

Open Report on behalf of the Executive Director for Communities

Report to:	South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum
Date:	25 January 2012
Subject:	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2) – Lincolnshire County Council

Summary:

A report outlining the progress made in the preparation of the Lincolnshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2

Recommendation(s):

- i) That the forum notes the contents of the report.
- ii) That the forum considers the questions included in the report and provides a formal response.

1. Background

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) placed a statutory duty on Highway Authorities to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

The first Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan was published in April 2007. The plan is a strategic document which sets out how the County Council intends to improve the management, provision and promotion of the County's public rights of way network.

The County Council has now started to prepare the second ROWIP. A great deal has changed since the publication of the first ROWIP and ROWIP2 will have to take account of significant changes in National policy and the current economic climate.

Unfortunately limited resources will prevent the County Council from undertaking a full round of public consultation or a detailed network assessment, however, the principles regarding public need which underpinned the first RoWIP, and the network assessment made at that time, are all still considered to be relevant.

2. Summary

Legislative Background

Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of way Act 2000 requires every council to prepare and publish a ROWIP. The plan must make an assessment of:

- the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public
- the opportunities provided by local ROWs for exercise, open air recreation and enjoyment of the area
- the accessibility of local ROWs to those who are blind or partially sighted or who have other mobility problems, and
- such other matters as Secretary of State may direct.

The ROWIP should also include a Statement of Actions that the County Council proposes to take in the management and improvement of the rights of way network.

The Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2012

The first Lincolnshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan was published in April 2007 and runs until 2012.

The ROWIP is being implemented under four themes, each with a strategic aim and supporting the wider social objectives of the County Council including the aims of the LTP2:

- Sustainable Transport – *Strategic Aim to increase the use of the network for sustainable transport and utility trips*
- Health and Well-being – *Strategic Aim to make it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily lives and lead healthier lifestyles*
- Rural Economy and Tourism – *Strategic Aim to support local businesses and tourism through access improvements*
- Social Issues – *Strategic Aim to enable more people to enjoy walking and riding*

Since the publication of the first ROWIP, we have implemented as much of the Statement of Action as possible. A final report will be produced in the coming weeks which will explore the achievements against the Statement of Action.

In summary, ROWIP implementation has resulted in;

- improvements to the management of the PRow network,
- improved accessibility to the PRow network and other countryside access sites,
- extensive targeted surface improvements to over 30 paths in addition to further localised schemes undertaken by the divisions,
- policy development has enabled more efficient ways of working,
- the development of new and existing trails,
- over 50 promotional leaflets published,

- the development of on-line information,
- the publication of a countryside education pack for schools and youth groups,
- increased opportunities for partnership working

The Second Lincolnshire ROWIP, the first step...

With the implementation of the first ROWIP now drawing to a close attention is turning to the second ROWIP. A great deal has changed since the publication of the first ROWIP and ROWIP 2 will have to take account of significant changes in National policy and the current economic climate.

Unfortunately limited resources will prevent the County Council from undertaking a full round of public consultation or a detailed network assessment however the principles regarding public need which underpinned the first RoWIP, and the network assessment made at that time are all still considered to be relevant.

The initial step in the process is to establish how successful the current ROWIP has been. The County Council would welcome your response to the following questions;

- 1) Do you feel that the Statements of Action contained in the first ROWIP were sufficient?
- 2) What areas of the ROWIP do you feel the County Council has-
 - a) Delivered well
 - b) Failed to deliver or didn't completely deliver
- 3) What areas do you feel should be considered for the next ROWIP?

ROWIP 2 will have an increased emphasis on community involvement and partnership work as a result of our decreased capability to deliver the plan on our own.

Whilst ROWIP2 will consider the whole PRow and countryside access network, LCC will focus on the areas of the county which are covered by other green infrastructure plans and strategies e.g. Coastal Country park, Wash Green Infrastructure Plan or the Witham Valley Country Park.

Concentrating efforts in defined areas will enable the countryside access network to be developed and improved within a strategic framework and enable improvements which have a proven evidence base to be prioritised. This approach will also enable a more efficient use of resources and increase the opportunities for gaining funding.

3. Consultation

Scrutiny Comments

n/a

Executive Councillor Comments

n/a

Local Member Comments

n/a

Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

N/a

5. Background papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Andy Savage - Senior Countryside Access Officer, who can be contacted on 01522 782070 or andrew.savage@lincolnshire.gov.uk