

## Cumbria Lost Ways Project – ‘use and condition’ survey results



A survey to assess the condition of public rights of way in the part of Cumbria outside of the two National Parks was conducted in 2005 by the ‘*Cumbria Lost Ways project*’. A total of 151 parishes, or 2719 individual public rights of way were surveyed by volunteers.

Parishes were encouraged to take part in the survey which would give information about the physical condition of the rights of way network and the level of use it receives, pinpoint overgrown or obstructed routes, and provide information on anomalies, such as footpaths stopping at parish boundaries etc.

In addition, this information on condition, potential missing links or redundant routes, and suitable routes for people with limited mobility or less mobile is useful for the ROWIP<sup>1</sup>. A form was completed for each right of way, including identification of any routes that may be suitable for people with limited mobility – a grading system was used.

### Use

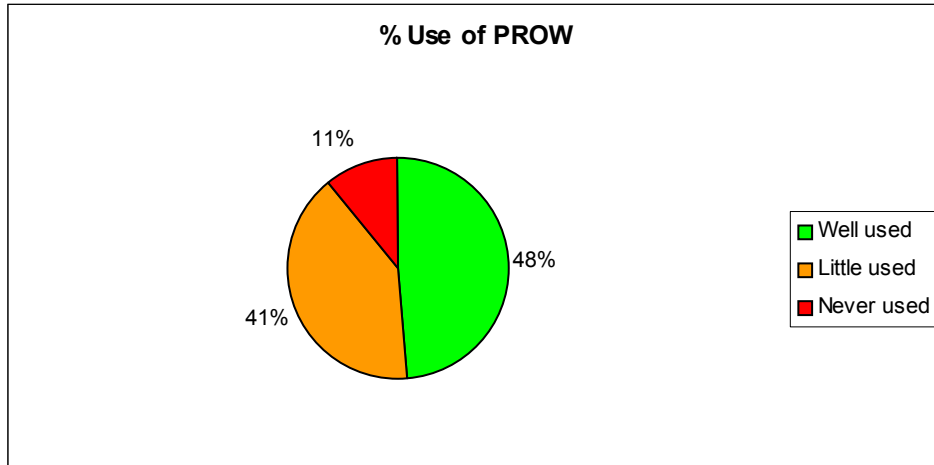
- 48% are perceived as being well used
- 40% are perceived as being little used
- 11% are perceived as being never used<sup>2</sup>
  
- 88% of rights of way are used by walkers

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the Cumbria Lost Ways Project is independent from the national ‘Discovering Lost Ways’ pilot to identify unrecorded or incorrectly recorded routes on the Definitive Map. The Cumbria Lost Ways survey was additionally interested in historical information (old kilns, mines, mills etc, and connecting packhorse trails) and biodiversity information (hedgerows and verges). The use-and-condition element of the survey was funded by Cumbria County Council.

<sup>2</sup> This figure may well correlate with the amount of routes that are reported as incorrectly signed or obstructed. In other words, maybe they are ‘never’ used, because it is impossible to do so at present.

- 13% of rights of way are used by cyclists
- 17% of rights of way are used by horse-riders
- 21% are used by motor bikes or motor vehicles (which includes private use and agricultural usage)



**Signs**

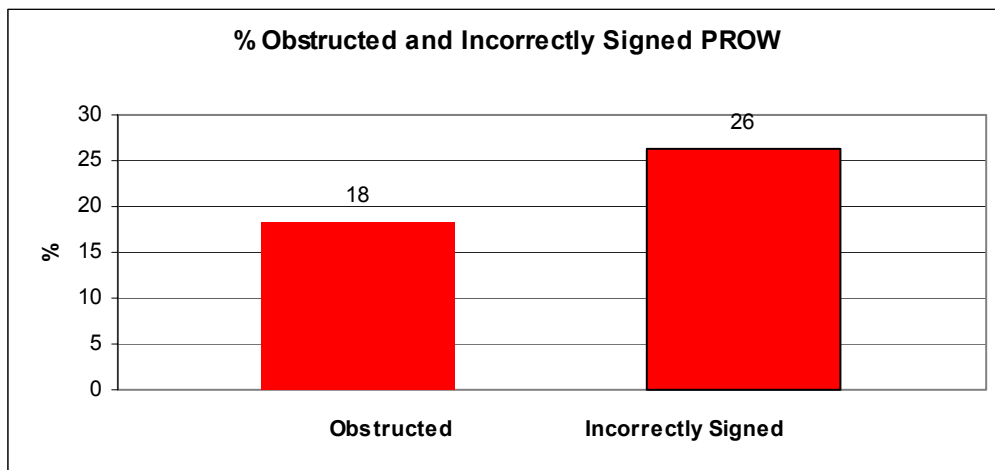
*Incorrectly signed means that the sign is missing or incorrect at the point where the public right of way leaves the metalled road.*

- 26% were reported as being incorrectly signed<sup>3</sup>

**Obstructed**

*'Obstructed' could mean blocked by equipment or materials, vehicles, locked or tied or fixed gates, obstructed stiles, overgrown or overhanging vegetation, barbed wire on stiles or gates, or intimidatory notices.*

- 18% were obstructed in some way

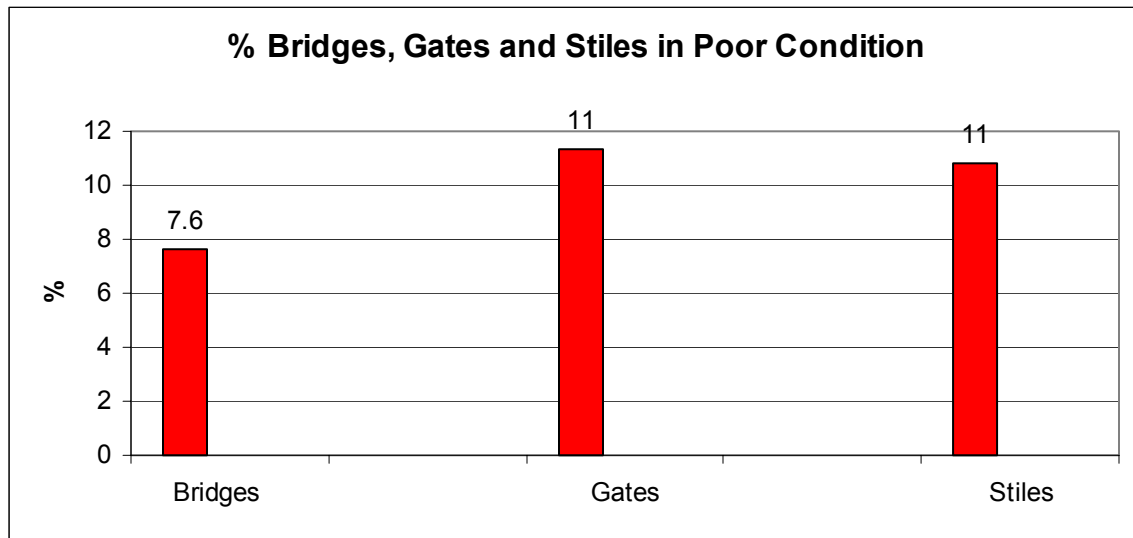


<sup>3</sup> Unsigned urban tarmac paths were not included in this total.

## Furniture

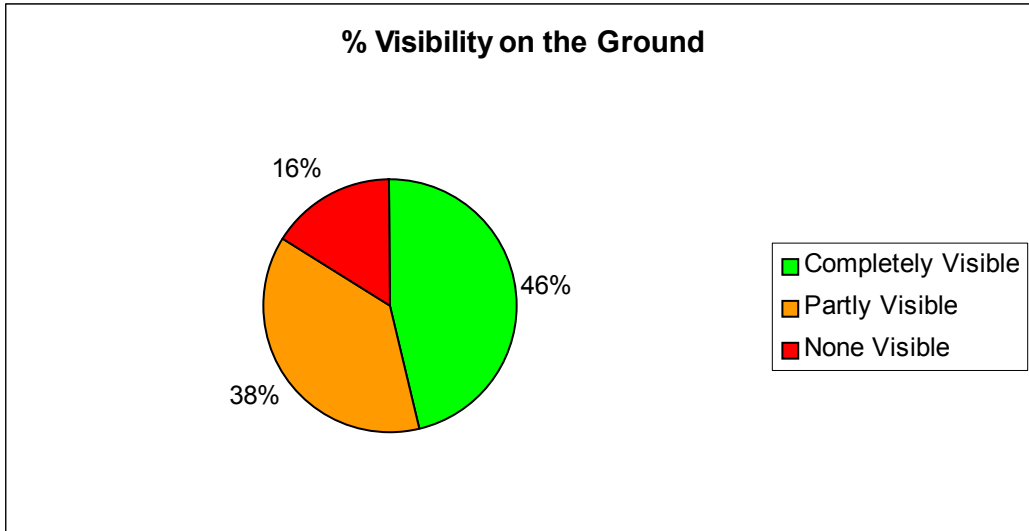
*Good condition = easy and safe to use, no missing parts or broken sections. In the case of gates 'good condition' also means opens freely, structurally sound, good catches, suitable for the user-type (taking into account elderly people, disabled people, walkers, riders and so on). In the case of stiles 'good condition' also means safe to cross, no barbed wire and barrier-free.*

- Out of 197 fords, 15% are made up of stepping stones.
- Out of 845 bridges, 7.6% were described as being in a poor condition
- Out of 4950 gates, 11% were described as being in a poor condition
- Out of 3834 stiles, 11% were described as being in a poor condition



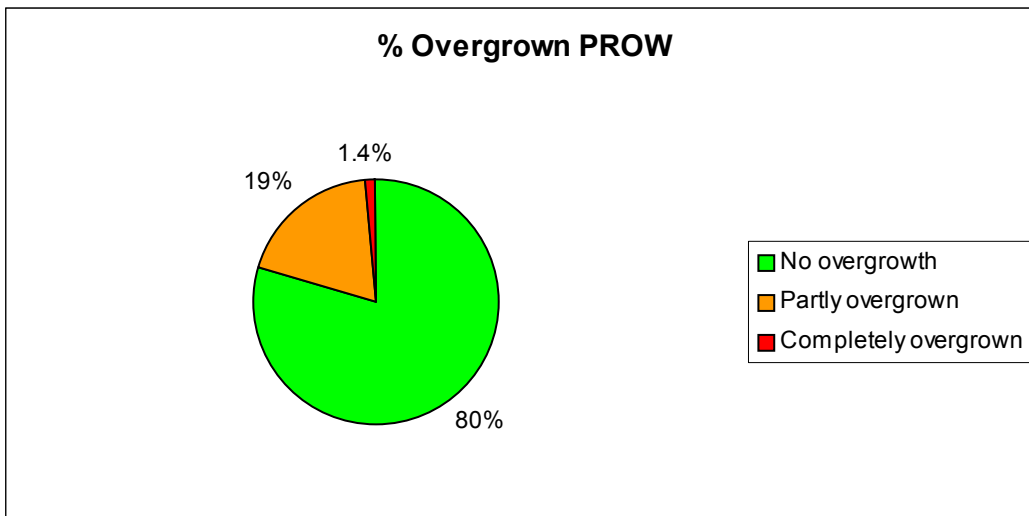
## Visibility on the ground

- 46% are completely 'visible on the ground'
- 38% are partly 'visible on the ground'
- 16% are not at all 'visible on the ground'



**Overgrown**

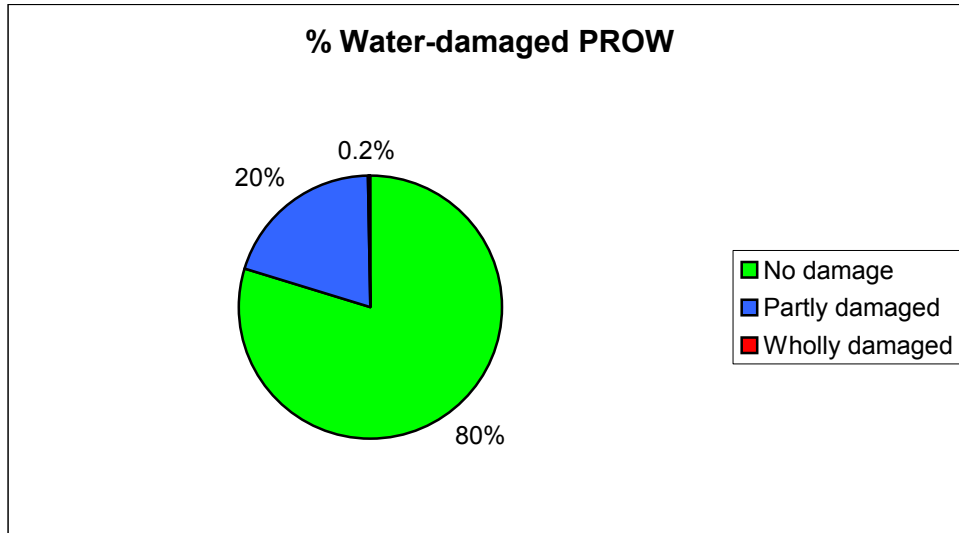
- 80% are not overgrown
- 19% are partly overgrown
- 1.4% are completely overgrown



**Water damage**

*'Water damage' means that if water crosses or courses down the route in wet conditions, causing erosion, volunteers were encouraged to report it.*

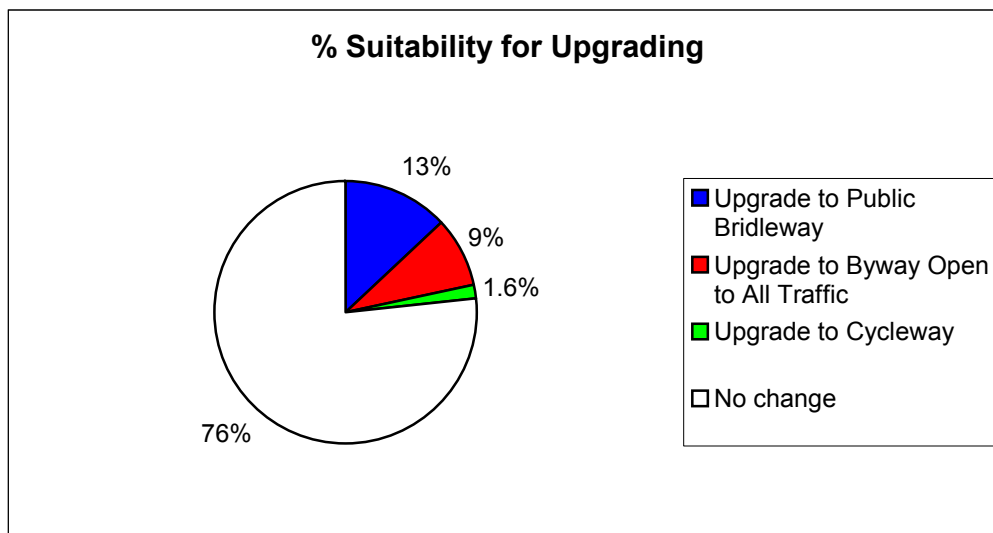
- 80% were not damaged by water
- 20% were partly damaged by water
- 0.2% were wholly damaged by water



### Upgrades<sup>4</sup>

*'Upgrading' refers to the legal process whereby a route can have higher rights added to it, for example, a footpath becoming a bridleway.*

- 13% were identified as being suitable for upgrading to bridleway status
- 8.6% were identified as being suitable for upgrading to byway status
- 1.6% were identified as being suitable for upgrading to cycle track status



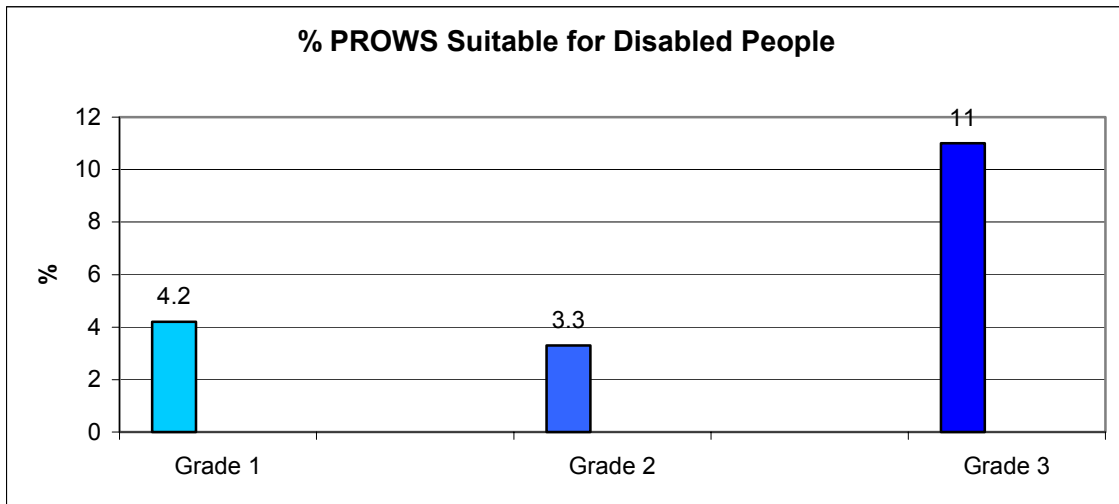
### Grades for people with limited mobility

*A grading system was used – grade 1 (smooth surface, gentle gradient and barrier-free), grade 2 (as grade 1 only slightly steeper or varied gradient) and*

<sup>4</sup> These ideas were put forward as 'Action Suggestions' by the Cumbria Lost Ways project into the ROWIP assessment / scoring methodology.

*grade 3 (varied surface, pinch stiles or non-accessible gates, with a reasonably gentle gradient, suitable for ambulant disabled people)*<sup>5</sup>.

- 4.2% were identified as being 'grade 1' (smooth surface, gentle gradient and barrier-free),
- 3.3% were identified as being 'grade 2' (as grade 1 only slightly steeper or varied gradient),
- 11% were identified as being 'grade 3' (varied surface, pinch stiles or non-accessible gates, with a reasonably gentle gradient, suitable for ambulant disabled people).



<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that this method of grading routes relies on subjective assessments being made by untrained volunteers who may not be familiar with the needs and capabilities of a wide variety of disabled and people with limited mobility.