

**From:** Mike Hill: Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory Services  
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee - 15 May 2018

**Subject:** Revision of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

**Classification:** Unrestricted

### **Summary**

There is a statutory requirement to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and to review the plan within 10 years of its publication. The current ROWIP was adopted in 2008, and therefore a review is required. This report details how the review was undertaken and the main elements of the draft plan.

### **Recommendation**

Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and consider the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan and to endorse the recommendation to progress to public consultation.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 It is a statutory requirement to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and to review it within 10 years of publication.
- 1.2 The ROWIP sets the direction and supports the work of the Public Rights of Way Team to make a real difference to the quality of life of Kent residents.

## **2. The Report**

- 2.1 The first Rights of Way Improvement Plan was adopted by the County Council in 2008. Significant investment, improvements and savings to the capital liability for the Public Rights of Way network have been delivered through the objectives set out in the initial Plan.
- 2.2 The County Council is required to review its plan within 10 years of its publication. It is imperative that the Plan is kept up to date and is:
  - a) aligned to current County Council priorities
  - b) reflects the input provided by our customers,
  - c) adapts to the current economic climate, and;
  - d) provides a policy basis for securing new opportunities as they arise.
- 2.3 For these reasons a review of the ROWIP has been undertaken and a draft Plan produced for consultation; provided as Appendix 1.
- 2.4 Preparation of the Plan has involved extensive research, customer surveys and direct customer feedback. This has included; previously completed

consultations, research of business and asset management plans, review of KCC and national research and policy, obtaining information from focus groups, Parish Councils, District/Borough Councils and County Members.

- 2.5 As a statutory document there is certain information that must be contained within the Plan. Those requirements are set out in legislation contained within the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. The revision therefore contains many of the same elements as the original 2007 and 2013 versions.
- 2.6 The main elements of the Plan including those regulatory requirements are:
- a) An assessment of existing and potential use and demand.
  - b) Detailed customer profiling using Market Research, Mosaic and Countryside Access Management System.
  - c) National and local policy context. Attention has been given to aligning the Plan with 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)', Local Transport Plan 4 and the Active Travel Strategy.
  - d) Operational management, asset management and budgetary information.
  - e) How to make the best of new national and local funding opportunities.
  - f) A delivery plan that includes main objectives, actions, benefits and key partners and resource implications.
- 2.7 Statutory pre-consultation is required with district/borough, parish and neighbouring councils. Natural England as the regulating body must also be informed of the proposed update. The consultation must be advertised in two local papers to enable opportunities to comment from all Kent residents and to conform with regulation.
- 2.8 The public consultation is expected to take place during June and August. The PROW Team will be distributing posters and postcards to libraries, putting out press releases and sending the plan to the database of people that expressed an interest when completing market research questionnaire. In addition, the draft plan will be sent to the list of KCC Consultees and will be available on PROW and Explore Kent webpages. An easy read version of the plan will also be produced.

### **3. Policy Framework**

- 3.1 The proposed decision meets the objectives of 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)'. Links to the delivery of the strategic objectives particularly are articulated throughout the draft plan.
- 3.2 The ROWIP aims to not only to protect and improve the public right of way (PROW) network but to make local communities aware of the opportunities it provides to access local facilities and the countryside, contribute to a thriving rural economy, improve health, wellbeing and their quality of life. The PROW network is free to all users including disadvantaged young and old people.

The links between mental health issues and the benefits from walking and cycling have been well documented and the plan will aim to promote these benefits to both young and old age groups.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There is no obligation to deliver programmes and projects identified in the ROWIP. Where programmes and projects are identified they will only be taken forward if the resource is available. External funding will be sought where appropriate to enable the delivery of projects that would not be funded as core activity. Many potential projects will only be feasible if delivered through partnership working.

#### **5. Equalities Implications**

- 5.1 An initial EQIA was produced at the start of the review. This document has been updated throughout the review process and a final version of the EQIA will be submitted with the draft ROWIP document.

#### **6. Next steps**

- 6.1 The consultation process is outlined through legislation contained within the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Should approval from this Committee be given, the Draft Plan will be subject to a full public consultation. The proposed timetable is as follows.
- a) Preparation for consultation by Corporate Communications - May 2018
  - b) Public Consultation - June - August 2018
  - c) Respond to the consultation amending the plan where appropriate - August 2018
  - d) Present to Cabinet for adoption - September 2018

#### **7. Recommendation**

- 7.1 Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and consider the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan and to endorse the recommendation to progress to public consultation.

#### **8. Background documents**

Appendix 1: ROWIP Draft Document

PROW Evidence Base Documents:<http://kcc-app610:9070/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD5368&ID=5368&RPID=22030647>

#### **9. Contact details**

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