

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 18 th June 2019
Report Subject	Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-2028
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 60 of the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, requires all Local Highway Authorities to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). The RoWIP is a plan for the Local Authority to manage and improve its rights of way network over a 10 year period.

This second ROWIP assesses the 2018 network and evaluates progress made since 2008. The current (2018) policy context is examined, priority areas are identified and a new-style Statement of Action proposed.

In July 2016, the Welsh Government issued guidance to local highway authorities in Wales for the review and redrafting of RoWIPs. This guidance has been used to direct the preparation of Flintshire's second RoWIP.

Part of the plan is a booklet containing a suit of policies and procedures associated with Rights of Way.

This final draft has been amended following a statutory three month consultation

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members approve the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and policy and procedures booklet.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE PLAN																
1.01	The RoWIP 2018-2028 focuses on three main sections; evaluation of the previous plan; assessment of the current network condition and; statement of action going forward over the life of the plan.																
1.02	The plan is a statutory requirement under Section 60 of the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000.																
1.03	<p>Evaluating delivery of the first ROWIP</p> <p>The first RoWIP identified the following areas as being key priorities for 2008-18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of the network • Service Management • Improving the network • Signage • Clear obstructions and improve enforcement • Definitive Map • Improve accessibility • The development of bridleways and a cycle network • Link up and develop bridleway network • Off-road motor vehicles • Publicity and promotion 																
1.04	Of the 22 tasks identified, seven have been completed or there has been substantial progress made; while seven have made little or no progress; and eight have made partial progress. However, the recording of essential data has been found to have been inconsistent and sometimes lacking, leading to difficulty in identifying progress in some areas.																
1.05	<p>Assessment of current condition of the network and its legal record</p> <p>The public rights of way network in 2018 consists of approximately 1800 individual public paths made up as follows:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Footpath</td> <td style="width: 5%;">-</td> <td style="width: 60%;">955.2km</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: right;">(88.3%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bridleway</td> <td>-</td> <td>114.6km</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(10.6%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BOAT*</td> <td>-</td> <td>11.9km (1.1%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">*(Byway Open to All Traffic)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">Total 1,082km (100%)</td> </tr> </table>	Footpath	-	955.2km	(88.3%)	Bridleway	-	114.6km	(10.6%)	BOAT*	-	11.9km (1.1%)	*(Byway Open to All Traffic)	Total 1,082km (100%)			
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1.06	<p>The RoWIP specifically assesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of Use • Maintenance and repair • Enforcement • Legal record • Policies and protocols • Infrastructure • Surface 																

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Vegetation management • Reporting, recording and monitoring processes • Promoted routes <p>Current management and organisation is detailed with specific reference to staff, budget, the Local Access Forum (LAF), and external relationships.</p>
1.07	A strategic overview of the PRow network was carried out, with reference to relevant legislation, strategies and documents at national and county level.
1.08	The findings from the review of the consultation responses, the desk review of relevant strategies and plans, and the evaluation of the current condition of the network can be drawn together to show a number of emerging messages:
1.09	<p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who walk regularly are broadly happy with the condition of the network; • Users would like to see a more dynamic approach to enforcement; with improved communication about action taken; • Horse-riders want bridleway improvements; • Disabled users feel strongly about the restricted access to Wales Coastal Path, and need facilities. <p>Landowners have concerns about users opening up gaps around stiles.</p>
1.10	<p>Condition monitoring and maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is very little available data on network condition; • Work is primarily reactive, and not pro-active; • Stakeholders are unclear about how and why maintenance works are prioritised and done.
1.11	<p>Information and promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAMS on-line reporting system is a positive development. • Promotion of the network, carried out by the Countryside team, is limited; • There is very little information for either land managers or path users, but there is demand for it; • PR opportunities are not maximised.
1.12	<p>The organisational perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights of Way staff focus on their own individual areas; • The team has looked externally to learn from good practice elsewhere; • Relevant data and information is difficult to access. <p>There is a weak relationship between Rights of Way and the rangers/Countryside service.</p>

1.13	<p>There are aspects where the local rights of way network that can be said to meet present needs, in terms of what participants in the review have said they like about the Flintshire's rights of way network. These can be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing access to many different parts of the County for regular walking; • Footpaths mainly in good useable condition; • Noticeable improvements in recent years; • Good signposting from roads; • Providing some opportunities for off-road mountain biking and horse-riding.
1.14	<p>However, it is evident that there are ways in which Flintshire's local rights of way are weak in terms of meeting present and future needs, in relation to the problems that participants in the review raised and the improvements that they said they would like to see. These can be summarised as follows (in no particular order of importance):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waymarking is not as consistent as some users would like; • There are not enough bridleways for riders to enable them to ride off-road as much as they would like; • Wheelchair users are not all able to access the Wales Coast Path, and experience some problems with the surfacing on local footpaths; • Landowners have experienced problems as a result of inappropriate behaviour by users and their dogs, particularly in terms of compromising the stock proofing of their fields; • There is insufficient information about the Rights of Way network, in terms of what is there, and people's rights and responsibilities.
1.15	<p>Opportunities identified in the Statement of Action:</p>
1.16	<p>Physical accessibility of the network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate opportunities where disability access can be improved; • Maintain good condition of footpaths; • Waymarking and signage improvements; • Investigate opportunities for bridleway linkages; • Investigate opportunities for footpath links between key places; • Using volunteers more for maintenance and improvement works; • Deal with enforcement issues in a timely way.
1.17	<p>More purposeful use of the Rights of Way network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and maintain strategic linkages, and facilitate networks, at strategic and operational levels; • Investigate opportunities for appropriate routes for walking for health; • Investigate opportunities for appropriate routes for active travel.
1.18	<p>Legal recording and changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate the Definitive Map and Statement;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address anomalies; • Continuous review of the Definitive Map and Statement; • Build expertise amongst the ROW team staff; • Investigate and develop opportunities for sourcing external funding; • Develop and disseminate a team prioritisation policy for legal work.
1.19	<p>Promotion and information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the route network; • Promote routes for riders and cyclists; • Improve information provision for land managers and ROW users; • Improve information provision for people with disabilities.
1.20	<p>Strategic working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work pro-actively, using the ROWIP for direction; regularly review progress and report to LAF and Cabinet; • Develop, review and update policies to ensure comprehensive and consistent coverage of key areas of activity; • Build and maintain strong means of communication with key stakeholders, including Councillors, users and landowners; • Create and implement a volunteering strategy, including considering collaborative opportunities; • Develop use of GIS as a proactive management & decision-making tool; • Develop and disseminate a team prioritisation policy for legal work.
1.21	<p>Key task planning and delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound record-keeping, especially on CAMS; • Well designed and planned surveying/data gathering; • Consistent procedures for all key work tasks.
1.22	<p>Organisational development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review lead roles and responsibilities for key tasks for particular individuals; • Encourage individuals to work with initiative, within a ‘whole team’; • Build relevant expertise related to lead roles within the team; • Establish the LAF; • Investigate opportunities for closer collaborative working with neighbouring and over-lapping authorities; • Investigate and develop opportunities for sourcing external funding.
1.23	<p>In response to the early findings of the RoWIP, a Policy and Procedure booklet has already been developed as a priority.</p> <p>The policies and procedures will form the basis of a booklet to be made available to users of the Public Rights of Way network and to landowners, in order that there is widespread understanding and transparency about what Flintshire County Council does and how it does it.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the Authority has considered best practice and published guidance notes in the delivery of the service.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The RoWIP details the likely resource implications over the next 10 years, and it is expected to be delivered from existing Service budgets and additional grant aid and income.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>The following organisations were consulted in the development of this plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Horse Society, Clwyd Branch • Exercise Referral Scheme, Deeside Leisure Centre • Flintshire Disability Forum • Flintshire Local Voluntary Council • Farming Union of Wales • National Farming Union • Natural Resources Wales • Public Health Wales • Ramblers Flintshire (Footpaths Officers) • Walkabout Flintshire
3.02	An electronic survey disseminated to members of Ramblers Flintshire and Walkabout Flintshire walk leaders received 40 responses.
3.04	A pre-consultation letter was sent out in 2017 to Town and Community Councils and neighbouring Authorities.
3.04	A statutory 3 month public consultation was undertaken and the summary responses are included in the appendices. Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee have also been consulted on the ROWIP and Policies and Procedure booklet.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-2028
5.02	Flintshire Rights of Way Policy and Procedures 2018
5.03	Summary consultation responses document

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Contact Officer: Tom Woodall, Access & Natural Environment Manager Telephone: 01352 703902 E-mail: tom.woodall@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None.