

	<p style="text-align: center;">Highways Committee 30th May 2007</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Director of Transportation</p>
<p>For Action Wards Affected: ALL</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Report Title: Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)</p>	

Forward Plan Ref: E & C-07/08-065

1.0 Summary

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the Act) placed a duty on all local highway authorities to prepare a Rights of way Improvement Plan (the ROWIP) by November 2007. The ROWIP should enable Authorities to look for ways of promoting and encouraging use of the rights of way network, and ensure that it is fit for purpose in the 21st Century.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- (a) note the requirements for the production of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the London Borough of Brent.
- (b) endorse the vision statement and key objectives attached to this report in the Appendix.
- (c) instruct officers to produce the Rights of Way Improvement Plan by the end of November 2007.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Act requires that the ROWIP contains:

- (a) an assessment of the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public; opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area; the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems; and such other matters as the Secretary of State may direct.
- (b) a statement of action setting out what is to be done for the management of local rights of way, and for securing an improved network, with particular regards to the matters dealt with in the assessment.
- (c) such other material as the Secretary of State may direct.

3.2 Local rights of way are defined in the Act as being:

- (a) footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways, and
- (b) ways shown in a definitive map and statement for the area as restricted byways or byways open to all traffic.

3.3 There are approximately 16 km of public rights of way in the Borough recorded on the definitive map. These are made up almost exclusively of urban footpaths. To meet the requirements of Best Value Performance Indicator 178 (percentage of total length of footpaths and other public rights of way that are easy to use) an annual survey of 5% of the network is undertaken. There are also approximately 59 km of cycle routes in the Borough, a substantial amount of these being on-street.

3.4 Under Sections 60, 61 and 62 of the Act, all authorities in England will need to prepare the Plan by November 2007. Exceptions are those authorities classed as “excellent” under Comprehensive performance Assessment and Inner London Boroughs.

3.5 In the Transportation Service Unit’s Operation Plan for 2006/2007 the development of a ROWIP to comply with the requirements of the Act was identified as a key priority.

3.6 It is intended for the Plan to complement and integrate with the Local Implementation Plan (LIP) for Brent. This will ensure the long-term suitability of the rights of way network and help contribute towards the key public priorities for health, quality of life and urban congestion. In particular there are London wide targets for increases in walking (10%) and cycling (80%) between 2001 and 2015.

3.7 The production of the ROWIP will require consultation with stakeholders including adjoining authorities, Natural England and various internal Council departments. The timetable for this is to consult in May 2007, evaluate responses in June 2007 and produce a draft ROWIP including an action plan by the end of June 2007. There would follow a 12 week consultation period on the draft Plan until the end of September 2007 during which time the consultation outcomes would be considered and the draft Plan amended. Executive Committee will be asked to adopt the final ROWIP and action Plan in time for the Act deadline of 21st November 2007.

3.8 It is the Government's intention that Rights of Way Improvement Plans will be progressively integrated with local transport plans. To assist in the integration process it is intended that the ROWIP will, in part, focus on the key objectives of:

- (a) Tackling congestion and better air quality
- (b) Delivering safer roads
- (c) Delivering a more accessible network
- (d) Improving conditions for walking and cycling.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The work in producing the ROWIP will mostly be undertaken by an external consultant at a cost of £9,500 which will be funded from existing Transportation Revenue Funding. The consultant will be managed by the Civil Engineering Section of the Transportation Service Unit.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 Under Section 60 to 62 of the Countryside and Rights of way Act 2000 every local highway authority in England and Wales shall prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan by November 2007.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 It is clear that there are a number of paths that are currently unsuitable for use by the partially sighted and disabled. For example, the paths through more rural areas may not have such even surfacing as those in more urban areas thus limiting their use by the partially sighted and those of limited mobility. Responses from consultations and condition surveys, as part of the research for the Right of Away improvement Plan, should enable clear conclusions to be drawn on how easy the network is for the less mobile and partially sighted, with the long term aim of improving the network and making it more accessible for all.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

7.1 The work to produce the Plan is extensive and cannot be accommodated within existing resources. An external consultant has been engaged to undertake much of the work including the drafting of the Plan.

8.0 Environmental Implications

8.1 Any improvement to the Rights of Way in Brent will be carried out with environmental considerations in mind.

Background Papers

- Brent ROWIP Definitive Plan and Statement
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans – DEFRA Statutory Guidance to Local highway Authorities in England (Nov 92)
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Contact Officers

Any person wishing to inspect the above mentioned papers should contact Paul Fraser at 2nd Floor West Brent House, Wembley Tel: 0208 937 5135

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APPENDIX

Vision Statement Regarding the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The London Borough of Brent, through the preparation and implementation of its Rights of way Improvement Plan, aims to evaluate and improve access to local rights of way within and around the Borough to ensure that they:

- meet the present and future needs of the public;
- provide opportunities for exercise and other forms of open air recreation;
- are available to the blind and partially sighted and others with mobility problems.

The Council recognises:

- the economic and social value and the health benefits the local rights of way network can offer;
- the need for increased opportunities for everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, to be able to enjoy access to the local rights of way network in and around the Borough;
- the need for the legal records to be accurate and up to date;
- the impact the ROWIP could have in meeting the aims and objectives of the Council;
- the need for the local rights of way network to be properly promoted;
- the need to increase opportunities for sustainable travel, for leisure and travel to work, school and local services;
- the need to ensure that proposals and schemes are priorities and implemented to meet the needs and aspirations of the population to deliver maximum benefit from available resources;
- the need for the ROWIP to integrate with the Council's objectives set out in the draft Local Implementation Plan, in particular supporting the key objectives of tackling congestion and better air quality, delivering safer roads, delivering a more accessible network and improving conditions for walking and cycling.