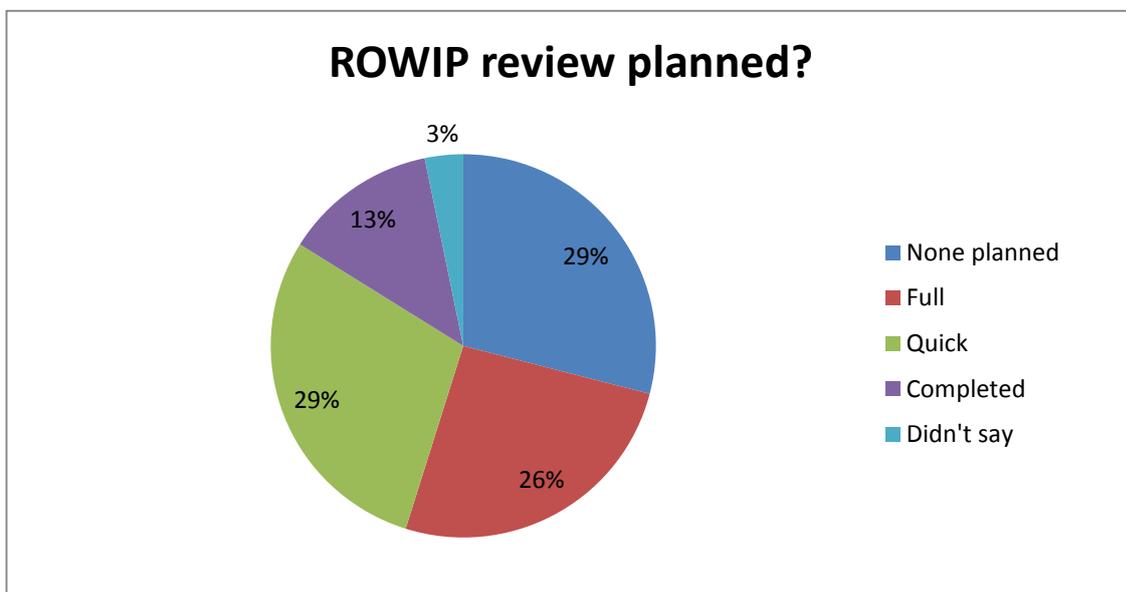


## Defra/Natural England Rights of Way Improvement Plan Questionnaire 2013:

Respondents: 31 Highways Authorities surveyed via ADEPT mailing list

**Q1: What is your local authority doing with regard to the 10 year statutory review of your ROWIP?**



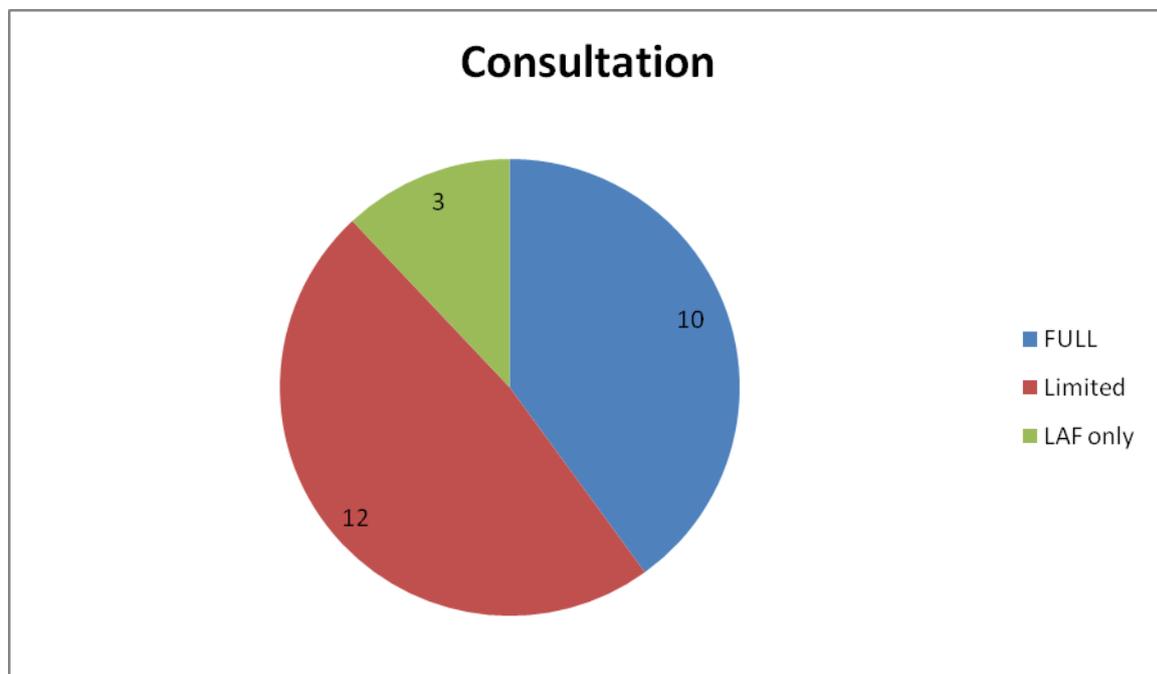
Of the 31 authorities that responded 70% were either planning a full or quick review, or had already carried one out, with 30% responding that none was planned.

19 out of 20 also responded that more funding would make them more likely to carry out a review.

Unsurprisingly there were a range of dates for planned and completed reviews up until 2018.

Quite a large percentage had no review planned but this is probably because one hadn't been planned yet rather than that there being no intention to.

## Q2 What extent will or would the ROWIP be consulted on?



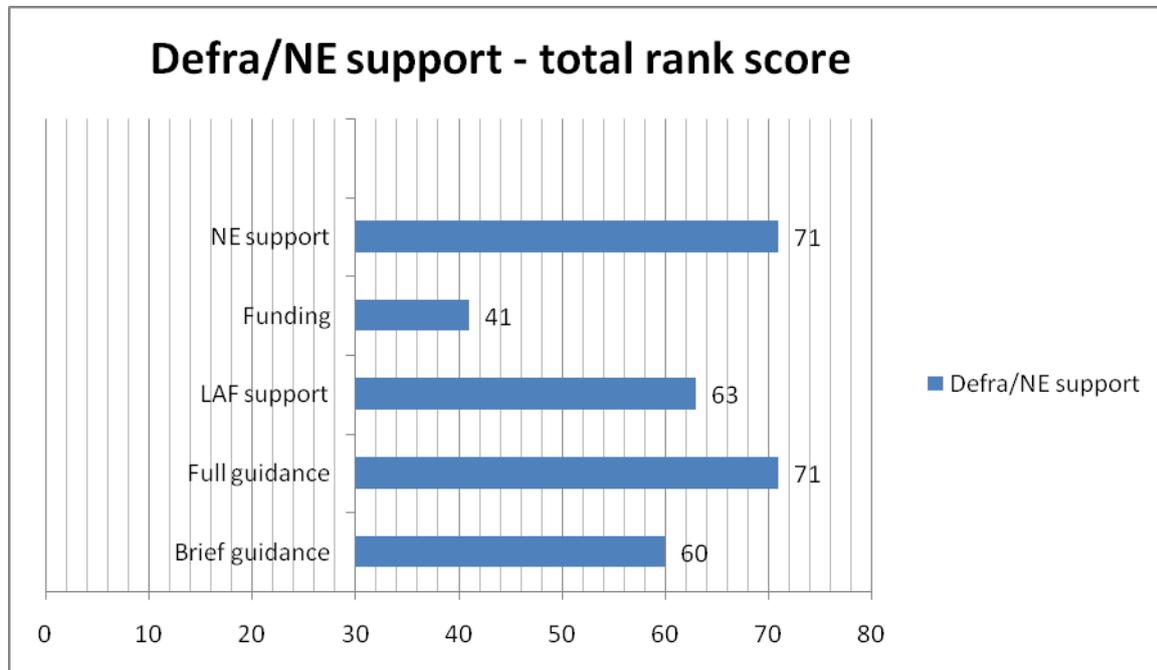
Over half of the 25 respondents to this question either carried out, or indicated they would carry out, a limited consultation i.e. LAF only and/or other selected groups.

### Q2 Comments:

*We don't currently have the staff resource to undertake annual reviews that we had originally intended following publication in 2008, and haven't since May 2009. The ROWIP is a 10 year document until 2018.,*

### Q3: What support could Defra/NE offer to help local authorities in their ROWIP Reviews?

NE staff support/ funding for reviews/ LAF support/ full guidance/ brief guidance



**NB: A lower 'score' \* indicates a higher preference.**

\*Score range derived from a 1-5 priority ranking multiplied by 31 with 31 = most popular, 155 least.

**3 HA's indicated 'do nothing'.**

Clearly additional funding would be welcome, should it become available, but support for other interventions was not strong. There may be a case for NE/Defra providing specific guidance to support ROWIP implementation e.g. on Strategic Environmental Assessments perhaps, but this would need to be identified in advance with authorities.

#### **Q3 Comments:**

*Seeing as we were one of the first Highway Authorities to produce a ROWIP (in 2006), we found there was very little guidance or best practice examples to help us with our ROWIP mid-term review. This is why, under Q3 I've highlighted the need for New Full Guidance as a priority, as this will be very useful for other Highway Authorities going through this process.*

*Would wish to see smaller authorities being encouraged to support each other and possibly join up to complete the review*

*Increase the overall importance of PROW and the ROWIP – Defra / NE websites don't do enough to promote*

*Promote compact and so accessible/digestible ROWIPs. The first round of ROWIPs tended to be verbose with case making and 'justification'. 2<sup>nd</sup> round ROWIPs should be compact accessible documents to :*

*(1) enable realistic consultation / comprehension – Members and key consultees seem to like it because it is not a 'tome' to read/comprehend/comment on*

*(2) enable realistic / comprehensible reference to for policy implication*

*(3) broaden the accessibility of the document by not presenting a 'fog' of background*

*(4) to reduce the work load in its production, publication, storage and circulation.*

*(5) to improve feasibility of integration as part of the main LTP doc. where intended*

*(6) enables a heavily distilled easily used policy document.*

*They raised the profile of RoW sections – it's the profile of the valued work that demonstrate the importance of in-tact row sections*

*Supply someone, at their cost, to carry out the task!.*

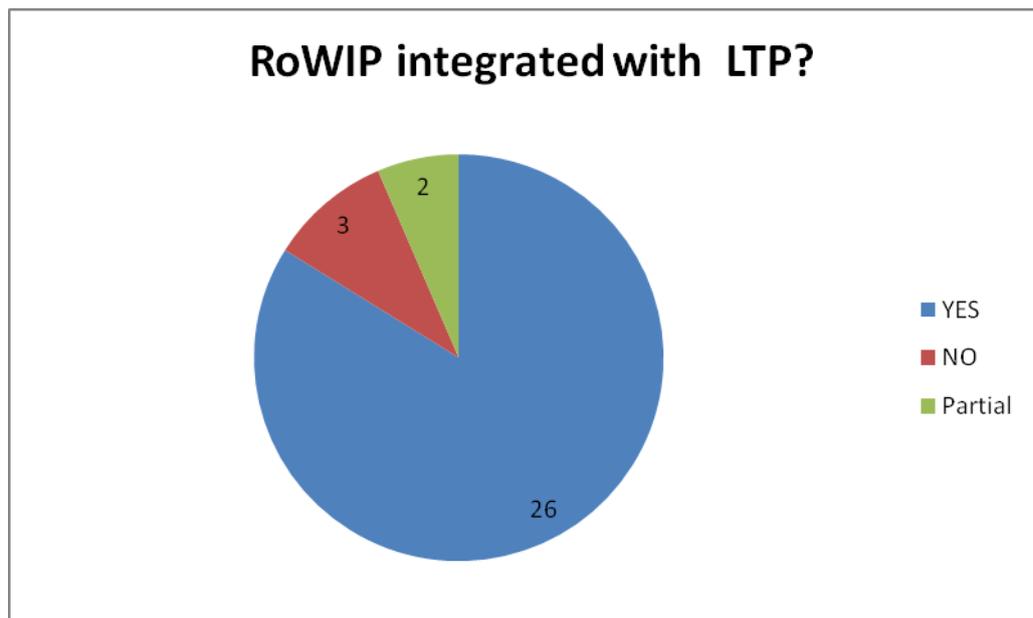
*Funding of a dedicated officer post for LAF/RoWIP work*

*We only received 30 per cent of the 2001 government settlement to local authorities because it wasn't ring-fenced*

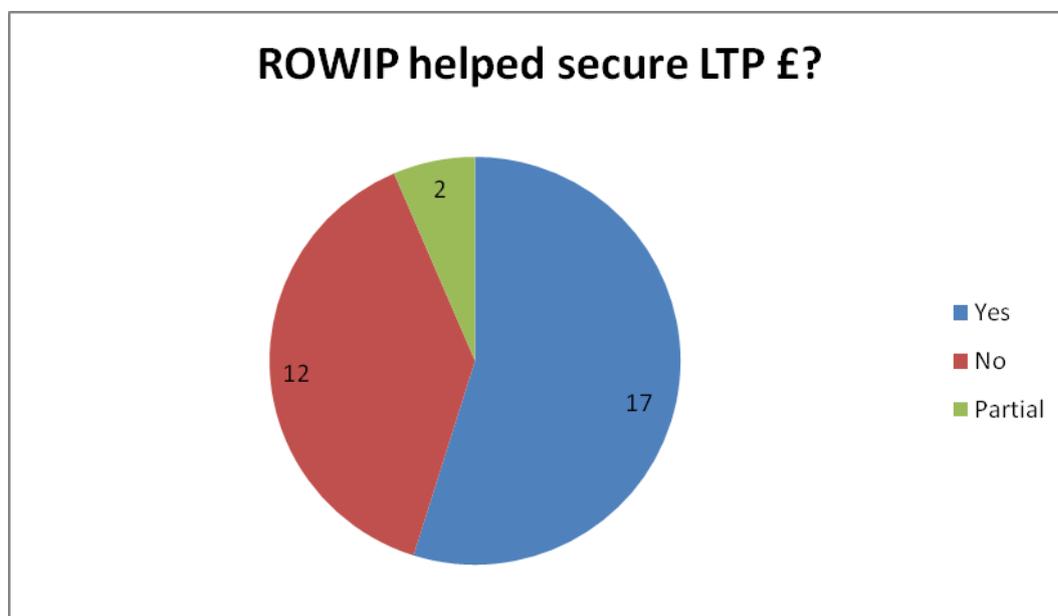
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*Change legislation to reflect current economic circumstances.*

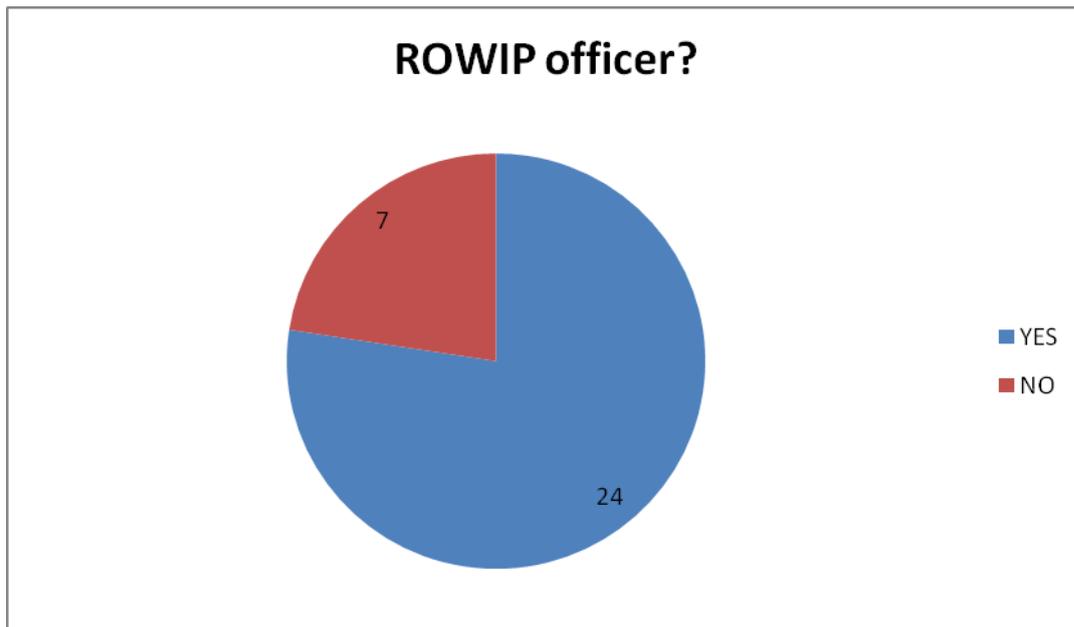
**Q4: Was your ROWIP integrated with your Local Transport Plan?**



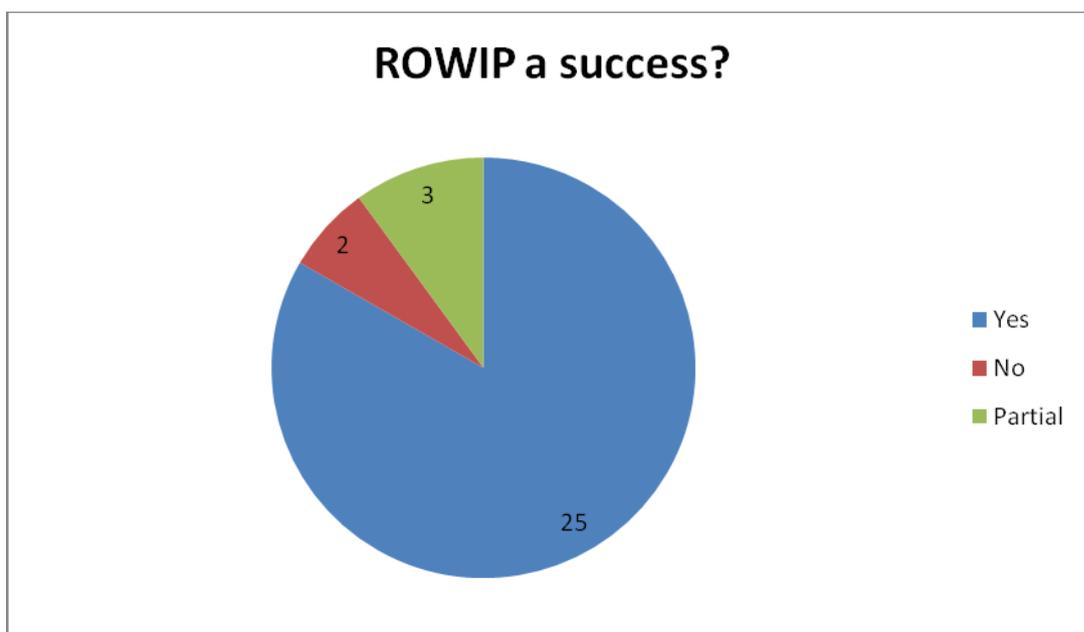
**Q5: Did your ROWIP help you obtain LTP funding?**



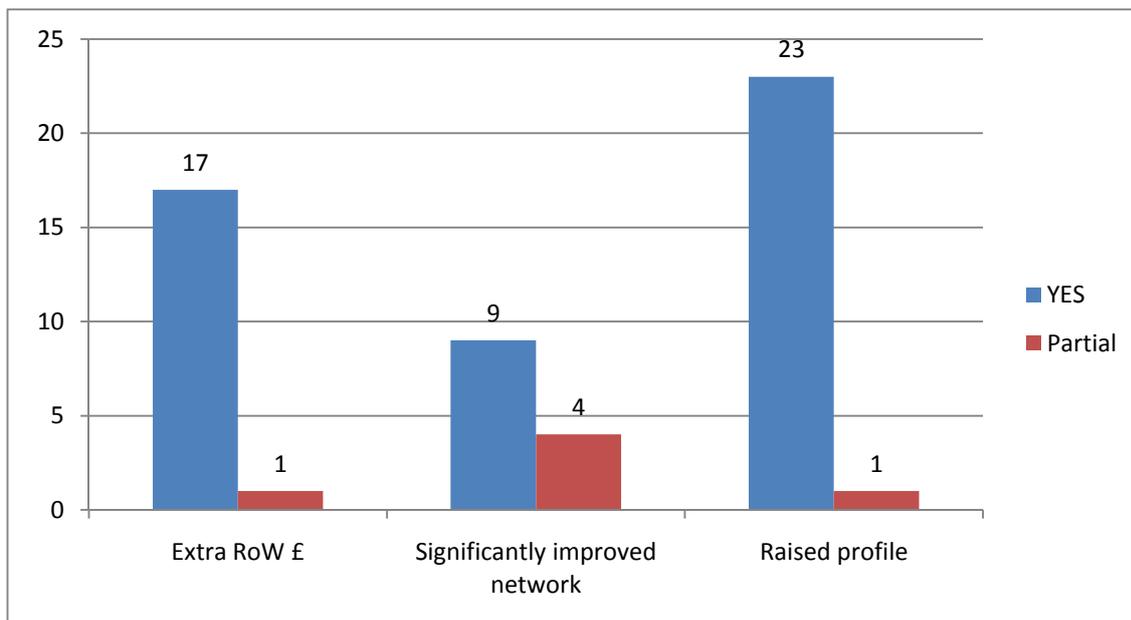
**Q6: Do you have a dedicated ROWIP officer in post?**



**Q7: Do you consider ROWIPs a success?**



## Reasons for ROWIP success:



**Extra RoW funding:** 55% thought it helped 39% did not..

**Significantly improved the network:** 42% thought it helped/partially helped, 58% didn't.

**Raised profile of RoW sections (or RoW in general):** 75% yes/partial, 25% no.

It was encouraging to see that ROWIPs were in general considered a success but there also seems to be a 'gap' between the acknowledgement that the ROWIP helped to raise the profile of rights of way (and in over half of cases that it helped secure funding) and actual network improvement. It may be that even with 'extra' funding this was not enough to make a significant impact on the network and/or it may depend on what constitutes 'significant' improvement over the day to day work of maintaining the existing network.

### Q7 comments:

*The RoWIP has proved to be a very successful document in both raising the profile of our access work and in attracting capital funding, particularly through the Local Transport Plan*

*Very limited – generally the high level aims and objectives have been embraced and are in the main the same as WSCC's PROW service aims – work to deliver against many of these aims was already being carried out before the RoWIP was published, but the RoWIP gave reassurances that these practices were appropriate. The aspirational nature of RoWIPs has created additional work that has on occasions taken resources away from actual project delivery and has created a disjoin between WSCC and West Sussex LAF to some extent. Projects are most likely to be delivered where opportunities arise (e.g. development, willing*

*landowners) rather than by chasing them. It has not been helped by having a duty to publish a RoWIP but no duty to deliver (but do understand why this is the case)*

*It provides a benchmark for our work*

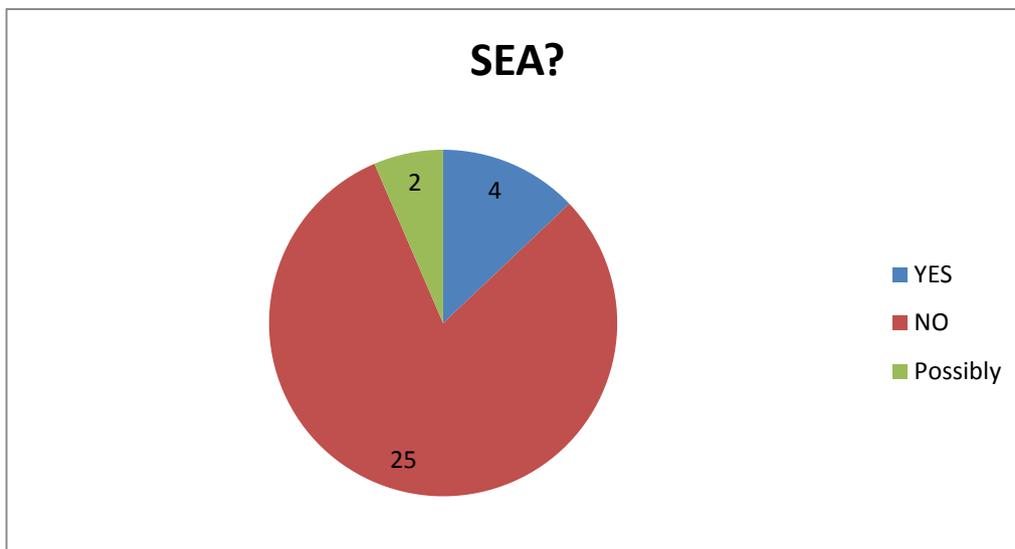
*They raised the profile of RoW sections – it's the profile of the valued work that demonstrate the importance of in-tact row sections*

*They raised the profile of RoW and provided a 'platform' for promoting associated work*

*The ROWIP action plan forms the basis of annual business planning*

*Undertaking a ROWIP in itself was worthwhile. It was good to focus minds on the direction of the Council in relation to access and ROW and was an excellent learning exercise for staff. It has been a useful document to raise the profile of ROW within the local authority, where it might otherwise get lost in the funding rounds/cuts. It is a useful reference point to look back to see how far an authority has improved (a milestone). It is also been a very useful document from which to quote as back-up advice in large and strategic planning responses and enables ROW to be set in a context with other County Council strategies. The aims of the ROWIP can therefore be promoted in other strategies. From this year we have our own internal complications with the ROW Service being split across 3 different functions and managed separately. Maintenance and enforcement work now sits within the Transport arm of the Council managed through a private company which has its own business planning processes. The ROWIP initially was an excellent means of 'setting the pace' for this team but its impact may now be offset with other priorities and cuts. It is still used strategically as described above, but the targets in all Chapters are beginning to look either out of date or not being achieved due to staff reductions. DEFRA should consider giving ROWIPs a boost by prompts to local authorities rather than simply 'reviewing' ROWIPs per se, so that central government momentum is not lost. Money is not always the answer, whereas political / strategic influence and pressure may be - but some new guidance that serves as a confidence builder would be helpful*

**Q8: Are you carrying out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as part of your ROWIP Review?**



Defra guidance on ROWIPs has indicated the need for authorities to consider a SEA when drawing up a ROWIP but this question was asked only in relation to the review. Whether a SEA is needed will largely depend on the nature of the ROWIP (i.e. prescriptive or more general), the type of improvements proposed and the presence/distribution of protected areas etc. within the ROWIP area.