

ROW IMPROVEMENT PLANS (ROWIPs)

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 introduced a duty for all local highway authorities to prepare a ROWIP by November 2007.

POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

The value of public ROWs for walking, cycling and horse riding and as a means of sustainable travel as an alternative to the car is well recognised.

The purpose of the ROWIP is to ensure that ROWs networks meet the needs of all our communities and will continue to do so.

They will take into account the opportunities ROWs provide for exercise and recreation; the role of ROWs, as part of the transport network, in achieving the priorities of the LTP; and the contribution of ROWs to the achievement of the West Yorkshire district authorities' corporate objectives and the Government's Rural Strategy.

The key common objectives of all the ROWIPs will be to:

- protect, improve and extend the ROW networks as an important means of access to the countryside for recreation and for health;
- enhance opportunities for safe and sustainable travel, both for recreation and for access to work, school and services;
- improve accessibility of ROWs for all members of our communities and provide appropriate publicity;
- ensure that the condition of the ROWs network enhances the appearance and amenity of the natural and built environment and our local heritage; and
- ensure that the ROWs network contributes to the enhancement of economic opportunities.

PROGRESS REPORTS

It is a requirement that each district authority has to provide a report on progress made by in developing a ROWIP.

The following pages contain the reports from each of the district authorities.

The progress reports are followed a section on how the ROWs contribute to the shared priorities and LTP objectives.

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City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council - Progress Report 31 December 2005

The consultation is now finished. Various mechanisms for consultation have been used:

- ‘Speakout Panel’ –This is a panel of local people, making up a representative sample of the district, who receive and complete questionnaires sent out by the Council. We asked a series of questions about people’s use and priorities for ROWs.
- A simple statement about ROWIPs telling people what it is about and inviting involvement was written. This was produced as a flyer and over 10,000 copies were distributed. The flyer was sent out to an extensive list of people, which included our usual consultees, landowners, horse riding establishments, Parish, Town and Community Councils in the district and approx. 800 special interest groups.
- Copies of this flyer were made available in local libraries, Tourist Information Centres and sent out or made available via the Neighbourhood Forums meetings.
- The flyer was also posted on our website with a postal address and a dedicated email address for submission of initial responses and ideas. A link to this was put on the main Council homepage as ‘news’. We also set up an electronic questionnaire using the same questions as were posed by the ‘Speak Out’ panel.
- An all user email was sent out to all employees of Bradford Council (who have access to email) and also to all Ward Councillors.
- We held a stand at Bingley and Keighley Agricultural Fairs and asked people to fill in paper copies of the questionnaire and make any other comments they wished to make.

- We also asked for volunteers for Focus Groups. These groups were run at the end of February/beginning of March. Despite poor weather they were well attended and provided a lively exchange of ideas and suggestions which will be most useful.
- One aspect of research we still need to do is some analysis relating to missing links and other map based work and how the backlog of Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) claims and outstanding map anomalies could contribute.
- We are intending on having a draft ROWIP written later this year and intend to have it ready for the first round of consultation by the autumn.

From these various exercises, certain key themes have emerged:

- The most important issues for our consultees seems to be the maintenance and improvement of existing local ROWs, there is a requirement for paths close to where people live to be clean, open and signposted and way-marked. People want good, helpful information about where they can go and what they can do.
- Overall, the interlinked nature of ROWs and issues like health, transport and the environment was recognised and it was felt that more could be achieved by working in partnership with other agencies and with local people and activists.
- Key ‘missing links’ and major problems with the network such as poor road crossings and lack of river crossings were mentioned, but overall there was less focus on creating new routes and more interest in using and protecting existing ones.

There is a significant amount of latent demand for ROWs that could be unlocked and met with the right approach and resources.

An initial draft ROWIP has been prepared and gone out to the West Yorkshire Pennine Local Access Forum (LAF) and our own Rights of Way Forum. The draft plan should be ready to go out for widespread consultation in March 2006.

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council - Progress Report 31 December 2005

Reference has been made to many existing national, regional and local strategic documents. These indicate the importance of ROWs as part of our heritage, the environment, transport routes and a major recreational resource, making a contribution to the prosperity of the local economy through tourism. ROWs are important to the health of the nation in terms of road safety, congestion and pollution, providing a facility for exercise and its associated benefits for heart disease, obesity and mental health.

The importance as a means of transport is highlighted by the creation of the ROWs Task Group, during the preparation of LTP2, resulting in a joint strategic statement for all five West Yorkshire district authorities.

The existing level of provision for access to the countryside, including parks, open spaces, access land, ROWs and other paths available to the public across the borough has been researched and proven to be extensive.

Wide consultation has taken place based primarily on a paper or email questionnaire.

This was sent out to an extensive list of people, which included our usual consultees on ROWs matters, parish and town councils, landowners, horse riding establishments and other tourism and recreation-based businesses and many special interest groups.

Copies were made available in local libraries and tourist information centres and were sent out or made available to a large number of interested individuals. Copies were also available at our stand at Halifax and Todmorden Agricultural Shows, which raised awareness of the ROWIP as well as open access. Talks have been given to community groups, equestrian and farmers' groups.

Returned questionnaires are now being quantitatively analysed. These will be used alongside the results from a series of questions to the "Talk Back" panel, a representative group of local people that the council uses for consultation on a whole range of issues. The findings will indicate present level and type of existing use, likely areas of demand and needs of the public, along with specific ideas, recommendations for improvements and existing examples of good practice.

From the initial analysis, it has been identified that the response from the South Asian ethnic minorities is lower than we would like in order for it to provide a representative sample. Other methods of contact are being initiated, such as the use of specific focus groups formed from various community groups.

Some quick wins are underway, including additional signage and way marking. Work with "Safer Routes to School" on permissive cycleways at three schools across the borough is being part funded by Sustrans. Up-grading of a footpath to a cycletrack under the Cycle Tracks Act 1984, will help completion of the Hebble Trail Cycleway.

Work is in progress on other community projects, for example, the control of motor bikes on the bridleway and other open spaces around the housing estate in Mixenden. The suggestion of an "adopt a path" scheme for local user and community groups has solicited wide interest.

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Kirklees Metropolitan Council - Progress Report 31 December 2005

Consultation on the Plan

We have decided to adopt a two-stage process of consultation in producing our ROWIP:

- Stage 1 - We have undertaken consultation on the Outline Strategy for the ROWIP, and this initial process has finished. The results of this consultation will provide the framework for the work that we undertake at Stage 2.
- Stage 2 – We will produce a more detailed action and implementation plan by November 2007, which will reflect the needs of localities within Kirklees. We will work with existing bodies and organisations during this process, although it may be necessary to establish separate focus groups on specific issues. We will utilise the good links that we already have with a range of organisations, many of whom attend the Kirklees Public ROWs Forum. We will also involve West Yorkshire Pennine LAF, Area Committees and Town and Parish Councils.

We will also ensure that this work links to other Council Strategies.

Progress to date

Our consultation process so far has involved the following:

- Officers have attended a range of meetings of user and interest groups, representative bodies, and colleagues within the Council, to establish what issues they see as important in the improvement and development of the ROWs network.
- We have also utilised the Kirklees Talkback Panel, which is made up of a representative group of local people, who receive and complete questionnaires sent out by the Council. We asked a set of focused questions to establish current levels of usage, and what people see as key priorities for improvement.

Future Work

We aim to publish the Outline Strategy by the end of March 2006 and we will circulate this for comment to interested parties.

Work will then commence on assessing how the key issues identified affect the network as whole, as well as how they relate to particular localities.

Leeds City Council - Progress Report 31 December 2005

- 1) The ROWs Development Officer had already been actively working on strategic improvements to the ROWs network in Leeds since originally appointed in 1988. In March 2005 the new duty imposed by section 60 of the CROW Act, 2000 to prepare and publish a ROWIP, was formally included in the Development Officer's job description.
- 2) The Development Officer has attended several ROWIP training courses and workshops.
- 3) An informal assessment of the adequacy of the Definitive Path network in Leeds in order to identify any gaps, inconsistencies or opportunities has previously been carried out by the Development Officer but will be updated and formalised during 2005/6 as part of the ongoing ROWIP investigation work.
- 4) Regular reports on the progress of the ROWIP in Leeds have been given to the Leeds LAF and constructive comments received have been used to guide the work of the Development Officer.
- 5) A draft timetable for investigating and compiling the ROWIP in Leeds has been prepared and approved by the Leeds LAF.
- 6) A questionnaire survey has been devised with the assistance of the Leeds LAF which has been carried out in the form of face to face interviews with the public during 2005. A second round of questionnaire surveys will be distributed to 'Path User' and 'Friends of' Group representatives during early 2006 with analysis of the results of both surveys being carried out during spring 2006. The responses received will then be used to formulate much of the assessment of Public ROW use and demand in Leeds as required by the CROW Act, 2000.
- 7) Leeds has actively contributed to and agreed a joint West Yorkshire LTP high level policy and objective statement for

improving the ROWs network and this has also been reported to the Leeds LAF.

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City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council - Progress Report 31 December 2005

Include a high level statement of policy and objectives for improving the ROW network

- An LTP policy statement has been agreed with partner West Yorkshire district authorities (Kirklees, Calderdale, Leeds, and Bradford).

Identify the stage that the authority has reached in preparing their ROWIP

- In September 2003 the ROW Development Officer was appointed to coordinate work on the preparation of the plan, with ongoing work on the ROWIP is in line with the guidance and ongoing good practice.
- The ROW Development Officer has attended the ROWIP Officer Regional Workshops.
- Work to collate information and develop links with the users, the Wakefield LAF and groups has been on-going, including some preliminary pilot work in the Stanley parish and a strategic cycle network through the Wakefield District Cycle Forum.
- The ROWIP timetable has been established to enable progress to be monitored.
- Established a project steering group (strategic) - to drive the development of the plan.
- Established officer working group (delivery) - collate path network information and deliver improvements.
- Confirmed the scope of the ROWIP and terms of reference for the steering and working group.
- Use and demand studies completed in May - The use and demand studies have been guided by Corporate Communications and have involved consultation with Wakefield

LAF. This was completed through a variety of techniques including focus groups and interviews which were specific to the relevant target audience and a questionnaire on the web site. The study included walkers, horse riders, cyclists, people with mobility problems and non users. The use and demand study identified that paths are used for leisure, exercise, dog walking and utility , including journeys to work.

- Final report of use and demand study completed for approval.
- Although the Action Plan for the ROWIP is not yet developed, key areas for funding within LTP2 have been identified which address the findings of the use and demand study.

Provide, where possible, an initial audit and assessment of the key issues to be addressed locally in the ROWIP

The key recommendations from the use and demand study to make the rights of way network better, safer, and more convenient for people to use are:

- Provision of information: more information and publicity to allow people, including those with sight and mobility impairment to use paths with confidence.
- Signing enhancements: including, where appropriate, information on destination, distance, and points of interest on the path.
- Maintenance: the rights of way network needs to be fit for purpose, including clearance of undergrowth and overhanging vegetation and provision of surfacing appropriate to the anticipated use. Improvements to allow greater access, for example the removal of obstructions and path furniture which restrict users.
- Extending the network: there are opportunities to improve access to the existing path network, by providing additional routes to fill gaps in the network and increasing the ability for other users to access existing paths.

- Antisocial behaviour: problems such as motorcycle misuse, litter, fly tipping and dog fouling which deter use of the rights of way network need to be addressed through cooperation with the appropriate agencies.
- Enhancements: identification of suitable locations and provision of seating, rest and viewing areas.
- Addressing inequalities: some groups use the network less than other groups for example young people and black minority ethnic groups. Some groups have fewer opportunities to enjoy the path network, for example, people with mobility problems and horse riders.

The assessment of the network itself is underway to be completed by February 2006. Once all the information is gathered then the prioritisation of improvements and identification of wider revenue and capital funding resources to deliver the improvements will be undertaken within the action plan.

Identify how the authority is proposing to ensure the integration of ROWIPs in to the LTP process at the local level

- Effective working of the steering group to drive the development of the plan and its implementation.
- Effective working of the officer working group to provide information and deliver improvements.

Identify how any ROW improvement proposals in the main body of the LTP would deliver transport shared objectives and wider quality of life issues

- This is covered in the Strategies Chapter and high level policy statement.

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CONTRIBUTION TO THE LTP STRATEGIES

Delivering Accessibility

ROWs for walking and cycling are important to everybody and especially people without cars - elderly, children, people on lower incomes and disabled people. They provide important links between communities and workplaces, shops, schools and other facilities. ROWs can help to join up communities.

If routes are improved so that they can be accessed by people with mobility problems and visual impairments this will improve access for everyone and make ROWs more attractive to all users.

Measures to improve accessibility are:

- improve surfaces and drainage;
- where appropriate, work with landowners to replace or augment stiles with gates and ensure that gates and other furniture are in good condition and easy to use;
- introduce lighting on appropriate utility type paths, particularly in urban areas;
- provide better signposting to indicate start of paths and destinations;
- promote and encourage the use of improved paths;
- integrate improvements to the ROWs network as part of 'safer routes to school' and neighbourhood path schemes;
- identify opportunities to eliminate 'missing links' in the network;
- ensure that the ROWs and public transport networks are integrated and not severed by difficult/dangerous road crossings;
- ensure that ROWs development and enhancement is integrated into rural and urban planning;

- secure improvements from developers through the planning process to facilitate improvements to existing routes and secure new routes; and
- ensure that routes are maintained to appropriate standards for their likely use.

Tackling Congestion

ROWs offer opportunities to reduce vehicle use to work, school, local facilities and local recreation/tourism sites, etc. ROWs can sometimes provide shorter or quicker journeys than using the car.

Measures to reduce congestion are:

- improve routes to bus and train stations to encourage people to use public transport;
- improve links into centres of work and schools - i.e. where traffic is going at congested periods;
- make appropriate routes suitable for commuter use by improving surfacing so ordinary shoes can be worn, removal of unnecessary obstacles and introduction of lighting;
- improve routes which can be used by cyclists and where appropriate create new routes;
- encourage the provision of facilities in workplaces for washing and changing for those who walk or cycle; and
- promote the use of ROWs as a viable alternative for short journeys.

Safer Roads

ROWs can segregate users from road traffic, providing safer routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Further benefits can be gained by:

- seek to improve sightlines and road crossings where ROWs cross roads;

- pavement provision or improvement to verges where ROWs emerge onto roads with no or limited pavements;
- new paths to avoid busy roads or to avoid roads lacking, or deficient, in pavements;
- improving verges alongside roads that link adjacent bridleways;
- removing other hazards for cyclists, walkers and horse riders; and
- integrating improvements to the ROWs network as part of 'safer routes to school' and neighbourhood path schemes.

Better Air Quality

Air quality can be improved if we can reduce reliance on vehicles by providing attractive alternatives such as a quality path network and encouraging more walking and cycling.

The measures to be used are the same as for Accessibility and Congestion.

Other Quality of Life Issues

Quality ROWs can contribute to community pride, access to local facilities, and neighbourhood links as well as access to the countryside. They can assist in making somewhere a 'Good place to live,' and also attractive to businesses and visitors in tourism areas.

Quality of public spaces and better streetscapes

An attractive, well maintained path network will contribute to improved quality of public space and streetscape. This can be achieved by:

- wide, open paths through estates with mown grassy verges (not close boarded) as policy;
- surfacing, drainage and lighting of paths in urban areas where appropriate to reduce mud on paths and to ensure 'all weather' availability;

- good quality paths with good surfaces and width, lighting where appropriate and well maintained furniture and signage; and
- litter and dog faeces removal.

Community safety, personal safety and crime

Crime and fear of crime can be reduced by creating improved and safer routes:

- good quality paths with good surfaces and width, lighting where appropriate and well maintained furniture and signage;
- open paths through estates with mown grassy verges;
- in liaison with police and anti-social behaviour teams, modify paths that have known anti-social behaviour problems;
- make paths feel more secure by creating and maintaining an attractive path environment; and
- encouraging developers to provide or alter paths to good design standards and practices.

Healthy communities

Increasing use of path network for walking, cycling and riding has physical and mental health benefits from increased exercise, reduced traffic noise and pollution. Quality ROWs will encourage more use of the network.

The ability to confidently travel around the local community on foot could help ensure interaction between people and reduce the isolation of travelling in individual cars.

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We need to:

- ensure that paths are connected into the other transport networks in the area and go to places people want to get to;
- ensure that people have access to clean, well built paths near to their homes; and
- ensure that safe, attractive paths are available to access places of interest and the countryside.

Sustainable and Prosperous Communities

A realistic approach to modify the ROWs network as part of neighbourhood renewal schemes will ensure that the local network meets local needs and is an asset to the area.

We need to provide open paths through estates with mown grassy verges (not close boarded) as policy; and ensure that paths are well maintained and cleaned

Attractive and promoted ROWs in rural communities can support local businesses e.g. tourism, equestrian facilities, cycle shops, etc. ROWs need to be promoted as tourist attractions not just as access to other attractions

Noise

ROWs can help to reduce the overall number of cars on the road and thus reduce vehicular noise. Tree planted buffer zones to reduce noise effects could incorporate existing/newly created paths making it possible for more people to choose to walk or cycle, or to get more easily to public transport.

Noise buffer zones should be considered for all ROWs (not just for housing areas) to make using paths near major roads more attractive.

Climate change and greenhouse gases

ROWs both encourage and allow more walking and cycling thereby encouraging less use of motorised vehicles. These activities are 'carbon neutral' and do not contribute to global warming.

Intentionally blank