

Durham
County Council



Walk Cycle Ride

Rights of Way Improvement Plan
for County Durham 2015-2018

Our plans to develop a high quality path network fit
for 21st Century travel, recreation and enjoyment.

Welcome to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) for County Durham.

Contents

	Page
1 Forewords	3
Councillor Neil Foster and Geoff Hughes	
2 Introduction	5
2.1 Review of ROWIPs 1 & 2	6
2.2 Funding Improvements	7
2.3 Case Studies	8
2.4 The Scope of ROWIP3	11
2.5 Beyond the ROWIP	12
3 Context	13
3.1 Context	14
3.2 The ROWIP and the Councils Key Corporate Plans	14
3.3 ROWIP3 and Local Transport Plan 3	16
3.4 County Durham's Cycling Strategy and Action Plan	17
3.5 Other schemes and projects	18
4 Vision, Objectives and Opportunities	19
4.1 Our Vision	20
4.2 ROWIP3 Objectives	20
4.3 ROWIP3 Opportunities	20
5 Conclusion	23
6 Implementation Plan 2015-2018	25
6.1 Path Projects	26
6.2 Path Project Details	26
6.3 Implementation Plan Key	27
6.4 Monitoring	27
6.5 Funding	27
7 Appendices	31
7.1 Consultees for Draft ROWIP3	32
7.2 Glossary	33

The background image shows a group of cyclists riding on a paved path through a wooded area. In the foreground, a man is riding a motorized scooter. The word "Foreword" is overlaid on the image.

Foreword

Forewords

Despite the difficult times for Local Government, it is important that we continue to plan for the future and put forward ideas to improve life for the residents of County Durham and the many people that visit the county.

This is our third Rights of Way Improvement Plan, and it is great to see the innovative ways in which we are working with our partner organisations to make real positive changes. Walking, cycling and riding in County Durham offer huge opportunities for people to be physically active, to enjoy our wonderful countryside, to travel to work or school and to offer something special to tourists.

This Plan builds on the successes of our previous two Plans; it reflects the changing circumstances that we find ourselves in, but it also remains positive about the value of our access network and the many actions that we can all take to bring about further improvements. Public Rights of Way are a huge asset and this Plan helps to ensure their protection for future generations.

County Councillor Neil Foster
Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration



The County Durham Local Access Forum (LAF) is delighted to be identified as a close partner in the preparation and implementation of the ROWIP.

The LAF is a statutory advisory body established to improve public access and open air recreation for all and through our active involvement we believe that the plan focuses on the key issues that need to be addressed in order that the Access and Rights of Way Network in the County fulfils its potential.

It is vital that a strategic approach to investment is followed to make the best use of limited resources and we would like to think this plan provides that mechanism not just for the County Council but for all of the stakeholders who have an interest in this area. It is easy to take access to the countryside for granted but it is essential that we continue to commit resources to maintaining and improving the legacy of Rights of Way we have inherited to ensure that it continues to meet today's needs. The LAF will continue to afford a high priority to supporting this work.

Geoff Hughes
Chair of the County Durham Local Access Forum

Introduction





Under the requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) Act 2000, we (Durham County Council) produced our first Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP), ***Passionate About Paths*** (ROWIP1) in November 2007.

We based the plan on what people told us were the most important issues and priorities for the access and rights of way network (AROW) in the future. Its objectives were designed to be aspirational and conveyed the optimistic and ambitious mood at that time. It helped raise the profile of our work, secure funding for improvements, encourage partnership working and generate a greater appreciation of the AROW network.

Our second plan, ***Paths for People*** (ROWIP2), was published in July 2011.

ROWIP2 built on the success of ROWIP1 but took into account the financial challenges faced by Local Authorities. As a result we set out a more focussed approach to reflect a reduction in the available resources and developed an action plan which targeted key access routes with greatest demand such as important utility and recreational paths around communities.

ROWIP3 Walk, Cycle, Ride, will continue to build on the foundations set by its predecessors and will adopt the same pragmatic but creative approach to providing a network fit for the 21st Century.

Improvement Plans do not replace the day to day work to protect and maintain the network undertaken through our statutory duties.

2.1 Review of ROWIPs 1 & 2

We had many successes through the implementation of ROWIPs 1 & 2. Notably we have;

- **Successfully used the ROWIP as a mechanism for securing funding**, notably approximately £2.5million from LTP since 2011 with an average annual allocation now of £500,000 for walking and cycling schemes
- **Secured the registration of 13 new footpaths and bridleways** on Durham County Council owned land
- **Successfully delivered one of first stretches of England's Coastal Path** in partnership with Natural England along 14 miles of Durham's coast

- **Succeeded at taking a more modern, planned and strategic approach** to considering how to fulfil access requirements using creation agreements, creating permissive access and cycle tracks
- **Won two National Awards for ROWIP1**; one from Natural England for “Best Contribution to Quality of Life” and for the ROWIP Officer an IPROW¹ “Right Way” Award
- **Maintained strong relationships with landowners** – vital for access management
- **Sustained a strong involvement with the County Durham Local Access Forum (CDLAF)²**
- **Continued to invest in community led projects and schemes through the Parish Paths Partnership**
- **Continued to develop the innovative Access Prioritisation Project³** – a targeted audit and prioritisation system for identifying paths with the greatest potential for improvement in specific areas
- **Published the consolidated new digital Definitive Map online** – This map shows the different status of the routes available, including public footpaths, bridleways and byways⁴
- **Continued to develop the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS)** – an electronic database and management system
- **Undertaken an urban path survey** of 56kms – the survey helped us establish a baseline condition for all the rights of way in main urban settlements to enable better management
- **Carried out an Accessible Structures pilot** – a targeted programme to systematically replace access structures such as replacing stiles with gates or gaps, in specific locations
- **Secured the designation of Open Access rights** on Waldrige Fell and Chapman’s Well, both DCC Countryside Sites.

2.2 Funding Improvements

Since the publication of ROWIPs 1 & 2, we have implemented as much of the ROWIP action plans as possible.

We have spent over £2 million on walking and cycling in the last 5 years using Local Transport Plan (LTP) funds as well as approximately £540,000 of additional funds from a variety of sources to support individual projects.

Whilst support for delivery has continued to be predominantly from the LTP, (and it is anticipated that in the medium to longer term this support will continue through the North East Combined Authorities Strategic Transport plan for the North East) additional funds will continue to be sought from other sources. LTP3 specifically funds capital works so we were able to carry out high quality improvements to the path network. The following case studies describe three very different schemes delivered within the lifespan of ROWIP2. Together these projects provide over 8 miles of improved paths; of which we have created 6 miles of brand new routes and have significantly improved 2 miles of existing bridleway.

We retained the breadth of content and a strategic view of the delivery plan to allow flexibility in what we were able to deliver. This less prescriptive approach meant we were not so reliant on funding for a few specific projects; instead we covered a wide range of actions that we could prioritise and act on when funding became available. We intend to continue to use this model for ROWIP3 as it is proven to work.

¹ The Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management.

² The County Durham Local Access Forum (LAF) is a statutory body that advises us on land access issues. See here: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/3323/County-Durham-Local-Access-Forum>

³ Information on the County Durham Access Prioritisation Project can be found here: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/3679/Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan>

⁴ The County Durham Definitive Public Rights of Way map online can be accessed here: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/definitivemap>

2.3 Case Studies

Case Study 1: Locomotion Way

In 2014 we completed a brand new multi-user route (MUR) linking Newton Aycliffe to Shildon. The Locomotion Way provides a new route for pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders, mobility scooters and families with push chairs. The route is a 3 metres wide tarmac path which is low maintenance and provides a comfortable and accessible surface.

Durham County Council worked with the landowners Network Rail and provided £350,000 funding. A further £300,000 has come from the Department for Transport via Sustrans 'Links to Communities Fund'.

The path makes active travel a viable and sustainable option for getting to school, work and



other services. As the path comes within the Local Motion area⁵, the physical works have been complemented by the Local Motion team's promotion of the route through

workplaces, schools and the wider community.



⁵ The County Durham Local Motion project covers the Area Action Partnerships of Bishop Auckland and Shildon, Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership, and, East Durham Rural Corridor.

Case Study 2: Frankland Lane

This important bridleway links a large residential area to the centre of Durham City. It was a badly potholed farm track desperately in need of repair for many years. Though well used it did not meet modern day needs and provided poor infrastructure for users.

The path was identified as a 'Priority A' for improvement through the Access Prioritisation project and we secured LTP funds to carry out substantial drainage and resurfacing works. The scheme tied in with a link route in the same area improving a small network of paths in a local area.

Before



After



Before



After



Positive feedback on improvements from users:

“I've now been all the way down into the City from Newton Hall on my mobility scooter, which I couldn't do before as the path was too uneven. I also do a shorter circuit twice a day and the paths are so easy to use now and I can get out with the dogs. It's great and I really appreciate what's been done.”

“I cycled Frankland Lane today as far as the Prison. They've done a brilliant job resurfacing the road to the farm - I'd always hoped that the whole road would be done in one go, but never imagined that it would. The fibredec and then the road surface to the prison is also really good. Ten out of ten for this one.”

“Frankland Park Wood and Low Newton Nature Reserve looking great. Thanks for the new footpaths making walking accessible for all!”

Case Study 3: Securing new paths on Council land

The County Council has registered 13 new paths on Council land. The paths (11 footpaths and 2 bridleways) were dedicated by the Council as landowner and are now depicted on the Council's official record of public rights of way, the Definitive Map and Statement. The paths were brought to the Council's attention mainly due to the public's use of them.

The paths are now firmly protected for the future and will be maintained by the Access and ROW Team.



2.4

The Scope of ROWIP3

Moving forward and looking at what lies ahead for the next 3 years, we can set the scene for ROWIP3. While economic pressures continue to shape how Local Authorities are able to function, there are also positive changes with more opportunities to build partnerships and seek new funding. In particular the integration of public health functions within the local authority indicates a new era for contributing to quality of life and health and wellbeing by enabling and encouraging everyday physical activity.

ROWIP3 will retain the same scope as ROWIP2 with the main focus on short utility trips and longer recreational routes from urban settlements. This helps to concentrate our resources in the areas of greatest demand.

This is a 3 year strategy with an implementation plan. We have created specific projects as the mechanism for delivering the objectives and actions within this timeframe. Where the projects from ROWIP2 are ongoing or have a new upcoming opportunity to be delivered they are included from the previous plan.

The extensive consultation carried out during the production of ROWIP1 continues to inform the plan. The draft ROWIP3 was available for comment for a limited period and amendments made prior to the completed document being published.

We continue to receive requests for path improvements and our system for mapping and prioritising suggested improvements has been updated and developed to better support the extensive variety and size of schemes submitted. All suggestions received from communities, members of the public, officers and Councillors are inputted and improvements are prioritised according to a standard set of criteria. Over the last five years the scale and nature of the schemes requested has expanded and developed into



larger projects which incorporate works on highways as well as the off-road network.

Through the prioritisation of improvements and through partnerships we will continue to develop efficient ways of working to ensure investments are justified and will assist in the maintenance of a high quality network.

Other changes will also benefit access management such as new legislation, through the Deregulation Act which removes the need to advertise some Path Orders in newspapers and therefore brings a substantial cost saving.

With possible significant changes planned for County Durham through large scale residential, employment and commercial development, it is more important than ever that the access network is improved and secured to provide high quality links to work, to local services from these areas of new housing and existing residential areas. High quality path provision assists regeneration by being part of a high quality design package that invites businesses to invest and expand in County Durham.

Although ROWIP3 focusses on the Public Rights of Way Network, we recognise that this is one element within the wider access network. In order to strategically manage and improve the whole network ROWIP3 will consider all routes and as such it covers PROW (footpaths, bridleways and byways), railway paths, permissive paths, promoted routes, cycle routes, Open Access or Coastal Access Land. Where the plan states “path” this is in its broadest sense and refers to all types referred to previously. There are a wide variety of users who are considered through the plan and these include walkers, cyclists, horseriders and off-road vehicle drivers. The ROWIP looks at how all the different elements can work together to fulfil access needs. This network will be referred to as the Access and Rights of Way network (AROW).

We will continue to have due regard for the Equality Act 2010 by considering the widest range of users, in particular people with mobility issues. We will also continue to adhere to our duty to protect sensitive habitats and biodiversity in managing and improving access. Natural England's National Character Area profiles will be used to help determine access improvements which are appropriate to the landscape character of each area.

We will also maximise opportunities to contribute to sustainable travel and leisure options to benefit local residents and encourage investment through tourism.

2.5 Beyond the ROWIP

Closely connected to the ROWIP3, but beyond its remit, are other important and growing agendas which should be referred to. In particular, through work to develop a comprehensive Cycling Network Planning process, Cycling Super Routes and a network of primary and secondary routes will be identified for the first time. In future years the development of new cycling routes and improvements to existing cycling routes is a real growth area with great potential to complement the broader access network. We have further developed work in this area and this will be detailed in an updated Cycling Strategy & Action Plan which is due to be re-published in 2016. Also, the behaviour change agenda has been very successfully addressed through the Local Motion project in the south of the County and the Living Streets project. Work with communities, workplaces and schools has enabled and encouraged a shift in travel modes in favour of walking, cycling and public transport over the private car. More information about these related agendas is detailed in Chapter 3.



Context

3.1 Context

County Durham is one of the largest Unitary Council's in England. It has an area of 223,000 hectares (862 square miles).

The County has a current population of 516,000 people scattered across over 250 communities of differing character and size including 12 main towns, numerous larger and smaller villages and hamlets. The county includes some of the most attractive and varied countryside in northern England as well as a diverse range of wildlife habitat and areas of special landscape value.

As the Highway Authority, Durham County Council has a duty to assert and protect the public's right to use the 3,500km of public path network. The authority also has a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

3.2 The ROWIP and the Councils Key Corporate Plans

The ROWIP fits within the authority's broader strategic framework and embraces the overarching plans and ambitions for the County. In particular, **'Altogether Better the Sustainable Community Strategy for County Durham 2010-2030'** (SCS) sets out the priorities for communities across County Durham to 2030 and the **Regeneration Statement** focuses on shaping a County Durham where people want to live, invest and visit whilst enabling the County's residents and businesses to achieve their potential.

The SCS was produced by the County Durham Partnership in 2010 and was later revised in 2014. It is the overarching plan for County Durham. It sets out our shared long-term vision for the county, our ambitions for the area and the priorities

that partners and communities believe are important. It provides the blueprint to deliver long lasting improvements and sets the scene for the County Durham Plan. The SCS includes an overarching vision for an "Altogether Better" County Durham. The ROWIP can help deliver on the 5 key SCS themes for change;

- Altogether Wealthier
- Altogether Better for Children and Young People
- Altogether Healthier
- Altogether Greener
- Altogether Safer





The County Durham **Regeneration Statement** also helps outline how our ambition of creating sustainable places where people want to live, work, invest and visit can be achieved. The Regeneration Statement has five key ambitions and objectives that inform the SCS's priority theme of Altogether Wealthier and our priorities for regenerating the County. These five key ambitions are:

- A Thriving Durham City
- Vibrant and Successful Towns
- Competitive and Successful People
- Sustainable Neighbourhoods and Rural Communities
- A Top Location for Business.

The ROWIP can assist the delivery of the spatial, social, health and economic aspirations of these strategies through;

- The prioritisation of high quality improvements on path networks around major centres, creating active travel opportunities for workforces
- By promoting the County as an attractive and green location for investment through a high quality path network as part of its green infrastructure
- By enabling more people to be healthy, happy and confident through an active lifestyle in an attractive and vibrant County
- Through the sustenance of a high quality environment.

3.3 ROWIP3 and Local Transport Plan 3

ROWIP3 continues its strong links with the LTP3 and is a successful mechanism for delivering on LTP3 objectives through the capital programme. Walking and cycling are included as interventions in all 6 goals (with “provide/improve walking and cycling routes/facilities” in the first 5 and “prioritise management of PROW in/around major settlements and key routes” in the 6th);

A stronger economy through regeneration

Reduce our carbon output

Safer and healthier travel

Better accessibility to services

Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment

Maintain the transport asset

LTP3 includes 4 specific policies for ROWIP3, these are Policy 15 on walking and 16 on cycling, 31 on security and 7 on attitude change. The plan also includes “improve accessibility on rights of way” as a priority for the first 3 years of delivery.



Policy 7 – Attitude Change

The County Council will bring about attitude change through publicising the importance of reducing dependence on the private car and encouraging the use of alternative modes of transport, especially for journeys that are made on a regular basis and those of a shorter distance. This will be done in parallel with appropriate infrastructure improvements which will play their part in demonstrating that alternatives to the car can be easy and attractive. Alternative modes will include car sharing and car clubs.

Policy 15 – Walking

The overall pedestrian network will continue to be developed and improved for the benefit of all of its users and to encourage walking. The provision of light controlled pedestrian crossings will be based on a priority needs assessment. Policies on the development of walking and operation of the urban and rural path network are outlined in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Policy 16 – Cycling

The cycle network will continue to be developed for the benefit of its users and to attract new users. Policies on the development and operation of the network are contained in the County Durham Cycling Strategy.

Policy 31 – Security

Improvements to perceptions of, or actual, poor security will continue to be made to walking and cycling routes.



During the life of this ROWIP, LTP3 will be replaced by a new Strategic Transport Plan for the North East Combined Authority Area⁶. Through the Council's work in helping to prepare this new Plan, we will seek to ensure that walking and cycling and the protection and enhancement of the AROW network are identified as a priority. In addition to this, the Strategic Transport Plan provides tangible opportunities to ensure coordinated improvements across local authority boundaries for example the Great North Cycleway⁷.

3.4 County Durham's Cycling Strategy and Action Plan

The current strategy supports the ROWIP through joint aims to create a more consistently high standard for the access network in and between key settlements. The next County Durham Cycling Strategy and Action Plan is due to be published in 2016. The existing strategy has delivered vital

improvements to the network to enable greater participation in cycling. The network of Cycling Super Routes has now been identified in draft through the County Durham Local Plan which will assist in the prioritisation of resources. Other work currently underway includes a review of the Strategic Cycling Network in Durham City and an audit of the cycling network in the 12 main towns.

Other plans and strategies of relevance are:

- County Durham Physical Activity Strategy
- Area Action Plans
- Parish and Locality Plans
- Healthy Weight Framework
- North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan
- Durham Heritage Coast Management Plan
- Landscape partnerships management plans: Heart of Teesdale and the proposed Bright Water and Land of Oak and Iron; and
- The County Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.

⁶ The North East Combined Authority Area includes the five districts of Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and County Durham.

⁷ We are working with neighbouring authorities to create a promoted route called the 'Great North Cycleway'. Once complete this route will run from Darlington to Blyth.



3.5

Other schemes and projects

The Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) has been delivered in County Durham since 2011.

The programme includes the Local Motion and Living Streets projects. Local Motion is a behaviour change project which encourages and enables school children, employees and the community to choose sustainable travel options. The Living Streets project is a walking outreach scheme which works with schools, the community and employers. Both projects encourage the use of and promote the access and rights of way network in the targeted areas they cover. The improvement of paths in these localities greatly complements the behaviour change work and we have carried out audits and improvement works wherever possible.

Where appropriate we will continue to work with landscape and other partnerships to pool resources and help to deliver on common goals. The funding sources include LEADER, LNPs and council budgets as and when they are available.

Natural England's National Character Area profiles will be used to determine access opportunities which are appropriate to the landscape character of the area. In addition, Natural England have dedicated Open Access in parts of NNRs in the county to provide a valuable recreational resource.

Vision, Objectives and Opportunities



4.1 Our Vision

Our Vision is to deliver an access network fit for the 21st Century.



4.2 ROWIP3 Objectives

The objectives remain the same as the previous ROWIPs.

1. Improve access infrastructure
2. Contribute to a prosperous economy
3. Promote good health
4. Promote a high quality environment
5. Influence travel choices
6. Inspire active, confident and responsible communities

4.3 ROWIP3 Opportunities

The main opportunities for delivering the objectives are;

Opportunity 1. Delivering a High Quality and Sustainable Access Infrastructure

Opportunity 2. Influencing Development and Contribute to Economic Regeneration

Opportunity 3. Promoting Quality of Life and Healthy Happy Communities

Opportunity 4. Engaging Partnerships and Involving Communities

Within each section is a list of policies which set out our approach to fulfilling these opportunities. There are 14 policies in total and these are tabled in the Implementation Plan (section 6, page 25). The policies will be addressed through specific measurable actions which will be delivered through core rights of way work and through 5 projects. The projects are an effective way for delivering multiple objectives.



Opportunity 1 Delivering a High Quality and Sustainable Access Infrastructure

We will strive to manage the network so that it fulfils its potential and is an available and enjoyable resource. Good management includes maintenance which is crucial to making the most of the network, fulfilling investment in

improvements and encouraging people to use and enjoy paths. Enforcing the Highway Law is also a vital area of work and we will fulfil our duties to protect and assert the public's right to use paths. Alongside this, we will deliver high quality improvements to the network and working practices to enable sustainable, effective and efficient use of resources. The following policies demonstrate how we will do this:-

1. **Protect and maintain the network:** by ensuring the rights of the public are protected and asserted by securing an appropriate annual budget for maintenance, continue the registration and the protection of unrecorded rights and the ongoing maintenance of network records.
2. **Modernise the network:** by improving existing routes.
3. **Prioritise improvements:** by providing evidence based action plans for all main towns and villages through the Access Prioritisation Project.
4. **Influence travel and lifestyle choices:** by understanding the user through the installation of automatic counters to capture information on participation levels and the profile of users, and by creating and promoting well designed, high quality active travel routes.
5. **Support National Trails:** by playing an active role in the National Trail Partnerships for the Pennine Way and the England Coast Path.



Opportunity 2 Influencing Development and Contribute to Economic Regeneration

Access plays a significant role in supporting a vibrant economy by providing routes for sustainable travel and tourism, linking valuable green infrastructure and enhancing quality of life.

1. **Protect and improve paths around development:** ensure paths are provided and improved as part of development.
2. **Identify and improve gateway sites to public green spaces:** deliver improvements to key entry points.
3. **Deliver improvements to specific recreational routes which contribute to economic regeneration:** identify opportunities to secure access on County Council land.



Opportunity 3 Promoting Quality of Life and Healthy Happy Communities



The contribution paths make to healthy active lifestyles, social cohesion and pride in place cannot be over-emphasised. Paths provide opportunities for daily exercise in natural green spaces, affordable green routes to work and an increased sense of community, all of which can enhance quality of life and improve health and wellbeing. It is vital that promotional work is incorporated into improvements to enable well-informed confident users to enjoy the network.



1. **Encourage the use of access and rights of way as part of active recreation through improvement and promotion to benefit health and wellbeing:** by supporting projects that use the access network to promote healthy active lifestyles.
2. **Encourage responsible use of the network:** complete online information on Places to walk/cycle/ride.
3. **Enhance the natural environment and biodiversity as part of improvement schemes:** by adherence to legislation on protected species and by reducing the negative impacts of improvements and by incorporating enhancements wherever possible.



Opportunity 4 Engaging Partnerships and Involve Communities

Partnership working continues to be important to secure understanding of and investment in the access network across a broad range of agendas such as health, tourism and physical activity. We will build on existing partnerships and create new relationships where value can be added to each other's strategic priorities. Community involvement continues to be a main focus for us and we will support communities by enabling management and encouraging use of the network.

1. **Support communities and volunteers to assist in access management:** including delivery through Parish and Town Councils and Meetings and Durham Voluntary Countryside Ranger Service (DVCRS) and through work on Access Prioritisation with the aforementioned and Area Action Partnerships (AAPs).
2. **Maintain and develop partnerships which can secure resources and support improvements and sustain use of the network:** by prioritising guided walk and ride routes for maintenance and improvement, by maintaining self-guided promoted routes though DVCRS and through the delivery of path improvements with additional funding.
3. **Work with landowners to manage access across private land:** by encouraging take up of 25% grants, by promoting good working practice and by distributing guidance on access management.



A photograph of a man in a red jacket and black helmet riding a bicycle. A child in a yellow helmet is seated in a stroller attached to the back of the bike. The man is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

Conclusion



5. Conclusion

ROWIP3, Walk, Cycle, Ride is our plan to develop and deliver a high quality path network fit for 21st Century travel, recreation and enjoyment.

The plan follows on from ROWIPs 1 and 2 and continues to promote the vital contribution the access and rights of way network makes to wider economic, health, environmental and social agendas and Durham County Council's corporate goals. ROWIP3 focusses on paths which serve specific strategic purposes such as those which provide important utility and recreational routes around the main towns and villages of the County, and those which offer opportunities for sustainable tourism and physical activity.



Implementation Plan 2015-2018

6.1 Implementation Plan

ROWIP3 will be implemented through the policies and actions set out either through core Access and Rights of Way work or through projects. These are all either existing projects or projects which have been trialled through previous ROWIPs which can be developed. The projects have proved to be an effective way of delivering the objectives as they address several policies at once. The projects are;

Path Projects

- Access Prioritisation
- Promotion & Information
- Accessibility Target Areas
- Greenways
- Gateways

6.2 Path Project Details

Access Prioritisation

This innovative project, which was developed and trialled in 2009/10 and has since been applied to four more areas, helps us proactively manage the network by creating evidence-based prioritised plans for path improvements. We will continue to develop the project and roll it out to new areas. Information on the County Durham Access Prioritisation Project can be found here: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/3679/Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan>.

Promotion & Information

We will continue to improve the information we make available to the public. We will develop the online Definitive Map to include options for adding the wider path network (such as Railway Paths



and permissive routes) and will create accessible online maps and downloads. We will pay particular regard to ensuring that the information is easily accessible and in a variety of formats. The County Durham Definitive Public Rights of Way map online can be accessed here:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/definitivemap>

Accessibility Target Areas

In Year 1 of ROWIP2 we successfully piloted the scheme which made the paths more accessible in Kelloe and Stanley. We will carry out further surveys and replacement programmes (stiles and gates) in four Parishes throughout the life of the Implementation Plan to make the paths more accessible and attractive in these areas. This project aims to transform paths in areas of greatest need, whether this is because the paths have been unsupported by P3 groups, haven't been targeted for extra funding or because the paths are well used. We will support volunteers to carry out the path surveys and draw up a list of priority routes for improvement based on a standard list of criteria. This will help focus resources into the "most important local paths" and will assist us in developing a more strategic approach to network improvements. This project demonstrates our commitment to a more accessible access network.

Greenways

We will continue to develop a strategic network of Greenways which are attractive, accessible multi-user routes. The project aims to influence transport choices and provide high quality routes for commuters and for recreational use which can

potentially attract visitors. These routes will be newly created routes or improvements to existing public rights of way. They will be high quality and attractive in design with a strong emphasis on the incorporation of environmental enhancements for biodiversity.

Gateways

We will develop a project which identifies and improves key access points into greenspaces and the countryside through smart design of entrance features, crossing points, signage and interpretive material to ensure people feel safe, welcome, confident and informed when using these paths so that they are able to enjoy their experience. This will also include working with other Council Services to arrange the removal of rubbish as part of the improvement programme where it is an issue.

6.3 Implementation Plan Key

Policy:

Our approach to delivering the Opportunities

Action:

The specific task to be delivered

PI (Performance Indicator):

The measure we will use to report progress

Project:

As detailed in previous section

Lead:

The team / partners involved in delivery

Objectives:

The ROWIP Objectives addressed

Priority:

The timeframe for delivery

Yr1 = quick wins, deliverable by Apr 2016

Yr2/3 = actions deliverable before March 2019

CI (Continual Improvements) = ongoing throughout and beyond the life of the plan

Cost:

-£ = no additional cost, will use existing staff resource, may lead to efficiency savings

£ = up to £10,000

££ = £10,000 - £100,000

£££ = £100,000 - £400,000

££££ = more than £400,000

6.4 Monitoring

We will measure the achievements of ROWIP3 by assessing the numbers of actions delivered and performance indicators reached in an annual action plans and a final report in 2019.

The CDLAF will act as independent critical friend to assess progress against the Implementation Plan through regular updates and reporting at LAF meetings.

We also will use new methods for assessing the success of the plan through assessing data on participation levels (use of the network) and on the numbers of priority path improvements delivered.

6.5 Funding

We will use the Implementation Plan to produce an Action Plan with costings for each year.

Funding for Year 1 will be predominantly from LTP and partnership projects.

As previously stated, it is anticipated that policy support will continue through the North East Combined Authorities Strategic Transport Plan and we will be eligible to access funding from this regional pot for Durham County's walking and cycling schemes.

Table of actions

Opportunity 1 - Delivering a High Quality and Sustainable Access Infrastructure							
Policy	Action	Delivery					
		PI	Project	Lead & Partners	Objectives	Priority	Cost
1. Protect and maintain the network	1. Ensure the rights of the public are protected and asserted	Number of reported cases resolved		AROW, landowners	All	CI	-£
	2. Secure an appropriate annual budget for maintenance	Agree annual maintenance budget		AROW, Transport	All	CI	£££
	3. Register and protect unrecorded rights	Number of unrecorded paths protected					£
	4. Continue the ongoing maintenance of network records	Resource allocated to upkeep of records		AROW, Travel Planning	All	CI	-£
2. Modernise the network	5. Improve existing routes	Number of paths improved	Access Prioritisation Greenways Accessibility Target Areas	AROW, landowners, Countryside, P3	All	CI	£££
3. Prioritise improvements	6. Provide evidence based action plans for main towns and villages through the Access Prioritisation Project	Number of towns and villages audited	Access Prioritisation	AROW, CDLAF, external assistance	All	Yr2	£££
4. Influence travel and lifestyle choices	7. Understand the user through the installation of automatic counters and carry out user surveys and manual counts to capture information on participation levels and profile of users	Number of counters installed and profiles undertaken	Access Prioritisation Promotion & Information	AROW, Traffic	All, esp 5	Yr2	££
	8. Create and promote well designed, high quality active travel routes	Number of active travel routes created and promoted	Promotion & Information Greenways	AROW, Transport, landowners	All, esp 5	Yr2/3	££££
5. Support National Trails	9. Play an active role in the National Trail Partnerships for the Pennine Way and the England Coast Path	Funding for ongoing maintenance		National Trail Partnership, DHCP, AROW	1, 4, 6	Yr2/3	-£

Table of actions

Opportunity 2 - Influencing Development and Contribute to Economic Regeneration							
Policy	Action	Delivery					
		PI	Project	Lead & Partners	Objectives	Priority	Cost
1. Protect and improve paths around development	9. Ensure high quality paths are provided and improved as part of development	Number of paths improved	Access Prioritisation Gateways Greenways Promotion & Information	AROW	All	CI	-£
2. Identify and improve gateway sites	10. Deliver improvements to key access entry points	Number of gateways improved	Access Prioritisation Gateways	AROW	1, 6	Yr2/3	£££
3. Deliver improvements which contribute to economic regeneration	11. Identify opportunities to secure access on County Council land	Number of paths protected, improved or created	Access Prioritisation Greenways	AROW, Assets, CDLAF	All	Yr2/3	£

Opportunity 3 - Promoting Quality of Life and Healthy Happy Communities							
Policy	Action	Delivery					
		PI	Project	Lead & Partners	Objectives	Priority	Cost
1. Encourage the use of access and rights of way as part of active recreation through improvement and promotion to benefit health and wellbeing	16. Support projects that use the access network to promote healthy active lifestyles	Number of projects supported	Promotion & Information	AROW, Sport and Leisure	2,6	CI	£
2. Encourage responsible use of the network	17. Complete online information on Places to walk/cycle/ride	Online maps updated	Promotion & Information Gateways Greenways	AROW	3,4,5,6	Yr2/3	£
3. Enhance the natural environment and biodiversity as part of improvement schemes	18. Adhere to legislation on protected species and reduce negative impacts of improvements	Number of ecological and landscape assessments carried out	All	AROW, Ecology, Landscape	3, 4, 6	CI	£

Table of actions

Opportunity 4 - Engaging Partnerships and Involving Communities							
Policy	Action	Delivery					
		PI	Project	Lead & Partners	Objectives	Priority	Cost
1. Support communities and volunteers to assist in access management	15. Deliver through Parish and Town Councils and Meetings and DVCRS and through work on Access Prioritisation.	Number of local councils and other groups supported	Promotion & Information	AROW, DVCRS, Countryside, AAPs, Parish and Town Councils and Meetings	1, 4, 6	CI	££
2. Maintain and develop partnerships which can secure resources and support improvements and sustain use of the network	16. Prioritise promoted routes for maintenance and improvement	Routes mapped and added to annual maintenance list	Promotion & Information Greenways	AROW, Sport and Leisure	1, 3, 4, 6	CI	-£
	17. Maintain self-guided promoted routes through DVCRS scheme	Percentage of routes surveyed and maintained	Promotion & Information	AROW, DVCRS, Countryside	1, 4, 6	CI	-£
	18. Delivery of path improvements through additional funding	Value of path projects		AROW, external funding sources	All	CI	£££
3. Work with landowners to manage access across private land	19. Encourage take up of 25% grants – promote with landowners	Form distributed to landowners	Promotion & Information	AROW, CDLAF	1	CI	£
	20. Promote good working practice by distributing guidance on access management	Number of Guidance leaflets distributed	Promotion & Information	AROW	1	CI	-£

Appendices



7.1 List of Consultees

USER GROUPS

Byways and Bridleways Trust
British Horse Society
CTC, the national cycling charity
Durham Mountain Sports
Land Access Recreation Association
Open Spaces Society

British Canoe Union
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Durham City Cycling Forum
Durham University Mountaineering Club
NERO
Ramblers

LANDOWNERS / MANAGERS

Church Commissioners
Croxdale Estates
Forest Enterprise
Mortham Estates
National Trust
Scargill Estates
Strathmore Estates
Trustees of Lord Crewe
Woodland Trust

Country Land and Business Association
Durham Universities
Lambton Estate
National Farmers Union
Raby Estates
Smiths Gore
The Moorland Association
Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Service

OTHER GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS / ORGANISATIONS

BLIND Life
Durham Bike User Groups
Durham Wildlife Trust
Gateway Wheelers
Living Streets
Sustrans
Youth Hostel Association

Disability North
Durham City Cycling Forum
Environment Agency
Groundwork Trust
Sport England
Teesdale Disability Access Forum

PARTNERSHIPS

Area Action Partnerships
County Durham Local Access Forum
Durham Heritage Coast
Durham Voluntary Countryside Ranger Service (DVCRS)
Heart of Durham
Land of Oak and Iron
North Pennines AONB

Barnard Castle Vision
County Durham Sport
Durham's Ramblers Liaison Group
Heart of Teesdale
Limestone Landscapes
Visit County Durham

GOVERNMENT

Department of Farming and Rural Affairs
Neighbouring Highway Authorities
Town Councils

Natural England
Parish Councils
Parish Meetings

7.2 Glossary

AAP	Area Action Partnership
AAPR	Adopt a Promoted Route
AROW	Access and Rights of Way
CDLAF	County Durham Local Access Forum
CROW	Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
DCC	Durham County Council
DHCP	Durham Heritage Coast Partnership
DVCRS	Durham Voluntary Countryside Ranger Service
LNP	Local Nature Partnership
LTP	Local Transport Plan
NNR	National Nature Reserve
ROWIP	Rights of Way Improvement Plan
RED	Regeneration and Economic Development





The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) is a statutory document that enables Highway Authorities to create a more modern access and rights of way network.

We have created a plan which contributes to wider agendas including the environment, physical activity, health, social inclusion and sustainable travel.

The access and rights of way network provides more than 3,650kms of opportunities for walking, cycling and riding for travel, recreation and enjoyment across County Durham.

Improvements to the access and rights of way network will help to;

- ✓ provide sustainable means of travel to work, school and key services and reduce the reliance on cars
- ✓ contribute to the quality of people's lives, their fitness, health and wellbeing
- ✓ increase accessibility and opportunities to enjoy tourist destinations and the countryside
- ✓ enhance the environment.

For more information contact
03000 265311 prow@durham.gov.uk

walk · cycle · ride

prow@durham.gov.uk · www.durham.gov.uk/prow

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