

# Theme 3:

## Provide Opportunities for Outdoor Access and Recreation

Overall:

GOOD

The indicators representing this theme are:

- **Indicator 7:** % of Rights of Way that are easy to use
- **Indicator 8:** Erosion on upland paths
- **Indicator 9:** Visitor satisfaction

The percentage of rights of way that are easy to use was slightly lower in 2013 than in 2006, however there were 26km more rights of way. The number of rights of way that are easy to use has increased since 2010/2011 and this trend is expected to continue. Overall the general condition of this indicator is good.

According to upland path erosion survey work that has already taken place, the majority of paths are in good condition. The survey work is near completion and due to be published later in 2015. Some paths in the west of the Park have yet to be surveyed, but their condition is historically very good, so the general condition of upland paths is expected to remain as good.

The visitor satisfaction indicator uses the results of 2 questions from the annual Brecon Beacons Visitor Survey. The questions relate to expectation and overall perception. Generally the response is very good for both questions.

Using the three indicators to assess overall condition (Poor, Fair, Good or Excellent), the state of the park in the context of Management Plan Theme 3 is GOOD.



# Indicator 7:

## % of Rights of Way that are easy to use

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is required to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Plan, which was approved in 2007<sup>14</sup>, involves an assessment of the extent to which rights of way meet present and likely future needs of the public. This includes opportunities for walking, horse riding, cycling and other forms of open air recreation as well as looking at how accessible these activities are for people with mobility or visual impairment.

The production of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan provided the opportunity to assess the condition of the rights of way network, the resources available to improve it and progress towards a future that will offer improvements for all users. The opportunity to go walking has repeatedly been identified as a key attraction of the Brecon Beacons National Park, while the popularity of off road cycling is increasing.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan states that 'In recognising the critical dependence of the tourism industry on the accessibility of the countryside, and that the level of maintenance of individual rights of way will vary, the establishment of a network hierarchy becomes an essential next step'.

In 2012/13, 15km of rights of way were improved. The Park's public rights of way therefore saw good improvement in terms of the percentage of the network being physically easy to use.

Table ROW 1 shows the breakdown of rights of way across the Park between 2006 and 2013. It shows that in 2013 the rights of way network was longer in terms of total distance than in 2006.

in km	2006	2013
Footpaths	1,415	1,472
Bridleways	367	344
Byways	200	193
Total	1,983	2,009

Table ROW 1:  
Distance (km) of Rights of Way between 2006 and 2013

14 <http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/the-authority/planning-access-and-row/rights-of-way-improvement-plan/>

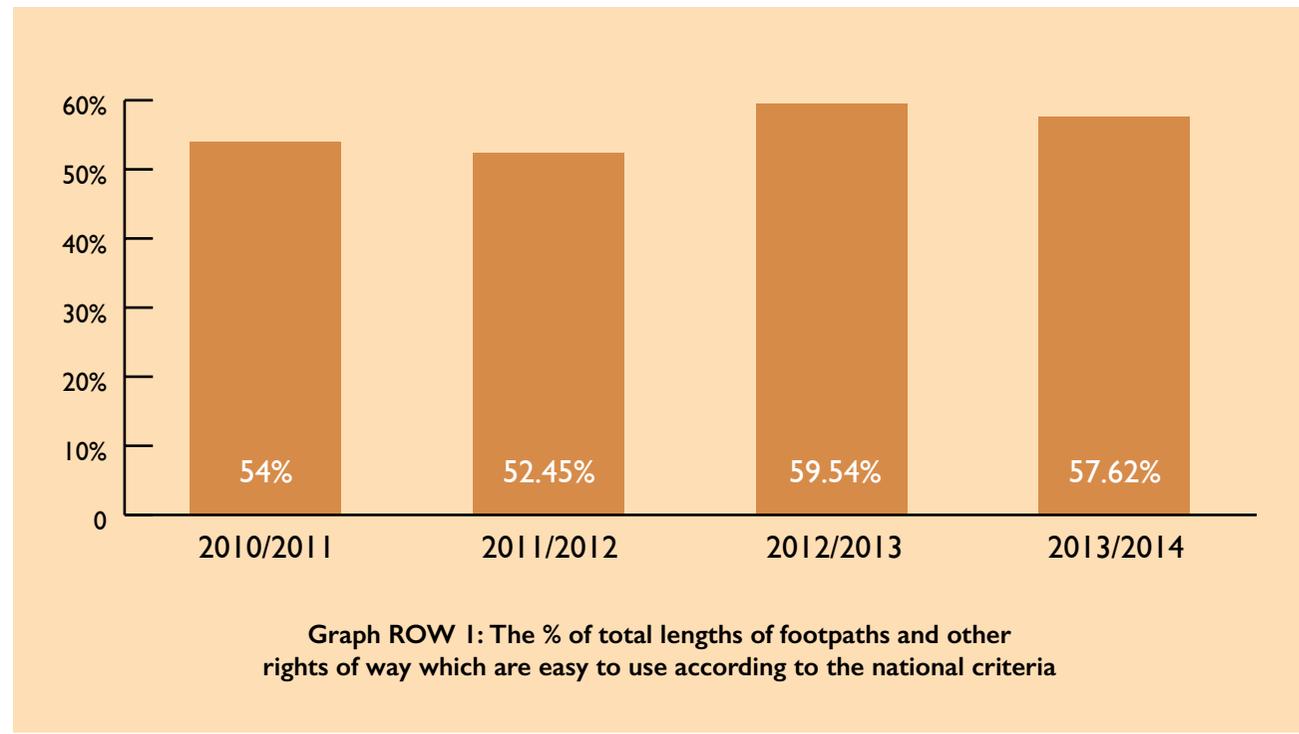




The previous State of the Park Report (2006) identified 62.2% of rights of way within the Park that were easy to use, 73.1% were open and 66.7% were signposted.

In 2013, 59.5% of rights of way were easy to use (See graph ROW I below), 85.5% were open and 81.3% were signposted. Graph ROW I shows that in 2011 54% of rights of way were easy to use. In 2012 this decreased to 52.45%.

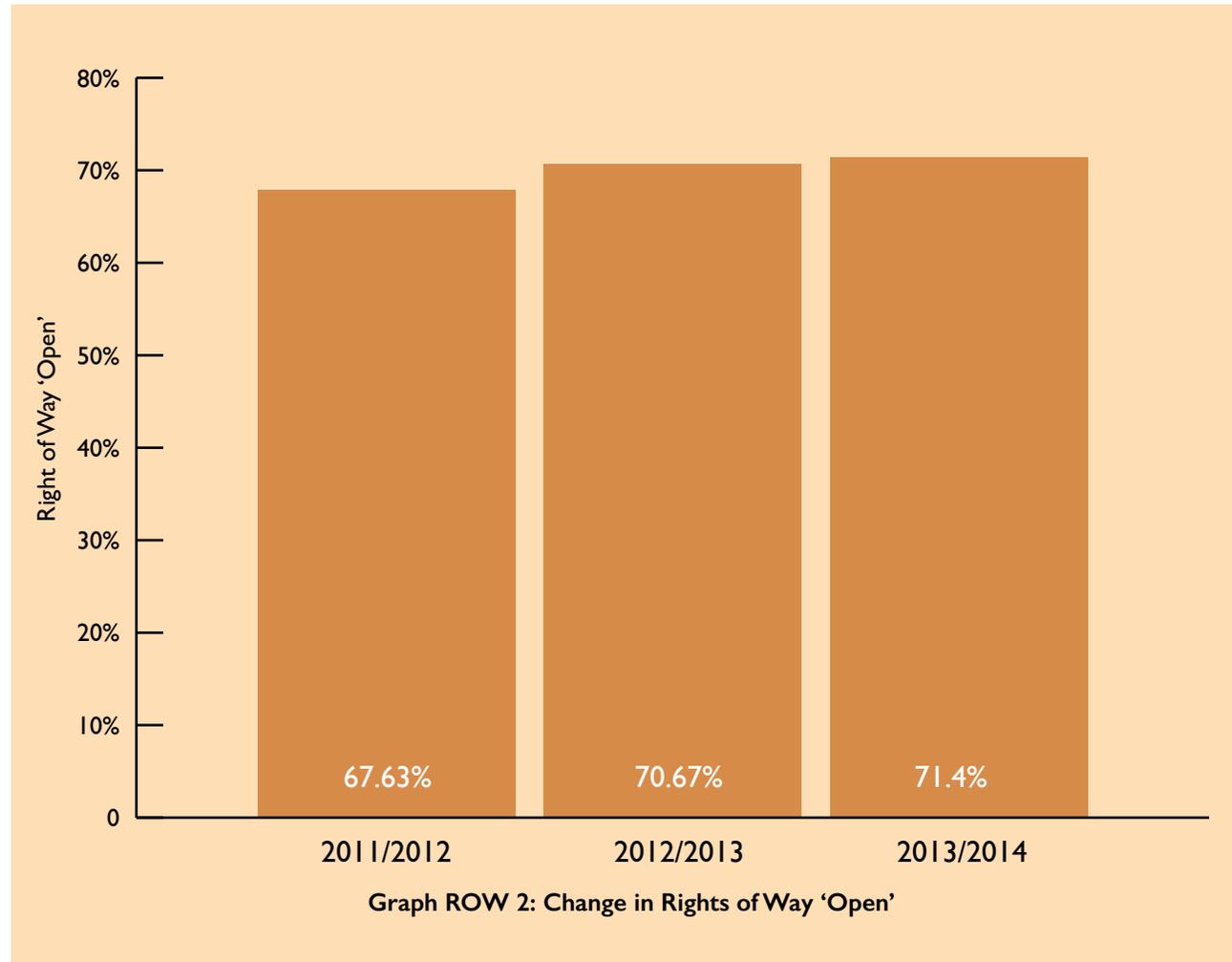
In 2013 the % of rights of way that were easy to use was 59.5%. The trend over recent years is that the condition of rights of way is improving.



Positive progress has been made over the past eight years as more rights of way are accessible now than previously. While the longer term trend suggests that there has been a decrease in the percentage of rights of way that are easy to use (from 62.2% in 2006 to 59.5% in 2013), the recent trend since 2011 suggests the rights of way network is steadily improving as shown in graph ROW I. It is worth noting that there is also a higher total number in kilometres of rights of way today than in 2006.

Following a recent scrutiny study, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority agreed to also prepare a figure based on a more flexible and realistic set of criteria.

The figures below in Graph ROW 2 are derived from the strict national criteria but with a few measures omitted to provide a more realistic view of the condition of the network. The new figure shows that rights of way which are 'open' within the park in 2013/2014 is 71.4%. Graph ROW2 below shows how this figure has improved from 67.3% in 2011/12.

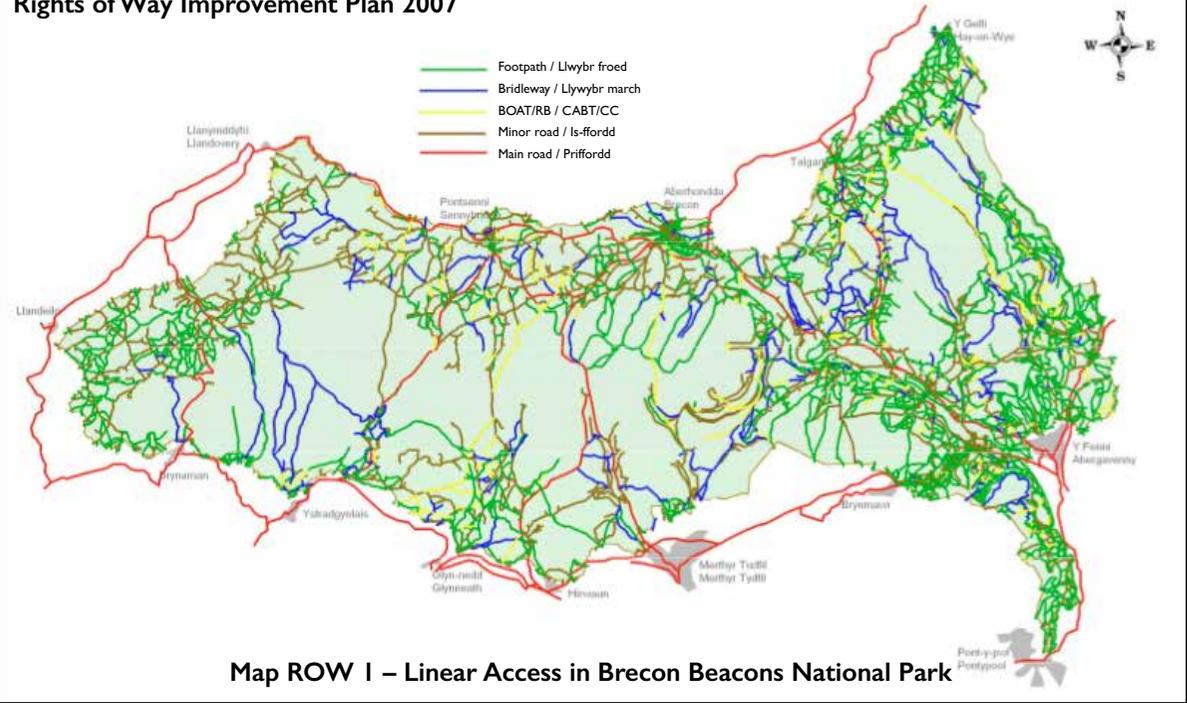


The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 introduced a new right for people to walk over areas of open countryside and registered common land in Wales and England. Maps ROW 1 and ROW 2 identify the linear access routes within the park (ROW 1) and the open area access (ROW 2) within the park (2007 Rights of Way Improvement Plan).

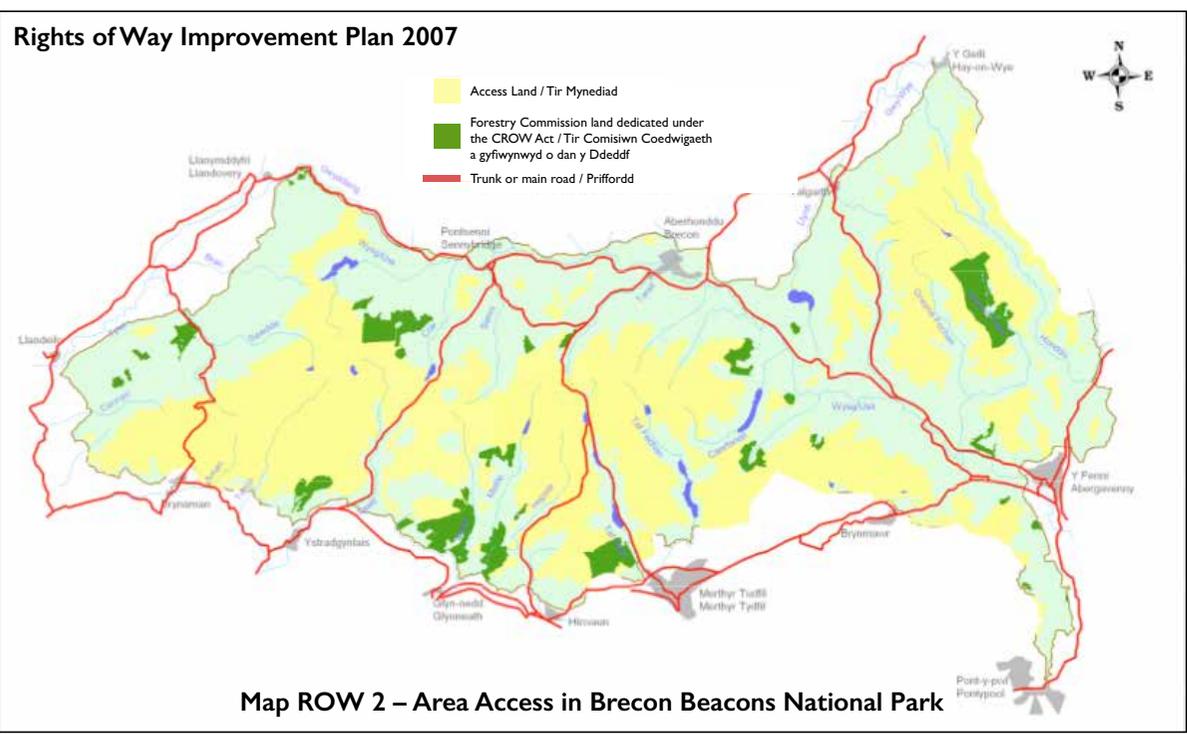




Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007



Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007



# Indicator 8:

## Erosion on Upland Paths

A number of path repair projects have been completed over the past 10 years designed to minimise erosion to paths in the uplands. However, upland path erosion in the National Park remains a significant problem.

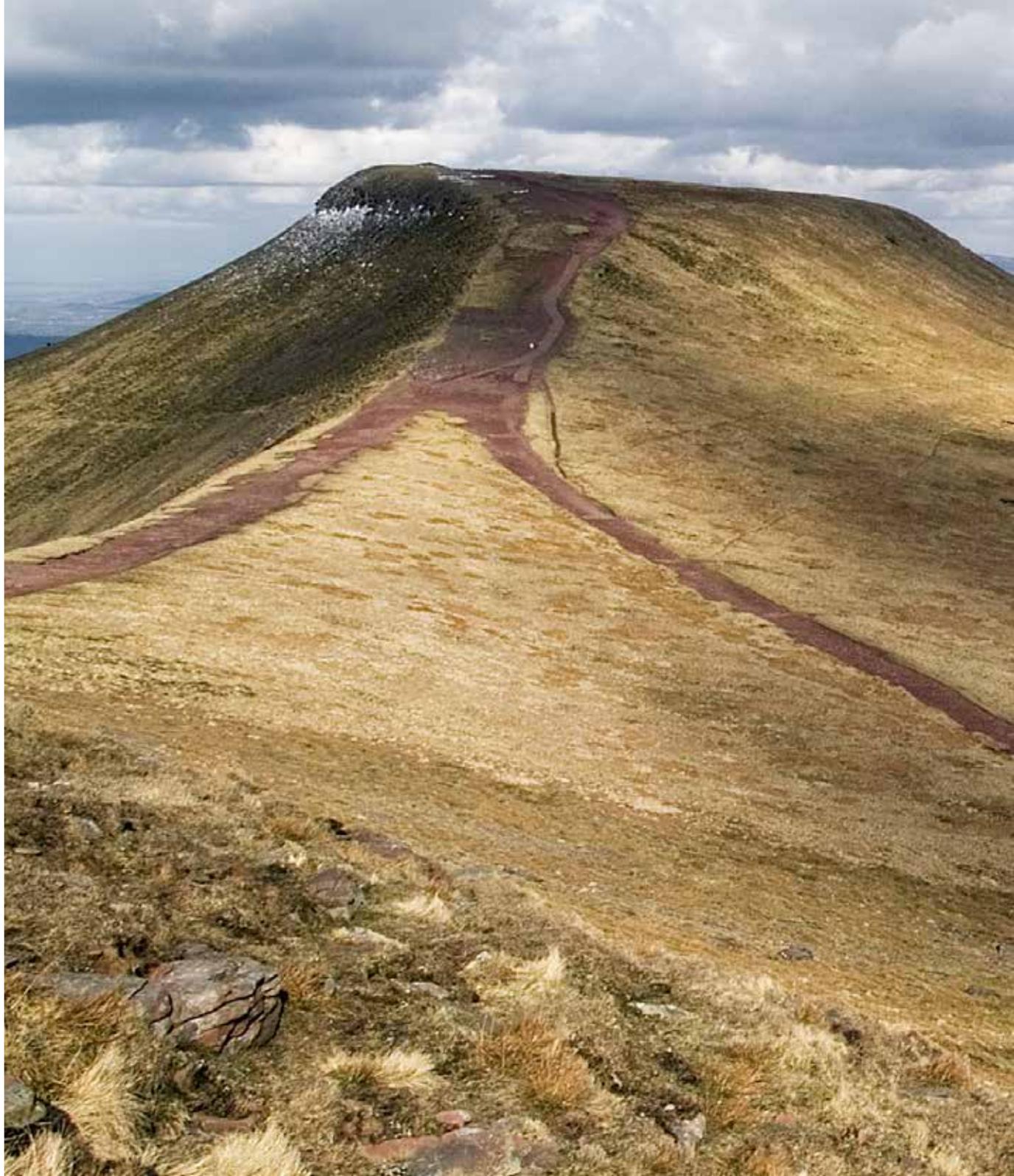
In 2006, the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority carried out a condition survey of 155km of mountain paths throughout the National Park. The aim of the survey was to collect impartial information about path condition to inform a strategy intended to address and manage upland erosion. Copies of the Upland Erosion Strategy which was produced can be downloaded from the National Park website.

<http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/environment/planning-access-and-row/upland-path-erosion/>

A new review of upland erosion is currently underway (2014) and the results will be published in future iterations of this report. The review will include total lengths of pathways in the categories identified below. Each upland path is given an erosion score and categorised using the Scottish National Heritage Criteria for reviewing upland erosion on paths, as follows:

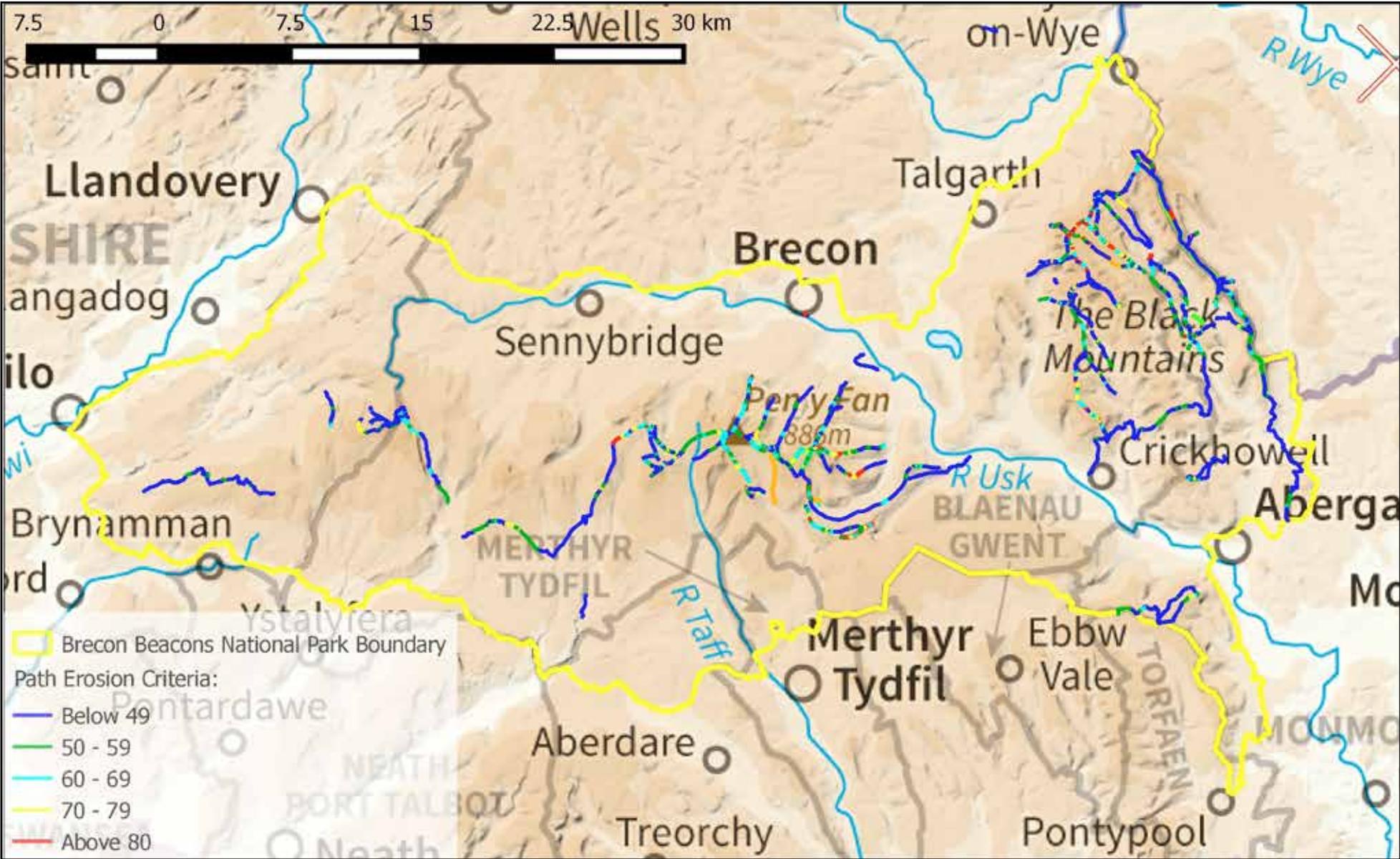
- >80 – Red
- 70-79 – Yellow
- 60-69 – Light blue
- 50-59 – Light Green
- <50 – Blue

Where a path is categorised as either red or yellow, this indicates that repair work is required. Any other score indicates that the path is in at least an acceptable condition and is not a priority for repair.





Map UEI below shows the extent of the work that has already been undertaken.



Map UEI: Upland Erosion Review 2014 (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority)

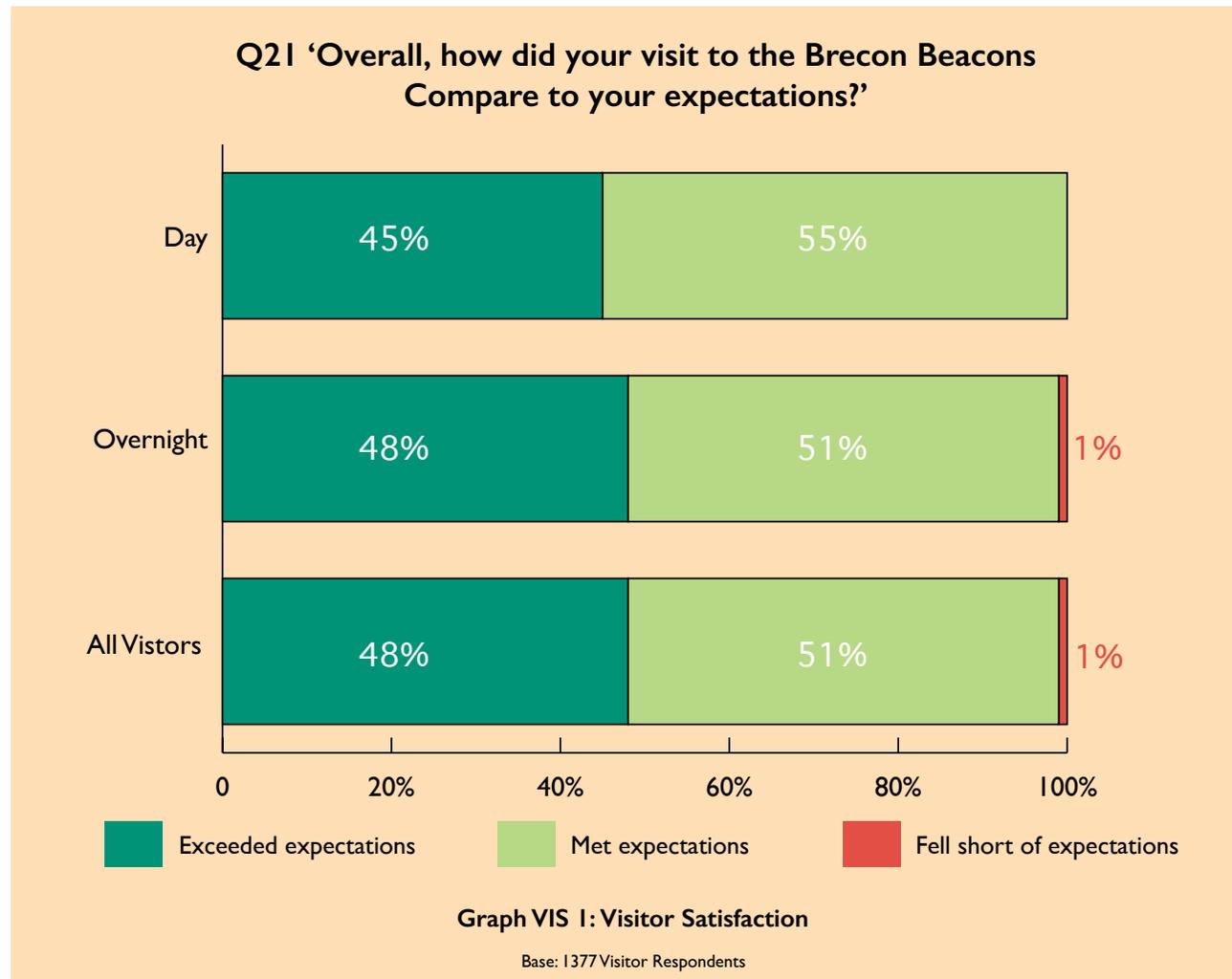


# Indicator 9:

## Visitor Satisfaction

In November 2013, the Brecon Beacons Marketing and Coordination Group published the results of the annual Brecon Beacons Visitor Survey. Further information on the Visitor Survey can be found here. <http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/communities/tourism-new/tourism-facts-and-figures-1/>

Question 21 of the Visitor Survey asked respondents 'Overall, how did your visit to the Brecon Beacons compare to your expectations?' The results to this question can be seen in Graph VIS 1.



© Nigel Forster - Boating on the canal

Overall, the visit experience is good and almost half (48%) of visitors said it exceeded their expectations and 51% said it met them. Just 1% said that their experience fell short of expectations. This year's Visit Wales visitor survey shows similar results for Wales as a whole (49% exceeded and 49% met expectations). There is little variation amongst day and overnight visitors.

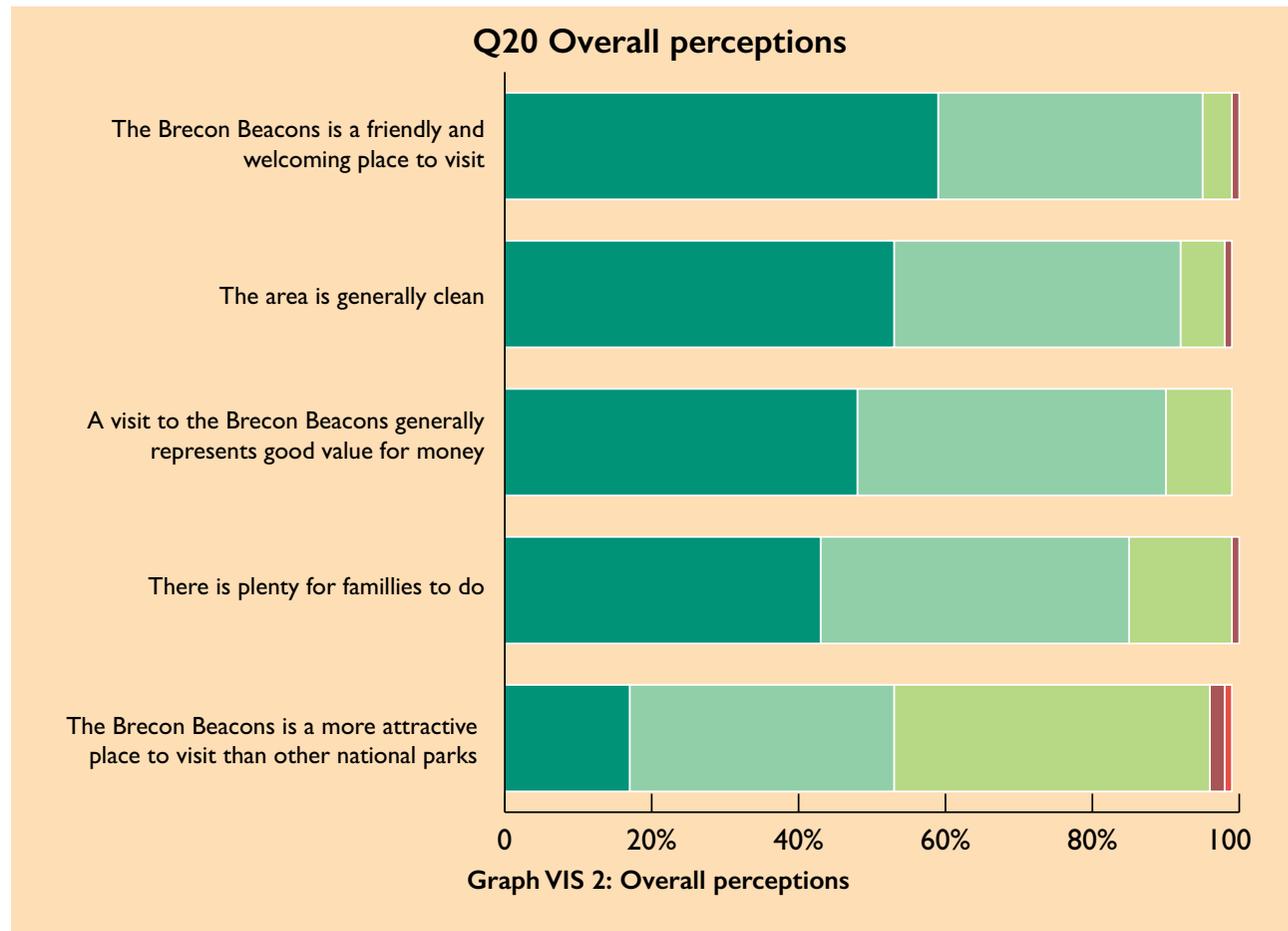
The highest ratings come from new visitors 56% of which say the visit exceeded their expectations. This is encouraging for potential future return visits. Visitors from some areas are slightly more impressed by the area than others. Over half of the visitors coming from London & South East (53%) and overseas (52%) said that expectations were exceeded<sup>15</sup>. Question 20 of the Visitor Survey related to overall perceptions of visitors to the park. The results can be seen in Graph VIS 2.

The impressions visitors have of a destination influence potential recommendations to family, friends and colleagues. To gauge how the Brecon Beacons is perceived, respondents were asked about a number of aspects of their visit including value for money, friendliness and welcome, availability of family activities, cleanliness and attractiveness as a national park.

Perceptions of the area are good overall, with the best ratings for the 'welcome' visitors receive (95% positive) and cleanliness (92%). Negative opinions are few and far between and mainly relate to attractiveness compared to other national parks (3% negative).

Over half (52%) of those travelling in family groups with children 'strongly agreed' that there is plenty for families to do with a further 39% 'slightly agreeing' (91% positive). Just 1% disagreed and the remaining 8% had no strong opinion either way. These ratings are better than average where 85% slightly or strongly agree - other groups have more neutral responses possibly reflecting lack of experience of these types of activities. However, it is encouraging that those with the most relevant experience of family activities give a positive response.

Cleanliness in the area is generally good with only a few respondents suggesting otherwise but some visitor groups are more positive than others. Almost six in ten new visitors (59%) strongly agree that the area is generally clean compared with 53% overall and just under half of



lapsed visitors (49%). Visitors from Wales and London & South East are most positive about the cleanliness of the area (60% and 57% respectively strongly agree).

Almost all visitors feel that the Brecon Beacons is a friendly and welcoming place to visit (95%) and almost six in ten (59%) strongly agree.

There are slight variations by location with visitors from London & South East feeling most welcome (63% 'strongly agree') compared to those from Wales (60%), South West/M4 corridor (57%), overseas (58%) and other areas of England/Scotland slightly lower (56%). Lapsed visitors are a little less enthusiastic about the welcome they received (53% strongly agree).



<sup>15</sup> <http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/the-authority/working-in-partnership/tourism-new/Visitor%20Satisfaction%20Surveys/brecon-beacons-visitor-survey-2013>