

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

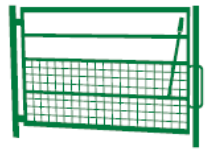


Strimmed more than
1,000
miles of paths



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.

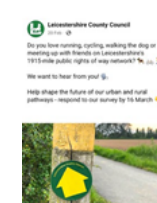
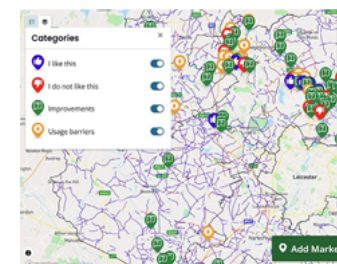
- ❑ The new RoWIP has been developed through engagement from the outset.
- ❑ Pre-consultation engagement with statutory and non-statutory stakeholders helped inform development of the draft RoWIP, this included:

- 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

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.



- ❑ 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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