities reported that the frequency of meetings varied depending on need.

4.3. LAF attendance at meetings

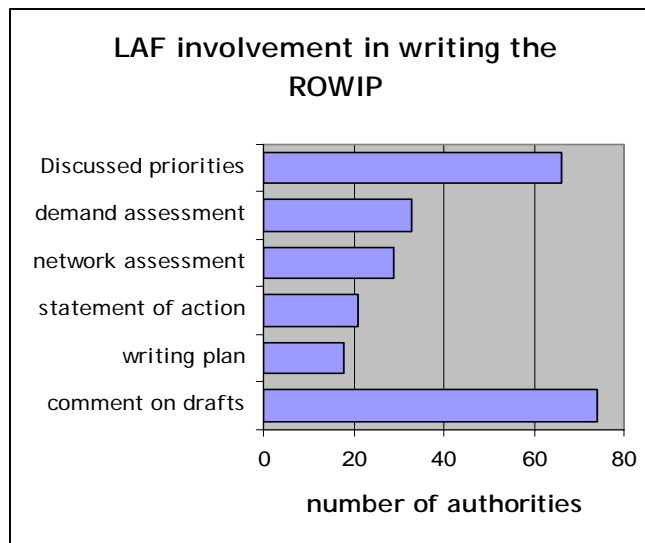


Of the 84 authorities working with LAFs :

- 58 (69%) respondents report that most members attend the LAF meetings
- 18 (21%) report than less than 60% attend
- 9 (11%) report that meetings are poorly attended

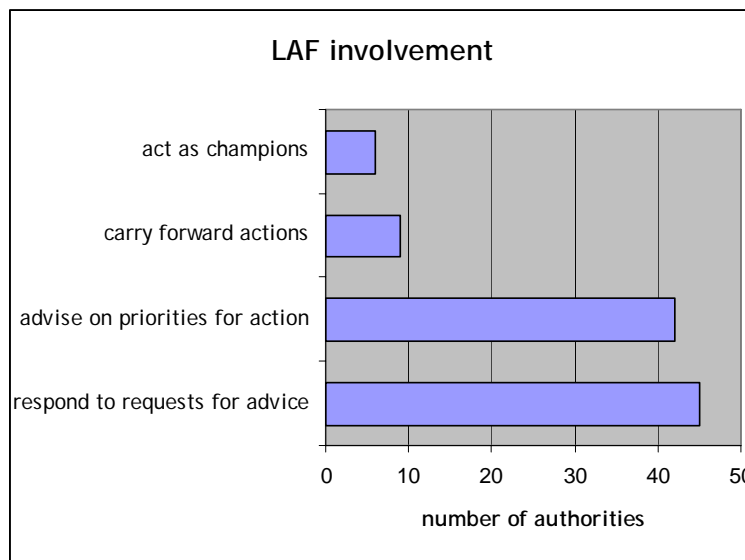
4.4. LAF involvement with writing the ROWIP

The level of involvement varies widely across the country with some LAFs involved at a very peripheral level and others closely involved with the development and implementation of the ROWIP.



- Almost all authorities which have reached the draft stage have consulted with the LAF on pre-publication drafts. 11 have not done this - 5 London Boroughs, Southend-on-Sea (which do not have LAFs), and 5 other authorities which do have LAFs.
- The majority of authorities discussed ROWIP priorities with the LAF - 78%
- 45% authorities involved the LAF in the demand or network assessment phases
- 35% authorities involved the LAF in writing the action plan, or with writing the plan.

4.5. LAF involvement with implementing the ROWIP



Of the 53 ROWIPs which are being implemented :

- 2 involve the LAF fully, with LAF members acting as champions for themes in the action plan, taking an active role in carrying forward actions and advising on priorities for action
- 5 have LAF members taking on 2 of these roles :
 - 4 LAFs take an active role in implementing actions and advise on priorities
 - 1 LAF advises on priorities and members act as champions for themes in the action plan.
- In total 26 (49%) LAFs advise on priorities for action.
- 19 (36%) authorities are implementing the ROWIP (are working with a LAF) but are not involving the LAF in any active roles.

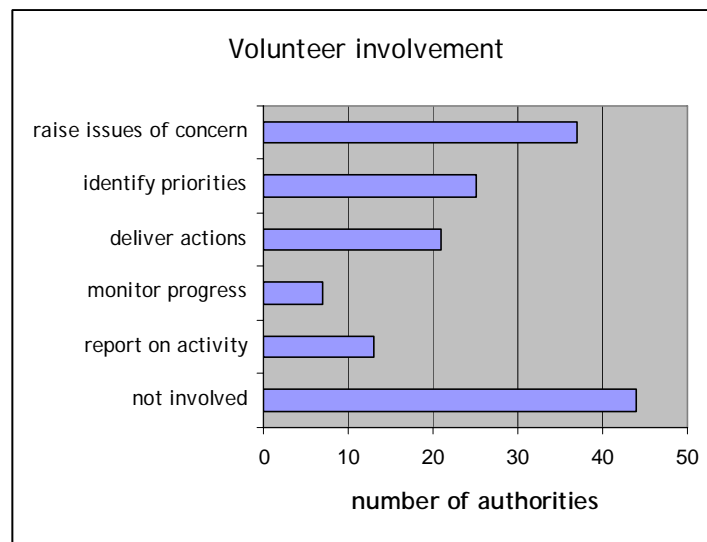
4.6. LAFs not taking an active role

In 9 cases the LAFs appears to take a less active role - their involvement with the ROWIP being to comment on drafts and respond to requests for advice. Two-thirds (6) of these report that the LAF is poorly attended, or that less than 60% of members attend.

5. Involvement of volunteers

Of the 98 ROWIPs (covered by the authorities' responses):

Less than half (45%) of the ROWIPs have any involvement from volunteers outside the LAF.



Involvement varies but :

- 38% authorities report that volunteers report issues of concern to them
- 26% involve volunteers in identifying priorities
- In one 5th of LHAs preparing ROWIPs volunteers actively help to deliver actions (21%)
- In 5% volunteers report to the authority on activity they undertake which contributes to ROWIP delivery.

Four authorities report that the LAF is poorly attended and that volunteers are not involved with the ROWIP. This raises concerns about community involvement in the ROWIP and authority commitment to the ROWIP process.

6. Resources

Just under half of the authorities responding to this question (48%) report that the ROWIP has yet to secure any additional resources. 8 of these have published a final ROWIP and are implementing it.

Generally authorities that have an adopted ROWIP and started implementation have secured additional funds.

30% of authorities reported that the ROWIP has resulted in improved access to resources.

Of the 51 authorities securing additional funds through the ROWIP :

- 20 (39%) have secured additional funds from within the authority, amounting to increases of 100% in one authority, and between £15,000 and £190,000 in others.
- 23 (45%) have secured annual fixed sums through the LTP - of between 25% - 100% of the previous ROW budget. The authorities that gave figures report between £15,000 and £300,000 per year coming to ROWIP implementation from the LTP.
- In addition 22 (43%) authorities have secured funding for specific projects through the LTP - of up to £400,000.
- 1 authority reported they had secured only £5,000 from the LTP as a 'token gesture'
- 9 (18%) authorities report that ROWIP actions are given priority in the LTP process.

- 15 (30%) authorities access funds through s106 agreements to deliver ROWIP actions. One authority reported this as being up to £700,000 in one year, another reported it was 6 times the annual rights of way budget.

Other funding sources are more difficult to secure with only 2 authorities securing EU funds, 4 receiving landfill tax funds, 3 getting Aggregate Levy funds, 3 securing benefits through agri-environment schemes, and 2 receiving sponsorship.

Only one authority reported receiving funds form the Primary Care Trusts, although health related funding is likely to be the biggest new funding source in the near future.

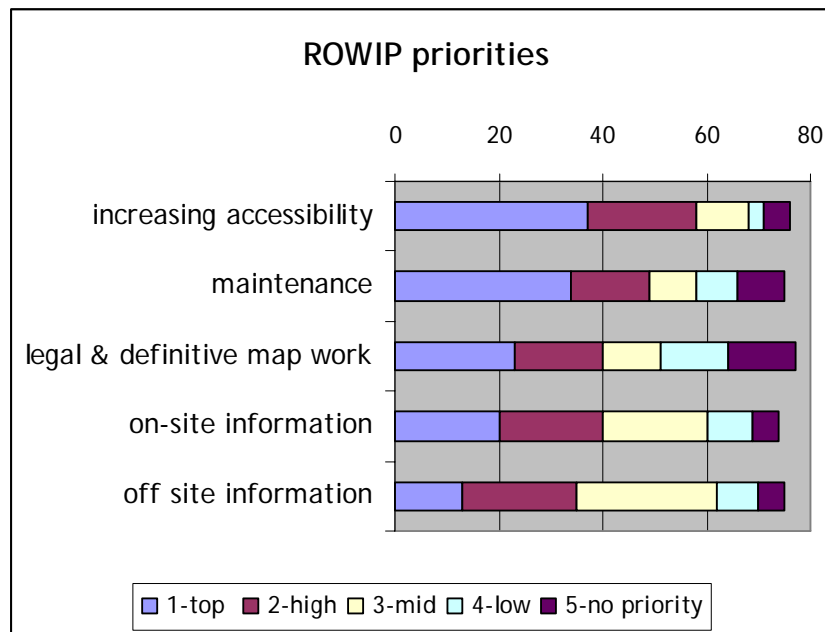
No authorities reported that they are currently receiving funds or support from the Forestry Commission or Environment Agency to deliver their ROWIP actions.

7. Implementation

- Just over half (54%) of the authorities have started implementing their ROWIP. This figure includes a number of authorities which have started to implement their ROWIPs ahead of formal publication.
- The majority have started to implement across the whole authority area with only 6% implementing in selected areas.

8. Priorities for action

Not all authorities were able to answer this question, either because they had not yet reached a stage where they had identified priorities, or because priorities were based on factors such as LAF or volunteer input, or available funding.



Of the 76 that did answer the question :

- Three quarters of ROWIPs (76%) prioritise increasing accessibility
- 49% indicated this had top priority
- 7% awarded no priority to increasing accessibility

- Two thirds of ROWIPs prioritise maintenance
- 45% gave maintenance top priority
- 12% awarded this the lowest score

- Over half (53%) prioritise definitive map work
- 30% awarded top priority to definitive map and legal work
- 17% awarded this the lowest score indicating it had no priority

- 16% of authorities awarded both definitive map work and maintenance top priority, although most of these awarded high priority to increasing accessibility and information suggesting they ROWIP is looking at aspects beyond statutory duties.

- Priority for different user groups was difficult to establish, although 30% of authorities gave top priority to improvements for equestrians, and no authorities identified improving access for users of motorised vehicles as a top priority.

- 26% gave top priority to improving on-site information (way marking, signage etc). 7% awarded this no priority.

- 17% gave top priority to improving off-site information (web, leaflets etc), 7% awarded this no priority despite the majority of demand assessments concluding that people want more information about where they can go.

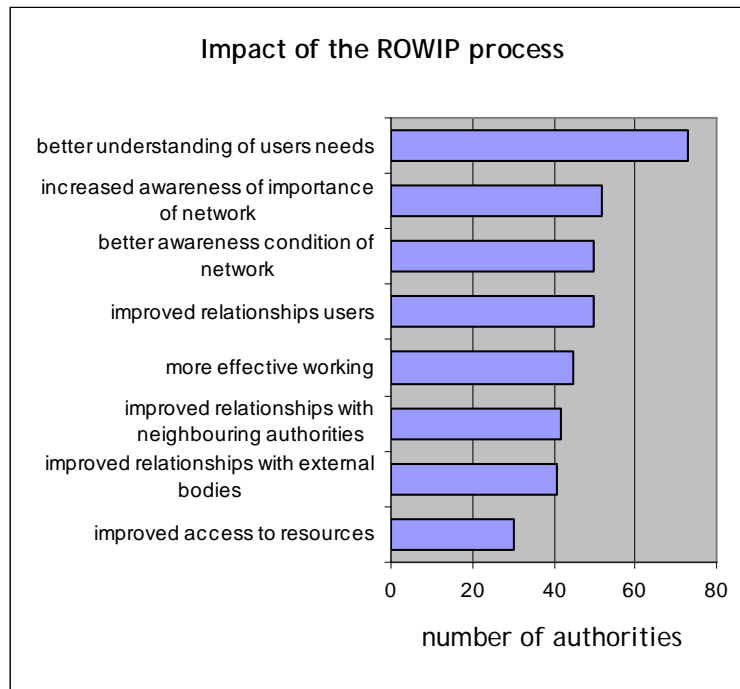
9. Impact of the ROWIP process

The responses to this questions were generally very positive with most authorities reporting some benefit arising from the ROWIP process.

Only 3 authorities who have written a draft or final ROWIP did not identify any positive benefits of the process.

- Only 6 authorities reported that the ROWIP process had made 'no difference'. However 3 of these also commented that it had improved their understanding of users needs, 1 admitted to greater knowledge of the condition of the network, and 1 reported more effective working within the authority.

- 2 of these had used consultants for part of the ROWIP assessment process - but there seems to be no clear correlation as the 8 authorities reporting that consultants were involved throughout the ROWIP process reported a range of improvements in relationships and working practices.



- 46% authorities reported that the ROWIP have resulted in more effective working within the authority
- 53% report that there is increased awareness within the authority of the importance of the network.
- 51% reported improved relationships with users and user groups
- 43% reported improved relationships with neighbouring authorities
- 42% have improved relationships with other external bodies
- 75% have an improved understanding of the needs of users
- 51% have a better awareness of the condition of the network
- 32% reported improved access to resources.

Few authorities reported any negative effects. The most common (34%) being that expectation has been raised leading to disappointment and frustration although all of these reported positive benefits which off-set this.