



## Report of the Director of City Development

### Executive Board

Date: 13 February 2009

Subject: Leeds Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan - 2009 to 2017

<b>Electoral Wards Affected:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> All Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)

<b>Specific Implications For:</b>
Equality and Diversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community Cohesion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Narrowing the Gap <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In  
(Details contained in the report)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report has been prepared following the report to Executive Board on 14 May 2008. At that time, Members were informed of the need to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and gave their support to begin the 12 week statutory consultation period for the draft Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Leeds.
2. Following the 12 week statutory consultation period and taking into account any comments and suggestions made, the final Plan is now ready to be published.
3. The purpose of this report is to seek Executive Board's approval for the final Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).
4. The ROWIP links to aims and priorities at both a national and local level, such as the West Yorkshire Transport Plan, Vision for Leeds, Leeds Strategic Plan, Cultural, Sport and Recreation Strategies.
5. The ROWIP, is intended to form a ten year management plan, setting out areas for consideration and improvement across the public rights of way network within the Leeds district. Through the assessment and consultation process undertaken to date, a series of actions and improvement projects have been identified.
6. If all of the identified projects were to be delivered over the next ten years, the City Council would need to seek funding between £2.3m and £3.9m, with the intention of seeking to maximise funding available through a variety of sources including Section 106 monies, West Yorkshire Transport Plan and third party grants. The Plan

provides an opportunity to bid for additional funding on an informed basis. This in turn will inform the Council's future investment decisions concerning improvements to the public rights of way network in Leeds.

7. It should mainly be viewed as an aspirational document highlighting improvements (which in part) are over and above the basic statutory requirements.
8. In drawing up a ROWIP the Council is required to:
  - a) assess the extent to which rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.
  - b) assess the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and enjoyment.
  - c) assess the accessibility of local rights of way to blind and partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.

## **1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Executive Board's approval for the Leeds Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

## **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 Leeds City Council is responsible for the maintenance, management and legal recording of the public rights of way network within its administrative boundary.

- 2.2 As part of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000, the City Council has a statutory duty to publish a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan, (ROWIP). In drawing up this plan the Council is required to:

- a) assess the extent to which rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.
- b) assess the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and enjoyment.
- c) assess the accessibility of local rights of way to blind and partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.

- 2.3 The public rights of way network in Leeds is both extensive and varied and includes:

- a total length of path network of 799km broken down to specific categories of public rights of way. In addition, it is also important to stress the importance of permissive paths, which are over and above this figure and enhance overall public access.
- key strategic and recreational routes, such as the Dales Way Link, Ebor Way, Leeds Country Way, Trans Pennine Trail and Aire Valley Towpath.
- local recreational routes such as the Meanwood Valley Trail, Calverley Millennium Way, Pudsey Link Bridleway, Leeds Links, The Linesway, Harland Way, Rothwell Greenway, Temple Newsam bridlepath, West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways and the Wykebeck Valley Way.
- open access land a total of 350ha and Woodland Trust Sites,

### **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP), is intended to form a ten year management plan, setting out areas for consideration and improvement across the public rights of way network within the Leeds district. To achieve this, officers have undertaken an assessment of the public rights of way network in Leeds and sought to obtain the public's views to identify the key issues to address going forward.
- 3.2 A questionnaire survey methodology was chosen to assess the needs of walkers, cyclists, horse riders, disabled path users and motorised vehicle users. Face to face questionnaire surveys were carried out and postal questionnaires were also sent out. In total 775 people responded to the questionnaire. Detailed analyses of the results are included in the main plan which has been placed on the Council's website at [www.leeds.gov.uk/parks](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/parks) and countryside. In addition, a summary of the results is included in the Executive Summary of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.3 A 'desk top' assessment of the definitive map and statement, (a legal record that indicates the status of a public right of way) was also undertaken to identify:
- the extent to which routes and networks are available to different groups of path users.
  - areas which are deficient in rights of way for all, or particular groups of path users.
  - the possible restoration of severed rights of way due to road building.
- 3.4 The results of this assessment are also included in the ROWIP, highlighting a number of specific issues where improvements could be made to the path network. The Action Plan that has been developed is attached to the Executive Summary at Appendix 1 and includes a series of general actions which will improve the management of the network, including actions to address outstanding Definitive Map Modification Orders and also site specific proposals, where improvement projects have been identified.
- 3.5 The Leeds Local Access Forum have given their advice and support for the Draft ROWIP and assisted in the design of the initial consultation process.
- 3.6 The Draft ROWIP for Leeds was published in July 2008 and was made available to the public as a printed document, a Compact Disc and via the Council's website [www.leeds.gov.uk](http://www.leeds.gov.uk). A copy of the full document is appended to the agenda for Executive Board members and can also be obtained from the named clerk on the front of the agenda.
- 3.7 Comments were invited within a 12 week period, originally up to the 13 October 2008, but subsequently extended to the end of October to give a little more time for responses to be submitted. A short questionnaire in the form of a tear off sheet was included within the draft ROWIP document itself but additional written suggestions and comments were also invited. Approximately 300 copies of the document were sent out to individuals, Parish and Town Councils, all elected members of Leeds City Council, members of the Leeds Local Access Forum, local path user groups and large landowning estates. Detailed analysis of the results can be found at Appendix 2
- 3.8 Of the respondents 82% felt that the Council had covered all the most important access routes and issues; 77% believed that we had set the ROWIP within the correct

Policy context, both Nationally and Locally and 91% agreed with the listed 'Statements of Action' for improving our management of the Rights of Way network.

- 3.9 Regarding the longer term priorities for improving the rights of way network in Leeds, these were as follows:- (1 being the most important).
- 1) All rights of way should be fully signposted, with destinations and distances where appropriate.
  - 2) A proactive approach should be taken towards establishing missing links in the public rights of way network.
  - 3) Historical research should be carried out, on a parish by parish basis, to determine whether there are 'lost ways' which need adding to, or legally upgrading, on the definitive map and statement.
  - 4) Surfaces and path furniture should be improved and upgraded whenever possible.
  - 5) Rights of way should, wherever reasonably possible, be made more accessible for the less able.
  - 6) More information on walking, cycling and horse riding should be produced and published.

3.9 Some respondents were doubtful that the City Council would take ownership or were committed to delivering the actions stated within the ROWIP. Although we accept that the ROWIP is an aspirational document in part, any additional funding should be taken into context within the broader financial implications and challenges that face the Parks and Countryside Service and across the City Council as a whole.

3.10 Taking into account all comments received, the Council has now developed a final version of the ROWIP for approval. Once the plan is published it will then be subject to a ten year review.

#### **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

4.1 The development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan will enable the City Council to meet its statutory duty to produce a plan under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000.

#### **5.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

5.1 As outlined above, the Council does have a statutory duty to publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Thereafter, although the Council is not obliged to implement the plan, it does provide an opportunity to bid for additional funding on an informed basis. This in turn will inform the Council's future investment decisions concerning improvements to the public rights of way network in Leeds. It should mainly be viewed as an aspirational document highlighting improvements (which in part) are over and above the basic statutory requirements.

5.2 If all of the identified projects were to be delivered over the next ten years, it is estimated that the City Council would need to seek funding for between £2.3m and £3.9m

- 5.3 The Action Plan, attached at Appendix 1 sets out the aspirations for the long-term development of the public rights of way network in Leeds.
- 5.4 It is not the intention at this stage to identify the specific funding streams that will meet the stated priorities, however the Council will work with a range of stakeholders to help bring forward funding packages over the lifetime of this plan.
- 5.5 In particular, the Council will seek to use Section 106 monies that become available, monies from the West Yorkshire Transport Plan and third party grants to maximise the funding that can be drawn upon.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

- 6.1 The ROWIP presented provides an overview of the public rights of way network in Leeds, acknowledges its importance as a recreational resource for the city and assesses areas where future improvements can be made. The Action Plan presented provides an opportunity for the Council to bid for additional funding on an informed basis. This in turn will inform the Council's future investment decisions concerning improvements to the public rights of way network in Leeds.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Executive Board is asked to note the contents of this report and the Executive Summary and Action Plan attached at Appendix 1 and to approve the Leeds Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

## **Background Papers**

Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan  
Executive Board Report, Leeds Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Consultation Draft,  
May 2008