

Open Report on behalf of Rutland County Council

Report to:	South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum
Date:	12 October 2011
Subject:	Rights of Way Improvement Plan Update – Rutland County Council

Summary:

This report explains the proposed format and approach to be taken in developing the second Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rutland.

Recommendation(s):

That the report be noted.

1. Background

Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the Act) requires local highway authorities to prepare and publish plans, known as Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs), setting out their proposals for the management and improvement of the local rights of way network. The first Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rutland was published by the County Council in October 2007 and covered a five year period ending in October 2012.

Guidance from the Department for Transport in 2004 made a case for the progressive incorporation of rights of way planning into local transport planning over the course of preparing the second Local Transport Plan (LTP). The stated aims of integrating the two plans are to:

- Clearly establish the shared aims and establish a definite link between ROWIPs and LTPs;
- ensure that, as public highways, rights of way are embraced by the LTP process and recognised in LTPs as a key ingredient in the development of an integrated transport network that provides choice in a variety of transport modes;
- recognise the invaluable role rights of way can play in assisting LTPs to achieve the shared priority and wider quality of life objectives;
- strengthen and facilitate the long term sustainability of rights of way
- in the longer term, reduce the quantity of plans produced by an authority

In 2009 the Department for Transport issued guidance to highway authorities in relation to Local Transport Plan 3. This document gave recognition to the increasing role of active travel solutions such as walking and cycling in modern transport systems and how they can contribute to the achievement of the national transport goals.

Also published in 2009 was 'LTP and ROWIP Integration: A Good Practice Note' by Natural England. Their aim is to assist local authorities in being clearer on how the two documents relate to each other – their common themes, objectives and how the new LTP flexibilities enable pragmatic integration measures in the new plans and projects.

2. Summary

In 2011 the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for Rutland was published, covering the period 2011 to 2026. It is written in three parts; the strategy, the evidence base and the implementation plan. The strategy covers a 15 year period and sets out our transport vision for Rutland but will be 'refreshed' should any significant changes to national/local policy occur. The implementation plan covers 3 year periods over the life of the strategy and contains the programme of work we propose to carry out.

It is proposed that the format of the second Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rutland follows that used in Local Transport Plan 3. By this we mean that it will contain a core long term strategy and much shorter term implementation plans.

We are proposing that the document is structured around the seven strategic aims, which resulted from a consultation exercise conducted by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) whilst writing the Sustainable Community Strategy and have directed our work ever since. The strategic aims are as follows:

- Maintaining high levels employment and a thriving economy
- Improving access to services
- Creating a safer community
- Protecting the rural environment
- Promoting good health and wellbeing
- Increasing our cultural, sport and recreational offer
- Creating a brighter future for all

Throughout October and November the Strategic Management Team will be briefing staff and attempting to embed our corporate priorities and a new set of core values. As we develop the second rights of way improvement plan we will coordinate our work with the LTP team to ensure the effects of these changes are handled consistently across both documents.

The requirement to produce ROWIPs was introduced by the previous (outgoing) labour government. The new coalition government is yet to issue any specific guidance on this matter, so we are still working under the existing framework of legislation and statutory guidance.

Since the election the government's focus on reducing the national deficit has had a serious impact on the funding received by local authorities and in turn on the funding that will be available for transport over the coming years. This must be reflected in any plans for the management and improvement of transport networks.

The original guidance encouraged highway authorities to be aspirational and ambitious in identifying potential improvement to the network so we cast our net wide when considering ways to improve the network whilst recognising that it

would not be possible to implement them all immediately. However, in this time of austerity we don't want to raise unreasonable expectations.

Our second ROWIP should focus on making the most out of what we have and finding more efficient ways to work. This will involve a light touch review of the existing document and a rationalisation of the action plan. The revised document will focus more on our statutory duties and how by fulfilling them we can contribute to other County Council aims and priorities.

The next stage in the development of the plan will be to take a look at the Action Plan contained in the original document and apply some rationalisation. We are seeking to retain what worked well; particularly those actions that have improved the network whilst also contributing towards helping the Council to meet its strategic aims / core values. Input will be sought from key stakeholders and Local Access Forum members who will be consulted regularly throughout the process.

3. Consultation

a) Scrutiny Comments

n/a

b) Executive Councillor Comments

n/a

c) Local Member Comments

n/a

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Background papers

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

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