



Meeting: **Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Date/Time: **Thursday, 5 June 2025 at 2.00 pm**

Location: **Sparkenhoe Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield**

Contact: **Mr A. Sarang (0116) 305 8644**

Email: **Aqil.Sarang@leics.gov.uk**

Membership

Mr. B. Piper CC (Chairman)

Mr. J. Bloxham CC	Mr. M. T. Mullaney CC
Mr. S. Bradshaw CC	Mr. O. O'Shea JP CC
Mr. G. Cooke CC	Mr. P. Rudkin CC
Mr. N. Holt CC	Mr. C. A. Smith CC
Mr. B. Lovegrove CC	Mr. A. Thorp CC
Mr. P. Morris CC	Mr. B. Walker CC

Please note: this meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's web site at <http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk>

AGENDA

Item

Report by

1. Appointment of Chairman.

To note that Mr Bill Piper CC has been appointed Chairman of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Rule 6(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule (Part 4E of the County Council's Constitution).

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2025.

(Pages 5 - 10)

4. Question Time.



5. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).
6. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.
7. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.
8. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.
9. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.
10. Home to School Transport Annual Report 2024/2025 and Key Priorities for 2025/2026. Director of Environment and Transport (Pages 11 - 24)
11. Flood Risk Management. Director of Environment and Transport (Pages 25 - 44)
12. Draft Rights Of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035 Director of Environment and Transport (Pages 45 - 138)
13. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 4 September 2025 at 2.00pm.
14. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The ability to ask good, pertinent questions lies at the heart of successful and effective scrutiny. To support members with this, a range of resources, including guides to questioning, are available via the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny website www.cfgs.org.uk. The following questions have been agreed by Scrutiny members as a good starting point for developing questions:

- Who was consulted and what were they consulted on? What is the process for and quality of the consultation?
- How have the voices of local people and frontline staff been heard?
- What does success look like?
- What is the history of the service and what will be different this time?
- What happens once the money is spent?
- If the service model is changing, has the previous service model been evaluated?
- What evaluation arrangements are in place – will there be an annual review?

Members are reminded that, to ensure questioning during meetings remains appropriately focused that:

- (a) they can use the officer contact details at the bottom of each report to ask questions of clarification or raise any related patch issues which might not be best addressed through the formal meeting;
- (b) they must speak only as a County Councillor and not on behalf of any other local authority when considering matters which also affect district or parish/town councils (see Articles 2.03(b) of the Council's Constitution).



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Minutes of a meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 6 March 2025.

PRESENT

Mr. T. Gillard CC (in the Chair)

Mr. R. G. Allen CC
Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC

Mr. J. Miah CC

In attendance

Mr. O. O'Shea CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport
Mrs. M. Wright CC – Cabinet Support Member
Mr Graham Compton, Road Safety Officer, Leicestershire Police (item 54 refers)

47. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

48. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no new questions had been received under Standing Order 35, however a request had been received from the Stoney Stanton Flood Action Group (SSFAG) for supplementary questions to be asked in relation to the answers to questions they had asked at the Committee meeting on 7 November 2024. The Chairman agreed that the supplementary questions could be asked on an exceptional basis but emphasised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was not the best channel for flood groups to seek information/communication on actions being taken for their specific locations of concern.

When the Committee came to the Question Time agenda item nobody from the SSFAG was present in the room. However, the Chairman permitted the supplementary questions to be asked later in the meeting once the members of the SSFAG arrived. Those questions were:

1. Supplementary question asked by Ms Ann Jackson

If the landowner refuses to do it, will Highways take responsibility for the Stressline pipe, and repair it at the cost of £14,500 which is significantly less than £994,000? The repairs that Stressline claimed to have carried out were not to the pipe itself, they were after the pipe. Stressline have not carried out any repairs to the actual pipe. Are the LLFA going to use enforcement powers to require Stressline to pay for the repairs to the pipe?

2. Supplementary question asked by Ms Ann Jackson

Are the LLFA saying they are happy to spend £994,000 to divert water away from the rear of the cottages as a coverup for the pipe being capped?

3. Supplementary question asked by Ms Ann Jackson

Are we correct in thinking that the project being worked on to reduce the volume of water entering the ditch line from Boundary Farm is once again part of the £994,000 project and is merely a smokescreen to cover up the capping of the pipe or is it to facilitate the building of 4,800 new properties, which will be of significant financial benefit to LCC?

4. Supplementary question asked by Ms Ann Jackson

The County Council said that site investigations were completed on 12th February and there were no issues found with the highway drainage system. However, we had our own independent survey on 19th February 2025 that had to be abandoned due to the blockages. How do you explain these discrepancies? Isn't Leicestershire County Council responsible for the condition of the assets? When will these ineffective drains and assets be rectified?

Reply by the Chairman:

The Chairman informed that written answers to the supplementary questions would be provided by the Director of Environment and Transport after the meeting.

49. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

50. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

51. Declarations of interest..

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

52. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

53. Presentation of Petitions.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

54. Road Casualty Reduction in Leicestershire.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the confirmed reported road casualty statistics up to the end of 2023; the Council's approach to casualty reduction; and the Leicestershire Police's

approach to road safety. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that a letter had been received by the Committee from Mr. Max Hunt CC dated 6 March 2025 which raised queries regarding vulnerable road users and 20 mph zones. A copy of the letter is filed with these minutes. It was agreed that the Director of Environment and Transport would provide a written response to Mr. Hunt CC after the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Graham Compton, Road Safety Officer at Leicestershire Police, to the meeting. Mr Compton presented the Police Road Safety update (attached as appendix A to the report).

Arising from discussion the following points were made:

- (i) A member welcomed the relatively low road casualties in Leicestershire overall, but raised concerns about hotspots such as school gates where the amount of accidents was higher and queried what could be done in those areas. In response it was explained that the approach would be data led and communities could help with collecting this data. Reassurance was given that work was taking place with partners such as schools regarding what initiatives would help improve the safety of those hotspots or the public's perception of safety in those areas. An education programme was available which used learning from the Police and Fire Service. The Road Safety Partnership carried out a lot of work regarding driver behaviour. Consideration was also being given to whether more use could be made of average speed cameras.
- (ii) The Department for Transport suggested the mean speed for a village road that was being considered for a 20mph speed limit/zone should be at or below 24mph. A member queried whether the County Council had the resources to change all those roads to a 20mph speed limit. In response it was explained that Leicestershire did not have a blanket approach and the focus in Leicestershire was on roads with a 30 or 40 mph speed limit. This approach was working in Leicestershire.
- (iii) There had been very few reported collisions involving e-scooters in Leicestershire, with just seven in 2023, though anecdotally members felt that the numbers were higher. Members raised particular concerns about e-scooters being used at night due to a lack of visibility. The use of e-scooters on public roads in Leicestershire was not legal but it was difficult to enforce. Leicestershire Police had carried out operations confiscating e-scooters. Further legislation and guidance was required to help tackle the problem.
- (iv) In response to concerns raised about cyclists not using lights at night, and young people crossing the road without looking, it was explained that education programmes took place in schools regarding staying visible on the roads.
- (v) In response to a question from the Chairman about a Community Speed Watch scheme that had taken place in the Whitwick area and whether another Speed Watch scheme could take place in the same electoral division, it was confirmed that there was no limit on how many Speed Watch schemes could take place as long as they met the criteria. One of the main difficulties was finding enough volunteers to operate the scheme. It was agreed that further information regarding Community Speed Watch schemes would be emailed to the Chairman after the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the update in relation to road safety and road casualties be noted.

55. Environment and Transport 2025/26 Highway and Transport Capital Programme and Works Programme.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport regarding the development of the Environment and Transport Department 2025/26 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

A member raised concerns that the Programmes were not supported by sufficient funding from central government and as a result the quality of Leicestershire's Highways would decrease. In response the Director acknowledged this concern and explained that she regularly raised the point with the Department for Transport (DFT) when she attended meetings with them. The DFT in turn recognised the severity of the situation and submitted evidence to the Treasury to help make the case for more funding for highways and transport. The Director also attended meetings with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding local government funding more generally.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the development of the Environment and Transport Department 2025/26 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme be noted.
- (b) That the comments now made be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 18 March 2025.

56. Highways and Transport Performance Report to December 2024.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment and Transport which provided the latest performance update on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) the County Council was responsible for within its Strategic Plan covering Highways and Transport Services to December 2024 (Quarter Three). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

A member queried whether the performance data for the public satisfaction metrics was completely accurate. In response the Director of Environment explained that it was not always clear what factors influenced a person's sense of satisfaction, and public satisfaction was just one of several different ways the department used for measuring performance. The department was interested in the public's view.

RESOLVED:

That the performance update be noted.

57. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee be held on 5th June 2025 at 2.00 pm.

2.00 - 3.30 pm
06 March 2025

CHAIRMAN

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HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 5 JUNE 2025

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025 AND
KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2025/2026

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise members regarding the performance and delivery of the school transport service for the 2024/25 academic year, and present the challenges faced by the service in terms of managing growth and driving efficiency.
2. The report also outlines key successes achieved in the past 12 months and provides a summary of the next steps to be taken by the service over the next year.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. The primary legislation governing home to school transport is the Education Act 1996, which imposes a duty on local authorities to:
 - a) Assess the school travel needs of their area and to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet school travel needs (Section 508A).
 - b) Make home to school travel arrangements to facilitate eligible children's attendance at relevant schools (Section 508B).
4. In March 2018, the Cabinet approved changes to the 'Mainstream and Special Educational Needs Home to School Transport Policy' which were introduced from the start of the 2019/20 academic year. The Policy, which is published each academic year, applies to children living in Leicestershire. It describes free and assisted transport entitlement to mainstream schools, academies and colleges, including entitlement for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) who have no special transport requirements and who attend such establishments. Some children with special educational needs require specific transport, for which there is a supplementary SEN policy.
5. In September 2019, the Cabinet considered a report on the implementation of the Council's 'Home to School Transport Policies', which included Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs). A judicial review on the Council's SEN Policy for 16–18-year-olds delayed the implementation of PTBs until the start of the

2021/22 academic year.

6. In June 2023, the Department for Education revised its statutory guidance on 'Travel to school for children of compulsory school age'. The updated guidance clarified the law, recognised the increasing cost of delivering free home to school travel and the importance of taking travel costs into account when local authorities planned the supply of school places. It stressed the importance of school travel and SEN teams working together to ensure travel arrangements were considered when deciding what school to name in a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
7. One important change in the statutory guidance was an amendment to the rules in relation to transport for looked after children (children in care or who have been looked after by the Council), who were placed in care outside of their permanent local authority and hosted by an alternative local authority. Transport would now be paid for by the hosting authority.

Background

Current School Transport Operation

8. The Council continues to meet all transport requests, despite challenging increases in pupil numbers and challenging market conditions.
 - a) Nearly 3.2m pupil journeys were provided over the 2024/25 financial year.
 - b) 94% of all pupils who applied and were assessed as eligible, prior to the start of summer 2024, were on arranged transport by the start of the new academic year.
9. Mainstream school transport is provided primarily by commissioned bus service and season tickets and SEN transport is provided in the main, by taxi, Council in-house fleet or PTB.
10. To achieve this, a wide range of tasks need to be performed, including undertaking eligible assessments; creating risk assessments; reviewing each school and contract; procuring new contracts or changes to existing contracts; generating route sheets; facilitating meet and greets; arranging equipment; setting up and monitoring payments; and supporting day-to-day correspondence with schools, operators, and families.
11. Data from January 2024 to December 2024 shows that almost 60,000 customer contacts were received:
 - a) 1,265 visits to County Hall,
 - b) 6,918 e-forms,
 - c) 45,867 emails,
 - d) 5,906 phone calls.
12. In addition, the service is responsible for the ongoing monitoring of contracts with transport providers. During 2024/25, over 1,800 operator and route checks were undertaken. Activities included:

- a) 815 on-site inspections of taxi/bus operations,
- b) 74 operator audits,
- c) 64 further checks of DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) applications,
- d) 362 verbal competences and identity document checks of new Personal Assistants.

Mainstream School Transport

13. The majority of students travel to primary and secondary schools within Leicestershire. In line with the current transport policy, 5,124 students were eligible for free school transport as at September 2024.

Figure 1: Breakdown of cost per pupil and budget for mainstream school transport

Mainstream Position	2024/2025	2025/2026
Pupils	5,124	
Average Cost Per Pupil	£1,191	
Expenditure	£6,101,861	
Budget	£4,575,091	£6,788,900
Overspend	£1,526,770	

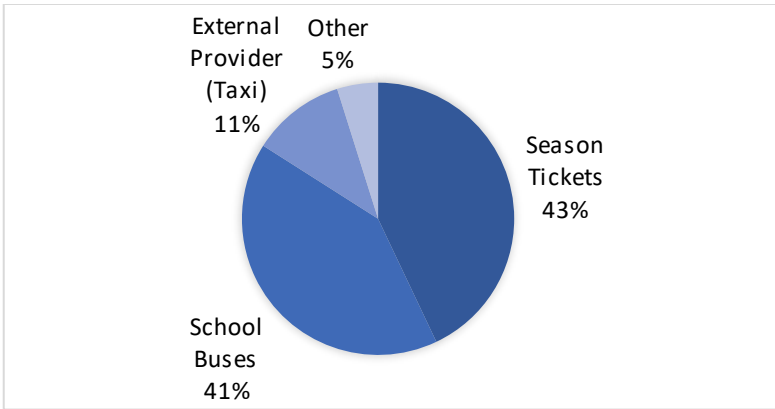
14. Last year transport was provided over 196 school days, twice a day a total of 2,008,608 journeys.

Figure 2: Travel options - Data Snapshot - September 2024

2024/2025 Mainstream	Total number of pupils
Season Tickets	2,201
School Buses	2,104
External Provider (Taxi)	570
Personal Transport Budget	38
Other Local Authority Provision	2
Service Shared by School	68
Local Bus Services	138
SEN Students on Mainstream	3
Total	5,124

15. The table above shows the different travel options available to mainstream settings. These are mainly buses and season tickets. This information is also shown on Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Travel Options



16. There has been a significant increase in costs affecting mainstream travel in recent years. In 2021/22, the cost per school day was £25,190 and, based on a total number of pupils at July 2022 of 4,803, this equates to £5.24 per pupil per day. In 2024/25, as of September 2024, the cost per school day had risen to £37,663 and, based on a total number of pupils as at September 2024 of 5,124, this equates to £7.35 per pupil per day. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) growth bid for 2025/26 was based on an estimated total of 5,245 Mainstream students requiring transport. Cost increases have occurred in recent years due to a number of factors including, rising fuel costs, inflation, the impact of the war in Ukraine and difficulties in recruiting drivers.

SEN Transport

17. Eligibility for SEN transport is assessed in three groups:
- a) Nursery age, 2-4
 - b) 5–16-year-olds,
 - c) Post-16.
18. If a child/young person is eligible for transport assistance, they may receive either:
- a) Council-organised transport, which may be a fleet minibus or taxi or a bus pass for use on public transport.
 - b) PTB, which provides freedom for the family/young person to make their own transport arrangements and to receive a personal payment, with the value based on the distance being travelled.
19. A total of 2,275 applications for SEN transport were received in the 2024/25 academic year and associated risk assessments were undertaken.

Figure 4: Breakdown of costs per pupil and budget for SEN transport

SEN Position	2024/2025	2025/2026
Pupils	2,985	

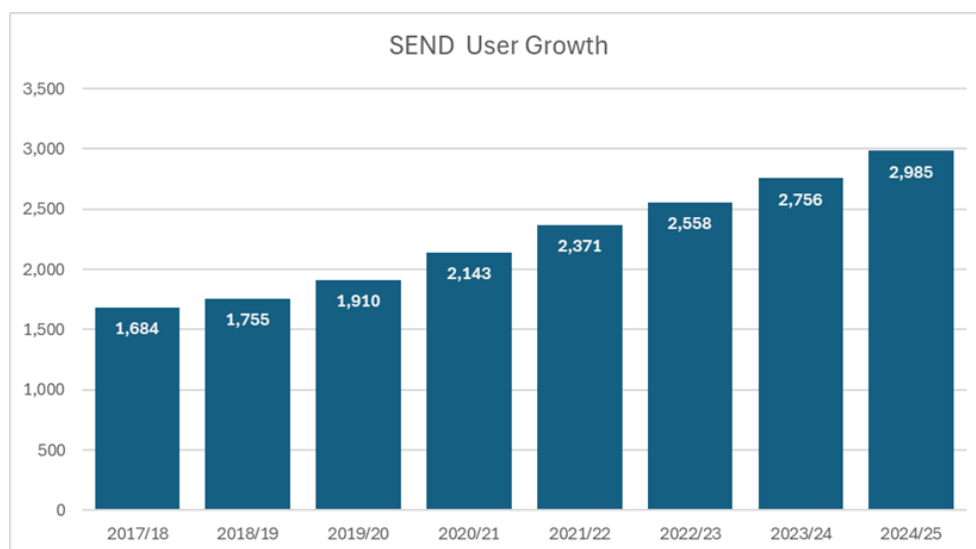
Average Cost Per Pupil	£8,680	
Expenditure	£25,909,820	
Budget	£26,128,799	£26,901,065
Underspend	-£218,979	

20. The 2,985 SEN pupils were taken on two trips per day for a total of 196 days, equivalent to 1,170,120 pupil journeys.

Costs and Growth Challenges

21. The local school transport market remains challenging both nationally and in Leicestershire, with increasing demand for the service and costs. Some of the challenges nationally and locally are as follows:
- Since the introduction of EHCPs in 2014, there has been a national growth of EHCPs of 140%. In Leicestershire the growth was 119% (2017 to 2024).
 - The increase in EHCPs has affected SEN transport, with approximately 45% of pupils with an EHCP requiring transport provision.
 - At November 2015, there were 1,551 SEN pupils receiving transport. This rose by 92% to 2,985 by October 2024.
 - The demand for EHCPs for children with SEN has also increased significantly, leading to rising demand for specialist SEND provision.

Figure 5: SEND User Growth in Leicestershire since 2017/2018 as recorded in November 2024



22. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) growth bid for 2025/26 was based on an estimated total of 3,202 SEN students requiring transport. There is currently a large number of children/young people with EHCPs waiting to be assessed or waiting for appropriate school places to become available. This has a significant impact on Assisted Transport Programme budgets and service delivery.
23. There were a greater number of SEN student applications, many waiting to be allocated their final provision. Joint working with Children and Family Services will continue to model the likely financial impact of increased student numbers.
24. The local market continues to show a significant volatility, which is reflected by the number of contracts handed back (terminated) by operators: this occurs when operators no longer feel that they can continue to provide the service.
 - a) 2024/25 - 188 terminations,
 - b) 2023/24 - 203 terminations,
 - c) 2022/23 - 200 terminations.
25. In addition, contract costs have risen substantially since the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of the Ukraine war. A sample of 220 SEN contracts taken from 2022/23 and 2023/24 showed an increased cost of 7.7%. A similar exercise was undertaken in September 2024, which showed a smaller increase of 1.85%: it is likely that this reduction reflects the fact that historic contracts have caught up with the market rate.
26. Against this backdrop, expenditure on SEN transport continues to rise. At the end of the 2018/19 year, the final expenditure on the SEN transport was £11.3m, whereas the 2024/25 SEN transport expenditure was £25.9m
27. Other factors related to this growth, which have added to the pressure, include:

Late applications for the SEN transport in 2024/25 - the Council received a significant volume of applications for SEN transport after the closing date, which is in late May each year. Late applications mean that the ability to build an efficient network is severely compromised as there is little time if any to plan. Late applications remain a contributory factor in the increase of solo taxi contracts. This situation often occurs because an Education Health and Care Plan is not yet in place, and therefore the school where transport is required is not known, and transport cannot therefore be planned within the usual planning timeframes.

- a) Since the outset of the pandemic, the pressure and volatility of SEN transport has been relentless. Before the pandemic, there was a quieter period between the end of October and the beginning of February each year, where transport teams could take stock and develop the service. This has been eroded as the growth has led to an ongoing demand; in 2023/24, the Council continued to receive on average 80-90 applications per month. In 2024/25, this has increased to 148 applications per month in total for the SEN and Mainstream transport which has a significant impact on the service's resource.

Drivers for Growth and National Comparators

28. The overall increasing pressures in home to school transport, but especially for SEN transport, are consistent across the country. The key elements that drive the SEN transport expenditure remain:
- a) Demand/growth - the number of pupils eligible for the SEN transport assistance.
 - b) The increased complexity of the needs of pupils travelling.
 - c) Market forces and competition – availability, fuel costs, inflation, wages etc.
 - d) A lack of locally available school places – this creates additional pressure with both more requests and longer and more expensive journeys.
29. As indicated previously, the unprecedented growth in EHCPs nationally in the last 10 years has also meant that the number of students entitled to SEN transport has risen. The growth has also created pressure on locally available SEN school places, meaning that many SEN pupils must travel further to access a suitable school.
30. A report by Impower and the County Council Network (CCN) in November 2024 notes that 'Home to school transport services remain the largest, and most financially challenging area of educational responsibility for councils outside of SEND'. The report cites research carried out by the CCN showing that 'costs for councils in county areas doubling to £800m in the last five years alone, with national expenditure growing from £727m in 2019 to £1.4bn in 2024'.
31. The table below shows the increase in national costs. It should be noted that in county and rural areas the increases are more acute, due to transporting nearly double the number of passengers.

Figure 6: Table showing national data trends EHCPs and cost increases

National Position	2018/2019	2023/2024	Increase
Pupils	911	1,300	43%
Average Cost Per Pupil - Overall	£6,280	£8,299	32%
Average Cost Per Pupil – County Councils	£6,972	£9,750	44%
	2014/2015	2023/2024	
EHCPs	240,183	575,973	140%

32. The CCN report also noted the increase in use of cars/taxis and the impact of complex needs on SEN costs, as shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Increased car/taxi use and SEN costs

National Position	Change / Impact
Use of cars, including taxis, to transport children with SEN to school had increased.	36% increase between 2019 and 2023
Complexity of children's needs that might require more individualised transport arrangements were impacting on costs.	77% of local authorities responded that they were contributing to higher costs of SEN transport

33. The types of trends identified by the CCN survey have also been echoed by the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers and the Local Government Association all of whom have identified growth in SEN transport as a significant pressure for local authorities across the country.
34. To further compound these pressures, a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and other world events have disproportionately affected the passenger transport industry. A shortage of drivers, increasing operating costs and an overall decline in the number of operators, has resulted in a steep increase in costs and reduced competition.

Assisted Transport Programme Work

35. In September 2022, the Council's Transformation Programme initiated work to manage demand and deliver efficiencies across the Assisted Transport Service.
36. The aim was to ensure that systems were in place to effectively deliver home to school transport and to ensure that best procurement practices underpinned service delivery.
37. Over the past year, the programme has implemented a number of key changes that have resulted in both improved outcomes and the achievement of MTFS efficiencies ahead of schedule. These include -
- a) Implementation of new operational management system - Including automated allocations; customer communication; financial management; improved data intelligence; and more efficient integrated processes for the service. It is anticipated that this will be fully implemented by summer 2025.
 - b) Customer Programme - A new Transport Hub improves customer experience, with benefits including fast-tracked responses to enquiries, online contact form providing answers to common queries, automated proactive communication to parents, Interactive Voice Response telephone messaging, improved website content, and a review of all

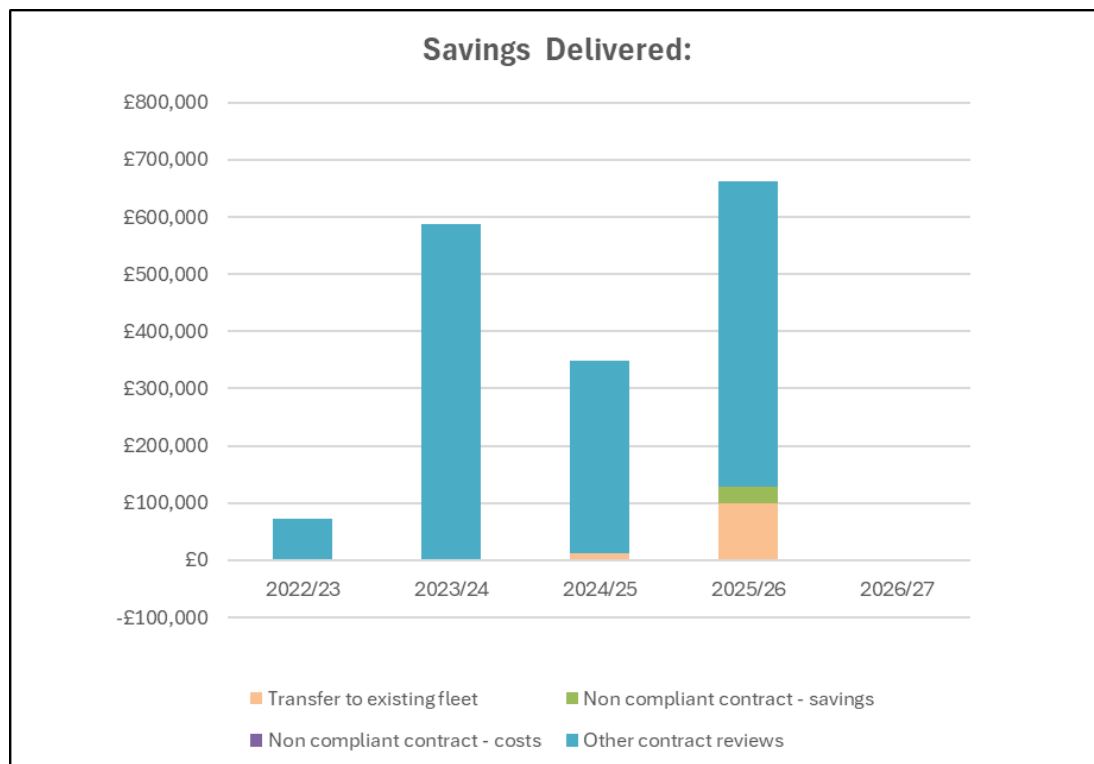
letters to customers. A duty cover will also continue to be in place during the summer peak period for parent communications, including the virtual hub. The virtual hub is a chat room where calls or messages that are more complex, than those typically received by the customer service centre can receive a response.

- c) Enhancements to Safeguarding Practice - A workstream has been established to bring about a number of enhancements including a revised DBS tariff, verbal competency and identity document checks, bespoke safeguarding training for Assisted Transport Service staff, a targeted inspection programme, DBS alerts ahead of expiry dates and new procedure for pre-contract checks of crews delivering transport for high needs service users.
- d) New Data Capability - The data capability of the new Home to School Transport Management comprehensive software system has improved budget forecasting, contracts and year-end reporting and new school year and 'exceptions' dashboards, to improve service performance management information.
- e) Efficiencies - New data and routing capability has improved the identification and implementation of more efficient home to school transport, providing better value for money, for example, merging routes and ensuring that single person journeys are identified through risk assessments, the service has successfully achieved efficiencies of £257,472 (relating to SEN and Mainstream) in 2024/25. This contributed £559,866 (relating to SEN and Mainstream) towards the MTFS savings target of £1,225,250 for 2025/26. Other efficiencies have also been achieved for Social Care.
- f) Commissioning and Procurement - Introduction of the Corporate Early Payment scheme by September 2025. Providers will also be required to make changes to some safeguarding practices, and to start submitting electronic invoices by September 2025, working towards full compliance with Procure to Pay.
- g) Replacement of outdated system - During 2024 an outline business case was approved, defining a broad programme of delivery in the coming years, including replacement of the previous outdated STADS system.
- h) Enhancements to PTB processes - The service has continued to prioritise the development of PTBs which is the most cost-effective solution. Around a third of SEN students are awarded PTBs.
- i) Partnership Working - During the last year, the Assisted Transport Service has been actively involved in regional and local partnership working with other local authorities to develop best practice in school transport.

Summary of Benefits to Date

38. Figure 8 below shows the Assisted Transport Programme's performance in recent years in terms of efficiency savings. The savings position is reviewed monthly on an on-going basis.

Figure 8: MTFS Savings Achieved by the ATP since 2022/2023 (includes SEN, Mainstream and Social Care Savings)



Next Steps and the Transformation Agenda

39. A review of the Assisted Transport Programme was undertaken in summer 2024, identifying a range of actions, including:
1. Utilising data to deliver continuous improvement.
 2. Improve cost control, through budget sufficiency and smarter commissioning.
 3. Collaborating with partners in the Council to forecast demand for transport arising from new housing developments and schools, including the design of safer walking routes.
 4. Implement and manage structural change, so that the transport teams are fit for future challenges.
 5. Digital as the default service offer.
 6. Continue to build on knowledge and skills of all staff, reducing risk and delivering a more robust service.
40. The programme also has a number of specific workstreams aimed at developing and improving the service, as set out below.

Information Technology Digital and Process

41. The focus of this workstream will be to ensure that the progress made to date is embedded and business processes, cost control and overall efficiency continue to be improved. These will include:
- a) Ensuring thorough planning for the decommissioning of previous IT systems, to support a seamless transition and successful implementation of alternative processes/systems.
 - b) Invoicing processes are fully digitalised, and all invoices are received electronically by September 2025.
 - c) The feasibility and viability undertaken on the potential introduction of new applications (apps) to fully automate some key business processes. This includes an app to automate inspection feedback, operator communication, invoicing, and parental driver portal.

Customer Experience

42. The rollout of improvements to customer contact will be monitored over summer 2025. 'Lessons learned' will inform the design of the next set of customer developments, working closely with specialist colleagues from the corporate customer programme to standardise best practice.
43. Stronger links with schools are being developed to ensure that transport provision is as effective as possible. This includes continued membership of the Education Leaders Meetings, comprising the Head Teachers of the six largest special needs schools and working with Children's Services to improve joint working and to support efficient decisions which evaluate both educational and transport implications.

Tendering and Efficiencies

44. During the new school year (2025/26) staff will continue to maximise efficiencies as part of designing the new school transport network. This will include a fundamental review of the routes used to the six largest special needs schools, to ensure that the Council's fleet is used as much as possible. The schools are: Dorothy Goodman (all sites), Ashmount, Birchwood (all sites), Birkett House (all sites), Forest Way, Maplewell (all sites).
45. Efficiencies will be tracked and logged to monitor MTFS savings. As part of this work, a further outcome will be the delivery of an ongoing tendering programme.

Commissioning and Procurement

46. The Commissioning and Procurement Workstream will continue to ensure that transport providers offer value for money for the Council, comply with required standards legislation, and understand any changes required for service delivery, arising from the programme.
47. Preparations are currently underway to vary the terms and conditions of contracts. Starting from autumn 2025, a number of improvements will start to be implemented, including enhanced safeguarding measures, and the introduction of digital processes for financial transactions. Further contract

variations will be required as the programme progresses and new initiatives are defined in detail.

48. Better value for money will also be sought. When very late requests are made for transport, this often results in higher costs for the Council. More fundamental changes to the way transport providers work will be needed if further opportunities for digitisation, such as the use of app-based technology, prove feasible. These, along with changes to procurement law, will require a significant review of the Framework Agreements with transport providers, involving a two-year planning period.
49. Ongoing engagement with providers during this period will be needed to understand the impact of proposed changes on contract prices and future changes to procurement agreements.

Finance and Performance

50. Finance reporting will continue to be enhanced to improve forecasting and budget management. In addition, the financial transactions will be streamlined to allow more efficiency.
51. Data intelligence will continue to be improved, through the development of dashboards, working with other local authorities that use the same Home to School Transport Management software system.

Safeguarding

52. The safeguarding workstream will continue to build on last year's improvements and extend roll-out of new initiatives, such as verbal competency testing, and extend the roll-out of internal training for staff within the Assisted Transport Service. Additional priorities include:
 - a) A review and development of the 'Helping Hands' training provided to operators.
 - b) Establishment of greater links with colleagues in health and social care teams to develop training for the staff dealing with students with multiple and complex needs.
 - c) Improving links between compliance activity and the software system, delivering automation of recording: site checks, incidents, and compliance actions.

Service Structure

53. A re-structure of Assisted Transport Service to maximise service delivery, efficiency and support staff wellbeing is to be completed by April 2026.

Resource Implications

54. For 2025/26, the SEN transport budget amounts to £26.9m. This includes net growth of £3.1m, which is projected to rise to £9.6m by 2028/29 (based on the current projected increase in SEN pupil numbers requiring transport).

55. For 2025/26, the Mainstream transport budget amounts to £6.8m. This includes net growth of £0.8m, which is projected to rise to £1.3m by 2028/29 (based on the current projected increase in Mainstream pupil numbers requiring transport – note this includes £0.1m growth following a statutory change in Mainstream Home to School transport policy).
56. The 2025-29 MTFS includes a net savings requirement from the overall Assisted Transport Programme (which incorporates SEN, Mainstream, and Social Care transport) of £0.6m in 2025/26, rising to £2.0m by 2028/29.
57. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Conclusion

58. Despite ongoing pressures for school transport, especially within the SEN transport and industry, the service was able to successfully deliver transport to students across the County, facilitating approximately 3.2m pupil journeys.
59. The new Home to School Transport Management software system has been implemented and whilst further developments are to be initiated, significant benefits are already emerging, especially in relation to financial reporting and improved data intelligence. The system has also facilitated the delivery of the targeted tendering work, which has supported the first tranche of efficiency savings.
60. 2025/26 will undoubtedly continue to see the service challenged by further growth and industry pressures. To combat this, there will be a continued roll-out of the transformation of the Assisted Transport Service, supporting delivery of the Council's statutory requirements and helping to deliver efficiencies.

Background Papers

Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 7 March 2024: Special Educational Needs School Transport Service – Update
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1293&MId=7456&Ver=4>
 (item 55)

Cabinet, 13 September 2019: Mainstream and Special Educational Needs Home to School Transport Policies – Outcome of Judicial Review
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5605&Ver=4>

Cabinet, 9 March 2018: Mainstream and Special Educational Needs Home to School Transport Policy
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5178&Ver=4>

Leicestershire County Council's 'School Transport – Special educational needs and disabilities' (SEND) webpage
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/school-transport/school-transport-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send>

Leicestershire County Council's Mainstream Home to School/College Transport Policy for the 2025-26 academic year

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-08/Mainstream-home-to-school-transport-policy-2025-26.pdf>

Leicestershire County Council's Special Educational Needs Home to School/College Transport Policy for the 2025-26 academic year

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-08/SEN-home-to-school-college-transport-policy-2025-26.pdf>

County Council's Network – ISOS Partnership: From home to the classroom - making school transport services sustainable (published November 2023)

<https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/advocacy/publications-research-consultations/?search=from+home+to+the+classroom&orderby=newest&category=&tag=104>

The Travel To School Challenge (published November 2024)

<https://impower.co.uk/publications/travel-to-school-report-ccn-bulletin/>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Equality Implications

61. There are no equality implications arising directly from the content of this report.
62. Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted in relation to work undertaken on individual projects when appropriate.

Human Rights Implications

63. There are no human rights implications arising directly from the content of this report.
64. Human Rights Impact Assessments will be conducted in relation to work undertaken on individual projects when appropriate.

Officers to Contact

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Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

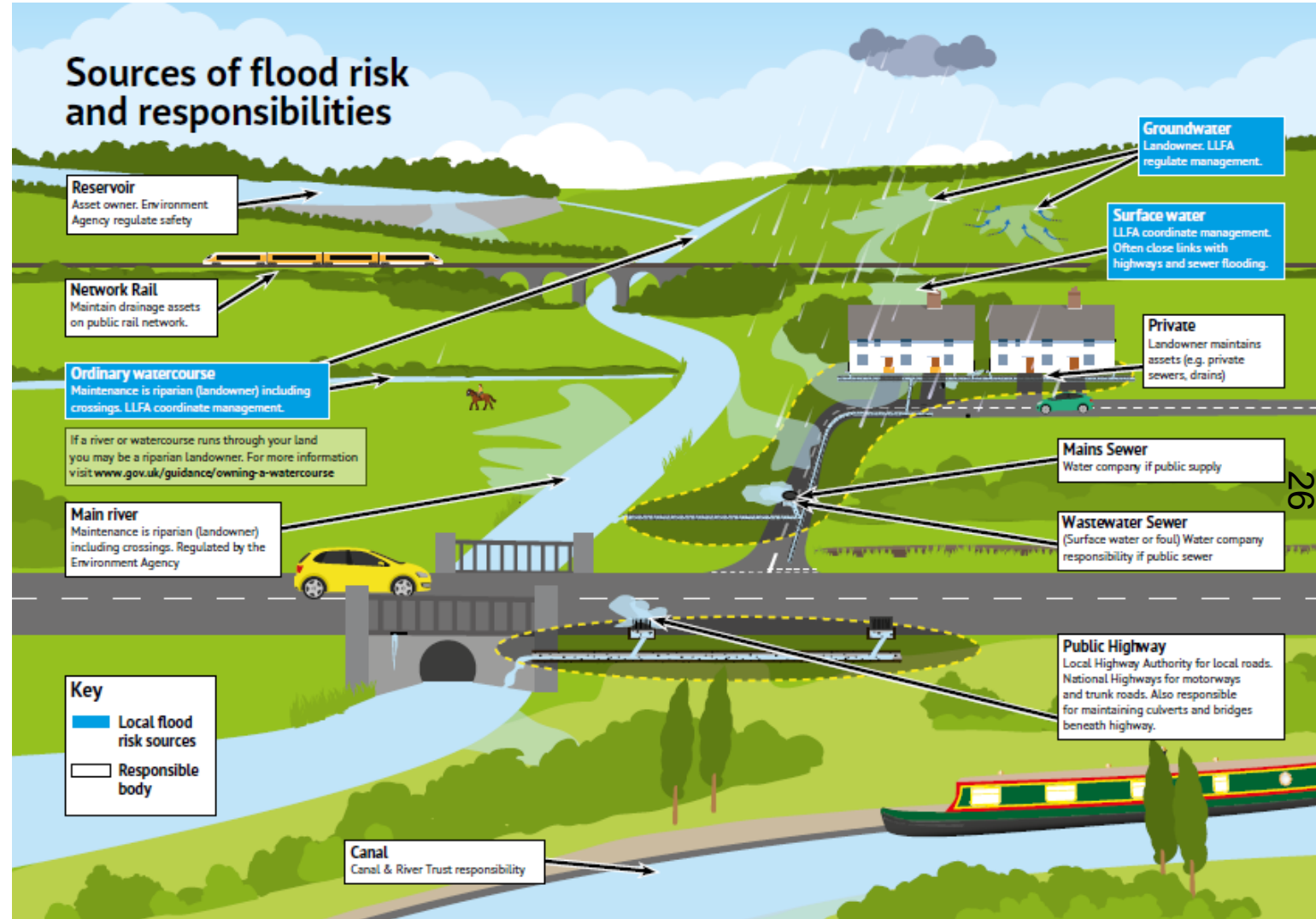
Flood Risk Management Update

5 June 2025

**Director of
Environment and Transport**

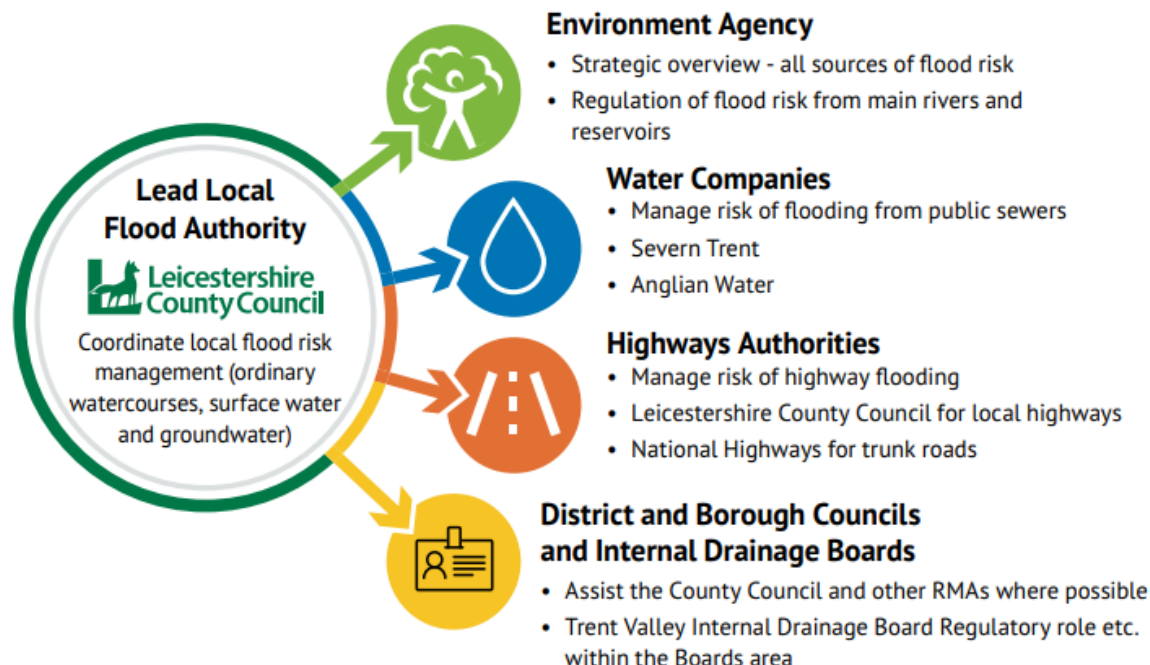
Flooding Sources and Responsibilities

- ❑ Flooding sources are often interrelated.
- ❑ A partnership approach is required.



- ❑ The Flood Risk Management Board (FRMB) is a partnership of Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), coordinated by the County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).
- ❑ The Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee acts as the 'Flood Risk Management Committee', monitoring the performance and activities of the FRMB.
- ❑ The FRMB met three times in 2024 and is scheduled to meet on 10 June 2025.
- ❑ The Committee had recently expressed an interest in hearing directly from other RMAs.

Leicestershire Risk Management Authorities

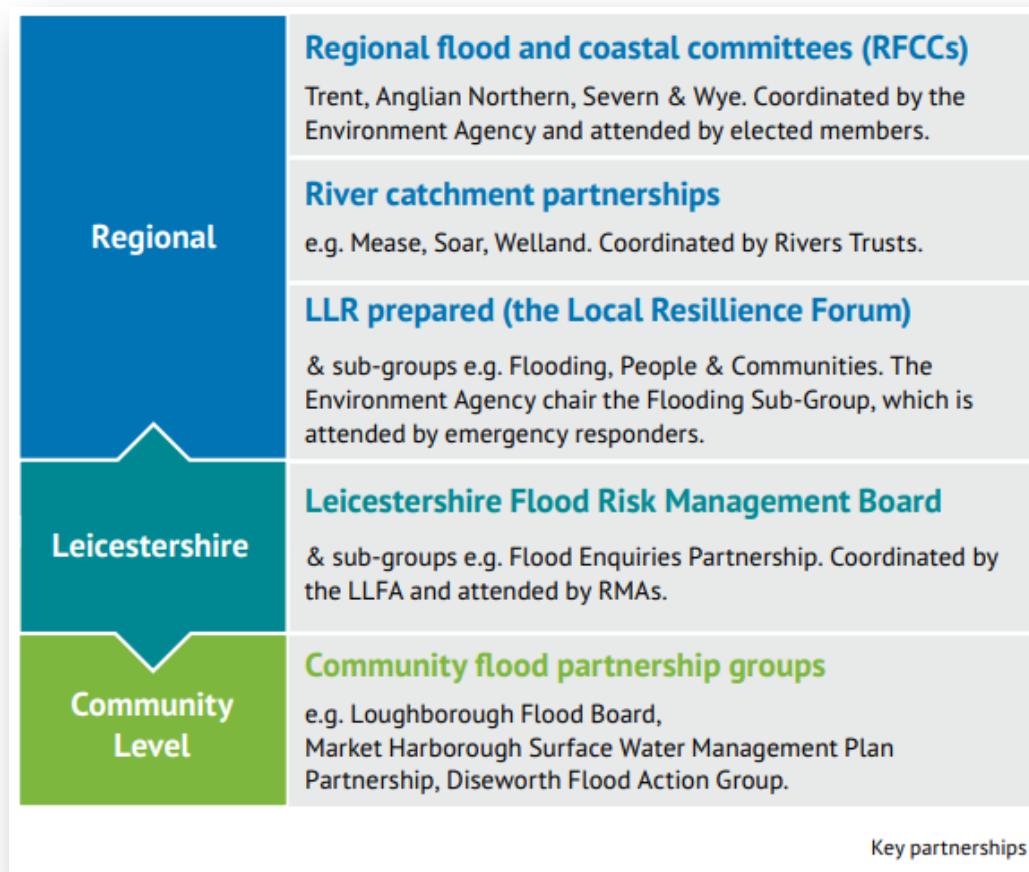




To manage local flood risk through effective **preparedness, response to, and recovery** from flood events.

- ❑ There are other key partnerships.
- ❑ Leicestershire is part of the Trent and Anglian Northern Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCC).
- ❑ RFCCs decide on regional spending, including local levy. They are made up of elected and independent members.
- ❑ The flooding sub-group of the Local Resilience Forum (Flood Response Planning Group) meets quarterly, and it is chaired by the Environment Agency.
- ❑ Flood preparedness, response and recovery is discussed at this forum.

Key partnerships

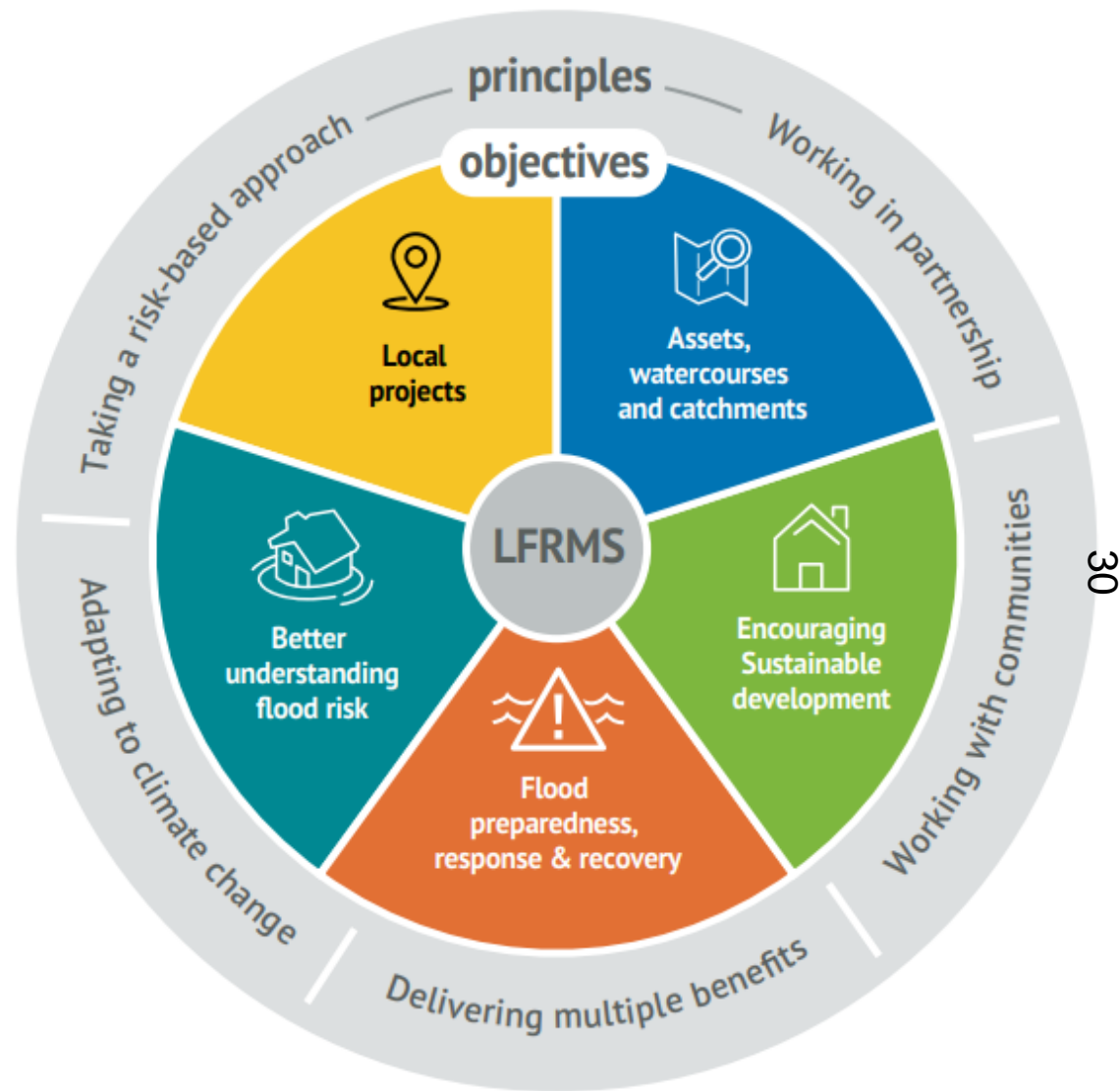


- ❑ Lead Local Flood Authority
 - Coordinates the management of local flood risk;
 - Develops and applies the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS);
 - Regulate the management of ordinary watercourses;
 - Develop and maintain the asset register and record;
 - Statutory consultee for surface water on major planning applications.
- ❑ Local Highway Authority is responsible for public highway drainage.
- ❑ The Council also coordinates the Resilience Partnership, including management of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Multi-Agency Flood Plan.



Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)

- ❑ The updated LFRMS was approved by the Cabinet in December 2023. The Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee was consulted twice (in June 2023 and November 2023).
- ❑ The Strategy was published in February 2024.
- ❑ The LFRMS 'wheel' includes five principles and five objectives. The Action Plan currently lists 33 measures.
- ❑ The Strategy is relevant to all RMAs in Leicestershire. It is mainly focused on local flood risk sources.
- ❑ It is consistent with the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (Environment Agency).



Local Flooding over the Last Two Years



To manage local flood risk through effective **preparedness, response to, and recovery** from flood events.

- ❑ **June 2023:** Oadby, Wigston & Kilby (52)*
- ❑ **October 2023:** Storm Babet (50)
- ❑ **January 2024:** Storm Henk (450)
- ❑ **21 September 2024:** Market Harborough town centre (42)
- ❑ **26 September 2024:** Blaby district (48)
- ❑ **24 November 2024:** Little Bowden, Market Harborough (8)
- ❑ **6 January 2025:** Countywide (720) - worst event in modern history in terms of number of properties flooded.

* (properties reported as internally flooded)



Formal Flood Investigations



To manage local flood risk through effective **preparedness, response to, and recovery** from flood events.

- ❑ Where flooding meets the locally agreed threshold, the LLFA has a duty to undertake and publish an investigation (Section 19) in partnership with the other RMAs.
- ❑ The Council has a Formal Flood Investigations Policy as part of the LFRMS.
- ❑ Actions can be agreed with RMAs; however, the LLFA does not have the powers to make the other RMAs implement solutions where it is their responsibility.
- ❑ In some instances, there may not be a realistic or affordable solution for flood mitigation.
- ❑ By the time of publication of investigations, it is the Council's aspiration that communities are already well informed as to investigation outcomes, as the Council has worked with them to investigate flooding.
- ❑ A statement was issued in April 2025 to help explain this, and a new investigations webpage created.
- ❑ All instances of flooding are investigated regardless of whether a formal investigation occurs.

Kibworth investigation

3. FLOOD INVESTIGATION

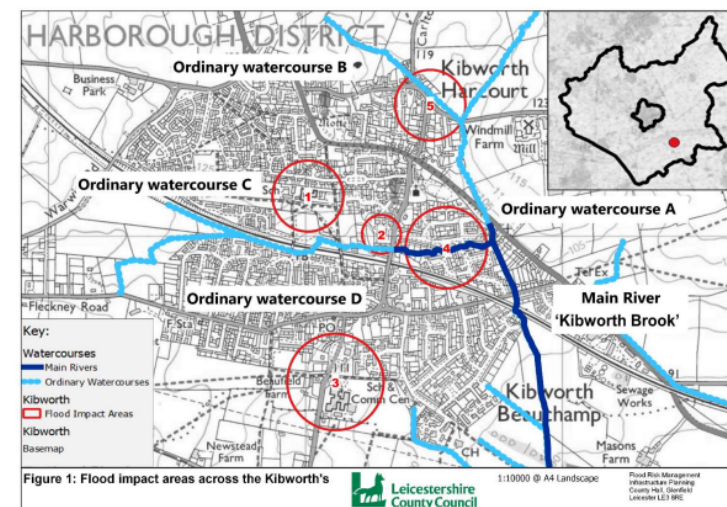
3.1 LOCATION AND SETTING

Kibworth is comprised of two civil parishes, Kibworth Beauchamp and Kibworth Harcourt, which are situated within Harborough District Council and located approximately 13km south-east of Leicester City. The land surrounding Kibworth falls to the south-east, with land to the north and south-west of the parishes having a higher elevation.

The flooding event which occurred on 20th July 2021, impacted five key parts of Kibworth including:

1. Kibworth Primary School
2. Church Road and Station Hollow
3. Kibworth Mead Academy and Kibworth Court Care Home
4. The Lea and Brookfield Way
5. Langton Road

These five flood impact areas are indicated on Figure 1 below.



Public Flooding Drop-In Sessions



To manage local flood risk through effective **preparedness, response to, and recovery** from flood events.

- ❑ The LLFA has been coordinating public flooding drop-in sessions in partnership with other RMAs.
- ❑ The first five sessions were held in spring 2024 following Storm Henk that occurred in January 2024.
- ❑ Two sessions were then held in autumn 2024 to encourage winter flooding preparedness.
- ❑ A further five sessions took place in spring 2025 following the flooding on 6 January 2025. These were also supported by the FloodPod and Flood Mary, who provide independent flood resilience advice.
- ❑ Public attendance ranged between 40 and 100 attendees.
- ❑ Both attendees and the RMAs appreciate the face-to-face discussions.
- ❑ Further winter flooding preparedness drop-in sessions are likely to be arranged for the autumn 2025. The Members will be welcome to attend.

Great Glen drop-in session, April 2025



'Who-to-Contact' Leaflets



To manage local flood risk through effective **preparedness, response to, and recovery** from flood events.

- Advice on 'who-to-contact' leaflets have been developed by the Council in collaboration with its partners.
- These have been shared by email with the flood wardens and distributed at the recent engagement events.

Reservoir:

Environment Agency

EA Incident Hotline
0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

Floodline 0345 988 1188
(Flood Warning Information)

Check for Flood Warnings:
check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk



Railway:

Network Rail

03457 11 41 41 (24 hours)

Main Rivers:

Environment Agency

EA Incident Hotline
0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

Floodline 0345 988 1188
(Flood Warning Information)

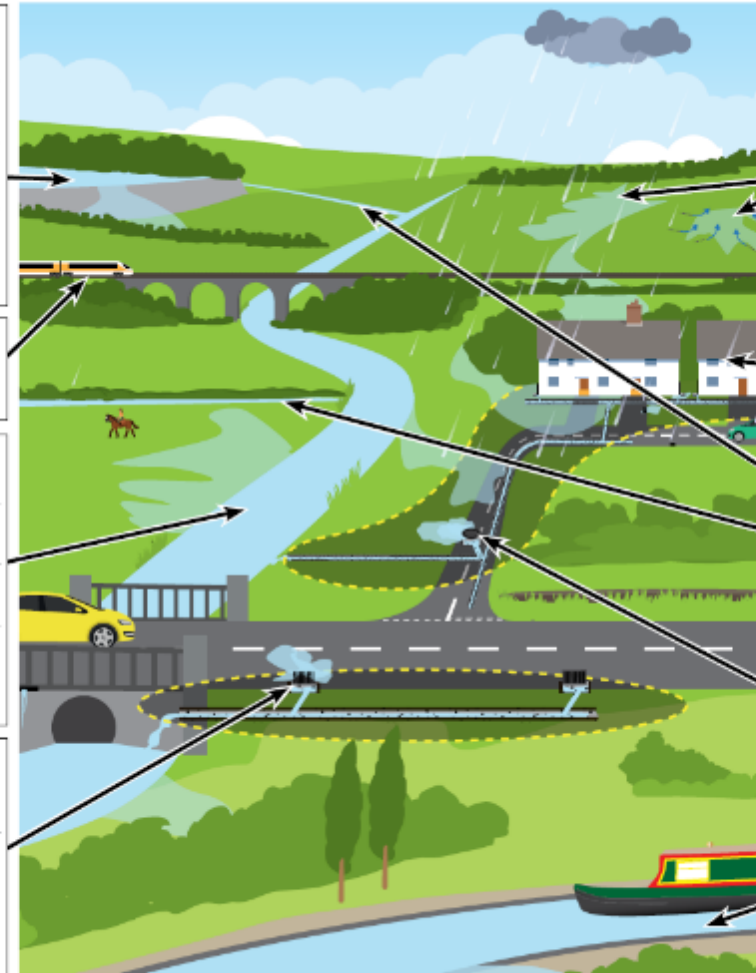
Check for Flood Warnings:
check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk



Public Highway:

Leicestershire County Council
Highways

Report a road problem online:
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/report-a-road-problem
or 0116 305 0001 (Not out of hours)



Surface Water and Groundwater:

Leicestershire County Council
Lead Local Flood Authority

Report a Flood online:
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/report-a-flood
or 0116 305 0001 (Not out of hours)



Check for Flood Warnings:
check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk



Private Residence or Business:

Private owner responsible
for the property

Ordinary Watercourses:

Leicestershire County Council Lead
Local Flood Authority

Report a Flood online:
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/report-a-flood
or 0116 305 0001 (Not out of hours)



Mains Sewer & Wastewater Sewer:

Sewer Trent:
0800 782 4444 (24 hours)
Anglian Water:
03457 145 145 (24 hours)

Canal:

Canal and River Trust
0303 040 40 40 (Office hours)
0800 479 9947 (24 hours)

If a river or watercourse runs through your land you may be a riparian landowner. For more information visit www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse



To manage local flood risk through effective **preparedness, response to, and recovery** from flood events.

- ❑ The Council is encouraging communities towards resilience via property protection and community action.
- ❑ The Council has developed the 'Be Flood Ready' messaging.
- ❑ The Council's website material is being updated with a focus on self-resilience.
- ❑ There will be further development of the guidance notes, and these will be circulated and promoted in due course.



Be Flood Ready logo



To manage local flood risk through effective **preparedness, response to, and recovery** from flood events.

- ❑ Volunteer flood wardens support flood event preparedness, response and recovery.
- ❑ The scheme is coordinated by the Resilience Partnership.
- ❑ Since September 2023, the number of flood wardens has increased from 100 to 130.
- ❑ Flood warden recruitment training events currently take place every two months.
- ❑ Since 2023, there has also been an annual flood warden engagement event, and flood wardens have established their own online networking groups.
- ❑ The Flood Warden Working Group meets every two months to coordinate support.
- ❑ The Flood Warden Handbook provides advice and guidance. It is updated annually.
- ❑ The Resilience Partnership is currently developing a formal community road closure scheme proposal.



Flood Warden Handbook



SEPTEMBER 2024



To manage local flood risk through the effective management of flood risk assets, watercourses, and catchments.

- ❑ Responsibility for the maintenance of rivers and watercourses is riparian (the adjacent landowner(s)).
- ❑ The Environment Agency regulates flood risk main rivers, such as the River Soar.
- ❑ The Environment Agency also owns some assets and may use its permissive powers to carry out maintenance.
- ❑ A map of the Environment Agency maintained or regulated flood risk assets is now publicly available online on the Environment Agency's website.
- ❑ The Council, as the LLFA, regulates the management of (usually smaller) ordinary watercourses.
- ❑ This involves guidance, consenting and enforcement.
- ❑ The Ordinary Watercourse Regulation and Culvert Policy forms part of the LFRMS.
- ❑ A local watercourses management guide is available.



AWARE • PREPARED • ENGAGED

A guide for watercourse 'riparian' landowners



If an ordinary watercourse is within or next to land or property that you own in Leicestershire, this guide is for you. For further, more detailed advice about owning watercourses please visit www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse



Surface Water Drainage



To manage local flood risk through the effective management of flood risk assets, watercourses, and catchments.

- There are over 130,000 gullies on local public roads in Leicestershire.
- Gullies are cleansed by the LHA's highway contractors using a risk-based approach, which uses various data such as past and predicted flooding.
- This means some gullies will be cleansed/inspected more often than others, either on a 10, 20 or 24-month frequency.
- Just because gullies are not draining, it does not always mean that they are blocked; for example, the sewer they connect to may be at capacity or blocked.
- Increased flooding events have seen a high demand in the number of requests for further gully cleansing and maintenance, in addition to routine cleansing.
- Following the storm on 6 January 2025, additional resources have provided further cleanse to 4756 gullies and 47 culverts in affected towns and villages.
- Gully emptying priorities at known flooding sites have been reviewed and the frequency of cleansing increased for 5240 gullies.
- The public sewer network is the responsibility of water companies (Severn Trent, Anglian Water).





To manage local flood risk through **encouraging sustainable development** working to ensure development is resilient to flooding, and does not increase risk of flooding elsewhere.

- ❑ The LLFA fulfils the role of statutory consultee on surface water for all major planning applications. The LLFA is not routinely consulted on minor applications but does respond where there is a significant surface water drainage concern.
- ❑ The LLFA responds to approximately 900 consultations from Local Planning Authorities each year.
- ❑ The responsibility for both final planning approval, and planning enforcement is with the district councils.
- ❑ The Council may adopt highway drainage and associated SuDS, but not usually other surface water elements.
- ❑ Water companies may adopt new sewers, whilst SuDS might be adopted by district councils as part of public open space, or by private management companies.
- ❑ Most of the district councils have recently been working on updating their Local Plans.
- ❑ The LLFA and the other RMAs have therefore also been consulted on multiple local policy updates, and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessments that support these.



Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) can temporarily store flood water. They can also be designed to provide water quality, amenity and biodiversity benefits.

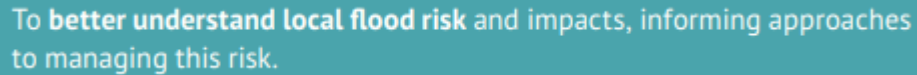


To manage local flood risk through developing and or managing **local projects** for at-risk communities.

- ❑ The LLFA and its partners have a programme of local projects to reduce the risk of flooding and increase resilience to flooding.
- ❑ For example, the Breedon flood alleviation scheme has progressed well.
- ❑ A combination of upstream storage, natural flood management, property flood resilience, and bridge alterations will reduce the risk of flooding to 46 properties.
- ❑ Business cases have been approved by the Environment Agency for projects in Long Whatton, Diseworth and Stoney Stanton.
- ❑ The Environment Agency is developing a project in Loughborough, and delivering Property Flood Resilience in Redmile, Sileby and Braunstone.

***Upstream storage
construction, Breedon***





- 41

Properties at risk of local flooding in the 1 in 100 annual chance event, based on the National Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Mapping and Local Flood Models

0
1 - 10
10 - 20
20 - 50
50 - 100

Note: The Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Maps primarily show flooding from surface water sources and major wetlands areas. The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is a complex system of waterways and wetlands. Agencies use a range of models to assess the risk of flooding from surface water, which is a complex task. The Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Maps (RFSWM) is a computer-generated map that shows the risk of flooding from surface water. The map is color-coded by risk level: 0 (lightest blue), 1-10 (light blue), 10-20 (medium blue), 20-50 (dark blue), and 50-100 (darkest blue). The map includes numerous community names and a north arrow. A legend on the left explains the color coding and notes that the map is based on the National Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Mapping and Local Flood Models. A note at the bottom states: 'Please note that if a community is estimated to be at lower risk and flooding is experienced, the necessary support will still be provided.'

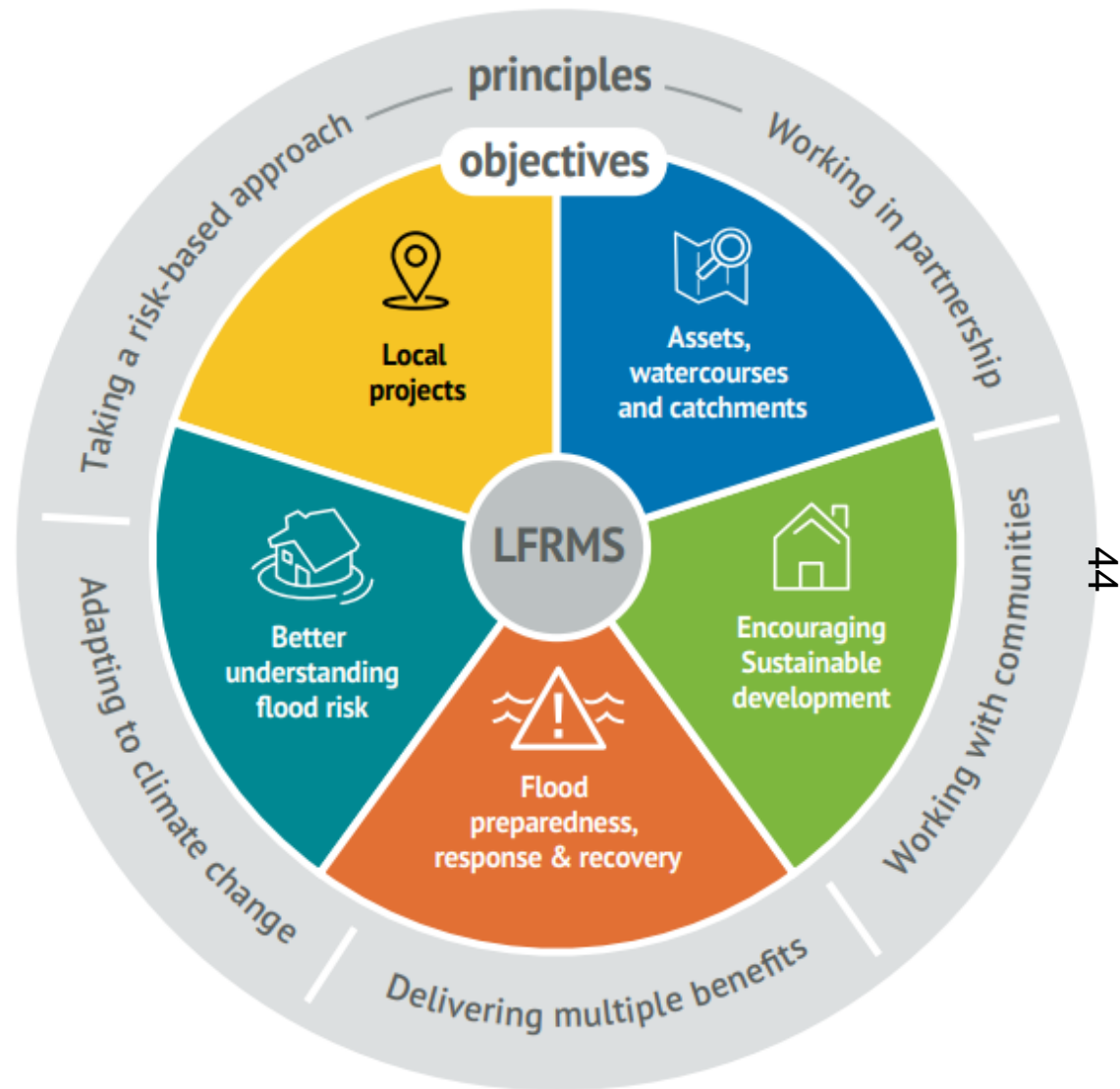
Please note that if a community is estimated to be at lower risk and flooding is experienced, the necessary support will still be provided.

Figure 1 Assessment of Local Flood Risk. Please note that if a community is estimated to be at lower risk and flooding is experienced, the necessary support will still be provided.

- ❑ An additional £400,000 was allocated after Storm Henk on 2 January 2024 to fund supplementary staff resources. It was used to support Section 19 investigation work and project delivery, as well as supporting the increasing complexity of the LLFA statutory consultee role in planning. The funding was used to create an additional, permanent Flood Engagement Officer role as part of the drive to educate land and property owners on their riparian maintenance responsibilities and how crucial this is in managing flood risk.
- ❑ An additional £340,000 was allocated after the storm of 6 January 2025. Out of that allocation, £100,000 was allocated to support community flood resilience through use of 'Flood Mary' at drop-in sessions, purchase of materials for further work to push the 'Be Flood Ready' message; and £240,000 was allocated to additional temporary resources to support the increase again in investigation and project work which will take several years to complete.
- ❑ For the Local Transport Grant, £521,000 was allocated to projects in Long Whatton and Oakthorpe to help better protect residents from future flood risk.

- ❑ As previously stated, the LLFA does not have the powers to make the other RMAs implement solutions where it is their responsibility.
- ❑ Lincolnshire County Council requests other RMAs to attend regular Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.
- ❑ It is suggested that the relevant Committee might want to consider inviting annually the water companies and the Environment Agency to Committee meetings to seek updates and check on their progress with flood risk management activities for Leicestershire.
- ❑ This would provide an opportunity to keep the spotlight on progress for flood risk management activity in Leicestershire in lieu of any powers over other RMAs.
- ❑ It is within the remit of the relevant Committee to monitor the performance and activities of the Flood Risk Management Board.

- ❑ The LFRMS will continue to be implemented.
- ❑ A full update on the LFRMS Action Plan implementation can be provided in due course.
- ❑ Propose to bring an annual update report.
- ❑ The Committee is to consider inviting the water companies and the Environment Agency to attend Committee meetings on an annual basis.



HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 5 JUNE 2025

RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the development of the Council's updated Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP), providing it with an opportunity to comment on the plan and the actions identified, as part of the public consultation that is being undertaken. The RoWIP sets out a series of actions that will continue to manage and improve the Leicestershire rights of way network for its current and future users.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. From 21 November 2002, relevant authorities in England were required by legislation to prepare and publish a RoWIP. This advice was subsequently amended by a requirement to fit elements of the RoWIP into the second Local Transport Plan (LTP) process. Leicestershire's first RoWIP was approved by the County Council in September 2006.
3. The 2006 RoWIP was updated in 2011 to support the LTP3. The LTP3 provided a long-term strategy for transport within the County, including the public rights of way network. The LTP3 was approved by County Council in March 2011.
4. On 20 July 2021, the Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS) and its Action Plan were approved by the Cabinet. The CaWS Action Plan contains a short-term action 'S12' to prepare a revised RoWIP by 2026.
5. On 22 November 2024, the LTP4 Core Document was approved by the Cabinet. The LTP4 is a key document in the development of the Council's transport programmes, providing the overarching strategic direction in support of sustainable travel and transport, including active travel and the public rights of way network.
6. In May 2022, the County Council approved its Strategic Plan (2022 – 2026), which was subsequently updated in 2024. The RoWIP helps to deliver positive actions towards all the Strategic Plan's five strategic outcomes:
 - a) 'Safe and Well' - Active travel is proven to improve health and wellbeing, both physically and mentally. The public rights of way network facilitates easy access to cycling, walking, wheeling and riding routes for regular journeys.
 - b) 'Clean and Green' - The public rights of way network provides sustainable access to nature and green space for all.

- c) 'Great Communities' - The public rights of way network helps connect all Leicestershire communities, encouraging community cohesion in a sustainable way.
 - d) 'Improved Opportunities' - The public rights of way network helps to connect communities to wider services in a healthy, environmentally friendly way, helping children and young people get the best start in life.
 - e) 'Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure' - The public rights of way network in Leicestershire spans over 1915 miles (3084 kilometres) of routes, providing accessible travel options for all.
7. On 7 February 2025, the Cabinet agreed the 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which was then approved by the County Council on 19 February 2025. Spending towards maintaining and improving public rights of way are contained within the MTFS.
 8. On 18 March 2025, the Cabinet approved the intended approach to undertake the development of an updated RoWIP to cover the period 2025-2035, and to undertake a 12-week public consultation on a draft RoWIP.

Background

9. Within Leicestershire there are more than 1,915 miles (3,084km) of public paths. Leicestershire County Council has a role to provide safe passage of people wanting to use the paths, ensuring the network is effectively recorded, managed and maintained. Approximately 40% of the highway network is made up of these rights of way. On this network there are many infrastructure assets that are required to be in place and maintained by the Council, working in partnership with landowners, farmers, organisations and volunteers. These assets include many gates and stiles, bridges of various sizes including large listed structures, around 40,000 waymarkers and over 15,000 waymarker posts. The Public Rights of Way network represents a significant asset to manage and maintain efficiently and effectively.
10. The RoWIP is a plan that explains how improvements made to the public rights of way network in Leicestershire, alongside effective management and maintenance, will provide a better experience for all users when walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding. The Plan covers a period of 10 years and aims to help connect Leicestershire communities with each other through nature and green spaces.
11. In September 2017, the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan set out the Council's operational procedures in undertaking a risk-based approach to asset management, aligning with Government guidance 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice 2016'. The Code is designed to promote the adoption of local levels of service for highway maintenance which are determined based on technical risk assessments alongside local needs and priorities.
12. Similar operational procedures and service levels for maintaining the public rights of way network are now being developed and alongside the RoWIP these will set out the overall approach to maintaining the public rights of way network for the next decade.
13. Since the current ROWIP was approved in 2006, much has been done including:

- a) The installation/replacement of more than 250 large bridges, around 300 new bridle gates, 15000 waymarker posts, over a 1000 small sleeper bridges and more than 1700 hand or kissing gates
- b) The removal of 1500 stiles
- c) The placement of 40000 waymarkers
- d) The strimming of more than 1000 miles of paths
- e) The repainting of more than 25000 posts and much more.

14. It is now required to be updated to ensure it aligns with:

- a) Current Government legislation and statutory guidance;
- b) The latest Council policies and strategies, including the LTP4 Core Document and the CaWS;
- c) The Council's risk-based approach to asset management.

Updating the RoWIP

15. The statutory guidance sets out that RoWIPs are required to consider at least the following:

- a) The extent to which rights of way meet the needs of the public;
- b) The opportunities for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation;
- c) A statement of the action the Authority proposes to take for the management of local rights of way.

16. The updated RoWIP will therefore set out a statement of action covering the identified changes to be made in respect of the management of, and improvements to, rights of way for a 10-year period, in line with Government guidance. The updated RoWIP is intended to cover the period from 2025 to 2035.

17. The Council has a statutory role as:

- a) Local Highway Authority to maintain and sign routes on the ground and to keep them open for people to use.
- b) Local Surveying Authority to map all of the paths on the Definitive Map and let people know where they are.
- c) Access Authority to look after open access sites and rights.

18. As with the current RoWIP, the updated Plan will set out a series of actions to meet these areas of work and maximise the use of the network in the most cost-efficient way.

19. The Council, working with other authorities and agencies, including the voluntary sector, aims to:

- a) Develop and manage a rights of way network that meets the current and future needs of the local community.
- b) Provide a good quality and value for money rights of way service.
- c) Enable as many people as possible to walk, wheel, cycle and ride, with particular focus on those currently excluded, including those with mobility constraints.
- d) Contribute towards improving the health of residents of Leicestershire and reduce their carbon footprint.

- e) Promote Leicestershire as an attractive place to walk, wheel, cycle and ride for all, including those living in or visiting the County.
- f) Monitor and report at regular intervals on how these goals are being achieved.

20. The updated RoWIP will play a key part in delivering these aims and build on the successes and achievements delivered during the first ROWIP period.

Consultation and Engagement

21. Consultation and engagement is embedded in the approach to developing and updating RoWIPs. Engagement has taken place throughout the development of the draft RoWIP to help shape its contents prior to being published as part of a formal consultation, the output of which will further inform the final plan.
22. The statutory guidance stipulates a number of stakeholders that must be engaged with when preparing an updated RoWIP; for Leicestershire that includes:
- a) Highway authorities whose areas adjoin Leicestershire;
 - b) District councils and parish councils;
 - c) Natural England;
 - d) Local Access Forums.
23. The Council hosts the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF). This is a statutory group that advises the Council and other bodies on the improvement of public access for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. The LLAF plays a key part in helping shape the RoWIP and supporting how the Council engages with its biggest stakeholder, the public.
24. There are two periods of engagement and consultation as part of updating the RoWIP, pre-consultation engagement during development, and then formal consultation on the draft RoWIP. This ensures all stakeholders have the opportunity to input and help shape the RoWIP and then review it once the draft is developed.

Pre-Consultation Engagement

25. In line with the Government's statutory guidance, there have been several pre-consultation engagement activities held over a four-week period during February and March 2025. This ensured that a wide range of stakeholders, including advocacy groups, local members and residents, were given the opportunity to have their say and help shape the draft RoWIP.
26. This engagement was carried out through a few different methods, which included:
- a) Direct elected member engagement - County Council Members, district council members and parish councils were asked for their views and asked to advise of any known local priorities for improvements to the rights of way network in their areas. They were also invited to participate in the online survey and map-based feedback exercise.
 - b) Direct engagement with statutory and other key stakeholders - key stakeholders, including neighbouring highway authorities, Natural England

and advocacy groups, were contacted directly asking them for their priorities for improvements to the rights of way network in Leicestershire. They were also invited to participate in the online survey and map-based feedback exercise.

- c) Online public survey – a four week online survey was launched in February 2025 to collect responses covering a range of subjects in relation to the Leicestershire rights of way network. For example, questions included how often the network is used, what barriers stop people from using the network, and what would encourage people to use the public rights of way network more often. This feedback has helped inform how the RoWIP can help ensure the network better meets the needs of users. Over 1240 responses were received to the online survey, which included responses from:
 - Leicestershire residents,
 - Visitors to Leicestershire,
 - County, district or parish/town members,
 - Representative of a public sector organisations,
 - Representative of a voluntary sector organisation, charity or community groups,
 - Representative of a business or private sector organisations.
 - d) Online map-based feedback - a map-based online engagement tool (Social PinPoint) that allows people to leave comments on specific areas of the public rights of way network via placing pins on a virtual map of Leicestershire. The participants were able to highlight their favourite routes, the ones they used most often, as well as what improvements they would like to see and where. This has also helped to identify what is needed and prioritise improvements.
 - e) Hosting a special forum with focus group workshops – on 3 March 2025, the LLAF members joined the Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Forum for a special session that invited all interested parties along to take part in discussion and learn all about the development of the RoWIP and how they can help shape it. This was an opportunity to get detailed feedback in a face-to-face environment, where attendees were asked for their ideas on what improvements could help make the rights of way network better meet the needs of all users over the next 10 years. Over 40 people attend the in-person event at County Hall.
27. During the pre-consultation engagement period, all activities were advertised through social media and on both the Leicestershire County Council website and the Choose How You Move website.
28. Further detail covering the engagement feedback can be viewed in the draft RoWIP appended to this report.

Formal Consultation on the Draft RoWIP

29. Following the pre-consultation engagement, the RoWIP was updated and a formal public consultation on the revised draft has now commenced. This will be held over a 12-week period between May and August 2025. This report forms part of the consultation to ensure comments from the Committee can be considered and reported to the Cabinet.

30. During the 12-week consultation period, the draft RoWIP will be shared online, and an accompanying online survey will be launched. Participants will be asked to consider the draft RoWIP and comment on whether they feel the actions proposed will help achieve the goals set out in the RoWIP in ensuring the rights of way network meets the present and future needs of users, provides opportunities for all users to access nature, open-air recreation and exercise, and does so in an efficient cost effective and sustainable way.
31. In addition to the online survey, a variety of engagement opportunities, including sustainable travel roadshows with stakeholders are planned during the 12-week consultation period to ensure that people have an opportunity to discuss the Plan and provide their thoughts on any potential amendments to the Plan.
32. The draft RoWIP will be reviewed and updated as appropriate in light of consultation responses received. The final updated version will be presented to the Cabinet for approval at its meeting in October 2025.

Resource Implications

33. Despite funding constraints, the Council has continued to manage the extensive rights of way network, meeting its statutory obligations and delivering a range of successful projects in Leicestershire.
34. The RoWIP and its actions present an ongoing programme of work, and capital and revenue allocations to ensure it continues to meet its statutory obligations, which are being delivered within agreed budgets, subject to approval through the MTFS.
35. The delivery of future actions in the RoWIP is dependent on continued funding, which comes from various sources, including agreed capital and revenue budgets set out in the MTFS, the Government, Section 106 contributions, and delivery of obligations by developers to improve the PROW network via the planning process and collaborative endeavours with other working partnerships.
36. The current revenue budget is £258,000 in 2025/26, as agreed through the current MTFS.
37. As set out in the Environment and Transport Highways and Transportation Capital Programme presented to the Cabinet on 18 March 2025, the annual capital maintenance budget for public rights of way is currently £18,797 levelling out to £17,000 until 2028/29. However, it is recognised that the cost to maintain the rights of way network presents a significant challenge in order to continue to maintain standards for users. As such, future increased maintenance funding provision is being considered for the immediate year and beyond in the wider context of potential multi-year funding settlements from the Government, the detail of which will be subject to the next Government spending review announcements post 11 June 2025.
38. The overall approach to maintaining the public rights of way network and the delivery of actions within the RoWIP will be through a risk-based assessment, aligned to the budgets available, which is being developed in parallel with the RoWIP.
39. In addition, the Council will continue to seek to improve and link paths with new developments. There are already a number of agreements with developers and

Local Planning Authorities which are programmed for delivery over the 10-year plan period as the trigger points for the works are reached.

40. The RoWIP is being developed within the framework of the current and future funding available. It is accepted that this will be subject to variations and the actions attached to the document can be updated to reflect future changes. All opportunities will continue to be explored and maximised towards securing external funding towards the sustainable management and improvement of the public rights of way network. This includes seeking to secure funding through the planning arena, Government grants, partnerships, local parish and district authorities where possible and appropriate.
41. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance were consulted on the content of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

42. A public consultation on the draft RoWIP document is being undertaken for a period of 12 weeks, between 19 May and 10 August 2025.
43. The outcome of the consultation and the final draft Plan will be presented to the Cabinet on 21 October 2025 for approval. The Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments will be considered when finalising the RoWIP and reported to the Cabinet at its meeting in October.

Conclusion

44. The updated RoWIP is being developed through engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, and in line with current Council policies and strategies, to create an achievable and affordable plan. This will help achieve the goals of a RoWIP in helping maintain and improve a rights of way network that meets the present and future needs of users, providing opportunities for all users to access nature, open-air recreation and exercise, and does so in an efficient, cost effective and sustainable way.
45. In doing so, it is intended to continue building on the successes of the significant work that has been undertaken to date to manage and maintain the public rights of way network in Leicestershire, providing continued accessible and sustainable travel options for all.
46. The Committee is asked to comment on the draft RoWIP appended to this report.

Appendix

Appendix A – Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035

Appendix B – Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035 – Action Plan

Background Papers

Report to County Council on 22 March 2006 - Second Local Transport Plan (LTP2)
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=1292&Ver=4>

Report to County Council on 20 September 2006 - 2006 Rights of Way Improvement Plan

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=1502&Ver=4>

Report to County Council on 23 March 2011 - Third Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3)

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=3057&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 20 July 2021 - Cycling and Walking Strategy and Action Plan (CaWS)

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6445&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 22 November 2024 - Fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) Core Document

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7511&Ver=4>

Report to County Council on 18 May 2022 - Strategic Plan (2022 – 2026)

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6482&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 07 February 2025 - Provisional Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7873&Ver=4>

Government guidance - Local authority rights of way improvement plans

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-authority-rights-of-way-improvement-plans>

Report to the Cabinet on 18 March 2025 - The Development of an updated Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) 2025-2035

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7874&Ver=4>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Equality Implications

47. An equality screening was undertaken as part of the process to develop the RoWIP, with the likely impact of the Plan being identified as positive or neutral.
48. Feedback received during engagement and forthcoming consultation activities, including with stakeholders such as the Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group, will be considered when updating the final draft Plan for approval.
49. Where appropriate, Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken during the development of individual projects and programmes.

Human Rights Implications

50. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Environmental Implications

51. The RoWIP will facilitate the continued successful management and improvement of the rights of way network through Leicestershire countryside, facilitating and encourage access to nature and green spaces for all. Therefore, the updated RoWIP is considered to help deliver positive benefits to residents and visitors to Leicestershire, in support of the goals set out in the Environment

Strategy, Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plans, and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy. All of which are aligned to the Council's Strategic Plan.

52. Environmental Impact Assessments will be carried out in relation to work undertaken on individual projects and programmes where appropriate.

Health Implications

53. A Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (HIA) has been undertaken and currently indicates a positive impact to public health, through encouraging and enabling communities to travel actively in the natural environment, contributing towards mental and physical health and wellbeing. The HIA will be updated as necessary following the completion of consultation activities set out in this report.

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Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Development of an updated Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

55

05 June 2024

- ❑ There are over 1,915 miles (3,084km) of public paths that make up the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network in Leicestershire.
- ❑ It consists of: footpaths, bridleways, byways and restricted byways.
- ❑ Over 40% of the highway network is made up of these rights of way.
- ❑ On the PROW network there are many infrastructure assets, including:
 - Hundreds of gates, stiles and bridges of various sizes including large listed structures;
 - Thousands of waymarkers and waymarker posts.
- ❑ The PROW network represents a significant asset to manage, record and maintain efficiently and effectively.
 - This is achieved through the County Council working in partnership with others, including local planning authorities, landowners, farmers, charities, organisations and volunteers.

- ❑ Leicestershire County Council has many duties and roles regarding PROW, ensuring the network is safe, accurately recorded, effectively managed and maintained. These include:
 - **Local Highway Authority**
 - Maintaining rights of way,
 - Ensuring a safe network,
 - Statutory consultee in the planning process,
 - Host the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF).
 - **Survey Authority**
 - Ensuring the Definitive Map continues to be an accurate public record.
 - **Access Authority**
 - Ensuring designated open access sites are accessible to the public.
 - **Encouraging & Enabling use**
 - Providing promotion, information, education and training for all ages and abilities.
- ❑ **Every local authority responsible for rights of way is required to have a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).**

Achievements

Since implementing the first improvement plan, much has been done. The Council has:



Installed or replaced
more than
250
larger bridges

Made more than
10,000
visits to clear
vegetation

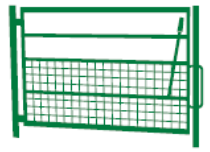


Strimmed more than
1,000
miles of paths



Installed more than
15,000
waymarker posts
to show the way ahead

Installed more than
1,700
hand or kissing gates
to replace boundary
structures



Installed around
300
new bridle gates
with easy opening
latches for riders

Repainted
more than
25,000
posts

Installed more than
1,000
new smaller
sleeper bridges

Removed over
1,500
stiles



Placed
40,000
waymarkers



Managed nearly
7,000
sites where
finger posts
are required



Challenges

- ❑ Recording, managing, maintaining, improving and encouraging use of the PROW network presents challenges, including:
 - Mitigating negative impacts of housing and employment development growth on the network.
 - Minimising the cost of maintenance duties.
 - Processing and recording current and historic Definitive Map Modification Orders claims.
 - Ensuring the Council fulfils its legal duties efficiently and effectively, responding to legislation changes.
 - Mitigating negative impacts on the environment, biodiversity and public health.

Opportunities

- ❑ Successfully improving, managing and maintaining the rights of way network helps:
 - Improve public health, enabling more people to be physically active and more often.
 - Maximise the life of assets, mitigating maintenance costs to provide value for money.
 - Provide free access to green space for all communities.
 - Connects local communities.
 - Maintain an accurate Definitive Map as a public record.
 - Protect the environment and biodiversity.
 - Support the rural economy and tourism.
 - Ensure housing and employment development growth improves access to PROW and active travel use.

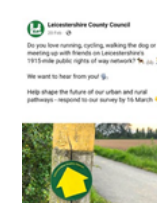
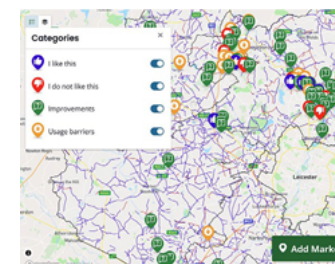
- ❑ The new RoWIP has been developed through engagement from the outset.
- ❑ Pre-consultation engagement with statutory and non-statutory stakeholders helped inform development of the draft RoWIP, this included:

- The public,
- Leicestershire Local Access Forum,
- Neighbouring Highway Authorities,
- District and parish councils,
- Neighbouring local authorities,
- The Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group,
- Advocacy groups including Ramblers association.



- ❑ Pre-consultation engagement activities with a wide range of stakeholders included:

- Online Survey - over 1240 responses were received,
- Map based feedback tool,
- Held public forum and workshop at County Hall.



Survey results helped to inform the draft RoWIP:



Common Barriers to using the Rights of Way Network in Leicestershire

51% of respondents said maintenance/cleanliness issues prevented them from using the network

29% physical access to route

27% lack of signage was an issue

Engagement Survey Summary

89%

were
Leicestershire
residents



39%
male

1% use another term



60%
female



71%

of respondents
start journeys
from home



85%

said they use
the network for
health, fitness and
well being purposes



What respondents said would encourage use

53% better quality of paths/cycleways/bridleways

62% would like to see paths/cycleways/bridleways better maintained

46% said better signage would encourage them great deal

38% would like to see improved accessibility including more routes with gates instead of stiles

42% would like to see more printed information on where to walk/cycle/ride on the network

Moving forward

- Respondents agreed most heavily used rights of way should be prioritised for maintenance.
- 78% of respondents agree that developers should be encouraged to provide more riding and walking opportunities.
- Most would like to see a 'Greenways' network introduced linking villages and towns.



Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035



Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035 Action Plan



- ❑ The new RoWIP covers a 10-year period between 2025 – 2035.
- ❑ It sets out:
 - What the Council does in fulfilling its various roles, in looking after the network, recording the network, improving access and encouraging use
 - How important partnership working is to the success of the PROW network and in minimising costs to the Council
 - How engagement is important to the continued success of the RoWIP
 - An assessment of the PROW network and its users
 - How the delivery of the RoWIP is funded and resourced
 - How performance of the PROW network and delivery of the RoWIP will be monitored
 - A series of ACTIONS in the Action Plan, informed through engagement, that ensures the Council will continue to successfully manage, record, maintain, improve and encourage use of the Leicestershire rights of way network efficiently and effectively for its current and future users.

Timeframe	Activity	Status
February – March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet - approval to develop and consult on a draft RoWIP 	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-consultation engagement activities with wide range of stakeholders included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Survey - over 1240 responses were received Map based feedback tool Held public forum and workshop at County Hall 	
May to August 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12-week public consultation on draft RoWIP June 2025 - H&T Overview and Scrutiny Committee 	In progress
October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet – outcome of consultation and seeking approval of the finalised RoWIP 	To be completed

- ❑ The Council has been successfully managing, recording, maintaining and improving rights of way for many years – this RoWIP will help build on that success.
- ❑ The PROW network represents a significant asset to manage, record and maintain efficiently and effectively – it is a great asset to Leicestershire.
- ❑ Engagement with the people of Leicestershire and key stakeholders has been an integral part of helping inform development of the RoWIP.
- ❑ Feedback from Members of this Committee and the public as part of the 12-week consultation period will further inform the final RoWIP.
- ❑ The Cabinet approval of the finalised RoWIP will be sought in October 2025.

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Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035



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Foreword

Foreword to be included here in final version of the document



1. Introduction

Leicestershire County Council is responsible for over 1,915 miles (3,084km) of public rights of way, including paths in both the countryside and urban areas. They are important for leisure, travelling to work or school, as well as peoples' health and wellbeing. The wonderful and diverse public rights of way are part of what makes Leicestershire a special place to live, work and thrive.

Although Leicestershire's rights of way network has developed over hundreds of years, it is important that it continues to meet the needs of the people that use it, both now and in the future. Enabling everyone to make the best use of the network, connecting our communities, and providing access to nature and the countryside is key to maintaining a healthy and prosperous rural county.

Every council that is responsible for public rights of way is required to have a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). This document is Leicestershire's RoWIP, which sets out how the network of rights of way will continue to be managed and improved over the next ten years between 2025 and 2035.

What is a Right of Way?

A right of way is a public highway that anyone, by law, has the right to use. There are four types:

- **Footpaths** for walking, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs
- **Bridleways** for walking, horse riding, cycling, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs
- **Restricted byways** for walking, horse riding, cycling, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs and horse-drawn carriages
- **Byways open to all traffic** for all modes including motorised vehicles



Footpath to
Foxton Locks
1 1/2



2. Policy Context

Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan sets out the Council's long-term vision and priorities.
Its five strategic outcomes are: Clean and Green • Great Communities • Safe and Well
• Improved Opportunities • Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure

Environment Strategy

The Environment Strategy provides an overarching framework with the aim to protect and enhance the environment, which includes supporting green and blue infrastructure projects through partnerships and collaboration to support biodiversity. Good management and improvement of the rights of way network contributes toward these aims.

Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy

Reducing CO2 and CO2e emissions to net zero in Leicestershire is a key commitment made by the Council. Increasing mode shift to active travel through the use of the rights of way network and reducing Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) motor vehicle use assists in reaching our Net Zero targets for the benefits of all communities.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan and its actions have been developed in the context of key policies and strategies, to ensure the plan is aligned with wider policy objectives that benefit our communities. These cover the areas of travel and transport, the environment and public health.

Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Encouraging more active travel use is vital for improving public health and wellbeing. Improving the rights of way network for our communities helps to deliver the incredible positive value that regular physical exercise has on public health.

Local Transport Plan (LTP4)

The direction and policy framework for the RoWIP is set by our Local Transport Plan (LTP4). The LTP4 Core Document, adopted in November 2024, sets out the vision for transport for Leicestershire over 2025 - 2040. The vision for transport is:

'Delivering a safe, connected and integrated transport network which is resilient and well managed to support the ambitions and health of our growing communities, safeguards the environment whilst delivering economic prosperity.'

Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS)

The RoWIP is an important element of the Cycling and Walking Strategy, helping to support people make more sustainable travel choices.

Public rights of way are vital in enabling our communities to access green and blue spaces and in connecting our communities. Encouraging and enabling use of the rights of way network can help towards improving public health and wellbeing, reducing negative impacts on the environment and air quality, and supporting the rural economy.

Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy

The highway network plays a key role in keeping people and places connected, especially in a rural county. Public rights of way make up over 40% of the highways network. Keeping our highway network in good condition is important for our communities, with the public rights of way and the RoWIP being a key part of the overall highway asset management framework.

Multi Modal Area Investment Plans (MMAIPs)

MMAIPs are holistic long term investment plans and are one of the delivery mechanisms for the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) that help secure investment and prioritise improvements to the transport networks, including the public rights of way network, to help mitigate transport challenges.

Biodiversity Duty Plan

The Biodiversity Duty Plan sets out the current and future actions that the Council will need to undertake to meet the strengthened biodiversity duty. One of the main areas where the Council has an opportunity to conserve and enhance biodiversity and demonstrate that it is meeting the duty is in relation to the land that it manages, which includes our rights of way network.

Access for Nature Delivery Plan

The Access for Nature Delivery Plan, which supports the Council's Action for Nature Strategic Approach to Biodiversity, Habitat and the Local Environment, includes actions to work with partners to seek funding and support to implement enhancements on the rights of way network.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan and its actions have been developed in the context of key policies and strategies, to ensure the plan is aligned with wider policy objectives that benefit our communities. These cover the areas of travel and transport, the environment and public health.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)

LCWIPs set out cycling and walking networks and infrastructure priorities in an area for investment, including rights of way. Alongside the plans are linked educational and promotional programmes to help encourage people to travel actively.

Leicestershire Highway Design Guide

As the Local Highway Authority for the county, the Council's primary focus is on prioritising the safety and efficiency of a cohesive transport network that also helps deliver accessible places that offer benefits for the environment and our health and wellbeing. This includes providing practical guidance to land developers and their agents on Leicestershire's expectations when designing sustainable developments, ensuring they promote active travel, including the use of the rights of way.

Tree Management Strategy

The many trees across our rights of way network provide huge benefits to physical, mental and social health, providing calming and peaceful environments and promoting general well-being.

Trees provide huge environmental benefits improving air quality, reducing air pollution, giving off oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide, which help to mitigate the effects of climate change. They also retain water and stabilise soils, thereby reducing flood risk.

Key Guidance and Legislation

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act)

The requirement for local highway authorities to have a Rights of Way Improvement Plan is set out in the CROW Act.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

This legislation sets out various duties relating to rights of way, including the duty to keep the definitive map and statement under continuous review. This is the legal record of public rights of way in Leicestershire.

There is a range of key guidance and legislation relating to local highway authorities in respect of preparing, publishing, assessing and reviewing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). These all play a role in informing the development and delivery of our RoWIP.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

This includes legislation relating to development and public rights of way.

Highways Act 1980

This sets out legislation pertaining to the highway.

Over 40% of the highways network is made up of public rights of way.

Rights of Way Improvement Plans - Statutory Guidance to local highway authorities in England - published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) November 2002.

This document sets out Government's guidance for local highway authorities (LHA's) on preparing, publishing, assessing and reviewing Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

LHA's are required to assess and review plans, and decide whether to amend them or not, at intervals of not less than 10 years.



3. What We Do

3.1 Looking After the Network

Within Leicestershire there are more than 1,915 miles (3,084km) of public paths. It is a significant resource to manage. Leicestershire County Council has a role to ensure the safe passage of people wanting to use the paths. Below are the main areas that collectively make up the ongoing programmes of work undertaken to look after the public rights of way network.

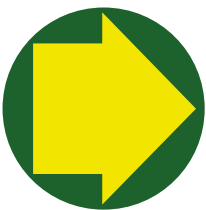
Signing Paths

The Council is required to maintain a direction post at the start of each path where it meets the carriageway. In Leicestershire, that is at nearly 7,000 locations in the county that meet this criterion





The signs, especially from urban areas, provide a gateway to the rural network, some include next village information and a distance. Within urban areas they also highlight routes that lead to schools or shops with local destination information on them. The largest number are on rural lanes showing where paths meets the carriageway. The traditional fingerposts point to the path as it joins the lane. Waymarker posts then guide users. On some promoted paths the signs include information on the promoted route, as well as local destinations where possible. The Leicestershire Round benefits from this and promotes itself at the junction points. One element of the local indicator for rights of way, which is used to monitor performance, includes measuring the number of posts that are provided.

The Council is also under a duty to sign paths along their route. In Leicestershire this utilises yellow waymarker posts at key sighting points along paths, to show the route ahead. Waymarker discs are also used at crossing points with colours that identify the status of the path. From the many compliments and messages

of thanks received, the council continues to have a very good reputation on the quality of its signage across the county. This includes compliments and thanks from those visiting the county.



There are now just over 15,000 locations for waymarker posts, and it is estimated that the Council has nearly 40,000 waymarkers in use at any one time located on other infrastructure across the network as well as posts. The waymarker discs are coloured to denote the status (type of right of way) of the route and the immediate direction of travel. The colour and status of the routes are:

Type of right of way	Waymarker Colour
Footpaths	
Bridleway	
Byways	
Restricted Byways	

The main focus of the waymarkers is to establish the legal routes of paths on the ground for the public and to ensure that the public keep to the paths.

Bridges and Structures

Just like other highways, the rights of way network has many bridges. These structures vary in size and condition, ranging from smaller stream crossings to the much larger structures with replacement costs of over £1million. The replacement of the bridges inventory is estimated to be over £12m.

There has been a rise in flooding incidents leading to bridges being washed away. In conjunction with Climate change policies, flood resilience has become a real issue for elements of the network. This has resulted in a changed design for bridges to allow a better chance of survival during peak flows. When older bridge structures reach the end of their life, they are replaced with bridges meeting the new design as part of the asset renewal process, providing improved resilience to impacts of climate change.

The larger and historic bridges are complex to manage. They vary in age from Medieval structures through to recent constructions. The older structures can be very expensive to maintain. Several bridges are listed and three are scheduled ancient monuments. Both planned and emergency repairs place strain on available funding due to the nature of the work. The Council is looking to add PROW bridges onto the wider highway bridge asset register to provide one register, facilitating more efficient management of bridges for routine maintenance and unplanned failure events.

Not all elements of some bridges are maintained by the authority. Bridges over rail lines are mainly maintained by Network Rail. This includes the longest bridge on the network, which is nearly 300 metres in length.

The failure of a bridge, or danger posed to users by the structure being weakened, will lead to closures. Public safety is paramount in such circumstances. The closure of a bridge has a knock-on effect to the local network and may mean local path links are severed, therefore reducing the number and duration of any bridge closure is important. In such circumstance we prioritise repairs as far as possible to reduce the impact on the network.



Boundary Crossings

Rights of way differ from most other highways in that they often have barriers across them. If a path crosses an area of land capable of holding livestock the occupier can apply for permission to place a fence across it. Nearly all the current fences have historical usage permission. The landowner is required to provide a suitable crossing, usually a stile or a gate. Nearly a fifth of all reports received from the public about rights of way are about these crossings.

The COVID-19 pandemic in the early 2020's saw an increase in the number of people using local paths. The number of reports regarding stiles saw a large increase with new users exploring paths.

Improving access to the wider community has included programmes to replace stiles. Under the previous RoWIP the Council had a policy of 'gap, gate, stile'. The best replacement to a barrier is a gap. A gate is easier to use than a stile. The authority has encouraged gaps to replace stiles in areas with no livestock. It also supported the replacement of more than 1,700 stiles with gates, which have proved popular with users and land managers.

Routes on the network near urban areas and those that link settlements on key green corridors will be subject to 'gap, gate, stile' support where funding is available, to improve access for more people on these priority paths.

Applications for new barriers for livestock will require a gate, ensuring that it meets the Council's design requirements in the online standard drawing¹.

Surfacing

Public paths vary in condition and usability, particularly when it comes to the surface of a route. Most paths in urban areas are either sealed by use of material such as asphalt, or stoned, whilst most rural paths have no sealed or stoned surfacing. Paths that cross arable fields can be ploughed and then restored to provide a level walk.

A path that can be ploughed and an urban surfaced path are different for users, yet both are public highways. The surface of the path is fundamentally different, reflecting the number of people using it. One is close to where many people live, while the other may not be. A sealed surface path does need to be inspected on a programmed basis to ensure proper maintenance.

Paths originating from urban areas, including rural shorter loops, going directly to another close town or village see more use. All reports from customers on any path have been, or are intended to be, investigated. To improve the ongoing maintenance of surfaced routes, a programmed inspection regime is intended to be introduced. This will ensure that regularly used surfaced routes are checked and maintenance works identified.

Key path networks near urban areas, as well as village to village cross field routes, will have a higher level of priority for improving and widening access, such as stile replacement, drainage and stoning.

A much smaller part of the path network are byways, which are carriageways that are mainly used by walkers and riders, but sometimes by vehicles. This RoWIP also includes other minor county roads which have no sealed surface. The legislation that requires local highway authorities to reclassify routes as byways included the provision that there was no liability to surface routes to be suitable for vehicles. Walkers and riders however, do need to be catered for.

¹ www.leicestershirehighwaydesignguide.uk/materials-and-construction/standard-drawings-and-specification/rights-way-standard-drawings

Inspection Regimes

The authority responds and investigates all defect reports no matter where they are on the network. The reports are usually allocated to inspectors who specialise in rights of way work. As well as responsive inspections, the authority also has a programme to inspect all sealed routes. These are mostly in urban areas but also include routes such as cycleways on rural routes. An annual inspection programme is already in place for most of the urban sealed routes. The other routes are to be scheduled for inclusion in the yearly inspections over the early years of the action plan.

Planning

The county is subject to a wide range of planning proposals. These vary in scale from large mineral sites, distribution centres, urban extensions and smaller housing sites. Paragraph 105 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that “Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance Public Rights of Way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks...”.

The Council is a statutory consultee in the planning process, providing advice in relation to public rights of way in relation to planning proposals and applications.

Where public rights of way are impacted by development the Council will expect that consideration is given not just to replacement or reinstatement, but enhancement of the provision, to reflect the increased potential of local usage.

This recognises the impact that development can have on a public right of way, which is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, including future transport options.

As an example, a new large housing site on the periphery of an existing settlement will need to offer local travel options for new residents, including walking, wheeling and cycling to schools, shops and wider links into the rural network to access the wider environment.

Developers are requested to check if a site is crossed by any paths or is alongside any others. An online map is available for free inspection to check where the paths are. This can be used by any party².

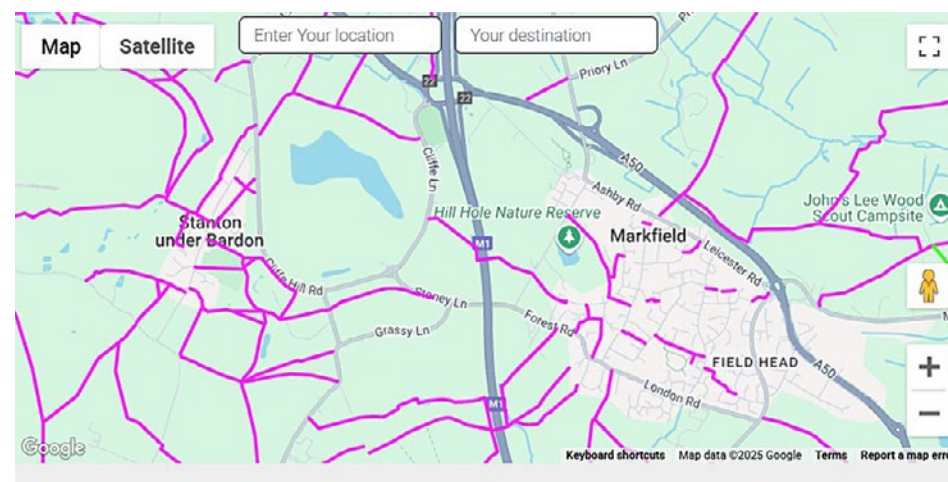


Figure 1 - Where to walk and ride map resource available to the public.

² www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/where-to-walk-and-ride-in-leicestershire

Where sites are subject to public rights of way, or could be linked to others, the Council has developed a wider Leicestershire Highway Design Guide³ (LHDG), which includes advice relating to rights of way. The LHDG is an online and dynamic guide, that will continue to be updated when required, to ensure it provides the most up to date advice in relation to development and rights of way.

At sites crossed by public rights of way there are several matters that should be considered when designing the layout of a development.

Details of how all existing and proposed public rights of way will be treated should be provided within the planning application. This should include provision for their management during construction, boundary treatments, surfacing, width, structures, signage and landscaping. Future maintenance will also need to be formally agreed.

Consideration should be given as to who will use the public rights of way and why, to maximise non-motorised travel. Users of all abilities need to be considered at the outset for surfacing, path widths and gradients and in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010⁴.

Some large sites have significant development periods, including phasing. Building works cannot begin until existing routes have been subject to a temporary closure or a full-time diversion or extinguishment. The long-term temporary closure of paths during construction is often a frustration to the public. Conversely, site security and safety on sites, including for local people, has to be recognised. These two issues need to be balanced, but safety must be paramount.

Both temporary and longer-term orders to divert or close routes are subject to statutory provisions that will take time to process. Developers should build this into the early planning of a site. The obstruction or diversion of an existing right of way is not permitted without obtaining the consent of the County Council, as the local highway authority, even if planning permission has been granted.

In the past, there have been several new estates built without finalising an official diversion of a path that crosses the site. This results in plots being crossed by a highway, making the conveyancing process far more difficult for all parties involved and causing difficulties for occupiers who wish to sell a unit soon after buying. Resolving these issues before they occur is advantageous for all parties concerned.

Paths should be routed through public open spaces where appropriate, and ideally away from estate roads. If the use of footways or cycleways is unavoidable, the route should be as direct as possible, taking account of where people would like to go. Parallel paths and footways should be avoided.

The Council will resist the provision of routes that take the form of narrow passageways bounded by walls, hedges or close-boarded fencing.

Planting should consider the mature sizes of the species being used and be set back from the path to ensure clear passage and minimise maintenance. If a route is curved or has corners, the distances between planting and the path should be increased to maintain satisfactory visibility.

Developments may have a significant effect on the level of use of the surrounding network of public rights of way, particularly where they may become important routes to neighbouring areas, shops, schools, services and places of employment. Requests may be made for improvements to the local path network beyond the development boundary. In addition, access to the wider rural network may need to reflect the new numbers of residents that are likely to use them.

³ www.leicestershirehighwaydesignguide.uk/

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

The National Planning Policy Framework has supported the principle, and the delivery of, 'Green Infrastructure'. In land use terms this is an overarching description of areas of green and blue (water) that can and do deliver a wide range of benefits. These corridors can extend from urban areas out into the countryside. The rights of way network often provides the key access for the public. Green Infrastructure also supports carbon reduction, flood alleviation and providing cool corridors in urban areas in summer.

The river corridor from Leicester to Cossington is a good example. A Green and blue corridor linking a number of green areas of parks and country parks with the river and lakes, as well as nature areas. The footpaths and cycleways give access to the corridor from surrounding communities and offer a linear route from the heart of Leicester city into the wider county rural landscape.

3.2 Recording the Network

As well as managing the path network, the Council also has a surveying function to record the network of paths. One of the key elements of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949⁵ is to require local highway authorities to record the location of all paths and then produce a legal record. The Definitive Map of public rights of way is maintained by the County Council. It is a legal record of all public highways in Leicestershire that are either footpaths, bridleways or byways.

The map is conclusive evidence of the existence of a path, its status, and its position on the ground. Only highways shown on the Definitive Map have such conclusive protection.

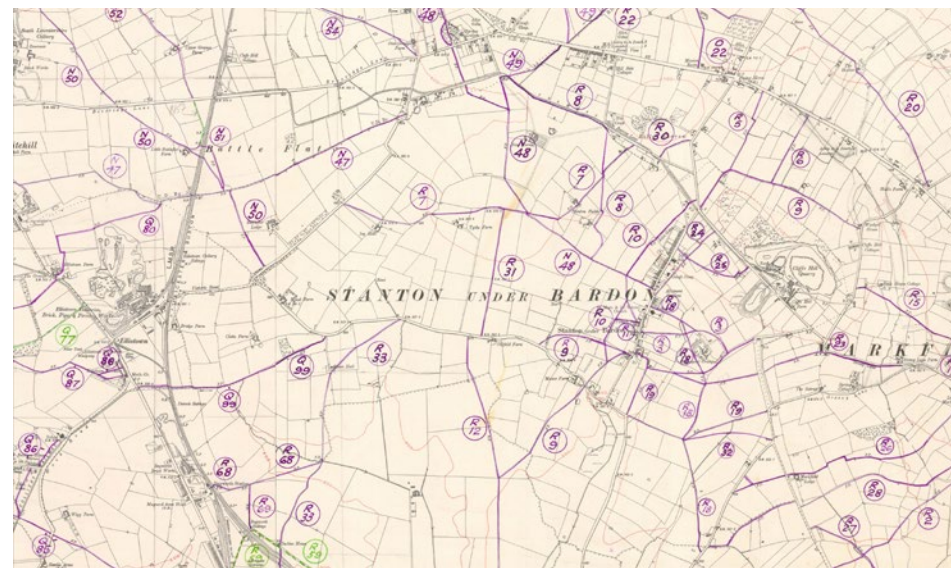


Figure 2 - Extract of 1957 Definitive Map.

⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/97/enacted

A first survey was carried out and a map produced in 1952, based in part on surveys carried out by local parish councils. The Act required that the map be updated every 5 years. In 1957 a further map was published. Thereafter no further maps were produced, until the introduction of the Wildlife & Countryside Act in 1981⁶. This brought in a system of continuous review, so the map could be amended with each legal change and updated.

Each change to the map results in a legal process, known as a Definitive Map Modification Order⁷ (DMMO). For older legal orders this is an administrative task. To update the 1957 map to the new map more than 1,500 DMMO orders need to be 'made'. Once completed, the map will be subject to continuous review.

Although conclusive, the map can be changed. Anyone can apply to have a route added, provided they have enough evidence to prove a case. Claims to add routes to the map can be based on historical evidence that a highway came into being in the past or that a route has been used for many years without challenge. The evidence will be considered by the Council before deciding whether to make an order. Dealing with such orders is very resource intensive for the Council. As well as compiling witnesses' statements, historical evidence needs to be checked or collated. This enables a decision to be taken on whether to proceed or not. Even if the order is made, anyone may object and most orders have formal objections. At this point of the process the case is passed to the Planning Inspectorate for determination. In most cases this leads to a full public inquiry, although sometimes a Hearing is held.

In 2015 Government published the Deregulation Act⁸. One element related to simplifying the system for rights of way orders. It proposed to introduce a cut-off date for any new claims, closing the map for claims based on historical evidence. All historic highways not recorded by that date and not shown on a Definitive Map were to be extinguished, ending the 'once a highway, always a highway' perspective. This resulted in a large number of claims being made to the authority before the cut-off date. Over time the list of outstanding cases has risen from 40 to nearly 200.

To enact the elements relating to rights of way from the Act, further legislation needed to be drafted and time given to enact. Since 2015 only the cut-off date was enacted into law. Subsequently the Government repealed the provision, and the system is back to the position prior to 2015, albeit with a large number of claims.

The Council is required to maintain an online DMMO application claims register⁹ which lists all the claims made. This is published and updated when necessary. For conveyancing purposes, the Definitive map may be checked to see if land is crossed by a path. A full check also asks if there are any claims or proposals that may also have a bearing on the conveyance.

Government has indicated that some of the proposals linked to the Deregulation Act may be pursued to assist parties determining orders. Currently there is no firm timetable, and the changes will not be major. That leaves a large list of claims awaiting determination. Currently orders are required to be made or submitted to the Secretary of State for determination within 12 months. The new draft provisions have sought orders to be dealt with more quickly. Due to the sheer scale of claims and evidence submitted, because of the then assumed cut-off date, the threshold is extremely challenging with the resources available for the task.

⁶ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69

⁷ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/section/53

⁸ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/20/notes

⁹ www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/definitive-map-modification-orders

The number of outstanding cases needs a pragmatic and efficient approach to move them forward, with an appropriate process in place. The approach to outstanding cases will be a priority in the action plan. It is recognised that any further legislative and guidance changes will require a further review, depending on the requirements set out.

The 1949 Act required a physical map to be published to a set format. With further legislative updates, local highway authorities are required to have a copy of the Definitive map for inspection and also supply a copy to each District authority in two tier authority structures. Parish Councils can also request copies for their area.

All mapping data that shows rights of way is derived from the Definitive Map. This includes the information supplied to the Ordnance Survey for inclusion on national mapping products¹⁰.

With the introduction of digital mapping systems and the ability to deliver mapping to people's homes and mobile devices, the Council has provided an online version of the map¹¹. Although not the official Definitive Map, it does provide an online resource of the information for people to access.

There are also other digital highway data sets that utilise the path mapping. Government has created a National Street Gazetteer (NSG) to list all streets and provide a framework for the management of the highways network. Leicestershire County Council has included the public rights of way within the NSG. There is still more work to be done to further integrate the data and meet future data requirements. FindMyStreet¹² is a Government initiative to make the NSG data available to the public online. This includes some other meta data, such as who is responsible to maintain the route.

Modern digital data not only allows for delivery over the web it can also contain meta data to assist other parties with access to it, including asset and report data. Larger projects, such as new minerals sites and other large infrastructure projects, often need large amounts of data to plan ahead. As such, the information is an important resource for a wide audience. Whilst there is a requirement for the Definitive Map to be kept up to date it also feeds and supplies other data resources.

The management of the Definitive Map will continue to meet legal requirements. The increasing use of the path data, as well as further meta data requirements in other systems, reflects a changing landscape. It is information that feeds into bigger data sets and needs to reflect this and be compatible.

¹⁰ <https://shop.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/map-ranges/os-paper-map-ranges/>

¹¹ www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/where-to-walk-and-ride-in-leicestershire

¹² www.findmystreet.co.uk/

3.3 Open Access

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a new piece of legislation that sought to record all areas of mountain, moor, heath and down. In addition, this data was to also include all registered common land.

The legislation granted public access rights to this land. The County Council became the 'Access Authority' for Leicestershire to manage access to these sites. Within the county most sites are small, although there are over 100 of them and there are some larger sites. New powers allowed for byelaws and wardens, if necessary.

The principal sites are:

- Charnwood Lodge - 184 acres
- Loughborough Meadows - 165 acres
- Burbage Common - 75 acres
- Burrough Hill - 75 acres

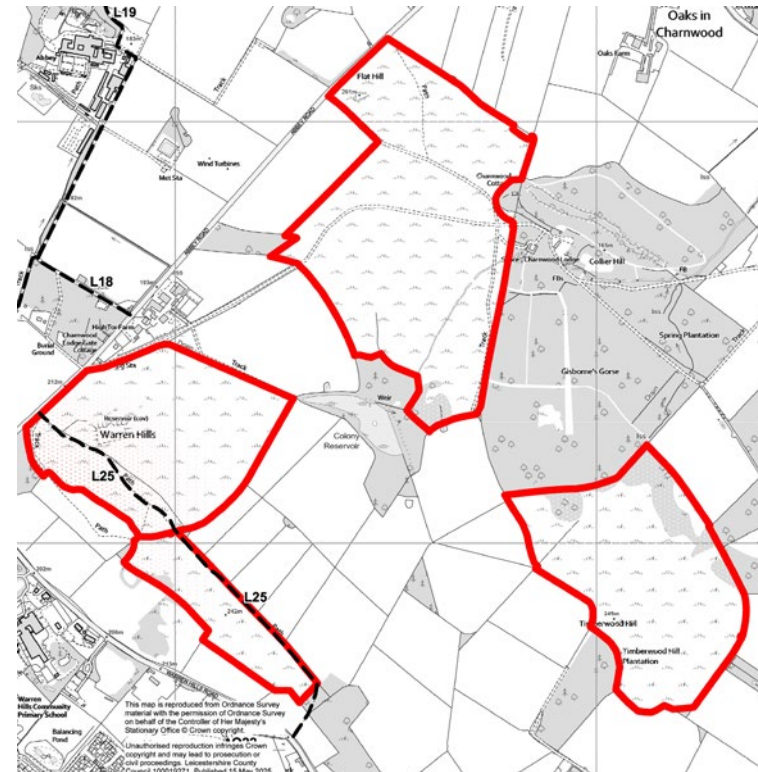


Figure 3 - Areas of open access at Charnwood Lodge.

The Access authority is asked to ensure that all sites can be accessed by the public and that appropriate signage is in place. The Council has been assisted in this work by the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF). As well as carrying out repeat site inspections, the group has liaised with the site managers to ensure people can enjoy the sites.

There is a review required of the sites by 2030. This will be carried out by Natural England.

3.4 Encouraging Use

In 2021 the County Council adopted the Cycling & Walking Strategy (CaWS). The vision of the strategy is to inspire more people to walk, wheel and ride. Underpinning this was maintaining and enhancing walking, wheeling and cycling routes and providing information and training to the public. Promoting, encouraging and enabling the use of the rights of way network by walking, wheeling and riding is carried out under our Choose How You Move (CHYM) brand, in support of the CaWS objectives.



Choose How You Move (CHYM) is the brand for our programme of measures designed to encourage and enable people across Leicestershire to choose active and sustainable travel. The key aim of the CHYM programme is to take a life-cycle approach that begins with children and includes all residents regardless of age or background to help them to travel actively through walking, wheeling and riding.

Some of the great work being done as part of our CHYM programme in collaboration with neighbouring local authorities includes:

- Creating walking, wheeling and cycle route maps
- Promotion of guided walks and walking groups in local areas
- Cycle training for all users
- Promotion of cycle groups and clubs in local areas
- Personalised travel planning for communities and businesses
- Helping schools with their school travel plans to support staff, parents and children
- Active travel grants – helping businesses empower their employees to use active travel
- E-bike trials
- Incentivised activity monitoring with Better Points rewards.

In addition to the CHYM programme, there are lots of partner organisations and individual volunteers who dedicate their time to help promote and encourage use of the rights of way network, including the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF).

3.5 Partnership Working

The Council works with a range of individuals, councils, agencies and funding partners to deliver the network we see and use.

The LLAFF represents the interests of people concerned with public access in Leicestershire including both users and landowners. The forum also promotes the use of rights of way, country parks and open access for recreational use, as well as for commuting. Members of the group are volunteers.

The main role of the Forum is to advise all levels of local government, and relevant agencies on policy proposals and issues relating to access. The forum also carries out regular site visits to assess the state of public land across the county, and to advise the authority's responsible for access.

The Forum holds public meetings and will have a hands-on role in monitoring delivery of the RoWIP to see how the Actions in the plan are being delivered. The Action plan will be reviewed, including an annual update to the Forum.

Volunteers from the Leicestershire Footpath Association currently support the maintenance of the Leicestershire Round. The Council has also recently advertised for more general path volunteers to assist on the wider network. A further group of volunteers is due to start on research and site survey work to support the historic claims for paths submitted by the public.

The Trail Riders fellowship has assisted with some surface work on several byways in the county through volunteers and funding.

Under Section 43 of the Highways Act, Parish Councils have powers to carry out works on footpaths and bridleways. Parish Councils already carry out some vegetation clearance and limited works. The County Council runs a Parish Pilot scheme that supports parish, town councils and community organisations with carrying out small-scale improvements and path maintenance of local paths.

Local planning authorities engage with highway authorities in seeking appropriate funding from new development. Developers contribute the largest sums to improve access in and around developments, as part of their obligation to help mitigate the impact of the development. This includes Section 106 (S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) payments, to improve paths beyond the development itself.

Other local authorities have historically also assisted with joint bids to outside parties and some funding for access. Planning policies also highlight the importance of public access within the development framework.

The charity Sustrans, whose aim is to make it easier for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle, has been a major funding partner in the past and continues to work on schemes in the county, as well as managing some routes. The organisation has assisted with the creation of significant cycleways.

Currently the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme is contributing towards access improvements in the area, which is backed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The National Forest has been supportive of access projects, including funding elements. This has included improvements to a route from Leicester city to Bradgate Park. The Forest also developed the National Forest Way.

The Big Lottery, which is an organisation that gives millions of pounds from the UK's National Lottery to good causes has, over time, contributed towards over £1million of work on public rights of way, mainly though cycleway development. The Aggregates Levy, which is a tax levied on the commercial exploitation of rock, sand and gravel in the UK, has also provided funding over the years.

Government funding has been a major trigger in the past. Previously most funding came from what is now Defra - Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. A precursor to this was the Countryside Commission, which funded works and staff for nearly 10 years. The Department for Transport (DfT) is now the main source of direct Government funding. This includes the multi modal funding and a range of interrelated schemes and proposals linked to wider access and non-vehicular transport.



4. Achievements

Over the past few decades the Council has successfully managed the public rights of way network as a whole, by ensuring it is well maintained and accessible for the public. The network we see today is different to that of 20 years ago. In particular, funding has been focused on things that make paths easier to use by the public. As an example, within the county you are likely to start on a path that is signed from the roadside, is waymarked on its route and has reasonable boundary crossing points.

Since the start of the first Rights of Way Improvement Plan much has been done to improve access to the network. In raw numbers, the figures below demonstrate the size of the network and the extent of the works. During that period, the authority has:

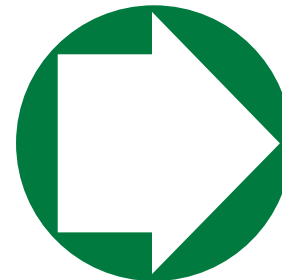


Installed more than
15,000
waymarker posts
to show the way ahead

Installed more than
1,700
hand or kissing gates
to replace boundary
structures

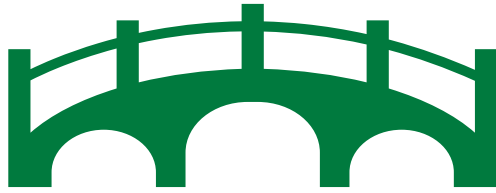


Placed
40,000
waymarkers



Managed nearly
7,000
sites where
finger posts
are required



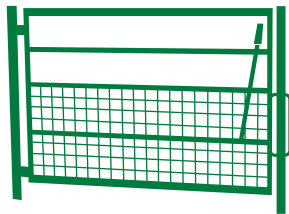


Installed or replaced
more than
250
larger bridges

Made more than
10,000
visits to clear
vegetation



Strimmed more than
1,000
miles of paths



Installed around
300
new bridle gates
with easy opening
latches for riders

Repainted
more than
25,000
posts

Installed more than
1,000
new smaller
sleeper bridges

Removed over
1,500
stiles



The main focus has been on the area improvement schemes that looked at path networks in specific areas. During the lifetime of the first RoWIP most of the network was surveyed to ensure the paths were open, in the right place and brought up to a usable standard.

The signing of the paths has been greatly appreciated by the public. Visible clear signing helps people who are unable to follow a map in a rural setting and has removed barriers to new users of routes. Making paths a little bit easier to use helps many. A hand gate is so much easier to use than a stile or field gate.

Wanting easier boundary crossings is one of the main report types we receive. This has had a fundamental impact on the route's visibility and accessibility for the public.

Going back 20 years to the start of the first RoWIP, the Council has dealt with over 37,000 reports from the public. All of these have been investigated over the lifetime of the plans. The main items dealt with include:

Just under
4,000
stile reports

Over
3,000
surface
vegetation reports

6,000
reports of
overgrowth
of verges,
hedges and trees,
both rural and urban

2,000
reports of
surface damage

Well over
2,000
reports regarding
fingerposts

2,200
gate reports

1,400
waymarking reports

1,100
bridge reports

This is the foundation for keeping the network open and available.

The Council has worked with Network Rail to replace all pedestrian and bridleway crossings on the Midland Main Line with safer crossing points. This included 6 new bridges put in place near crossings, amounting to a significant capital investment. The largest being a bridle bridge near Loughborough which is over 300 metres long. This work has also assisted in the scheme of electrification for the Midland Main Line.

The proposals for HS2, and the eastern leg through parts of Leicestershire, involved proposals for 42 path crossings. In the first Rights of Way Plan the Council recognised the damage done to the network by large linear infrastructure projects, such as the motorway network. The Council worked with HS2 Ltd to try to minimise local network disruption and provision of suitable crossings. With the abandonment of the eastern leg the work has ceased, but remains in place should it be revived.

Since 2006 the Council has carried out nearly 500 Definitive Map Modification Orders to keep the map up to date. The orders also deal with claims for historic routes and routes claimed through use by the public. The map has now been digitised and a version is now available online for public and business use. The data has been utilised for the delivery of the National Street Gazetteer and other data sets, including other online datasets such as www.findmystreet.co.uk. The Council has also dealt with over 600 applications to divert paths. Some of these orders are objected to and are required to be referred to the planning inspectorate for determination. The Council has engaged with that process on multiple occasions.

The service also assists the conveyancing industry to ensure potential purchasers understand if a holding is affected by a public path. Under the planning process, the Council has considered and commented on relevant applications. Some applications are very large and affect local networks. As examples, the extension to the Bardon Quarry involved the movements of several paths for a number of phases over several years. The proposals for the new East Midlands Gateway logistics park included multiple paths and changes to railway crossings, which are now all in place. Housing forms most applications, from larger urban extensions to individual units. Many enhancements to paths have been delivered by developers or, alternatively, the developer has funded enhancements delivered by the Council. The network has benefited from several million pounds worth of schemes since 2006, funded by the development process.

This year is the 25th anniversary of the National Forest. Access was always a key outcome and the main project affecting rights of way during that time was the establishment of the National Forest Way. The Council supported the establishment of the route. The primary long-distance path in the county is the Leicestershire Round. This 100 mile stroll around the county has seen a partnership with the Leicestershire Footpath Association. The group now operates with some active volunteers and the support of the County Council to look after the route.

The Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF)¹³ has actively worked with the Council during the period of the plans. The LLAF represents the interests of everyone concerned with public access in Leicestershire, including both users and landowners. The LLAF also promotes the use of rights of way, country parks and open access for recreational use, as well as for commuting. It also hosts public meetings dealing with public access in the county.

¹³ www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/leicestershire-local-access-forum



5. Consultation and Engagement

5.1 Engagement Process

To help develop a Rights of Way Improvement Plan it is key to understand the priorities and needs of those using the public rights of way network.

In order to get an understanding of the current and likely future needs of people using, or wishing to use, the rights of way network, we undertook an engagement exercise to seek the views of the public and a wide range of statutory and non-statutory stakeholders.

This engagement process was undertaken in several ways to get a balanced view, helping everyone have their say. The range of engagement activities included:

Public Rights of Way Survey

An online survey (also available in paper format) was launched between 19th February and 17th March 2025. The survey was made available to the public via the Council's Have Your Say webpage, as well as being shared directly with stakeholders who were identified in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Statutory Guidance, which was published by the Government agency DEFRA (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs).

Social PinPoint

Using the engagement tool Social PinPoint, an interactive map was created displaying layers of information relating to public rights of way in Leicestershire. Users were able to add a marker to a specific location/right of way and provide detail which related directly to that site such as highlighting good or bad routes, suggestions for improvements, maintenance or accessibility issues.

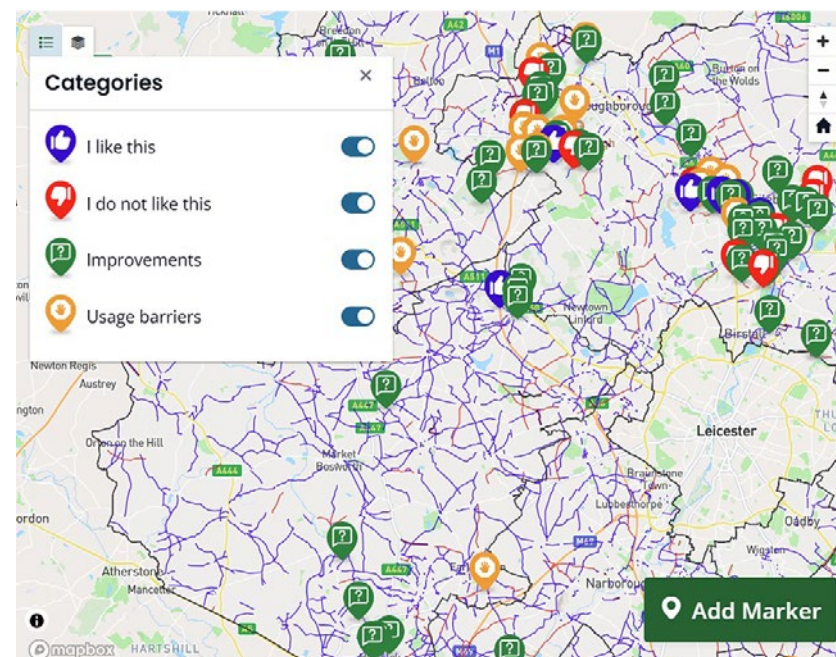


Figure 4 - Map available for people to use through the Social PinPoint engagement tool.

Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Forum

A public meeting of the cycling, walking and wheeling forum was held at County Hall in Glenfield on Monday 3rd March 2025, with over 40 attendees. This event was held through the established forum, which is a hybrid forum, meaning it can be attended either in person or online. A presentation was provided giving an overview of the rights of way in Leicestershire, along with the development of the rights of way improvement plan. A rights of way workshop was also included as part of the event providing attendees the opportunity to provide detailed feedback and discuss their thoughts on the network.



Social Media

We promoted the online survey, the cycling walking and wheeling forum and social pinpoint through the Council's corporate social media channels. Our posts received 711 clicks and 82 shares across the different platforms.



Images above show examples of social media posts made as part of the engagement process.

Local Access Forum

The Local Access Forum represents the interests of everyone concerned with public access in Leicestershire, including both users and landowners. It was therefore vital to work closely with its members during the engagement period, to help shape this Plan. The Local Access Forum and its members are key engagement and delivery partners in ensuring the Plan is a continued success over the next 10 year.

5.2 Engagement Survey Summary


89%
were
Leicestershire
residents


39%
male
1% use another term


60%
female


35%
Walking


8%
Cycling


12%
Horse riding

How respondents use rights of way



71%
of respondents
start journeys
from home



85%
said they use
the network for
health, fitness and
well being purposes



6%
said they use
the network to
travel to work



Common Barriers to using the Rights of Way Network in Leicestershire

51% of respondents said maintenance/cleanliness
issues prevented them from using the network

29% physical access to route

27% lack of signage was an issue



What respondents said would encourage use

53% better quality of paths/cycleways/bridleways

62% would like to see paths/cycleways/bridleways better maintained

46% said better signage would encourage them great deal

38% would like to see improved accessibility including more routes with gates instead of stiles

42% would like to see more printed information on where to walk/cycle/ride on the network

Getting in touch

50%
of respondents know
how to report an issue
on the network

Moving forward

Respondents agreed most heavily used
rights of way should be prioritised for maintenance

78% of respondents agree that developers should be
encouraged to provide more riding and walking opportunities

Most would like to see 'greenways' network
introduced linking villages and towns

5.3 Engagement Analysis

Survey Overview

We received over 1,240 responses to our online survey which included responses from:

- Leicestershire residents
- Visitors to Leicestershire
- County, district or parish/town councillors
- Representative of a public sector organisations
- Representative of a voluntary sector organisation, charity or community groups
- Representative of a business or private sector organisations

How People Access and Travel on the Rights of Way Network in Leicestershire

Walking remains the highest form of activity on the network, with 35% of respondents said they walked on the public rights of way network several times a week. 60% of journeys were between 2 and 4 miles.

12% of respondents said that they had used the network for horse riding several times a week, with many travelling between 5-10 miles per journey.

8% of respondents noted that they cycled several times a week on the network, with 29% saying that they travelled between 5-10 miles.

Most people began their journey and accessed the rights of way network from home, with 71% saying they walked, cycled or rode from home. 5% of respondents used their cars to access a starting point and only 1% of respondents used public transport to access the network. 3% specified “other”, which included equestrians beginning their journeys from stables or transporting their horse to access byways. Less than 1% of respondents said they travelled along byways using motor vehicles.

What is the Network Being Used For?

The rights of way network plays an important role in health, wellbeing and social inclusion with 85% of respondents saying they accessed the rights of way for leisure, health and fitness. There is also a high percentage of users accessing the network to walk with groups or friends and to exercise their pets/ animals. It is also interesting to note that rights of way provides access to work and education, provides access to local amenities such as shops, cafes, pubs and also offers connections to other modes of passenger transport, such as bus and rail. The survey also showed that respondents accessed the network for hobbies such as birdwatching and general access to nature. A very low percentage said that they used the network to ride motorcycles or drive vehicles.

What is Preventing People from Using the Network?

As well as knowing what works well and why people use the network the way that they do, we also wanted to understand what might prevent the public from using the public rights of way network in Leicestershire. The survey showed that:

- 51% of respondents highlighted that maintenance prevented them from using the network, as well as 29% noting that physical access to routes were an issue for them. This includes things such as stiles making routes inaccessible for users with disabilities and mobility issues, gates restricting horse riders along routes, as well as issues with flooding and overgrown vegetation restricting access to paths.
- More accessible links to bridleways was also a common theme, as respondents noted that equestrians had to use the main road network to reach off-road bridleway, which can be some distance away.
- When asked what would encourage respondents of the survey to use public rights of way more often:
- Maintenance was a clear theme for all users, with 62% agreeing that better maintained paths, cycleways and bridleways would encourage more frequent use.
- When asked if more accessible routes, with gates instead of stiles, would encourage more use of the network 38% responded that it would a great deal, an additional 28% saying it would somewhat help.

We also found that 84% of people responding to the survey would like to see:

- Clearer signage when out using the network
- More printed and digital route information being more readily accessible, 70% and 79% respectively.
- To some extent respondents also acknowledged that improved personal safety measures would encourage more usage
- More facilities such as cafes, toilets, seating and picnic areas on routes.
- 36% said they would like to see better parking facilities near routes including free or reduced parking charges.

Incentives

When asked “did you know you can earn rewards when walking or cycling on the rights of way network by using the 'BetterPoints' app?” 93% said no.

Interestingly, 51% said that receiving incentives would not encourage them to use the network more often, with only 10% responding that it would a great deal.

Information Provision

We found that 80% of respondents access public rights of way information, such as maps and/or walking routes, through digital websites/Apps, for example OS Maps, Strava and google. Less people access information from the County Council's website.

A high percentage of respondents said they felt confident when using either online maps or printed maps to follow a path across fields, but more information should be available to provide help and support to those who need it. People would like to see an improvement in the wayfinding across the network to help them identify routes, with 46% agreeing that this would encourage them a great deal. When asked if more printed information on where to walk/cycle/ride would encourage more use on the rights of way network 41% responded that it would to some extent.

Reporting a Problem

Half of respondents know how to report a problem on the public rights of way network, with 21% of those not having done so before.

Overall, the respondents that had reported a problem to Leicestershire County Council found the service satisfactory. When reporting an issue on the public rights of way network 12% rated the service ok, with acknowledgement that a high number of reported issues were resolved following a report. However, some respondents highlighted that they had not received any feedback, with response times being too long and they would have liked to be informed of progress after reporting a problem.

Priorities

We want to understand what the public and stakeholder's priorities are, to help shape the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan and action plan. From the results of the survey, we can see:

- 46% of respondents tend to agree that the most heavily used public rights of way routes should be prioritised for maintenance
- 43% agreed that this should include promoted routes, such as the Leicestershire Round.
- A high proportion noted that they felt vehicles should be restricted from using unsurfaced rural lanes during winter months, as this is when most damage occurs.
- Responses to whether future improvements should focus on routes nearer to where most people live was neutral, however 29% did tend to agree.
- Most respondents believed that developers should be encouraged to provide more walking and riding opportunities.
- Respondents would like to see a 'greenways' network of high-quality rights of way routes that link towns and villages developed.

Social PinPoint

This online mapping tool allowed users to populate and pin information specific to footpaths, bridleways and byways. There were four categories to choose from including I like this, I don't like this, improvements and usage barriers. We received 125 pins, with analysis showing:

- 65% of respondents noting maintenance as an issue
- 14% highlighted physical barriers/accessibility being a problem on some routes.
- Other areas that were noted included safety and network connectivity.

This data shows very similar themes to the survey results, where maintenance and accessibility appears to be a key priority.

5.4 Consultation Process

Undertaking the initial engagement process was invaluable in helping shape the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan and its actions. Once the draft plan had been developed it was published as part of a twelve week formal consultation, to ensure everyone had the chance to review it and provide feedback.

A summary of the 12 week Consultation will be included here in the final version of the Plan.

5.5 It Doesn't End There

Once the Rights of Way Improvement Plan has been formally approved and adopted by the Council, engagement will continue to support the delivery of the actions. Engagement will also help steer the updating of the actions over the next 10 year period, to make sure that the plan remains appropriate and deliverable for all users.

We will continue to measure user satisfaction through our existing processes and ensure there are opportunities for engagement, enabling open and continuous conversations.

To read more about how we will continuously monitor our progress against the action plan see the Monitoring and Evaluation section below.



6. Assessment of the Network

6.1 The Network and its Users

The approximate 1,915 miles (3,084km) of public paths within Leicestershire is a significant resource to manage. Placed end to end this is the equivalent of looking after a long-distance path between Leicester and Moscow.

The network is made up of different types of routes shown in table 1 below:

Route Type	Waymarker Colour	User Type				Percentage of Network of each Route Type
		Walkers	Cyclists	Riders	Motors	
Footpaths	Yellow	1517	0	0	0	80%
Bridleways	Blue	349	349	349	0	18%
Byways	Red	35	35	35	35	2%
Restricted Byways	Brown	9	9	9	9	<1%
Sub Total (Miles)		1910	393	393	44	100%
Total Percentage of the Network available to each User Type		100%	20%	20%	2%	

Table 1 - The number of miles and percentage of each route type available to each user type.

The extent of paths available for use is different for each of the user types. Walkers have access to the full network. Horse riders are entitled to use 20%, while motor vehicles are restricted to less than 2%.

A network plan of the above types looks very different. This results in a more fragmented network for horse riders. As shown in figure 5, the left plan shows the rights of way network for walkers and the right plan shows the network for riders. The eastern half of the county has more bridleways than the western.

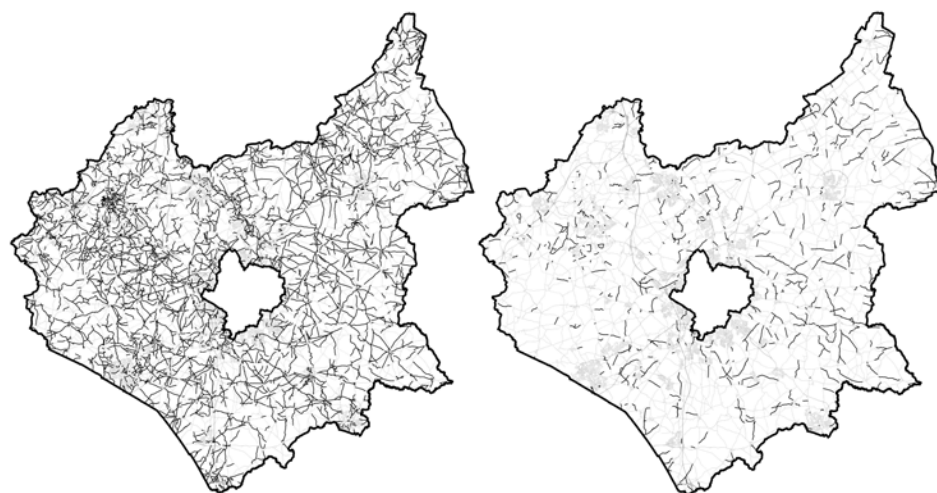


Figure 5 - Paths available to walkers and riders.

As well as the path network, users utilise the carriageway network. This includes walkers using shorter sections to link footpaths and horse riders using extensive sections to link bridleways.

Whilst the density does vary, the path network broadly covers the county. The network near to where most people live is denser, since paths tend to go from one settlement to another. However, the path network also crosses rural areas and is often considered to be a network that crosses farmland. In fact, 50% of the path network is within urban areas or within a quarter of a mile (402m) of them.



Figure 6 - Areas of the rights of way network within a quarter of a mile (402m) of where people live in towns and villages.

Analysis demonstrates that 75% of households are within one fifth of a mile (322m) of a path. This shows that the path network is on the doorstep of the wider population.

As part of the early consultation of this document the Council commissioned an online survey, including asking respondents what prevented them from using the network and the barriers they faced. In addition, analysis has been carried out on nearly 20,000 reports on issues on paths from the public over the past 10 years.

Both the survey carried out for the first RoWIP and the survey for this plan highlight that most journeys start from a doorstep, where people live, attend school, work or shop. This extends to recreational walking, be it walking the dog or simply exploring the local area.

An analysis of the public reports dealing with issues on the rights of way network underlines this, with some trends to note. Looking at reports and the distance from the reporter's general postcode there is a clear link.

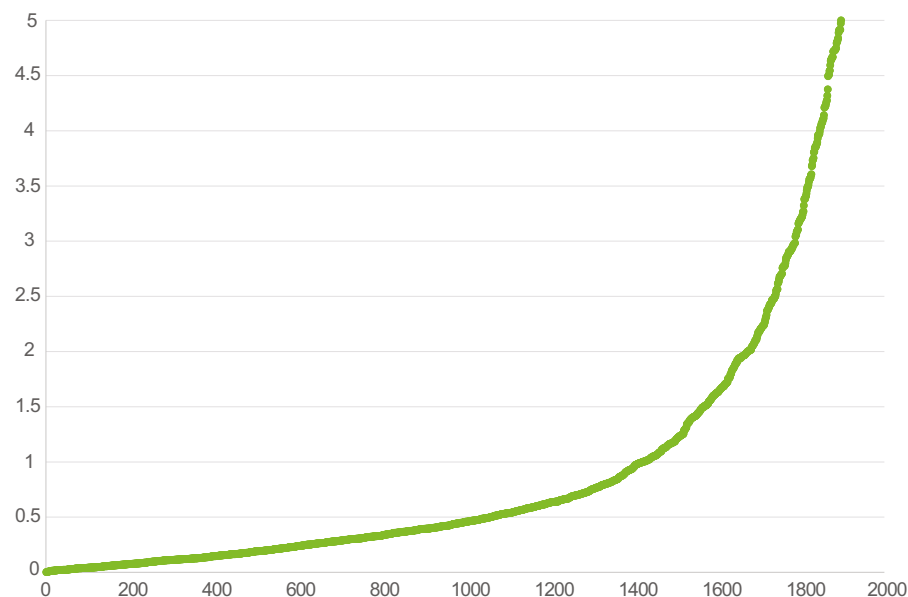


Figure 7 - Distance of Reports from the reporter's home. 51% are within half a mile.

This underlines that most journeys using paths start at the front door. In addition, these reports are likely to be on routes where repeat visits occur. A study of reports received shows that 510% are within 0.5 miles of where the reporter lives. 70% are within 1 mile of where the reporter lives.

Nearly all paths have reports associated with them demonstrating that the wider network is used throughout. This use is on a lesser extent.

Looking at the figures shown in map, figure 8 below, within built up areas and a quarter of a mile (402m) beyond, contains 50% of the path network. These areas contain 65% of all reports. The remaining 50% of the network contains 35% of reports. Reports are more frequent in the urban and near urban routes, near to where people live. This is no surprise and challenges the view perception that rights of way are just rural routes.

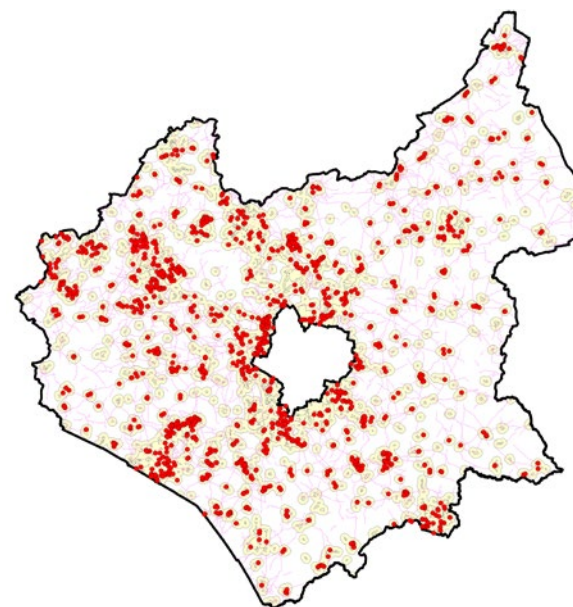


Figure 8 - Within a quarter of a mile of where people live are 65% of all reports and 50% of the network.

6.2 Our Role as a Highway Authority

The primary role of Leicestershire County Council as a highway authority is to ensure the safe passage of people wanting to use the paths. Whilst there are a series of duties and powers, the fundamental responsibility is ensuring anyone can pass and repass along any route¹⁴.

The Council receives reports from the public on a daily basis. Over the past 10 years nearly 20,000 reports have been received. This equates to nearly 40 reports per week. Each of these reports includes details on the nature of the problem found and what was done to rectify the issue. As such, it is a very good measure of what causes concerns to users and occupiers. The reports form a wide range of categories that represent the issues that the public must face when using paths. Some issues are rarely reported, others frequently reported. The number and category of reports is show below in figure 9.

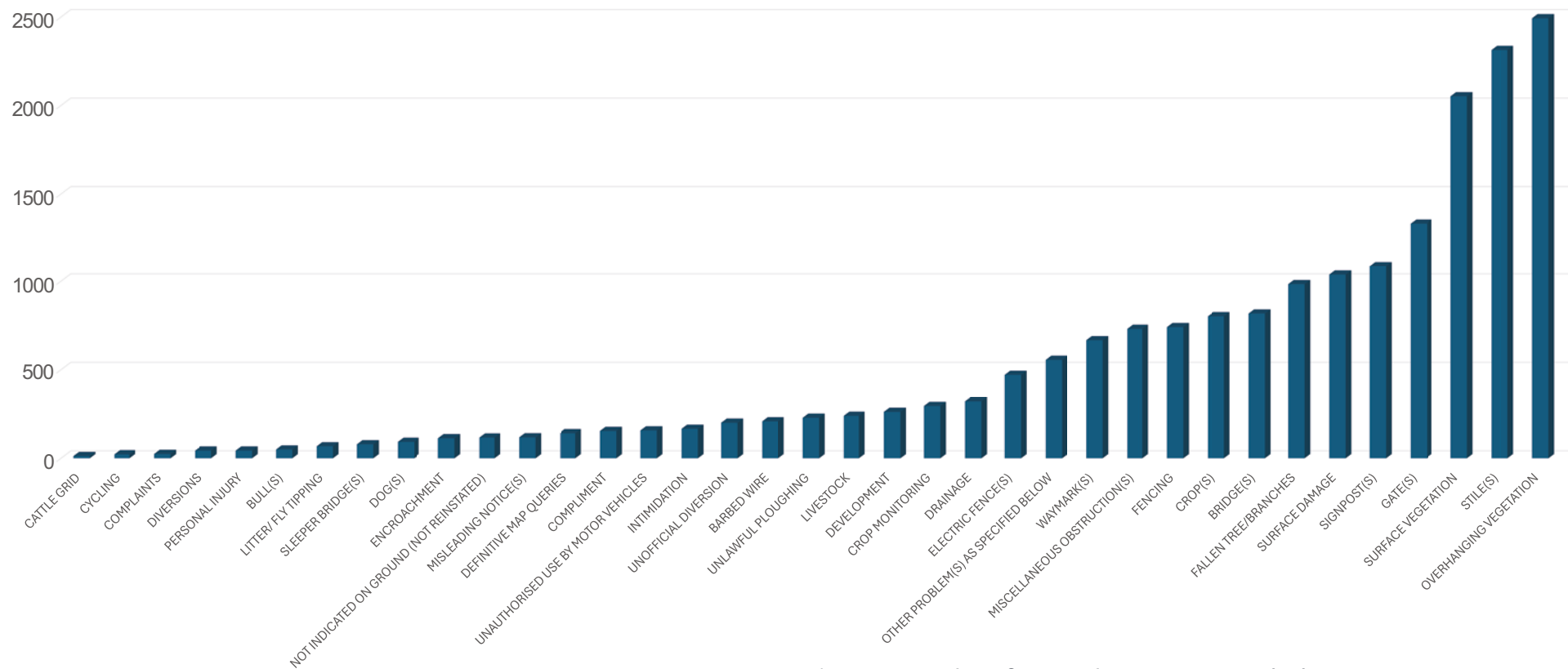


Figure 9 - Number of reports by category over the last 10 years.

¹⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/41

The primary categories of reports over the 10-year period are shown below in table 2.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Crop(s)	84	89	112	72	105	50	89	75	79	45	800
Bridge(s)	37	44	70	60	64	97	140	91	78	129	810
Fallen tree/ branches	75	59	122	106	99	102	99	102	66	103	933
Surface damage	111	97	92	86	77	109	135	87	111	117	1022
Signpost(s)	140	93	71	119	109	139	128	113	79	82	1073
Gate(s)	136	131	124	144	128	159	162	129	92	98	1303
Surface vegetation	176	208	272	211	228	101	187	134	269	260	2046
Stile(s)	207	170	159	190	201	268	392	305	205	192	2289
Overhanging vegetation	288	240	254	224	303	176	244	172	294	277	2472

Table 2 - Primary categories of reports by year over a 10-year period.

Vegetation and crops make up four of the top ten categories. Nature dictates that these are items that recur on a yearly basis. They also highlight that the parties responsible to keep the route clear aren't always the highway authority. Natural vegetation from the surface of the highway is the responsibility of the highway authority. Hedges alongside highways are invariably the responsibility of the occupier, as are crops.

It remains the duty of the highway authority to ensure that the third parties carry out their responsibilities. Stiles and gates are the responsibility of the occupier, whilst signage and bridges are the responsibility of the County Council.

The frequency and pattern by month of reports are shown in figure 10, which shows the use of the network and when peak increases in reports coincide with problems, such as vegetation growing season. This covers a period of 5 years. The pattern is consistent each year, as is the resource requirement.

The only significant variation is during the COVID-19 pandemic year. Assuming a ratio of reports to numbers using the network, there was about a 20% increase for periods that coincided with COVID-19 travel lockdowns. Overall, the pattern is very similar each year. As such, it is expected that this will repeat over the lifetime of this document.

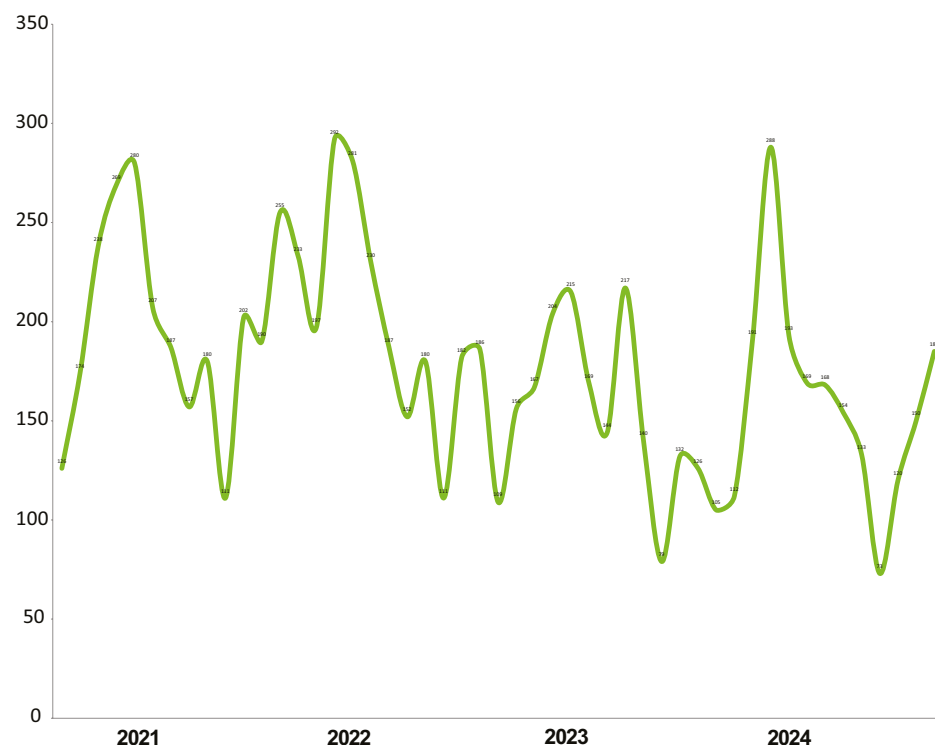


Figure 10 - Number of reports by month over last 5 years.

The number of reports and their frequency over the calendar year is largely predictable, as is the changing resource level to deal with associated responses. There is, of course, an annual average figure of reports and the state of the network.

To assess how path networks were being managed, Government established a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 178). In general, it measured the ease of use of the path network for the public. It also set a comparable standard measure between authorities to monitor performance. The first RoWIP included this as a yearly measure of performance.

Subsequently Government dropped this indicator from the national figures. However, the Council carried on recording results as a local indicator until 2018.

The measure was based on a series of checks for each path surveyed, with any failure in any category failing the whole path:

- If the path has a fingerpost at the start
- Is the path waymarked
- If it crosses any bridges, are they adequate
- Are boundary crossing adequate, such as stiles
- Is the route obstructed
- Is the path affected by ploughing or crops
- Is the surface reasonable

In 2024, as part of the development of this RoWIP, the Council carried out a survey, with a further repeat survey carried out in 2025 to give a comparable figure. The result in 2025 was a small 4% drop from 2017 and a 2% rise from 2024. Some fall was expected, as investment set out in the last RoWIP had come to an end several years ago. There is a strong correlation between investment on certain items on the network and the survey results. Other issues are linked to items such as vegetation growing seasons, which vary considerably.

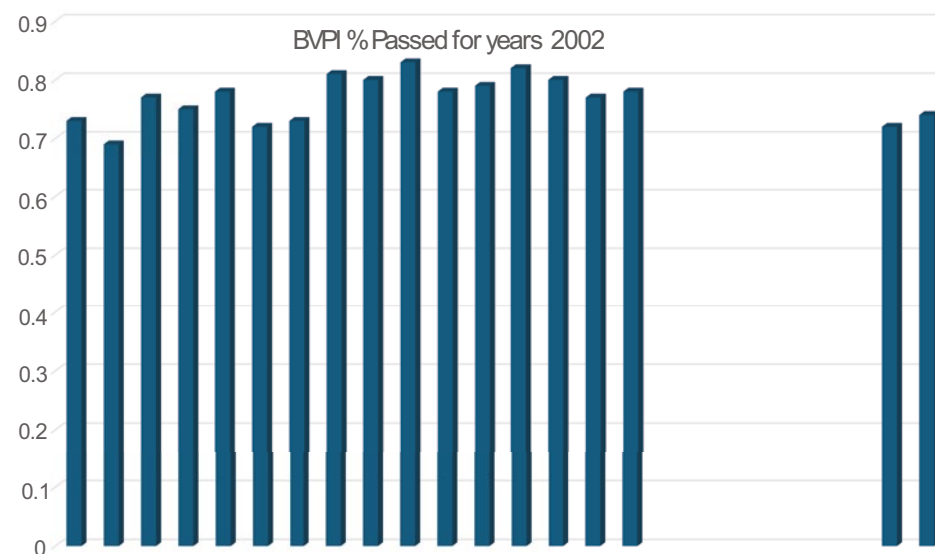


Figure 11 - Local indicator performance since 2002. Not collated 2018 - 2023.

Some failures are linked to private parties managing land that is crossed by a path, which is outside initial control of the Council (albeit effective enforcement can help to resolve issues). This includes crops, vegetations and boundary crossing points, such as stiles or gates. Wetter warm years have had a significant bearing on the number and severity of growth-related issues.

As well as consistent report numbers over time, the nature of those reports has stayed comparable too. Figure 11, shows numbers of the main report subject categories over time. The numbers of reports for each category are consistent, with the exception of the COVID-19 pandemic period. This included the restricted travel lock down periods that led to more people at home beginning to explore their local area when they had limited options.

As such, it is possible to plan ahead on likely volumes and subcategory volumes. Figure 12 shows the main report type numbers over time:

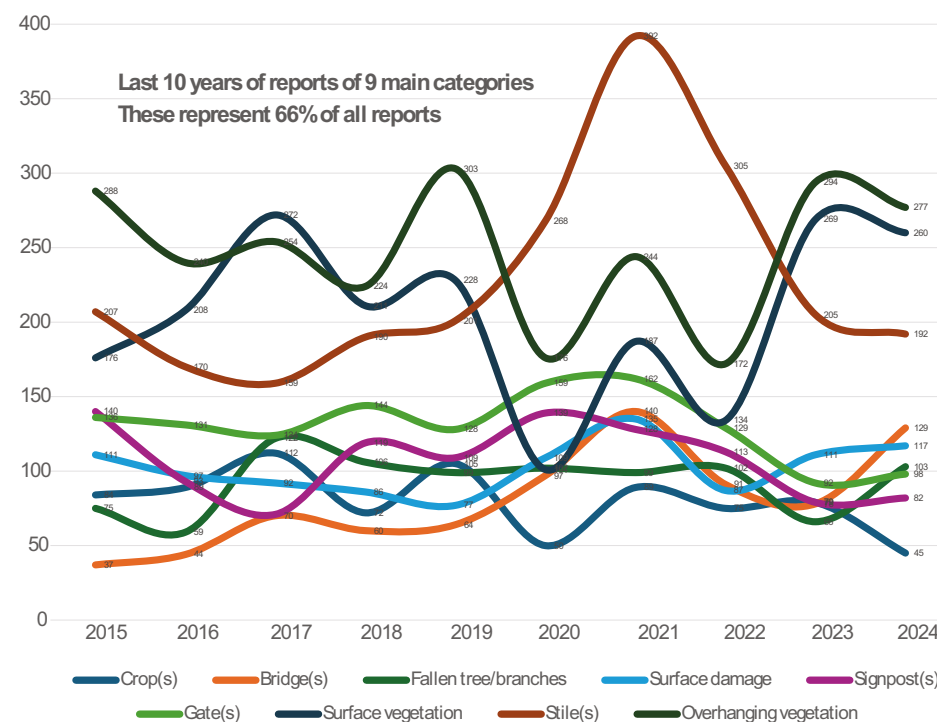


Figure 12 - Number of reports covering nine main categories over last 10 years.

Periods of COVID-19 related travel lockdown highlighted the increase in use of the local path network during later lockdown periods and the type of reports from potential new users. The standout figure was the significant increase in boundary crossing reports. The barriers and crossing points appeared to have a disproportionate effect on new or less experienced users during that period, suggesting that easier livestock barriers, such as gates, are important to attract new users.

In broad terms it is possible to predict the volume of report numbers and types of reports for the next few years, unless something significant changes. In addition, the wider concentration of reports near to where people live provides further evidence to target certain report types and locations, to maximise usage.

The Council has a cyclical programme of vegetation cuts on rights of way, with two cuts carried out each year. The first is at the end of May or early June once the first growth spurt has started. A second cut then happens in late summer. The cuts are focused on routes that are subject to multiple reports and offer a clear benefit to users. They are also tied into the wider highway cyclical programme. In total more than 40 miles of routes are in the programme.

This proactive intervention needs to be financed and balanced against available funding and calls on the rights of way budget. The balance of proactive and reactive funding is always subject to review. Proactive funding can be targeted on parts of the network that are most used. Reactive work ensures that no part of the network is forgotten and that requests from the public can be dealt with.

The issue of overhanging vegetation is still the largest group of reports received. Boundary fences and hedges alongside paths are invariably the responsibility of the adjoining landowners. As such, the Council must assess the report and then, if action is required, contact the occupier. If needed, a request that the vegetation is cut back is made.

Some of these issues may have to result in some form of enforcement. The authority has an adopted Enforcement Protocol. This sets out how any report will be dealt with and the enforcement procedure that will be followed by the Council in a consistent manner and in line with legislation.

The main method used to report issues on the network is via the 'Report a road problem'¹⁵ web page on the council's website.

This allows users to report an issue, including when out on a path with a mobile phone. A report will feed directly back to the data management system and work allocation systems and will then go to an officer for action. The report will also be updated and, if requested, the customer will be updated. This includes details of works allocated by the same system.

The Public right of way 'report it' form on the webpage is supported with mapping that shows the paths. There have been requests from the public for background mapping to include more detail including field boundaries to allow reports to be more precisely placed.

When reporting a problem the Council would also like to encourage the use of photos from the reporter of the issue at hand. This allows reports to be more quickly actioned and speed up the response. This helps inspectors find the issue more quickly.

¹⁵ www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-maintenance/report-a-road-problem

The Council monitors how long a case takes from receipt to the matter being closed. In broad terms half of all reports are dealt with within 12 days. Two thirds of reports are resolved within a month. The closure times for reports is shown in Figure 13.

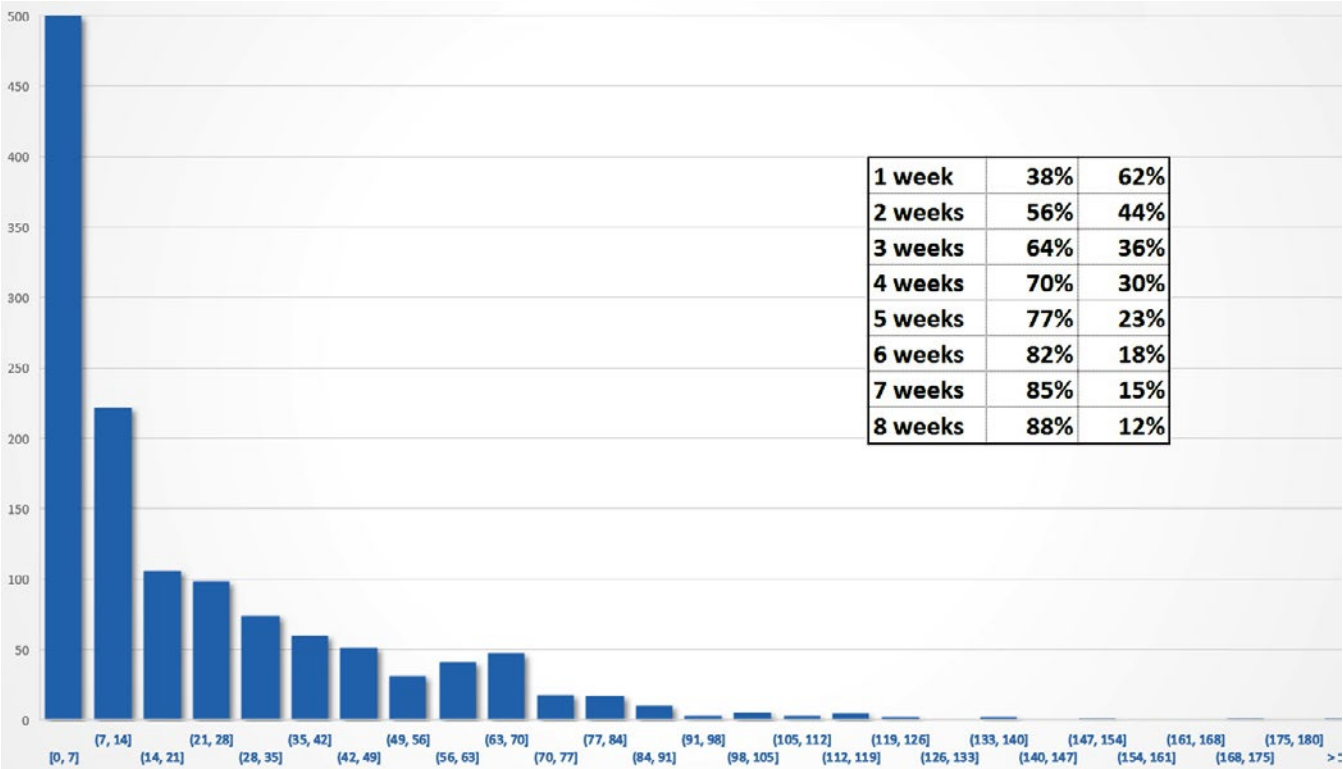


Figure 13 - Time taken to resolve reports from public.



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7. Action Plan Summary

The assessment of the network and its users is key to developing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This evidence contributes to the development of planned future actions, which will deliver outcomes that successfully manage and improve the network for users over the plan period.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) legislation requires local highway authorities to prepare and publish “a statement of the action they propose to take for the management of local rights of way, and for securing an improved network of local rights of way, with 10-year to the matters dealt with in the assessment”. The Current Action Plan appended to this document represents the statement of action the Council is proposing to take over the next 10 years as part of this RoWIP.

The Action Plan is a living document, which will be monitored and reviewed annually and updated with new or amended actions in response to the changing priorities and funding available. This approach is intended to ensure that the RoWIP continues to be relevant and fit for purpose over the 10-year period, delivering the outcomes that support the successful management and improvement of the rights of way network for all of the people that use it.

Delivering the Action Plan

Delivering the actions set out in the action plan is a collaborative and collective effort across many parties, with the Council at its heart driving forward the positive change and sustainable management of the rights of way network. As set out in the partnership working section of this document, the Council worked successfully in partnership with many organisations to help deliver past RoWIP's. It will continue to do so with this latest RoWIP.

Funding and Resourcing Delivery

Funding and resources to support the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the network comes from a variety of sources. The Council's ability to deliver on many of the actions in the RoWIP action plan will be governed by the availability of funding, both capital and revenue, and the vital ongoing support of our partners.

We all want to see improvements to the network for current and future generations of people that use the network. Although the Council has limited resources to deliver on some of the actions at the scale and ambition that we would like, the ambition and determination to work towards improving the network with our partners remains.

Works to manage and improve rights of way are often delivered through combining funding and resources from across different parties. Some of the key sources of funding includes:

- **County Council budgets**

Balancing the needs and priorities across all areas of an Council's responsibilities and how they are funded is a difficult task, and any spending must always provide value for money. The funding for all the work the Council does to support managing and improving the rights of way network and its users is set out each financial year in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The MTFS can be viewed online on the council's website.

- **Direct Government Funding**

Grants from central Government that are applicable for projects that support the rights of way network are an important source of funding. This type of funding can be for specific infrastructure projects such as new bridges, or for wider programmes that improve the network or help users access it. Therefore, bidding for the limited funding that is available from central Government and its agencies continues to be an important part of the efforts to secure money towards rights of way projects.

- **Land Developers**

As in all areas of the country, land development affects many areas of Leicestershire. Delivering housing and economic growth is vital to supporting a prosperous society, but new housing and employment sites must be delivered in a sustainable way that works with the natural environment, which of course includes the impacts on public rights of way. All development sites are required to be sustainable and encourage and enable active travel, which will include either directly undertaking work to improve rights of way or making contributions through Section 106 (S106) monetary contributions towards the delivery of improvements by another party. Many improvements to the network are related to new housing and employment development

- **Farming Community**

Farmers throughout the county provide structures and clear paths for the public. When you cross a stile or walk through a field of crops cleared for the path, it is a farmer that has done the work. Farmers have also been very supportive of the waymarking programmes of the past to help keep users on the paths. And lastly, many works that need access for plant and vehicles require access being granted across private land.

- **Charitable Organisations**

The Council works with many charitable organisations to help deliver improvement to the network. This includes national bodies like Sustrans who are responsible for the national cycle network, and the Canal & River Trust whose work includes caring for the canal towpaths.

- **Other Councils**

Other councils, such as district and parish councils, have funding opportunities that are not available directly to the County Council. Working in close partnership with other councils is a great way to get projects delivered that benefit local communities and help to achieve aligned goals in local areas.

Local planning authorities (LPA's) perform a vital function in ensuring any development is undertaken in accordance with guidance, making sure developers mitigate the impact of their development and contribute towards rights of way where they are impacted. This is through S106 contributions and direct delivery of works

- **Volunteers**

The value of volunteers in supporting the rights of way network cannot be understated, they help care for rights of way across Leicestershire. The Council works with many volunteers, from individuals to associations, and every hour that every volunteer dedicates to helping keep our rights of way network up to standard is valued.

- **The Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF)**

The role that the Forum has in representing the interests of people concerned with public access in Leicestershire, including both users and landowners, as an invaluable one. Members of the group are volunteers, and they have a hands-on role in the delivery of any RoWIP, including this one. The Forum is essential to the successful delivery of the action plan and will be a continuous partner in informing the plan over the next ten years.



8. Delivering Outcomes

Making a Difference in our Communities



Enabling Health And Wellbeing

Improving and successfully managing our rights of way network helps remove barriers to enabling more people in our communities to be physically active and more often.

Physical activity is proven to significantly improve people physical and mental wellbeing, increasing life expectancy. The Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (1) has long established that adults should aim to be physically active every day for at least 150 minutes a week to stay healthy.

150 minutes of physical activity a week helps:

- Reduce the risk of developing breast cancer by 25%
- Reduce to the risk of dementia by 30%
- Reduce depression by 30%
- Reduce the risk of developing osteoporosis by 50%
- Reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 40%
- Reduce the risk of developing heart disease by 40%

In the Annual Chief Medical Officer Report 2024, Chris Whitty stated: **“Making walking and cycling more practical and safer, and access to green space easier and more equitable, would go a long way toward removing barriers to improving physical activity levels and could significantly improve the health of England’s increasingly urban population.”**

Even in a rural county, access for all to green spaces is a key part of helping to improve public health.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan helps deliver our Local Transport Plan (LPT4) five Core Themes and objectives under our Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS), by delivering outcomes that make a difference to our communities.



Protecting The Environment

Protecting the environment is a duty for us all. The rights of way network provides one of the easiest ways for people to access nature. Encouraging and enabling access helps people value the environment and want to help protect it. Over 20,000 reports from users have helped the Council to maintain the rights of way network in Leicestershire, in turn helping to protect the environment.

Many of the paths that make up the network are in, or next to, a wide variety of habitats that all support healthy biodiversity. Sharing the responsibility to maintain the environment on our paths through proper use and management is vital to ensuring the network continues to work in harmony with nature, promoting biodiversity in all its forms.



Embracing Innovation

Embracing innovation is often about improving existing practices. In the context of the RoWIP this includes ensuring all users can continue to access the rights of way network through innovative ways of managing and improving the network with the funding available.

An essential part of embracing innovation is engaging with users, including through the Local Access Forum and working with volunteers and partners to help shape innovative ways of managing and improving the network, and identifying resources to support delivery.

Innovation is also about identifying and utilising new technology. Innovation in digital mapping helps us digitally record the network and enables it to be viewed online. Innovation in the way we record asset information can also help improve the way we manage the network.



Enhancing Our Transport Network's Resilience

Connecting our communities is important, and the rights of way network plays a vital part in this. The network helps people travel around the surrounding environment without the need to use a car, helping to mitigate the negative impact on our roads and the environment, enhancing Leicestershire to be a special place to live, work and thrive.

The rights of way network is a great asset to Leicestershire, and as such it requires maintaining and improving over time to ensure it continues to be a reliable, resilient and accessible transport network asset for all its users. Through using a maintenance approach based on assessing risk, which helps prioritise maintenance across the network, it ensures the network can continue to be a safe and accessible asset for people to enjoy.

A well maintained network fit for all supports equestrians, walkers, wheelers, cyclists and off-road motor enthusiasts alike in accessing and enjoying the countryside.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan helps deliver our Local Transport Plan (LPT4) five Core Themes and objectives under our Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS), by delivering outcomes that make a difference to our communities.



Delivering Economic Growth

Housing and employment developments are key to supporting the delivery of economic growth. Many developments interact with existing rights of way and ensuring that all new development is designed with active travel at its heart, with due consideration to working in harmony with the environment and the network, ensures that future residents and workers have sustainable access to green and blue spaces via the rights of way network.

There are many businesses that make up a thriving rural economy, and rights of way have their place in supporting growth.

The British Horse Society in their Making Way for Horses report stated that: **“Rights of way and other forms of off-road access are essential facilities for this industry to flourish, and to save riders from having to risk their lives riding on the roads”.**



9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation of the rights of way network is vital in providing the necessary data that helps enable successful management of the network. This includes tracking the progress towards delivering the actions in the RoWIP action plan. It also helps identify if any changes need to be made to the actions, or whether new actions need to be added to the action plan in future.

9.1 Inspecting the Network

Inspecting routes in an efficient and appropriate way is part of how the network is successfully monitored. This is undertaken through an inspection regime. The authority's inspection regime, which informs this RoWIP, is split into two categories, annually inspected and reactively inspected.

Annually Inspected:

- Most routes with a sealed surface currently receive an annual inspection. Sealed surfaces include surfaces such as asphalt.
- It is intended to ensure that all paths with a sealed surface are subject to an annual inspection within the first two years of this plan.

Reactively Inspected:

- All remaining unsealed routes will be reactively inspected following reports received by people who use the network. This includes the public, user groups and our network of partner councils, volunteers that work with the authority through the Local Access Forum.

As part of efforts to ensure that up-to-date data on the rights of way network is recorded, the whole network is reviewed to capture all sealed public rights of way routes that are the Council's responsibility to maintain. This data then informs the inspection regimes.

In addition to the inspections set out above, are areas that may benefit from funding.

Scheme Inspected:

- Within the Action Plan are proposals to carry out improvements to routes around certain urban areas and the linear Greenways network linking towns and villages.
- Each scheme will include one-off surveys of all paths in the scheme to assist with proposals for funding and works.

9.2 Evaluating Performance of the Network

As mentioned in the “Assessment of the Network” section in this document, the Council has used the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 178) as a way to monitor performance of the paths on the network in the past, and intends to use this method going forward during this plan period.

The measure is based on a series of checks for each path that is inspected:

- If the path has a fingerpost at the start
- Is the path waymarked
- If it crosses any bridges are they adequate
- Are boundary crossing adequate, such as stiles
- Is the route obstructed
- Is the path affected by ploughing or crops
- Is the surface reasonable

These inspection criteria then provide an overall percentage as the performance indicator to help track the performance of the network over time, to help inform future management and improvements.

9.3 Monitoring and Evaluating the RoWIP Action Plan

Monitoring and evaluation of this RoWIP’s action plan will be undertaken annually.

The action plan will be updated every financial year, to show progress made against each action. This annual review and update will also include engaging with our Local Access Forum to ensure that progress and any updates can be collectively and collaboratively discussed to inform any changes and future actions.

This progress of the RoWIP and its action plan is part of the wider delivery of measures to improve active travel use in Leicestershire under the Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS), which itself supports the delivery of the Council’s Local Transport Plan (LTP). The current LTP4 vision is **‘Delivering a safe, connected and integrated transport network which is resilient and well managed to support the ambitions and health of our growing communities, safeguards the environment whilst delivering economic prosperity’**.



10. Additional Guidance and Information

Further information on wider public rights of way policy and guidance can be found at the various sources below.

Leicestershire County Council Websites

- **Where to walk and ride in Leicestershire:**

Our Where to Walk and Ride webpage contains lots of useful information to help you access the rights of way network in Leicestershire. You can access an interactive map helping you find a specific route and navigate the wonderful rights of way network.

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/where-to-walk-and-ride-in-leicestershire

- **Public rights of way information for parishes and communities:**

If you want a quick reference guide to rights of way you can find out more here:

<https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/parishes-and-communities/public-rights-of-way>

- **How to report an issue on a public rights of way:**

You are able to report any problems on a rights of way by using our 'Report it' form.

<https://leicestershirecc-self.achieveservice.com/service/report-it>

This allows you to report problems such as overgrown paths, crops, obstructions, misleading signs, or damaged bridges, stiles or gates.

- **Local Access Forum**

Local Access Forums are at the heart of collaborative management of the rights of way network by involving the community. Every local authority that looks after rights of way has a Local Access Forum, and you can get involved too. Find out more here:

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/leicestershire-local-access-forum

Leicestershire Highway Design Guide (LHDG) - Guidance for Land Developers

The Leicestershire Highways Design Guide (LHDG) is a key reference point for the council's policy, principles and technical guidance relating to the delivery and adoption of proposed highway and transportation assets that form part of the new development in the county. This includes developments that impact public rights of way.

The LHDG is also the foundation on which the Council provides highway observations on planning applications in its role as local highway authority (LHA). The LHDG can be access at:

www.leicestershirehighwaydesignguide.uk

Choose How You Move

- **The Choose How You Move (CHYM) website has lots of information about walking, wheeling and cycling in Leicestershire, including:**

Walking/Wheeling:

An interactive map of over 150 walks:

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks

Downloadable maps grouped by geographical areas or interests, such as family fun, history or long distance trails:

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walking/walking-maps

Guided walks:

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walking/guided-walks

Walking groups:

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walking/walking-groups/

Cycling:

An Interactive cycle map:

<https://leicestershire.activemap.co.uk>

Downloadable maps by area:

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/cycling/cycle-maps

Adult cycle courses:

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/cycling/cycling-courses

Cycling clubs and groups:

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/cycling/cycling-clubs-and-guided-rides

- **Earn rewards whilst walking, wheeling and cycling on the rights of way network**

The Choose How You Move rewards challenge is powered by BetterPoints and allows you to earn points for walking, running and cycling. Track your journeys using the free BetterPoints app to earn points and redeem them for high street vouchers or donate them to your favourite charity. Find out how here:

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/betterpoints

Government Website

- **Rights of Way, Local Authority Responsibilities**

If you want to know more about the many varied roles and responsibilities that local authorities have in regard to public rights of way, you can find it here:

www.gov.uk/guidance/public-rights-of-way-local-authority-responsibilities



Birstall village
Loughborough

Route 1
Thurmaston 1
Coston 4

Route 1
Leicester 5

Route 1

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Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2025-2035 Action Plan



11. Appendix - Action Plan

The statement of action the council propose to take over the next ten years for the management of local rights of way, and for securing an improved network of local rights of way, is set out in this current Action Plan.

The Action Plan is a living document, which will be monitored, reviewed and updated annually in response to the changing priorities, funding available and continued engagement feedback with all the partners, organisations, and volunteers the council works with. This will help ensure the actions in the plan continue to deliver outcomes that support the successful management and improvement of the rights of way network for all of the people that use it.

The current actions and their progress are set out below:

Themes Managing and Maintaining (MM) Encouraging and Enabling (EE) Working Together (WT) Improving the Network (IN)	Action Number	Action	Description	Frequency	Status / Progress	10 Year Programme Tracker									
						● = Scheduled ○ = To Be Confirmed ✓ = Completed									
						2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Highway Authority (HA)															
(WT)	AR1	Annual Reporting to LLAF	Produce an Annual Report on the progress of the RoWIP, and present to Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF)	Annual	Next report due in 2026	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(WT)	AR2	Update RoWIP Action Plan	Update RoWIP Action Plan to provide latest progress on Actions & review existing Actions &/or need for new Actions	Annual	Next update in 2026/27	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN)	HA1	Annual survey of the network	Measure the percentage of rights of way that are easy to use	Annual	2025 survey	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN)	HA2	Annual review of sealed surface routes	Inspection of all sealed surface paths. i.e. asphalt	Annual	80% to 100% over 2 years	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Themes Managing and Maintaining (MM) Encouraging and Enabling (EE) Working Together (WT) Improving the Network (IN)	Action Number	Action	Description	Frequency	Status / Progress	10 Year Programme Tracker									
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						2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
(MM), (IN), (WT)	HA3	Provide online defect reporting service	Reporting service that enable the public to report defects on paths using online system with photo option	Ongoing	Review 2026	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN), (WT)	HA4	Investigate all reports received	Investigate and prioritise all reports received from the public and stakeholders	Ongoing	50% closed within 1 month	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN), (WT)	HA5	Apply enforcement protocol	Defect reports about paths dealt with in line with the Enforcement Protocol	Ongoing	All over 1st year	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN)	HA6	Keep Enforcement protocol up-to-date	Ensure Enforcement Protocol is kept up to date, in line with legislation changes, for use by officers as necessary	Ongoing	Currently up-to-date	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(MM), (IN)	HA7	Manage vegetation on priority paths	Undertake an annual programme to manage vegetation on priority paths	Two Cuts	2025 2 cut programme	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN)	HA8	Integrate PRoW assets into wider highway network assets	Integrate PRoW assets into wider highway network assets to provide a complete assets register to aid assets management	First 3 years	60% to 100%	●	●	●							
(MM), (IN)	HA9	Survey and inspect bridge assets	Survey and inspect Bridge assets and identify replacement structures	Ongoing	70% complete 2025	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN), (WT)	HA10	Identify PRoW improvement projects in MMAIP and LCWIP areas	Identify suitable programme of PRoW improvement schemes to support delivery of wider MMAIP and LCWIP capital programmes	2025/6	Initiation date to be confirmed	●	●	●							
(MM), (IN)	HA11	Proactive sign renewal checks on priority routes	Undertake signage improvements and renewal to provide directional and destination information for users on the PRoW network	2026/27 onward	Dependent on funding aligned with wider area improvement works		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Themes Managing and Maintaining (MM) Encouraging and Enabling (EE) Working Together (WT) Improving the Network (IN)	Action Number	Action	Description	Frequency	Status / Progress	10 Year Programme Tracker									
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						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
(MM), (IN)	HA12	Improve access on promoted PRoW	Improve access on promoted PRoW routes including the Leicestershire Round	2026/27 onward	Dependent on funding		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(MM), (WT), (IN)	HA13	Implement Greenways programme	Implement Greenways programme to identify and improve priority routes between settlements. Improvements to include surfacing, signage and reducing stiles and replacing with gates or gaps in physical barriers such as hedges and fence lines, to better connect communities	2025/26	Initiation date to be confirmed, expected to begin 2026/27		●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(MM), (WT), (IN)	HA14	Manage highway verges	Undertake feasibility assessment of highway verges with a view to improve access for users, providing wider connectivity of the PRoW network, including equestrian users	2026 survey	Initiation date to be confirmed, expected to begin 2025/26	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(MM), (WT), (IN)	HA15	Survey the Leicestershire Round	Survey all routes on Leicestershire Round as a priority route	2025-27 survey	80% complete	●	●				○	○			
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	HA16	Assist Parish councils who want to help look after local paths	Assist Parish councils who want to help look after local paths in their areas	Ongoing	5% of paths currently looked after by Parish councils	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	HA17	Provide support to Leicestershire Footpaths Association (LFA) and volunteers working on Leicestershire Round	Provide support to LFA and other volunteers to enable them to assist with work on the Leicestershire Round	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	HA18	Recruit and support Volunteers	Recruit, appoint and support volunteers helping to manage the network	Ongoing	4 appointments made in 2025 so far	✓	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Themes Managing and Maintaining (MM) Encouraging and Enabling (EE) Working Together (WT) Improving the Network (IN)	Action Number	Action	Description	Frequency	Status / Progress	10 Year Programme Tracker									
						● = Scheduled ○ = To Be Confirmed ✓ = Completed									
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						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	HA19	Host the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF)	Host and support the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF), including holding three meetings annually	Ongoing - (3 Meetings every year)	1 Meeting held. 2 more to be held in 25/26	✓●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●
(WT)	HA20	Consult with the LLAF on policy or service changes that effect PROW	Consult with the LLAF on policy or service changes that effect PROW, to ensure improvements meet the needs of current and future users	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	HA21	Engage with the public Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Forum on PROW projects and schemes	Engage with the public Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Forum on PROW projects and schemes, to ensure all users are given the opportunity to input into the design of schemes and projects before they are delivered	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(EE), (WT)	EE1	Promoting the Network and its use	Promote the PRoW network and its use via Choose How You Move (CHYM)	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(EE), (WT)	EE2	Targeted Promotion and Engagement	Engage users and promote the PRoW Network and its uses to under represented communities to enable increased number and diversity of people using the network	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(EE), (WT)	EE3	Provide online and printed information on PRoW routes and events	Provide online and printed information for people to help the use PRoW routes and attend events and training	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(EE), (WT)	EE4	Facilitate Guided walks and rides on the PRoW Network	Facilitate guided walks and rides on the PRoW Network to help encourage and attract new users to the network and travelling actively	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Themes Managing and Maintaining (MM) Encouraging and Enabling (EE) Working Together (WT) Improving the Network (IN)	Action Number	Action	Description	Frequency	Status / Progress	10 Year Programme Tracker									
						● = Scheduled ○ = To Be Confirmed ✓ = Completed									
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						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
(EE), (WT)	EE5	Provide targeted information to improve accessibility of the network for users	Provide targeted information, promotions and communication campaigns, to ensure that there is clear information on the accessibility of individual PROWs to enable people to make informed and safe plans for using them	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	EE6	Engage and work in partnership with others to improve access for underrepresented user groups	Improve and increase working in partnership with groups/organisations/service providers that serve underrepresented user groups including those with protected characteristics, to promote, encourage and enable use of the PROWs for all	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	EE7	Engage and work in partnership with Landowners and Farmers to minimise conflict with livestock and users	Engage and work in partnership with Landowners and Farmers to minimise conflict with livestock and users on the network	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(EE), (WT)	EE8	Provide orienteering and map reading training for users	Provide orienteering and map reading training session for user groups to empower users to confidently navigate the network	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(EE), (WT)	EE9	Provide information and education provision to schools in Leicestershire on PROW and the Countryside Code	Providing information provision and practical skills training on using the PROW network in line with the countryside code. This will include getting to know signs and symbols using the countryside, being considerate and protecting the environment	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

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						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Surveying Authority (SA)															
(MM), (IN)	SA1	Maintain an up-to-date Definitive Map	The Definitive Map to be updated following all legal changes and published for inspection by the public	Ongoing	Within six weeks of change	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN)	SA2	Publish a Definitive Map Modification Order(DMMO) priority policy	Take account of legislative requirements and amending legislative proposals which are expected within the 3rd year of this plan, and to develop a DMMO priority policy	3rd Year	2027			●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(MM), (WT), (IN)	SA3	Recruit and support Research Volunteers	Recruit and support new Research volunteers to research existing historic DMMO claims and associated evidence	Ongoing	5 appointments made in 2025 so far	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(MM)	SA4	Maintain a DMMO online register	Provide an online register of claims for the public to inspect	Ongoing	100%	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (WT), (IN)	SA5	Provide PROW datasets to 3rd parties	Provide PROW data to organisations, including Ordnance Survey, Government and its agencies as part of the National Street Gazetteer (NSG) record. These organisations can also include private sector developers and their agents	Monthly	100%	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN)	SA6	Inform public of temporary orders that affect PROW	Update National data database with Temporary diversion, closure and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders(TTROs) on PROW	Ongoing	Continuous	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN)	SA7	Respond to legislative changes	If enacted, deregulation proposals affecting PROW to be implemented and processes reviewed, to ensure these are inline with government legislation	Subject to Parliament	As enacted				○	○					

Themes Managing and Maintaining (MM) Encouraging and Enabling (EE) Working Together (WT) Improving the Network (IN)	Action Number	Action	Description	Frequency	Status / Progress	10 Year Programme Tracker									
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						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
(MM), (IN)	SA8	Reduce anomalous PROW data recorded on the definitive map	Reduce contradictory PROW data recorded on the definitive map, when assessed with current land management data, to minimise impact on users and landowners	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (IN)	SA9	Publish an online register of Legal Orders	Maintain an online register of all Legal Order applications and process, and update in response to further legislative changes	Ongoing	100%	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Planning & Development (PD)															
(MM), (WT), (IN)	PD1	Provide advice and support to Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) for routes affected by development	Support the legal process of temporarily closing or moving routes during construction and assisting with permanently diverting paths under the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA)	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(MM), (WT), (IN)	PD2	Maintain up-to-date PROW Design Guidance	Ensure the latest relevant information regarding PROW is included in the Leicestershire Highways Design Guide, to aid land developers, their agents and other parties when designing and delivering developments	Ongoing	100%	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (WT), (IN)	PD3	Provide PROW formal advice to Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) and Secretary of State (SoS)	Provide formal advice to Local Planning Authorities (LPA's), and Secretary of State (SoS), on applications that are directly affected by PROW	Ongoing	As submitted	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

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						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
(MM), (WT), (IN)	PD4	Provide PROW advice to Developers and their agents on development proposals	Act as a point of expertise to advise land developers and their agents on development proposals that may directly affect PROWs	Ongoing		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	PD5	Obligate and deliver PROW improvements identified through the planning process	Ensure necessary PROW improvements are obligated from relevant parties as part of housing and employment land development, and support their delivery through Section 106 funding use	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (WT), (IN)	PD6	Provide PROW input into Local Plan development process	Provide PROW input into Local Plan process, to ensure access opportunities are maximised to connect communities as part of long term land development	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (WT), (IN)	PD7	Ensure Green Infrastructure proposals are aligned to access and the PROW network	Ensure Green Infrastructure proposals are aligned to access and the PROW network, including supporting climate change mitigation and flood risks	Ongoing	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
(MM), (WT), (IN)	PD8	Provide advice and work with government agencies including Network Rail on infrastructure improvements	Provide advice and work with government agencies including Network Rail on infrastructure improvements and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)	Ongoing	Inputting into Hinckley Rail Freight Interchange (HRFI) proposals. Working with Network Rail ongoing	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Themes Managing and Maintaining (MM) Encouraging and Enabling (EE) Working Together (WT) Improving the Network (IN)	Action Number	Action	Description	Frequency	Status / Progress	10 Year Programme Tracker									
						● = Scheduled ○ = To Be Confirmed ✓= Completed									
						2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
						Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Access Authority (AA)															
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	AA1	Ensure designated open access sites are accessible to the public	Work with land managers and the Leicestershire Local Access Forum on site access surveys of larger open access sites	5 yearly	Await Natural England review for which open access sites are on the register		●	●					●	●	
(MM), (EE), (WT), (IN)	AA2	Assist land managers to dedicated land as open access	Work with landowners who wish to dedicate land for open access	Ad hoc	Liaising with Landowners as required	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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