

Cabinet

21 October 2015

The County Durham Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2015-18



Report of Corporate Management Team

Ian Thompson, Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development

Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report is to seek approval of the third Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

Background

- 2 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on the County Council to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and to keep it under review.
- 3 The ROWIP enables Highway Authorities to create a more modern access and rights of way network.
- 4 We have created a plan, *Walk, Cycle, Ride*, which contributes to wider agendas including the environment, physical activity, health, social inclusion and sustainable travel.
- 5 *Walk, Cycle, Ride*, has been drawn up in accordance with Defra guidance and Natural England's guidance on integration with Local Transport Plans. The Plan contains a 3 year Implementation Plan which will be used to create annual work programmes.
- 6 The production of the first ROWIP required extensive community consultation and this set the direction and priorities of the initial document. The subsequent ROWIPs build on this research and understanding of the audience. Individual projects will include detailed consultation with stakeholders including public rights of way users.
- 7 The Draft ROWIP3 was developed in conjunction with the County Durham Local Access Forum and was available for a 4 week consultation period (1- 26 June, with an informal extension to 17 July to accommodate several Parish and Town Councils) on the County Council website and was emailed to an extensive list of stakeholders.

- 8 The draft was been reported to the Corporate Consultation Group which has supported this process.
- 9 We received 24 responses to the consultation. A report with the comments and action taken to address the feedback will be made available through the DCC Consultation webpages.
- 10 Where possible and appropriate we have taken on board and incorporated suggestions and comments received.
- 11 The final version of the ROWIP3 will be available as a pdf on the County Council web site and a hard copy will be placed in the Resource Centre for Members.

Strategic Framework

- 12 ROWIP fits within the authority's broader strategic framework and is influenced by the overarching plans and ambitions for the County as set out in the Regeneration Statement, the Local Sustainable Community Strategy and the County Durham Plan and the Local Transport Plan³. In particular, ROWIP can assist the delivery of spatial, social, health and economic aspirations through;
 - The prioritisation of high quality improvements on path networks around major centres
 - Creating active travel opportunities for workforces
 - Supporting sustainable tourism opportunities
 - Promoting the County as an attractive and green location for investment through a high quality path network as part of its green infrastructure
 - Enabling more people to be healthy, happy and confident through an active lifestyle in an attractive and vibrant County
 - And through the sustenance of a high quality environment.
- 13 ROWIP policies and actions will be delivered through 5 projects and core rights of way work. The Plan's vision is "to deliver an access network fit for the 21st Century" and the 6 objectives are;
 - Improve access infrastructure
 - Contribute to a prosperous economy
 - Promote good health
 - Promote a high quality environment
 - Influence travel choices
 - Inspire active, confident and responsible communities.
- 14 The draft was presented to REDs Strategic Planning Board on May 21 to ensure it fits within the strategic performance monitoring framework, with SMART actions and a delivery plan which is monitored. The board were supportive of the plan.

Delivery Programme

- 15 The ROWIP is supported through the LTP Integrated Transport Block grant from DfT. Additional funds have also been accessed since 2007 and will continue to be sought.
- 16 An annual work programme will be created and progress will be monitored against the action plan (referred to in 5). The County Durham Local Access Forum will continue to act as an independent critical friend to assess progress against the Implementation Plan through regular updates and reports.

Recommendations

- 17 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - Approve the final Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP2) 2015-2018

Background papers

Defra Guidance on ROWIPs

Natural England Guidance on ROWIP and LTP Integration (July 2009)

County Durham Local Transport Plan 3 (2011-2021)

County Durham Sustainable Community Strategy (2010-2030)

Regeneration Statement (January 2010)

County Durham Plan

Council Plan (2010-2013)

Contact: Victoria Lloyd-Gent Tel: 03000 265311

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance –

The ROWIP will access the capital funds from LTP3 Walking and Cycling budget and external funding will also be secured when possible and required.

Staffing –

The Sustainable Travel Officer will be directly responsible for producing and implementing the plan in conjunction with the Public Rights of Way Team and Travel Planning Team.

Risk –

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity –

The ROWIP will have due regard of the Equality Act 2010. In addition to this commitment, it is a statutory requirement of the Plan to assess the accessibility of local rights of way for blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems. The ROWIP's objectives aim to increase the availability of the network for a wider audience. In particular, Objectives 1. Improve access infrastructure, 3. Promote good health, 5. Influence travel choices and 6. Inspire active, confident and responsible communities.

By delivering a usable network through the ROWIP, social exclusion will be reduced, paths will be made more accessible and more opportunities will be available to more people.

Accommodation –

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder –

Not applicable

Human Rights –

Not applicable

Consultation –

The draft ROWIP3 was available for a 4 week consultation period. Individual projects will include detailed consultation with stakeholders including public rights of way users.

The draft was reported to the corporate Consultation Group who have supported this process.

Procurement –

Not applicable

Disability Discrimination Act –

The ROWIP will have due regard of the Equality Act 2010. In addition, it is a statutory requirement of the Plan to assess the accessibility of local rights of way for blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems. The ROWIP's objectives aim to increase the availability of the network for a wider audience. In particular, Objectives 1. Improve access infrastructure, 3. Promote good health, 5. Influence travel choices and 6. Inspire active, confident and responsible communities seek to deliver a more usable network where paths will be made more accessible and more opportunities will be available to more people.

Legal Implications -

Within the report.