



Lancashire Rights of Way **Improvement Plan**

2015 ~ 2025

Consultation Report
November 2015



Public rights of way and wider access in Lancashire

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Lancashire County Council produced its first Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) in 2005 in partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council, a ten year plan setting out the authorities' priorities in relation to the management and improvement of the public rights of way network. Work began on the revised RoWIP in 2014 with an assessment of user needs. This assessment involved asking user groups, local parish councils and service users about their issues and priorities. This work was supplemented with local knowledge from officers and referenced the latest research and data such as the Natural England MENE survey. This initial assessment helped to build the picture of issues and needs assisting with the formulation of broad responses as well as specific actions to address these issues. A draft RoWIP was then produced and published for consultation in March 2015. Details of the consultation process including methods, events and number of responses are presented in part 1. Part 2 presents the broad consultation findings along with our responses to these.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to submit their views as part of this consultation and in particular the Lancashire Local Access Forum for their input throughout the process.

Part 1: Consultation and engagement overview

Consultation on the draft Lancashire RoWIP took place during the twelve week period between 23 March 2015 ~ 15 June 2015. A press release was issued to launch the consultation and inform people of how to submit their views online and at face-to-face drop in sessions held at local libraries across the whole of Lancashire. A series of five consultation events were held for this purpose to enable people to ask questions and share their views.

Events were held as follows:

Lancaster Central library ~ Tuesday 14th April

Chorley library ~ Monday 20th April

Rawtenstall library ~ Monday 27th April

Accrington library ~ Tuesday 12th May

Skelmersdale library ~ Monday 18th May

The events were publicised on the LCC, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool Council websites and via social media.

The draft plan itself and a questionnaire were the focus of the consultation. The Lancashire Local Access and the Public Rights of Way and Access Forums were consulted throughout the plan preparation and again as part of the formal consultation. Additionally a large number of organisations were contacted directly and invited to present views as part of the consultation, a full list is contained in this report (see appendix A) All parish and town councils were contacted directly as well as district councils.

Consultation responses received

Overall the number of responses to the RoWIP consultation was very low. Only 29 people completed the online questionnaire and submitted views. Attendance at face to face consultation events was similarly low with only 20 people attending to discuss issues. The majority of comments were received via email which accounted to 60 in total.

Consultees were asked if they agreed with the issues and responses laid out in the RoWIP and asked to comment on them, consultees were also invited to offer any general comments and observations. A summary of the feedback received and our response is presented in part 2 of this report.

Overall the consultation did not raise any significant issues and in general consultees agreed with the issues and responses in the plan. There were concerns that the plan has a feeling of 'austerity' and could be more 'adventurous'; however, our response to this is that in general the RoWIP identifies key issues and priorities and responses to these will be developed as resources permit. It is intended to be 'scalable and flexible'.

Many of the responses identified specific problems which have been treated as defect reports in themselves rather than as part of the RoWIP consultation. Some other more general comments or suggestions were also outside the scope of RoWIP and were similarly treated as general correspondence for separate consideration and where appropriate have been referred to the relevant teams for possible action, subject to resources.

The consultation ended on 15 June 2015

Most frequently raised issues:

- Condition of the rights of way network generally
- Accessibility of routes
- People not knowing which routes are suitable for different types of users ~ good information about routes is vital to encourage use.

Part 2: Overview of consultation responses

Introduction to public rights of way and wider access in Lancashire (RoWIP Section 1.1)

This section of the plan provides an overview of rights of way and access in Lancashire along with general issues related to improving access and condition of the public rights of way network.

The RoWIP purpose and scope (Section 1.2 - 1.2.5)

This section considers the overall scope of the RoWIP and context in relation to local plans and strategies and the role of the Local Access Forum.

Section	What the consultation had to say	Our response
1.1	The guidance from DEFRA mentions 'Woodland' but this does not feature in the draft.	RoWIP amended see section 2.2.5 1.2.1
1.2.1	Request for explicit reference to the quality and usability of all the rights of way as well as their connectivity as part of a network.	RoWIP amended see section 1.2.1

Part 2: Overview of consultation responses

Assessment of Public Rights of Way and Wider Access in Lancashire - (Sections 2.1.1-2.1.3)

Issues we identified in the Plan include:

- Need to improve access to green space and engagement with communities
- Need to increase throughput of processing DMMOs to ensure that key routes are not lost.
- Need to increase throughput of processing PPOs and to do so such that improvements to the network can be achieved.
- Need to improve overall satisfaction with the PROW network by prioritising maintenance on heavily used or potentially heavily used routes.

Section	What the consultation had to say	Our response
2.1.1	Request for specific mention of the need for good surfaces and fewer stiles.	RoWIP amended to include reference to this issue being particularly significant to an ageing population. See 2.1.1
2.1.1	Concerns were raised that prioritising some routes may lead to rural rights of way not being maintained effectively.	With finite resources, regardless of the level, more spent on some routes means less on others but it is better that this is done in a planned, open and rational way including consultation with users and with appropriate information provided.
2.1.3	General concerns regarding overgrowth, deterioration of path surfaces and loss of clear markings over a number of years which reduces the potential for full accessibility.	Feedback is noted and further reinforces the need to address the issue of maintenance. The proposed maintenance programme will address issues identified ~ see statement of actions - theme 1.
2.1.3	Demands for better maintenance, dog friendly stiles and accessible routes. 'maintenance is a priority'	As above.
2.1.3	The importance of the PROW condition surveys was highlighted by consultees along with a commitment to keep these going.	We value the information obtained by conditions surveys and resources permitting would seek to continue these in the future. The plan has been revised to demonstrate an intention to do this if possible.

Part 2: Overview of consultation responses

Wider access opportunities considered as part of this plan ~ (RoWIP Section 2.2 ~ 2.7)

Issues we identified in the plan include:

- Promoted routes may need to be rationalised and maintenance prioritised based on health benefits.
- Lack of information about open access land and permissive routes
- Demand for the coastal path route work to be progressed
- Lack of facilities at local parks and open spaces that may prevent older people using these
- Poor connections to country parks and picnic sites from urban areas
- Roads and roadside verges not fully utilised and accessible

Section	What the consultation had to say	Our response
2.2.7	Unclassified roads are not mentioned in the RoWIP ~ they are an important right of way.	Unclassified roads are a public right of way and actions applying to rights of way generally will include these.
2.2.1	“The plan does not do enough to encourage rambling tourism” ~ (Ramblers Association).	The plan recognised that good information is vital to encourage use and access to the network ~ tourism is one such use that will benefit from improvements from actions to improve information.
2.2.3	Whilst it is acknowledged that the provision of information is important in relation to permissive/concessionary routes their maintenance and development is also key as they are of great value to the local and wider community. Effort should be made to enhance these routes wherever possible.	We acknowledge the importance of some local concessionary routes but the first priority must be to promote and maintain routes in a planned prioritised manner. The development of specific routes will be looked at in more detail as specific projects and action plans are developed over the lifetime of the RoWIP.
2.2.2	There is a lack of good information about access land and signage.	This is an issue identified in the plan and the statement of action included an action to address this ~ see action 2.4
2.2.4	Request for more links to the Coastal Trail as this work progresses to provide the opportunity for circular walks.	Noted: this will be taken into account when prioritising the network.
2.2.5	Canal towpaths could be used by horse riders ~ could the plan consider looking at these?	Where appropriate and access can be agreed towpaths may be identified as a priority within the bridleway network. See section 2.2.3
2.2.7	Request for a review of the ‘list of streets’ in order for them to be accurately presented on MARIO.	Agree: picked up in action ~ see action 2.5

Part 2: Overview of consultation responses

Assessment of user needs ~ (RoWIP Section 2.3 ~ 2.3.4)

Issues we identified in the plan include:

- There is a demand for better and accessible green space to urban areas for short walks and regular amenity use.
- There is an insufficient number of well maintained, good standard, well signposted multi-user routes ~ we want to identify key routes and improve these for all users.
- There needs to be better public information about the different types of routes available, standards to be expected and opportunities for benefiting health and wellbeing.
- Encouraging volunteers to get involved in the improving and maintaining the network is key to securing any significant improvements.

Section	What the consultation had to say	Our response
2.3.3	Concerns that MARIO is not user friendly, particularly it does not display Explorer or Land Ranger type maps. This is an issue for users.	Agree: will be picked up in action 2.1
2.3.2	Support for the removal of barriers wherever possible to ensure that disabled people are not prevented from using the network.	Supports our actions to improve multi-user routes.
2.3.2	Dog walkers are a good proportion of users ~ consider their needs such as gates/stiles that are dog friendly and accessible.	This will be taken into account through better information provision and accessible multi user routes.
2.3.2	Suggest use of term 'mobility impaired' to reflect the wide range of user needs.	Plan amended.
2.3.2	Lack of dropped kerbs can prevent mobility scooter and disabled users from accessing footpaths ~ this should be looked at.	This may affect some urban routes and accessibility of routes at the side of roads. This will be considered through actions to improve multi-user routes.
2.3.2	A number of consultees called for signage to be improved and simplified so that it's easier to understand and clear for users (user expectations are clear) - the average person does not know what a BOAT or Bridleway is.	Will be picked up in actions to improve information ~ see action 2.3, 2.4, 2.5
2.3.2	More clarity on what a footpath actually is and permitted usage.	As above.
2.3.2	Demand for better information about and awareness about the use of RADAR keys and routes suitable for wheelchairs. (Easy access routes).	As above.
2.3.2	Better signage ~ suggest using icons such as walking man for walkers, horse, motorbike etc.	Action 2.3 picks this issue up.
2.3.2	Consultees referred to the importance of supporting the volunteer element within Lancashire to ensure that historical and simply useful routes are not lost.	The RoWIP supports volunteer engagement ~ see theme 5, actions 5.0 and 5.1
2.3.2	The actions of farmers and land owners can lead to problems for walkers ~ e.g. animals making routes impassable ~ can more be done to address these issues?	We acknowledge that this can be an issue and will be taken into account when providing information about routes.

Part 2: Overview of consultation responses

Consultation responses in relation to specific actions identified in the plan include:

Section	What the consultation had to say	Our response
Theme 1	The need for better rail crossings is acknowledged in action 1.4 but needs to take into account the issue of crossing busy roads.	Noted, action amended.
Theme 1	Need to strengthen enforcement to ensure that routes are safe from obstructions with no illegal diversions.	Action 1.1. picks this up ~ prioritise enforcement.
Theme 1 and Theme 4	Ensure good working with planning departments to ensure financial contributions from developers are utilised to improve the network.	Action 1.3 and 4.0 considers this issue.
Theme 3	Consultees reinforced the need to work better with GP commissioning groups and other health walk providers to encourage use of the PROW network for walking.	Agree, this is picked up in actions to promote 20 minute walks ~ see action 3.1
Theme 4	Multi-user routes ~ concerns about educating users around the sharing of routes was highlighted ~ request for an additional action to do more work around this.	Noted ~ share with care action included ~ see action 4.2

Part 3: List of consultees

Organisation

Age UK Lancashire
Age Concern Central Lancashire
Lancashire Youth Council
Young Lancashire
East Lancashire Deaf Society
Action for Blind People
Disability First
Lancashire Care
Galloway's Society for the Blind
Deafway
East Lancashire Learning Disability Board
Lancashire Learning Disability Consortium
North Lancashire Area Learning Disability Partnership Board
One Voice
Disability Equality (NW) Ltd
Disability Youth Club
Sahara in Preston
Lancashire Wide Network for Minority Ethnic Women
Preston Domestic Violence Services
Fylde Coast Women's Aid
Preston & Western Lancashire REC
Nguzo Saba centre
Preston Black History Group
Jinnah Development Trust Ltd
Peoples Enterprise and Empowerment Forum
Lancashire Black & Minority Ethnic Pact
Pukar Centre
Building Bridges in Burnley
Building Bridges in Pendle
Participation Works NW Ltd
Enterprise 4 All
Asian Business Federation
Preston & District Chinese Community Association
Hyndburn Gypsy Roma & Traveller Network
Lancashire GRT Practitioners Network
GRT Hyndburn Women's Group
Churches Together in Lancashire
Lancashire Forum of Faiths
Gujarat Hindu Society
Lancashire Council of Mosques
Navajo Consultative Partnership
Lancashire LGBT Centre Group
Rainbow Generation
Chorley & South Ribble POUT ~ Power to be Out
Issac Hitchin Project Lancashire LGBT
Preston Project VIBE
Lancaster PYRO ~ Proud Youth R Out
Penlde LIP ~ Liberated in Pendle
Friends of Dorothy
Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Community Futures
Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Lancashire Association of Local Council
West Pennine Moors
Lancashire Visual Impairment Forum
Guide Dogs
OP Forum - Preston
OP Forum - Chorley
OP Forum ~ South Ribble
Deafway Forum
VI Forum
Ageing Well Forum
Dual Sensory Loss Forum
Pensioners' Forum
PD North Forum
Disability Partnership Forum ~ for Burnley, Pendle,

Part 3: List of consultees

Rossendale, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley
Disability Partnership Forum ~ For South Ribble, Chorley,
Preston, West Lancashire
50 + Assembly
Burnley Borough Council
Chorley Borough Council
Hyndburn Borough Council
Fylde Borough Council
Lancaster City Council
Pendle Borough Council
Preston City Council
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Rossendale Borough Council
South Ribble Borough Council
West Lancashire Borough Council
Wyre Borough Council
Blackpool Council
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Bolton Council
Cumbria County Council
Wigan Council
Bury Council
Rochdale Borough Council
Sefton Council
St Helen's Metropolitan Borough Council
Knowsley Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
North Yorkshire County Council
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Ramblers Association
British Horse Society
British Driving Society
Byway & Bridleways Trust
CTC

Auto Cycle Union
Forestry Commission
Sport England
Open Spaces Society
Natural England
DEFRA
Environment Agency
All Lancashire County Councillors
All Lancashire Parish and Town Councils

Not included in this list are a number of interested individuals and members of local interest groups who have expressed interest in offering their views on the RoWIP and have taken part in this consultation.