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Dr Mike Willison - Chairman
Leeds Local Access Forum
35 Church Wood Avenue
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CCU Ref: DWO 15056

28 March 2007

Dear Dr Willison

Implementing Rights of Way Improvement Plans

Thank you for your letter of 8 March about implementing rights of way improvement plans (ROWIPs). I have been asked to reply.

Defra has noted the concerns you share with the Chair of Cumbria Local Access Forum, and you may be interested to see the attached copy of the Minister's letter dated 22 February. As the concerns expressed by Mr Graham and yourself seem to be relatively widespread amongst forums, Defra is considering sending out a circular letter to all forums, explaining how it anticipates ROWIPs being implemented and the important role Defra envisage forums will play in this.

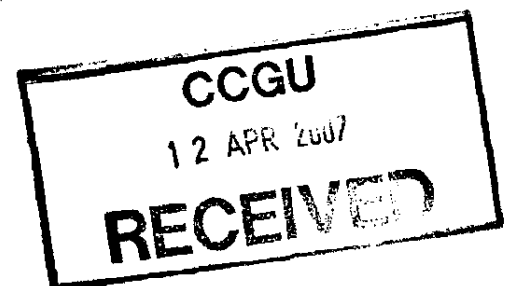
Natural England is currently considering how to support local authorities in preparing and implementing their ROWIPs, and its regional staff will be in contact with local authorities and local access forums soon.

It was never the intention that ROWIP implementation would be fully funded through the Local Transport Plan. Integration of these two plans does offer increased opportunities for funding, but as you rightly point out, only where ROWIP proposals are consistent with DfT's shared priorities for transport. Some rights of way improvements will not fall into these categories and will need to be funded from elsewhere.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vickie Whitehead".

Vickie Whitehead
Defra - Customer Contact Unit



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Mr Duncan Graham - Chairman
Cumbria Local Access Forum
Economy, Culture and Environment
The Courts
Carlisle CA3 8NA

Our Ref: PO 9206

22 February 2007

From the Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs
Barry Gardiner MP

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Gardiner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thank you for your letter of 5 February, on behalf of the Cumbria, Lake District National Park, and Yorkshire Dales National Park Access Forums, about the implementation of Rights Of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs).

There is no duty to implement ROWIPs because the Government wanted these plans to be aspirational. In other words we did not want individual authorities to reign in their ambitions for their rights of way networks, for fear of creating a hostage to fortune.

I appreciate your concerns about where the funding is going to come from to implement ROWIPs and know that many would like the Government to fund all ROWIP improvements. However, this is neither possible nor practical. It was never the intention that the Government would fund the improvements, particularly as they are likely to include a significant proportion of measures that are arguably already part of local authorities' statutory duties.

We made it clear from the outset that local authorities were responsible for sourcing funds to support the improvements identified in their action plan. The integration of Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and ROWIPs offers increased opportunities for funding where rights of way work will help deliver LTP priorities, but some rights of way improvements will not fall into this category and will need to be funded from elsewhere. This is why we still intend to have two separate plans, but bring them as close as possible to ensure they are properly integrated. I know that putting together funding proposals and chasing potential sources of income can be time consuming, but there are many positive spin-offs to joining up with other sectors to deliver an improved network. Many authorities have already risen to this challenge and are increasingly getting smarter at accessing funds from a variety of sources.



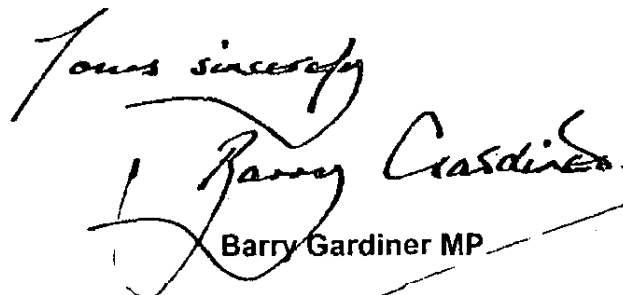
Research undertaken by Natural England on ROWIP progress last year found a wide diversity of funds being accessed to deliver ROWIP actions. These included: funds from Section 106 agreements (planning obligations), Aggregate Levy, Landfill tax, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainability Funds, Primary Care Trusts, Rural Development Agencies, European Union funds, Sport England, Heritage Lottery Funds, Tourism & Tourist Levy, plus a range of locally sourced funds and, of course, LTP funding and Environmentally Sensitive Area High Level Schemes.

Half of local highway authorities gave a clear indication of funding for rights of way improvements in their LTP last year, and almost a quarter indicated possible funding. The attached table summarises the funding identified in LTPs last year for rights of way work. Some authorities may not have got the allocation they were expecting from the LTP process and may need to reprioritise spending, but it would not be appropriate to seek to ring fence money for rights of way, so that it would be excluded from this process. Local authorities must have the discretion to decide what their priorities should be, taking into account the needs of their electorate. However, we will be encouraging those authorities that did not include rights of way in their final LTP to report on progress in integrating the two plans when they submit their next progress report to the Department for Transport next year.

I can assure you that we are just as keen as you to ensure that the very valuable work done in preparing ROWIPs leads to improvements on the ground. Since we cannot offer to fund all improvements, we are instead working with Natural England to look at other ways of facilitating early implementation. Natural England is looking at how knowledge and experience can be shared between authorities via the public rights of way Good Practice Guide and other networks. To help authorities to gain confidence in putting together funding partnerships and securing outside investment, Natural England have also been awarding small match funding grants in each region to get one or two projects identified in ROWIPs off the ground. Natural England hopes to restart this scheme in the next financial year.

Defra also recently funded Cranfield University to develop a decision support tool to help local authorities to justify and prioritise rights of way expenditure in line with the achievement of desired social and economic outcomes. The research and tool will be downloadable from our website at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/public/index.htm> later this month. Local authority staff that saw the tool in action last year at regional workshops were keen to put it into action.

Local access forums have a pivotal role to play in driving forward implementation of ROWIPs. Given that members are drawn from a wide range of interests, I hope that local access forums will be able to provide useful advice to local authorities on implementation and monitoring of ROWIPs, including the identification and suitability of funding sources and the development of potential partnerships. If there are other ways in which we could facilitate implementation, apart from funding implementation, then do let me know.

Yours sincerely

Barry Gardiner MP

Funding identified for rights of way in final Local Transport Plans March 2006

Authority	£	Source	Description
Bedfordshire	£395k over 5 years	Other county capital	ROW
Buckinghamshire	£100k per annum over 5 years £445k, £460k, £475k in 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09	Capital block Revenue	ROW Maintenance programme ROW Maintenance programme
Cambridgeshire	£55k over 5 years	Integrated transport block	ROW management - gate programme
Cheshire	125k over 5 years 150k over 5 years	LTP capital programme LTP capital programme	PROW improvements Macclesfield area programme quiet lanes/PROW improvements
Derbyshire	9040k over 5 years. 1075k over 5 years £856k over 5 years £4875k over 5 years	Maintenance projected capital spend Maintenance projected revenue spend	Footways, cycleways and ROW "Efficient maintenance and management"; PROW maintenance ROW improvements "Accessibility and travel awareness" Footways and ROW maintenance "Accessibility and travel awareness"
Devon	Not identified	LTP capital programme	Funding for ROWIP improvements in Sustainable tourism, recreation and leisure bids
Dorset	£100k pa	Not identified	ROWIP
Durham	£60k, £60k, £100k, £100k, £100k in 2006/07 and subsequent years	Capital block	Capital works for ROW Local strategic partnerships funding also identified. Various parish paths, footpath improvements in different geographic areas, under accessibility To enable successful integration of ROWIP
Essex	£2.5m over 5 years	Capital, Integrated transport block Revenue	Rights of way
Gloucestershire	£1232k, 2005/06	Not identified LTP	Programme of measures ... as part of ROWIP Provisional allocation, for improving access to and around the countryside including walking, horse riding, wheelchair access, public transport and cycling.
Hampshire	£900k over 5 years £1.5 m over 5 years	Integrated transport block	ROW
Hertfordshire	£150k, £250k, £400k, £500k, £650k in 2006/07 and subsequent years	LTP, Active Travel	Countryside access in Ribble Valley
Lancashire	£400k over 5 years	LTP capital	Asset management (ROW excluding improvements) Asset
Leicestershire	£560k over 5 years £30k over 5 years £200k 2006/7 Not identified	Integrated transport block Revenue funding implement LTP2 capital programmes	ROW maintenance ROW in spending on improving accessibility, ... improvement and maintenance

Lincolnshire	Not identified	Capital and revenue budgets	Funding for key strategic routes
Norfolk	£31.1k in 2005/06	Revenue	ROW
North Yorkshire	£4k in 2006/07; £4.2k in 2007/08; £4.41k in 2008/09; £4.63k in 2009/10; £4.86k in 2010/11	Revenue	ROW
Northamptonshire	£60k pa over 5 years £120k – £143 k pa £380k (part)	Integrated transport block Not identified OOPM Growth Area Funding	Healthier travel (implementing ROWIP) ROW maintenance ROWIP objectives linked to LTP (Connecting People and Place projects)
Shropshire	Not identified	Not identified	Quality walking routes in rural areas/to key destinations
Somerset	Not identified	LTP Non LTP	Long list of projects identified in draft ROWIP
Staffordshire	Not identified	LTP	Prioritised ROW improvements, as resources permit.
Surrey	£4k	LTP	Scheme planned in Guildford to improve public footpath No 38 (school link)
	£6k	LTP	Scheme planned in East Horsley to improve public footpath No 603 (sheltered housing/bus stop link)
	£500k over 5 years	LTP	To support ROW, measures that increase accessibility
Worcestershire	Not identified	LTP	To support ROWIP programme of improvements
Merseyside	Liverpool £90k over 5 years Wirral 70k over 5 years Sefton £210k over 5 years Wirral £75k over 5 years	LTP LTP LTP Non LTP	ROW improvements
West Yorkshire	£8799k 5 years Not identified	LTP District revenue funds	For walking schemes including ROW
Blackburn	125k over 5 years Not identified	LTP Revenue funding Lancashire CC/ Countryside Agency funding: s.278 agreements	ROWIP ROWIP ROWIP
Blackpool	Not identified	LTP	PROW upgrades
Brighton & Hove	£80k over 5 years £80k over 5 years	LTP LTP	Easy access route Missing links
Central Leicestershire	£15k 2006/07 £325k over 5 years	Revenue budget Integrated transport	ROW maintenance ROW improvements (City area only), delivering accessibility
Derby	Not identified	LTP	ROWIP improvements
Greater Nottingham	<£250k 2008/09 – 2009/10 £245k over 5 years	LTP Revenue expenditure	Local ROW schemes identified through ROWIP Countryside access
Hallon	£474k over 5 years Not identified	LTP maintenance programme Not identified	"Independent footpath network". Includes footways Improvements to ROW identified within walking and

Telford & Wrekin	£50k per annum over 5 years	LTP capital fund	Rights of Way Improvement Fund
Thurrock	£160k over 5 years	Not identified	ROW
Torbay	Not identified	Not identified	ROWIP improvements
West Berkshire	£130k 2006/07; £152k 2207/08; £142k 2208/09; £135k 2009/10; £135k 2010/11	LTP	9 rural walking/cycling schemes (includes ROW)
Windsor & Maidenhead	Not identified	Not identified	ROWIP
	£61k in 2006-07; £55k, £60k, £60k, £65k in subsequent years. "Other bridge schemes" includes ROW	30% funding from s.106 contributions, 70% capital allocation	Specific projects listed in ROWIP
	Not identified	Capital	ROW bridges

NB Only those authorities which mentioned ROW funding in some shape or form are included in this table.