



**Leeds**  
CITY COUNCIL

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**Report of the Director of City Development**

**Executive Board**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

**Subject: Leeds Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan – Consultation Draft**

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

All

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. As part of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 the Council has a statutory duty to publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, (ROWIP).
2. 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.
3. A questionnaire survey methodology was chosen to assess the needs of walkers, cyclists, horse riders, disabled path users and motorised vehicle users.

4. 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. Through the assessment and consultation process undertaken to date, a series of actions and improvement projects have been identified. If all of the identified projects were to be delivered over the next ten years, the City Council would need to seek funding between £1.895m and £3.045m, with the intention of seeking to maximise funding available through 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. It should mainly be viewed as an aspirational document highlighting improvements (which in part) are over and above the basic statutory requirements.

## **1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the need to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and to seek their support to begin the 12 week statutory consultation period for the draft Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Leeds.

## **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 document which has been deposited in the Members' library. In addition, a summary of the results is included in the Executive Summary of the draft 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 draft 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 Should Members approve the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan for consultation, the next step will be to make it available for a 12 week consultation period. The Council will make the draft ROWIP widely available for public consultation in order to attract as wide a response as possible. Feedback will be sought via a series of methods including direct correspondence with key stakeholders, through the Council's web-site, public displays and via the Council's library network.
- 3.7 Following the 12 week consultation period, and taking into account all comments received, the Council will then be in a position to develop a final version of the ROWIP for approval by Executive Board. The plan 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 £1.895m and £3.045m.
- 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 draft Plan 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. Subject to Member approval, the draft plan will be subject to a 12 week public consultation period.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and the draft Executive Summary and Action Plan attached at Appendix 1 and to approve the commencement of a 12 week public consultation period for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 7.2 Following the conclusion of the consultation period, officers will bring back a final version of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Executive Board approval.