

Subject: City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement Public Rights of Way network improvements

Date: 28th November 2023

Report of: Public Rights of Way Manager

Report to: Director of Communities, Environment & Housing

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report seeks approval from the Director of Communities, Environment & Housing to inject £608,880 City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement money allocated from West Yorkshire Combined Authority to the City Council into a capital scheme, with authority to spend, for the improvement of the Public Rights of Way network in Leeds up to 2026/2027.

The CRSTS is aimed at providing an integrated and inclusive transport network to make it easier for people to walk, cycle and use public transport around West Yorkshire. CRSTS has a number of aspirations for integrated sustainable transportation with the key ones for the Public Rights of Way network being connectivity and contributing to Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).

Implementation of this scheme will contribute to ensuring that the public rights of way network in Leeds is protected and improved in accordance with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan¹ and will be delivered with specific targeted improvement schemes. In this connection, the Best Council Plan, West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040, Leeds Transport Strategy, Local Transport Plan, Climate Change Plan, Leeds Vision 2030 and the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy all encourage the development and improvement of facilities to promote walking and cycling, active travel, access to green space to improve physical and mental health and reduce pollution and noise.

Recommendations

- a) It is recommended that the Director of Communities, Environment & Housing approves the injection into the Capital Programme of, and authority to spend, £608,880 City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement money from WYCA for improvements to the Public Rights of Way network up to 2026/2027.

What is this report about?

1. Approval from the Director of Communities, Environment & Housing is sought to inject £608,880 City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) money allocated from West Yorkshire Combined Authority to the City Council into a capital scheme for the improvement of the public rights of way (PROW) network in Leeds. The CRSTS is aimed at providing an integrated and inclusive transport network to make it easier for people to walk, cycle and use public transport around West Yorkshire. CRSTS has a number of aspirations for integrated sustainable transportation with the key ones for the Public Rights of Way network being connectivity and contributing to Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).
2. Authority to spend this CRSTS money for improvements to the Public Rights of Way network over the remaining 4 financial years of the scheme up to 2026/2027 is also sought.
3. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan¹ (RoWIP) is a strategic plan for the improvement of the rights of way network in Leeds and states the following (in Statements of Action):

8.2 Path improvements and signposting

- PI1 We will take a proactive approach to dealing with path maintenance issues.
- PI2 All rights of way will be signposted where they leave a metalled road.
- PI3 Where appropriate signs will have destinations and symbols included.
- PI4 Where reasonably possible all stiles will be replaced, or augmented, by gates to be compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 and 2005.
- PI7 We will seek additional resources for major improvement path projects.
- PI12 We will improve access controls and path furniture in order to allow, where practical and reasonable, disabled access – but still restrict unauthorised vehicular use.
- PI13 We will seek to improve path surfaces & drainage but there will be a presumption against using Tarmac to re-surface bridleways.
- PI14 In conjunction with landowners, we will seek to improve path furniture for all legitimate path users.
- PI16 We will prioritise the improvement of paths established by DMMO's to make them available for public use.
- PI17 We will seek to secure funding for maintenance and improvement works for non-definitive paths.

8.5 Key recreational routes

- KR1 We will build and maintain key recreational routes to higher standards.
- KR3 We will clearly sign all key recreational routes.
- KR5 We will give a higher priority to improving surfaces and drainage along our key recreational routes.

¹ The Council has published a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, under the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The RoWIP effectively reviewed performance against the Milestones Statement and serves as a management plan. The RoWIP sets out areas for improvement and identifies priorities for action in order to deliver the long term development of the public rights of way network in Leeds. The RoWIP produced two key outputs: Statements of Action and an Action Plan with estimated costs for key service areas and projects.

8.6 Missing links and developing the path network

- ML3 We will seek to secure new funding to make paths more accessible for people with disabilities.

8.7 Promotion and publicity

- PP3 We will raise the profile of the benefits of using the public rights of way network for recreation and health.

4. Implementation of this scheme will contribute to ensuring that the public rights of way network in Leeds is protected and improved in accordance with the RoWIP and will be delivered with specific targeted improvement schemes. In this connection, the Best Council Plan, West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040, Leeds Transport Strategy, Local Transport Plan, Climate Change Plan, Leeds Vision 2030 and the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy all encourage the development and improvement of facilities to promote walking and cycling, active travel, access to green space to improve physical and mental health and reduce pollution and noise.
5. Following discussion with Leeds Highways and Public Rights of Way officers, this CSRTS allocation (originally 2022/23 to 2026/27) is to be delivered by the PROW Section as a programme over the remaining 4 financial years of the scheme for improvements in support of wider strategy aligned to active travel aspirations. The funding will be spent on individual and city-wide projects in accordance with objectives set out in the RoWIP.
6. The settlement for Leeds is an allocation based on the proportion of the entire length of the West Yorkshire public rights of way network (covering Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield). This has been calculated at 17.7% for Leeds, based on total length of recorded public rights of way on the Definitive Map and Statement for the Leeds Metropolitan District.

What impact will this proposal have?

7. The PROW Section manages and maintains over 1400 Public Rights of Way (Footpaths, Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic), measuring some 862 km throughout the Leeds Metropolitan District and this proposal will significantly contribute towards ensuring that routes in all wards are provided to a satisfactory standard.
8. The length of the Rights of Way network has been increasing year on year. In 1985 there were 760km of recorded public rights of way throughout Leeds and this has increased by 102 km to 862km today.
9. Public Rights of Way are available free at the point of use and they provide an invaluable resource for local communities for activities that lend themselves to health and wellbeing, as well as being a practical and sustainable off road transportation system that links to and compliments the adopted highway network and routes such as cycleways. The Rights of Way network is a key element in the interconnected 'Green Infrastructure' of Leeds and its enhancement can provide 'added value' for local communities in providing better access for walkers, horse riders, pedal cyclists, off road drivers and those with specific mobility needs; who seek good quality and well way marked routes.
10. The projects identified in the RoWIP cumulatively totalled £3.9m to deliver and many projects have not commenced due to funding shortfalls. This funding will assist in this process and meeting the objectives of the RoWIP and also contribute towards to aims of the CRSTS.

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

11. The proposal aims to support local business through making it easier for people to access local facilities and services.
12. It supports the health and well-being agenda through encouraging people to walk and cycle, and by providing improved routes and connectivity for recreational and utilitarian purposes.
13. It will also support the Climate Emergency agenda through encouraging people to use sustainable modes of transport to access shops, facilities and amenities rather than driving by providing better more accessible routes.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

14. This report seeks to enable a capital scheme to be set up with authority to spend on specific improvement projects in accordance with the objectives of CRSTS. Consultation will be undertaken for individual projects with ward Members, parish councils, landowners, etc. as appropriate, and with other statutory consultees where required.

What are the resource implications?

15. The decision involves the injection into the Capital Programme of, and authority to spend, £608,880 City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) money for improvements to the Public Rights of Way network over the remaining 4 financial years of the scheme up to 2026/2027.
16. The total PROW revenue budget for 2023/24 is £284k, of which the maintenance function is approximately half. This equates to approximately £165 for maintenance per km of network. Consequently, the revenue budget cannot be relied upon and capital schemes have to be identified and secured to realise significant investment into the PROW asset.
17. The funding equates to a £121,776 annual allocation but this is not required to be uniformly spent over the funding period term.
18. The first project² is valued at the equivalent of one year's CRSTS allocation. Due to difficulties and delays in delivery this has been moved into 2023/24 thus meaning the total allocation of £608,880 will need to be spread over the remaining 4 financial years rather than the original 5 years. This means the funding per annum going forward is £152,220. The table below reflects this position:

² CRSTS funding allocated for a bridge replacement on Public Footpath Great & Little Preston 13 at Lowther Lake. The existing bridge has collapsed and is unusable severing an important and well used footpath link.

Capital Funding and Cash Flow

Previous total Authority to Spend on this scheme	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2023 £000's	FORECAST				
			2023/24 £000's	2024/25 £000's	2025/26 £000's	2026/27 £000's	2027 on £000's
LAND (1)	0.0						
CONSTRUCTION (3)	0.0						
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0						
DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0						
OTHER COSTS (7)	0.0						
TOTALS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Authority to Spend required for this Approval	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2023 £000's	FORECAST				
			2023/24 £000's	2024/25 £000's	2025/26 £000's	2026/27 £000's	2027 on £000's
LAND (1)	0.0						
CONSTRUCTION (3)	608.9		152.2	152.2	152.2	152.2	
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0						
DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0						
OTHER COSTS (7)	0.0						
TOTALS	608.9	0.0	152.2	152.2	152.2	152.2	0.0
Total overall Funding (As per latest Capital Programme)	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2023 £000's	FORECAST				
			2023/24 £000's	2024/25 £000's	2025/26 £000's	2026/27 £000's	2027 on £000's
WYCA grant	608.9		152.2	152.2	152.2	152.2	
Total Funding	608.9	0.0	152.2	152.2	152.2	152.2	0.0
Balance / Shortfall =	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Revenue Effects

REVENUE EFFECTS	2021/22 £000's	2022/23 SUBSEQUENT YEARS £000'S
EMPLOYEES	0.0	0.0
PREMISES COSTS	0.0	0.0
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	0.0	0.0
EXTERNAL INCOME GENERATED	0.0	0.0

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- Failure to maintain the PROW network satisfactorily will leave defects unremedied and could lead to accidents and claims for injury, and could cause the Council to be at risk of reputational damage. The public are more likely to fully utilise and enjoy using a PROW network that is well maintained and this funding will contribute towards these aims.
- Climate, Energy and Green Spaces will be responsible for all on-site Health and Safety. Individual schemes will be managed and delivered in accordance with approved safe methods of working

and full risk assessments and method statements will be undertaken prior to commencement on site in all circumstances.

What are the legal implications?

21. This is classified as a key decision due to its value and is subject to call-in.
22. All works and services will be procured in accordance with the Council's financial procedures and Contract Procedure Rules to ensure that the proposal delivers best value.
23. The PROW Section carries out the 'highway function' for public rights of way on behalf of the Highway Authority (Leeds City Council) and the proposed funding will help to ensure that the public rights of way network is protected and fit for purpose and compliant with the Council's statutory duties in this regard³.

Options, timescales and measuring success.

What other options were considered?

24. The CRSTS is necessary to realise the significant investment required into the public rights of way asset. The alternative of not proceeding with this expenditure would be to fail to deliver the proposed improvements to the PROW network.

How will success be measured?

25. Fully maintaining the PROW network recorded on the Definitive Map will bring benefits for health and well-being and sustainable transport and could bring subsequent economic benefits to the Leeds City Region and attract tourism. A better maintained network will be more likely to meet user expectations and consequently fewer maintenance enquiries will need to be dealt with.
26. At WYCA's request, monitoring and evaluation models have been developed that can be reported against on a quarterly basis to show how CRSTS is being spent.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

27. A programme of PROW improvements with specific measures is planned. Works will be scheduled throughout the funding period once funding is made available and will be phased across the remaining 4 years of the scheme.
28. The Chief Officer for Climate, Energy & Green Spaces will be responsible for implementation.

Appendices

- None

Background papers

- None

³ Highways Act 1980, sections 41 & 42. To maintain publicly maintainable footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic.