

Annex B: Rights of Way Improvement Plans Progress Reports



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Nottingham City Council RoWIP

B1 Policies and Strategies for Improving the Local Rights of Way Network

There are a number of policies directly related to the local rights of way network. For example the Nottingham Local Plan Policy T12, which protects Rights of Way from the adverse effects of development and T11, the protection of existing or proposed cycle routes. Other key policies include the New Deal for Transport Walking and Cycling Strategy (March 1999) and New Deal for Transport: Better for Nottingham (March 1999). The Primary Pedestrian Route Strategy is currently being developed which will be used to inform the emerging Walking Strategy. BVPI 178 (Ease of Use) will ensure accessibility and will inform the development of the ROWIP. Consideration will also be given to the Council's position on the designation of areas for extinguishing or diverting rights of way for crime prevention. All policies complement each other, support Government targets and reinforce the need to improve existing facilities, highlighting their importance and the need for their protection and promotion to support and encourage sustainable modes of transport.

There are further policies which, although not directly related to the local rights of way network, do provide a context for their importance. These policies include the City's Nature Conservation Strategy 2000-2005 and the developing Open and Green Spaces Strategy which aims to improve public access to and through the City's many open and green spaces. There is also reference made to the importance of public access in the various Management Plans produced for specific sites.

Further consideration will be given to how the policies and strategies of neighbouring Authorities impact on the development and improvement of the City's local rights of way network and to the Good Practice Guide developed by the Countryside Agency.

B2 Objectives for Improving the Local Rights of Way Network

- To raise the importance and profile of the local rights of way network to promote alternative, healthy, safe and sustainable mode of transport,
- Continually improve the network to encourage more people to change their modal habits and travel patterns whilst, and
- Continually accessing future demands and the different needs and abilities of existing and future users of the local rights of way network.

B3 Authority's Progress in Preparing the ROWIP

The authority has produced a preliminary consultation document titled 'Draft Outline of Contents for the ROWIP' which has been sent out to user groups and key officers within the authority as well as the City's Local Access Forum. The document provides an outline framework to provide all parties with an appreciation of what should be included in the Plan. Feedback from this will then help set out the main contents and sub sections of the Plan and further help identify targets, actions and priorities. A user questionnaire has been sent out to known organisations, placed on the authority's web site, made available in public places such as libraries and medical centres and at outdoor pursuit retailers. Face to face surveys have also been undertaken on some of the more popular routes and in the City Centre. Responses will help with assessment and evaluation of the local rights of way network and set out a statement of action for the Plan's first ten-year life cycle.

Using the Local Access Forum as an informative tool, the authority is also collating information on the state of the existing local rights of way network and ways in which it may be improved. This includes ensuring all public routes are legally defined, accessible, properly maintained, signed and well publicised. Initial discussions have also taken place with Nottinghamshire County Council on how both authorities can raise the profile and importance of walking, cycling and riding both within and between the urban and rural environments. Full consideration has also been given to how the ROWIP will be used to reduce dependency on private car use (especially for short journeys), cut congestion and air pollution, encourage a healthy community, reduce road casualties, raise the importance of caring for the local environment thereby improving the quality of life for both local people and visitors to the City.

B4 Key Issues to be Addressed

The key issues to be addressed as part of the ROWIP are:

- a.** Access to open space and the wider countryside,
- b.** Access to local recreational/leisure facilities/ places of employment,
- c.** Access to local services, amenities and public transport nodes,
- d.** Access for all / ease of use,
- e.** Connectivity of existing and newly created routes,
- f.** Fragmentation/loss of network by new development (and their protection),
- g.** Safety of vulnerable users such as the young, elderly and visually impaired,
- h.** Investigate and establish the status of any unrecorded paths/routes,
- i.** Balance public access with the level and perception of associated crime,
- j.** Unauthorised use by mechanically propelled vehicles,
- k.** Design of new routes and 'secured by design' (designing out crime), and
- l.** Regular inspection, cleansing and maintenance.

B5 Ensuring the Integration of the ROWIP and the LTP

The authority has ensured the integration of the ROWIP into the LTP by developing a partnership approach which includes scoping meetings with relevant officers within the authority such as transport planners, rights of way officers, safer routes to school and accident investigation team, and cycling and sustainability policy officers. Allocation of officers and maximising resources will be given a high priority. The authority's Area Committees and Area Focus teams will be used as a medium for communicating LTP and ROWIP targets and objectives to the local community and for gaining feedback on specific schemes. External partners include the County Council, the City's Local Access Forum, user groups and the Countryside Agency. Early consultation is viewed as an essential element for ensuring the successful integration of the ROWIP and LTP.

B6 The Transport Shared Priority Objectives and Wider Quality of Life Issues

The following proposed schemes will all make a positive contribution to the Transport Shared Priority Objectives and wider quality of life issues through improved accessibility and connectivity, encouraging more people to walk and cycle, improve health and well being and pedestrian safety while cutting congestion and air pollution.

- Create 'Access for All' route(s), along existing 'corridors' Trent Valley Way (Wilford to Clifton) and Fairham Brook (Silverdale Walk to Green Lane),
- Upgrade Sneinton Greenway including vehicle control measures,
- Upgrade Hucknall Road 'country walk' (to adoptable standard) and promote as a link from Bulwell / Bestwood Village/ Hucknall to City Hospital and as a 'Safer Routes to School' for Stanstead Primary and Top Valley Comprehensive Schools,
- Upgrade (to adoptable standard) primary City Centre alleyways where they provide non-vehicular routes and connectivity between busy roads for example Hurts Yard, Norfolk Place and Parliament Place. (This also supports the 'Discovering Lost Ways' project currently being developed by the Countryside Agency),
- Develop a recreational circular route around Colwick park for both horse riders and cyclists with suitable horse box/cycle parking facilities,
- Upgrade surface of existing public bridleway along Fox Covert Lane to Clifton Village and construction of new French drain to address erosion of surface during periods of heavy rain,
- Upgrade (to adoptable standard) Elm Avenue / Coronation Oaks and Robin Hood Chase to public bridleway status (route runs between Mansfield Road to Cranmer Street to Woodborough Road to St Ann's Well Road), and
- Extension of the existing public bridleway no 128 along the River Leen (Basford to Bulwell) from the junction of Coventry Court off Cinderhill Road to Bulwell Town Centre and NET.

Nottinghamshire County Council RoWIP

B7 Progress Summary

The Council is progressing well towards the submission of its final ROWIP. Consultation on and amendments to the pilot Plan have been undertaken and a draft of the final version is planned for public consultation in October 2006. Publication of the final Plan is still on schedule for March 2007.

In order to enable the ROWIP to be implemented in parallel with the LTP a funding contribution will be made from the LTP throughout the Plan period (see ROWIP target definition for full details of LTP and County funding). This will be supplemented with bids for external funding from Landfill Tax opportunities and Aggregates Levy funding, as well as important contributions in kind from local stakeholders.

Details of the progress made to date are given below.

B8 ROWIP Preparation Prior to Submission of the Provisional LTP in July 2005

All local highway authorities are required (under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000) to develop a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) by November 2007.

After the passing of the CROW Act, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) required the Countryside Agency to develop best practice guidance for use by all local authorities. In order to achieve this, the Agency identified eight exemplar local authorities to take part in producing pilot ROWIPs from which best practice could be drawn. Nottinghamshire County Council was selected as an exemplar authority and our Pilot ROWIP was published and submitted to DEFRA in March 2004.

For the purposes of the Pilot, a smaller area was identified on which to test a series of principles covering the districts of Ashfield, Broxtowe and Gedling (and therefore stretching into the Greater Nottingham Plan area).

The pilot ROWIP provided a well researched overview of the problems of and opportunities for rights of way in three of the seven districts in Nottinghamshire. It also set a framework for the preparation of the full ROWIP by November 2007. There has been a considerable amount of data collection on the condition, use and demand of the network. A large number of provisional policy statements and an action plan were identified, which will require evaluation and consultation before being taken forward into the full ROWIP. Some key areas for development emerged from the pilot including:

- More awareness raising about the network,
- Better standards of provision on existing routes,
- A more connected network,

- Safer and more accessible environment for users,
- More pro-active procedures for planning and Definitive Map work, and
- Better information on user distribution and network conditions.

A Local Access Forum was established in July 2003 as a requirement of the CROW Act 2000 which incorporates a ROWIP sub-group. The role of this consultative sub-group is to advise and make recommendations to the County Council on the development of the ROWIP.

B9 Update on Progress since Submission of the Provisional LTP

The pilot ROWIP was very well received by all including the sponsors of the pilot Plan, and a lot of the thought process, layout and policy will be used as the basis for the draft final ROWIP.

The County Council has continued to work towards the development of a full ROWIP for submission by the Government's deadline. This work has been progressed drawing on previous experience, as well as utilising best practice from elsewhere. For example, the County Council has adopted York City Council's whole network approach rather than individual routes.

Work has focused on five key areas:

1. Ascertain the needs and demands of different users (walkers, horse riders, cyclists, less able, carriage drivers, motorised users etc.)

During the last year a major consultation exercise was undertaken, consisting of:

- A detailed and comprehensive survey of 14,000 county council employees, which had a 10% response rate.
- A smaller survey, based on the above questionnaire, of visitors attending two major Nottinghamshire public events, resulting in over 500 returns.
- Bespoke user surveys aimed at individual user groups (walkers, horse riders, cyclists and recreational motorists) have been distributed widely and subsequently collated from individuals and organisations interested and involved in Nottinghamshire's rights of way network.
- A specific Land Manager survey has been distributed to both members of land owning / management organisations as well as individual farmers. The Countryside Access team attended an agricultural event to gather farmers' / land managers' views and priorities on access.
- From the pilot Plan it was identified that there is a lack of information on the density and distribution of horses. Consequently, a survey of the number and location of horses in the county has been embarked upon. This information will be used to identify priorities in the bridleway and byway network.
- External research specialists have carried out a series of three focus groups (established users, the 'general public' and land managers) on our behalf focusing on a series of access related issues.
- The pilot Plan has provided valuable data for a particular geographic area of Nottinghamshire and this information will be integrated into the main ROWIP document.
- Key trends have been identified from the consultation so far: a full analysis is in progress and the results will form the action plan and policy setting in the full ROWIP. These

initial findings have helped us formulate immediate short term and medium plans such as a Signing and Waymarking programme aimed at increasing user confidence of the network thus providing, for example, viable sustainable transport alternatives, recreational opportunities, healthier lifestyles, greater social inclusion for disadvantaged groups and rural economic regeneration.

2. Assess the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and enjoyment of the authority's area.

- As part of the ROWIP, Councils are required to assess their definitive map and statement, requests for improvements, the condition of the current network and assess the wider non-definitive network. We have started this exercise by examining, in detail, four areas in the county and recording our findings on GIS software. The main thrust of this mapping exercise is to examine all current rights of way unsurfaced roads, permissive paths, open access, commons, etc. This will identify a large number of issues; for example, the current state of the network regarding condition, maintenance and missing links; incorrect status of routes; required improvements; the ease of making these improvements; resource requirements; and the nature and extent of barriers – both built and natural. A detailed review of non-definitive access countywide including GIS mapping is also being undertaken. These exercises will help us produce a business plan to roll out for the whole of the county.
- Also in these four areas, we have consulted in detail on satisfaction levels and work priorities with parishes, parishioners, land managers, borough and district councils and user groups including people with disabilities. This will include the production of a local 'wish list'. This list will be used not only to make improvements but will provide the council with an example of a structured and costed programme to use as a model for the rest of the county.
- The assessment will be taken together with a review of our current management, strategies and policies to identify priorities, gaps and missing links in the county's network.
- The assessment will be finished and completed by Easter 2006. This 'case study' data will be summarised and fed into the main ROWIP document and the full studies annexed. Findings will also be used as part of the proposed business plan.

3. Accessibility of local rights of way for blind and partially sighted people and others with mobility problems.

- A full accessibility audit has been completed in one of the four network assessment areas. This survey, undertaken by the Fieldfare Trust has given us an invaluable insight into the needs of all users in a 'typical' path network in Nottinghamshire. The survey has highlighted the challenges ahead in improving access, through identifying and surveying the natural and built network environment; for example, cross and linear gradients, surfacing, furniture, resting places and rural gateways. We will progress these finding into an action plan on improving and opening up the countryside to all users. Consultation is on-going with disabled users through individual interviews, organisations and the Local Access Forum, both on wider access issues and on the access audit. This qualitative data will feed into the action plan.
- As part of the pilot ROWIP process we have developed a detailed policy document on network structures and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This has enabled us to be more proactive and structured in our approach with reference to the replacement

and installation of new structures. We will continue to build upon this whereby the provision of the least restrictive option becomes part of our everyday work programme. To complement this, the provision of clear information (to enable someone to make an informed decision of whether to use a particular route) will be enhanced thus promoting confidence and independence. Our ROWIP consultation process on the needs of network identified this of being of particular importance in enabling 'an access network for all'.

4. Reviewing the relationship of the ROWIP to plans, strategies and other documents.

- key themes and complementing the aims and objectives of existing plans and strategies. The Council will continue to build upon this work and ensure the integration of the ROWIP into wider policies and plans (nationally, regionally, county and district, and parish and community).

5. A review of existing internal policies.

- The Council will keep under review its existing policies relating directly to rights of way areas of work such as those regarding Motor Vehicles in the Countryside, Disability Discrimination Act policy in relation to Stiles and gates and Crime and Rights of Way.

B10 High Level Statement of Policies and Objectives for Improving the Rights of Way Network

As part of the pilot ROWIP 18 policy statements were drafted: 11 relating to network improvement, six to network users and one on supporting partnerships. The policy statements are detailed in nature and will form the basis of the first draft of the full ROWIP which will be subject to consultation in 2006.

The objectives of the ROWIP recognise the Council's statutory duty to assert and protect the rights of the public to use and enjoy the public rights of way network, and to maintain an accurate and up-to-date definitive map. The full ROWIP also needs to recognise the interests of agriculture, forestry and other land occupiers in the management of the public rights of way network.

The provisional key objectives of the full ROWIP are:

- a. To protect, maintain and seek to enhance the network for all lawful users
- b. To improve access to the network for all, including those with visual impairment or mobility problems, by adopting the principle of the least restrictive option
- c. To improve the safety and connectivity of the metalled road and rights of way network
- d. To increase awareness of the network and the understanding of the wider benefits arising from its use, such as leading an active and healthy lifestyle, and making a positive contribution to the local economy
- e. To ensure that both the LTP and ROWIP compliment and assist each other in the delivery of their common objectives

- f. To provide a complete and up-to-date definitive map and statement, with particular reference to map anomalies and the 'Lost Ways' project.

Table B1 below sets out some provisional actions included in the pilot ROWIP (and likely to be included in the full ROWIP) and an indication as to which provisional objectives they link to.

Table B1: Provisional Actions Included in the Pilot ROWIP

Actions	Objectives					
	√ = direct link			√ = indirect link		
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Network Maintenance						
Signing and waymarking	√	√	√	√	√	√
Structures	√	√			√	
Surfaces	√	√			√	
Ploughing and cropping	√	√				
Enforcement	√	√			√	
Network Enhancement						
Disabled Enhancement	√	√	√	√	√	
New and enhanced routes	√	√	√		√	√
Road safety and connectivity	√		√		√	√
Planning and development	√	√	√	√	√	√
Transport modal interchange / gateways						
to countryside paths and sites	√	√	√	√	√	
Network Awareness						
Publicity and promotion	√	√	√	√	√	
Information on the accessibility of routes 'for all'	√	√	√	√		
Definitive Map						
Up to date	√		√		√	√
Up to date information conveyed to external agencies (e.g. Ordnance Survey)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Ensure users / landowners are confident regarding legal status	√			√	√	√
Lost ways	√		√	√	√	√
Partnerships						
Land occupiers / farmers	√	√	√	√	√	√

Actions	Objectives					
	√ = direct link			√ = indirect link		
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Parishes	√	√	√	√	√	√
Internal colleagues	√	√	√	√	√	√
Other public and private bodies	√	√	√	√	√	√

B11 Links to Transport Objectives

The ROWIP has clear links with the Quality of Life objective. One of the three key strands, as stated by the ROWIP Statutory Guidance, is an assessment of the opportunities provided by public rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and enjoyment of the countryside.

Clearly, any work to enhance the public rights of way network will encourage greater use and lead to improvements in overall health and well-being. The network has a major role to play in quality of life, particularly in areas on the urban fringe.

Overall, the ROWIP and network are intrinsically linked with wider quality of life issues. These include the following:

- Social inclusion: rights of way are available to use for all; they are free to use and link all members of the community with friends, relatives, services and leisure facilities,
- Land use and planning: rights of way contribute to providing an attractive environment to live and work. Corridors are retained and protected providing a relief from development and reclamation,
- Environment: rights of way enable users to access and understand both the built and natural environment and their culture and heritage. This is particularly relevant when linking urban centres with the peace and tranquility of the countryside,
- Wildlife and Biodiversity: not only do rights of way link users with the natural environment, the rights of way network itself provides a green corridor and refuge for flora and fauna,
- Education: rights of way provide excellent opportunities for studying both the built and natural environment and they are a very important part of our history and heritage,
- Sporting activities: opportunities arise from the use of rights of way for a whole range of sporting activities from jogging, access to water based activities, cycling, climbing and horse riding to motor sport. They are also used for other interests such as bird watching, orienteering, photography and dog walking,
- Local economy: visiting the countryside and using rights of way contributes to tourism, and the local and regional economy directly through user spend thus ensuring the viability of local services and employment (particularly in rural areas), and
- Health: the use of rights of way through walking, cycling, riding and other physical activities contribute to overall health and well being. The very nature of the countryside enables users to relax, unwind and enjoy fresh air.

Rights of way also serve as functional routes, especially in the urban fringe, and have a role to play in improving accessibility to local schools and other facilities. (For a more detailed

assessment of the accessibility opportunities afforded by the ROWIP see section 4.3.9).

As part of the ROWIP the Council will identify and enhance routes that link to the wider transport network, with emphasis on the development of linear access, such as former railway corridors and riverside paths and towpaths.

The following list gives examples of potential schemes that will make a significant contribution to the shared LTP2 and ROWIP objectives:

- Trent Riverside Path, and
- Nuthall Railway and links to Derbyshire.

Partnership working has been key to the success of these schemes. We will continue to build upon this. For example, a major £50 million bid and project to set up a regional park in the Sherwood Forest area includes a significant element of improving access for all in Nottinghamshire and importantly, regionally into the surrounding counties. The ROWIP and LTP will play a major part in achieving this.

We will continue to seek to ensure the widest participation in the planning and delivery from all stakeholders. A comprehensive business plan will be developed in parallel with the ROWIP, with particular emphasis on building upon the ROWIP action plan. The provisional key objectives will be worked on in recognition of the key findings from the needs consultation and assessment of the network, and linked with the LTP's shared objectives.

Many of our provisional objectives, key themes and actions align with the LTP and therefore assist in delivering wider transport and quality of life objectives. The ROWIP also meets other objectives not directly linked with the LTP, such as wider health benefits and targets, recreational activities (e.g. Sport England objectives) and education through history and heritage. We will continue to work with our partners in achieving these 'other' shared objectives.

In order to achieve these objectives we recognise that more resources are needed. However, by working more efficiently and prioritising, working closer with our partners and seeking new funding opportunities, improvements, benefits and best value to all sectors of the society will be possible. This type of working is already producing benefits.

The production of our acclaimed pilot Plan, drawing upon best practice and guidance, and the work completed so far will ensure that we produce a productive and forward thinking ROWIP in Spring 2007, which will contribute to the overall LTP shared objectives and prepare us for full integration into the LTP process.