

# Chapter 1

## *Introduction*

### **Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs)**

1. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act included a duty for Highway Authorities to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) by November 2007.
2. The spirit of the legislation is making the network fit for today and for tomorrow, integrating countryside access with the health agenda, local economy and sustainable tourism, social inclusion, education, sustainable transport and the environment.
3. ROWIPs must assess:
  - The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public,
  - The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the authority's area,
  - The accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially-sighted people and others with mobility problems.
4. The conclusions of the assessments lead to Statements of Action to show how we plan to improve the management of local rights of way and secure an improved network.
5. The ROWIP does not focus solely on local rights of way, permitted access and cycle tracks, but also takes account of wider access opportunities, such as open access land and designated quiet lanes.
6. While there is a statutory duty to produce a ROWIP, its implementation has not been made statutory. This enables Highway Authorities to enter into partnerships to deliver some of the improvements highlighted in the statements of action.
7. In the future, the ROWIP will form an integral section of Local Transport Plans by 2010-11. This integration process is already underway. It is anticipated that further integration with Local Transport Plans will secure additional funding for improvements that meet shared objectives.

## The ROWIP in Cumbria

8. Cumbria County Council is the Highway Authority for the whole of Cumbria. It has a statutory duty to produce a ROWIP. Under Section 61(5) of the CROW Act the Council has the power to jointly discharge the production of the plan with the district councils and National Park Authorities. Cumbria County Council will seek to delegate powers to implement the statements of action within their area to each National Park Authority, within the context of their Rights of Way agency agreements. The final statements of action will include many joint projects that the authorities will work together on to achieve.
9. Cumbria County Council, in partnership with the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), have produced this draft ROWIP, which is a key working document, bringing together:
  - Information about, and assessments of, the existing rights of way network and other access opportunities,
  - The policies set out in the Cumbria Countryside Access Strategy,
  - Identification of key audiences for countryside recreation and an understanding of their needs and preferences,
  - Research relating to requests for improvements to the network,
  - Conclusions from these assessments and
  - Two Statements of Action; one for the Lake District National Park and one for the rest of Cumbria, (including the Cumbrian part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park). Statements of Action are in draft form, structured by beneficiary. Further detail (targets, projected costs, priority projects and potential partners) will be developed for the publication of the full ROWIP.

## Involvement of the Local Access Forums

10. There are three Local Access Forums covering Cumbria –
  - The Cumbria Local Access Forum (<http://www.cumbrialaf.org.uk/>),
  - The Lake District Local Access Forum ([http://www.lake-district.gov.uk/index/living\\_in/local\\_access\\_forum.htm](http://www.lake-district.gov.uk/index/living_in/local_access_forum.htm)), and
  - The Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum ([http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/local\\_access\\_forum](http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/local_access_forum)).
11. The Local Access Forums have been involved in every stage of the development process of this ROWIP, in particular –
  - Developing the policy in the ‘Countryside Access Strategy’ (see chapter 3),
  - Inputting into the ‘Needs and Preferences’ research (see chapter 4),
  - Advising on the scores and weightings which form the prioritisation mechanism (see chapter 4), and
  - Commenting on the draft text and draft statements of action.

## ROWIP – Proposed timetable

12. This 'draft ROWIP' is a consultation document. In autumn 2006, the comments received about this draft will be reviewed, a response published, and modifications made where necessary. The full ROWIP will be published in spring 2007, when targets, priority projects, potential partners and costs will be incorporated into the statements of action (see chapter 5).

Table 1 : Proposed timetable for production of full ROWIP

| Summer 2006  | Autumn 2006   | Winter 2006  | Spring 2007          |
|--|---|--|----------------------|
| Draft ROWIP published for consultation.<br><br>Develop priority projects, partnerships, targets and costs. | Publish response to comments received – modify ROWIP accordingly. | Finalise full ROWIP - 'priority projects', partnerships, targets, and projected costs.<br><br>Further consultation with Local Access Forums on the final draft and developed Statements of Actions | Publish final ROWIP. |