

# RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2

2019 to 2024



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Rotherham  
Metropolitan  
Borough Council 

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# Executive Summary

## Vision Statement

Welcome to the second Rotherham Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This plan aims to continue our work to make the countryside easy to access for the widest group of people, it seeks to continue our partnership with the Local Access Forum – an independent group of users, landowners and interested parties – and to encourage people to enjoy the local countryside. Throughout this document you'll see examples of the original ROWIP in action and what lessons and achievements were made.

The Vision Statement from the original Rotherham Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) from 2006 remains contemporary, and the ideas from that plan remain largely the same. This continued vision, and the ongoing development and work by the rights of way team, has ensured that the Local Access Forum (LAF), a voluntary advisory group, has continued with the original theme to bring the maximum amount of responsible users into the countryside.

Coupled with the above paragraph our ongoing vision is to develop, promote and protect a borough wide network of rights of way that meet the present and likely future needs of the public for the purposes of open air recreation, exercise and access to local services.

In particular this second Rotherham Rights of Way Improvement Plan continues with the aims to:

- Provide a rights of way network which is correctly recorded, easy to follow, free from obstruction and safe to use.

- Develop a network which meets the needs of local users and visitors to the borough whilst retaining the character of the countryside and reflecting the diverse nature of those users.
- Make the most of access opportunities to enable the network to be accessed by the widest possible audience, with particular regard to those with mobility problems whilst acknowledging that walking is by far the greatest use of our assets.
- Promote Public Health through a diverse, easy to use network.
- Increase opportunities for sustainable travel, for leisure and access to work, school and local services.
- Ensure that proposals and schemes are prioritised and implemented to meet the needs and aspirations of the population to deliver maximum benefit within available resources.
- Promote and encourage respect and understanding between path users and occupiers in order to minimise conflict.
- Continue to ensure that those who guide our actions in the LAF retain a budget to deliver those aspirations on the ground.
- However, in the current financial climate a further addition must be made to this plan to ensure our aims are realistic:
  - We will deliver the maximum we can with our available budget, using our funds imaginatively, seeking to enhance our work with volunteers and partners to make our funding go further and continue to embrace new ideas in the delivery of our service.

## Policy Context

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council wishes to provide an easy to use, comprehensive and diverse rights of way network. Our network should be available to the maximum amount of people that can reasonable use it, it should be clear where and which groups can use our network, and easy to find information about it.

A Rights of Way Improvement Plan sets out the guiding principles of this desire and brings them into clear and concise actions.

Rights of way almost always cross private land, however, and we have to be sensitive to the issues of land management when promoting access and be realistic about budgets and resources.



Volunteers from Rotherham Metro Ramblers Group at work

## Background

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires all highway authorities to produce a ‘Rights of Way Improvement Plan’ (ROWIP). The ROWIP is required to contain an assessment of the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public, the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and enjoyment of the area and the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems. The statutory guidance also states that the ROWIP itself should not focus on detailed site specific assessments, but draw broader, generic conclusions, which are then the focus of a “statement of action” for the management of local public rights of way and for securing an improved network of paths.

The original ROWIP was published in 2006.

## The Process

The process of developing the plan has been influenced by a number of factors, including the statutory ROWIP guidance, the highway authority’s statutory duties and powers, Natural England’s advice and wide ranging stakeholder consultations with Rotherham Local Access Forum, statutory agencies, path user groups and parish and town councils.

The delivery of significant improvements to non motorised transportation in Rotherham will be dependent on working in partnership. The contributions required from both internal and external partners are considered in detail.

## The Assessment

The Rotherham ROWIP identifies and evaluates the needs of the various users and summarises the current levels of public rights of way and recreational countryside access provision. Some of the key issues identified in the initial assessment were:

- The considerable scope and demand to develop facilities on the urban fringe and in rural areas,
- The network available to equestrians and cyclists is limited,
- The network of local rights of way are generally inaccessible to disabled users,
- The strong public demand to develop circular routes,
- In rural areas, where Rights of Way are linked by road, many stretches of roads are unsafe for users,
- In areas the Definitive Map and Statement does not accurately depict the nature and location of public use on the ground.

The core of the plan is a Statement of Action, which outlines the work the authority proposes to undertake to secure an improved network of local rights of way and access opportunities.

## Implementation

As stated in the Background section of this document, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Rotherham Borough Council has a statutory duty to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, but not to implement a plan. However, developing and publishing a ROWIP will continue to enable the Streetpride Service to seek external funding for access improvements. Such funding would be in addition to existing central public rights of way funding which is used to undertake statutory duties.

The Government have previously indicated that ROWIPs will be an important step in working towards a more integrated and sustainable transport network. As a result ROWIPs have been identified in statutory guidance as becoming a distinct, full integrated strand of the Local Transport Planning process.

Rotherham Borough Council with the Rotherham Local Access Forum (LAF) has used the 2006 ROWIP as a policy document to guide its Rights of Way activities and this plan.

# Right of Way Improvement Plan in Action



## Waverley

The huge Waverley Site – seen here from across the valley at Treeton – represented an enormous challenge and opportunity for the Borough Council and local residents. With many historic rights of way, there was potential for issues, however, at a very early stage the Local Access Forum and local residents worked in partnership with the developer to build an image and plan for public access, which was detailed in a master-plan for public access. Now many miles of trails – including a very popular riverside trail and a brand new equestrian access from Treeton are now available to all.

# 1. Introduction

More people continue to access the countryside around us. Their methods of access – whether it is walking, jogging, cycling, access in wheelchairs, riding, recreational vehicle use or any other of the countless reasons people visit the countryside around them, bring their own challenges, needs and pressures. At the same time, budgets have in effect reduced and managing this network for an increasingly diverse group of users becomes more challenging. The needs of the majority of users must also be considered in light of this increased demand. A careful balancing act between delivering statutory duties for the majority and ensuring everyone has fair access needs to continue to be met.

The first ROWIP started this process locally, and this plan is intended to build on those successes – and learn from the challenges we have already met. Therefore, this plan should be seen very much as a continuation of the first ROWIP; the network and needs and opportunities remain largely the same — more, better and wider access for all. This second ROWIP therefore proposes ways of adjusting these opportunities based on our experiences from the first ROWIP and to move forward based on those experiences. The experiences, successes and challenges of the first 10 years are a matter of public record — this second ROWIP does not seek to bulk out its contents by repeating these lessons but to provide a succinct assessment of what needs to be done to continue the excellent work of the Local Access Forum (LAF) who act as critical friends and guide on delivering the ROWIP locally.



Rotherham Borough Council respects and acknowledges the excellent work done by the LAF and particularly notes the level of independence the LAF brings to access issues. The LAF members are a diverse group of volunteers from all walks of life and interests, they do not come to the group representing a particular group or club —they do so to work in a spirit of cooperation to make things better for everyone. Membership is open to anyone, subject to the national guidance the LAF operates under.

Anyone wishing to join the LAF should make application via email: [rightsofwayissues@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:rightsofwayissues@rotherham.gov.uk) or 01709 336003.

## 2. The Aim of this Document

Rotherham's second ROWIP aims to build upon the successes of the first ROWIP published in 2006, and learn from the lessons of first 10 years. Although it is a duty – under section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 – to produce a ROWIP, we hope that the successes of the LAF in steering the strategic direction of the management and enhancement of the network shows that it is not just a duty but a shared desire to get the widest, most diverse use of our precious network.

- Although demands upon the authority as a whole have been very considerable in light of significant cutbacks, the network of paths remains one of the easiest to use in the country\* and this basic need – to provide an easy to use network remains at the heart of our plan.
- In taking forward our second plan we also recognise that:
  - There are not enough places for the less able to easily access, and more needs to be done to promote what access already exists
  - There are not enough bridleways and cycle-ways
  - Easy access to the network encourages regular exercise, which enhances the health and well-being of the local population
  - The rights of way network does not just serve a significant recreational need but also continues to form a viable sustainable transportation option and will do so for a long time in the future.
  - We also have to recognise the limitations of our budget and use our limited funds at locations where the maximum amount of users – of whatever particular group – gain benefits.

This ROWIP is, however, prepared in a changing environment in local government and in rights of way legislation – the Deregulation Bill is likely to have a significant impact upon resources and issues. ROWIP2 is therefore proposed to cover a 5 year period 2019 to 2024 after which time a further plan will be produced that more accurately measures these impacts.

A statement of action provided in this document details our approaches based upon these broad contexts. To help identify these actions better, a series of goals and measures is included (Sections 3 & 4).

Appended to this report is an example of results from the first ROWIP delivered via the annual plan of work, as well as other pertinent aspects of rights of way policy.



\*The Borough Council continues to assess the network using BVPI178 processes to determine how easy it is to use.

# 3. The Network and Area

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough is situated in South Yorkshire and covers an area of approximately 118sq miles. It shares boundaries with the boroughs of Doncaster, Barnsley and Sheffield and with the Counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The borough incorporates a varied pattern of landscapes from dense industrial and residential areas to extensive areas of open countryside.

The land use patterns have largely been shaped as a direct result of the topography and geology of the area. Large areas of the Don Valley and Rother Valley have been extensively industrialised. Other areas in the borough have been subject to industrialisation mainly as a result of coal mining in the villages and satellite towns surrounding Rotherham town centre.

- 3.1 Despite the borough having a rich industrial heritage, 70% of its area is made up of land of a rural nature. The most extensive areas of countryside are situated to the east and south of the town and in an area to the north of the town centred around Wentworth. These areas are predominantly comprised of arable farmland and pasture land with pockets of deciduous woodland.
- 3.2 The countryside in the borough absorbs much of the recreational pressure from the surrounding built up areas. The borough's 400km of definitive rights of way play a significant part in the public's enjoyment of the wider countryside. In addition to the public rights of way network, the public have access to a number of linear routes and countryside sites.

Towpaths, permissive paths and doorstep walks all increase opportunities for members of the public and visitors to access attractive areas of countryside.

- 3.3 The public rights of way network is also part of the local transport infrastructure and provides paths away from busy roads linking residential areas and local facilities. Local rights of way are both a significant part of the borough's heritage and a major recreational asset.
- 3.4 In 2018, the network stands at 330kms of Public Footpath, 80km of Public Bridleway and 1.5km of Byway. In addition to this network are approximately 100 unclassified rural roads that could enhance the network.
- 3.5 In addition to these routes, there are a significant number – in excess of 100 – that the public have asserted should be shown on the definitive map. There are also a large number of permissive paths, or paths where permission to use the routes is extended to other user groups such as permissive bridleways on public footpaths.
- 3.6 A significant proportion of one of the major promoted routes though the borough – the Trans Pennine Trail – uses permissive paths.

# 4. Legislative and Policy Framework

- 4.1 Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, highway authorities must prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan by November 2007, which will be updated every ten years. Section 60(1) of the Act states that:

**“Every local authority other than an inner London authority, shall within five years after commencement of this section, prepare and publish a plan, to be known as a rights of way improvement plan”**

- 4.2 A Rights of Way Improvement Plan must assess:
- The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public;
  - The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise, and other forms of outdoor recreation and the enjoyment of the authority's area;
  - The accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.

- 4.3 In order to do this, highway authorities need to consider the whole network of routes, not just definitive rights of way. They need to look at the whole spectrum of users and journey purposes, from disabled access needs to routes to open access land. There are many other routes and sites that are used by the general public that are not recorded as definitive public rights of way.

- 4.4 Rights of Way Improvement Plans should also include a statement of the action the Council proposes to take in the management of local rights of way and for securing an improved network, with particular regard to the matters dealt with in the assessment.

- 4.5 The Equality Act 2010 places a duty upon local authorities to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that people with disabilities are not placed at an unfair disadvantage when accessing paths.



# Right of Way Improvement Plan in Action



## Woodall –Kiveton Riding and Cycling Route

Through the Connect 2 Project, which raised money through a public telephone vote, a public path diversion and creation order has linked several miles of public bridleway to the only underpass on this stretch of the M1, enabling future development into Derbyshire. This partnership of public fund-raising, private landowner cooperation and officer input has opened this area of the countryside to a much wider group of users providing safe access to the countryside for local riders and cyclists. Gating an historic green lane has reduced anti-social behaviour and further enhanced the amenity.

# 5. The ROWIP and Other Local Plans

There are many plans and strategies in Rotherham that are relevant to the ROWIP. Some of the plans have a direct link to the ROWIP whereas others are more indirect. Identifying and reflecting the policies in other relevant documents will lend weight to funding bids from within the local authority and from bodies with complementary aims and objectives. It also provides opportunities for partnership working and the pooling of resources.

## 5.1 Core Strategy

Rotherham's Core Strategy (2013-2028) is the council's long-term strategy outlining goals and aims for the authority. The Core Strategy sets out the high level strategy and policies to guide how Rotherham will change over 15 years. The strategy impacts upon the rights of way network through both direct (promotion of health) and indirect (better community design) ways.

The core components of the strategy which affect access are listed below, for the sake of brevity relevant sections have been taken from the strategy, but to ensure the correct context the sections can be read in full here at:

[http://www.rotherham.doy.uk/downloads/download/57/local plan core strategy documentation](http://www.rotherham.doy.uk/downloads/download/57/local%20plan%20core%20strategy%20documentation)

### Core Strategy Objective 4 – Our Vision for the Future and Strategic Objectives

#### Public Health (4.3)

This is a new era for public health that will seize opportunities for better health and reduced inequalities in health (4.3.2). The Sheffield City Region Transport Strategy (2011-26) forms the core policy document for South Yorkshire's Third Local Transport Plan (LTP3). It identifies how to help people access jobs, leisure services and shops, as well as providing access to education and hospitals. It also addresses how transport can play a role in tackling climate change, road safety, promoting equality of opportunity and contribute to better, security and health. It considers all areas of transport – roads, air, walking and cycling, as well as access to the ports and the public transport network. It also looks at transport's role in tackling social exclusion and how we can make the best use of our existing infrastructure (4.3.10).

#### Dearne Valley Eco-Vision

The Dearne Valley spans three local authority areas – Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham. A new vision for the Dearne has been developed by the Dearne Valley Special Board, which operates under the auspices of the Sheffield City Region (4.3.15).

The proposals would see the Dearne Valley re-imagined by an eco-vision. As a pioneer in the Sheffield City Region, the Dearne would grasp the opportunities and apply the solutions needed to reduce the

community's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions such that, within a decade, it will be the lowest carbon community of its type in the UK (4.3.16).

For the communities of the Dearne, the vision will mean:

- an enhanced natural environment, creating a place where people want to live and work and bring up their families.
- the creation of an area attracting visitors from across the City Region (4.3.17).

## Core Strategy Objective 5 – Core Policies and Key Diagram

### Movement and accessibility (5.5)

Accessible places and managing demand for travel.

#### **Policy CS 14**

#### **Accessible Places and Managing Demand for Travel**

The Council will work with partners and stakeholders to focus transport investment on making places more accessible and on changing travel behaviour. Accessibility will be promoted through the proximity of people to employment, leisure, retail, health and public services by:

- b. Enabling walking and cycling to be used for shorter trips and for links to public transport interchanges.
- j. Implementing the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan and maximising the use of the Public Rights Of Way network and other

routes such as canal towpaths and disused railway lines for local transport connections on foot and by bicycle.

- m. Maintaining and improving School Travel Plans to manage demand for travel to and from schools and colleges.

Cycling and walking are becoming increasingly popular travel modes for short to medium length journeys and, as fuel prices, health, air quality and sustainability become increasingly important transport considerations, they will form an important part of future local transport networks. Green Infrastructure provision offers opportunities to enhance accessibility and contribute towards sustainable transport modes (5.5.7).

### **Managing the natural and historic environment - Green infrastructure (5.6)**

#### **Policy CS 19**

Rotherham's network of Green Infrastructure assets, including the Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors will be conserved, extended, enhanced, managed and maintained throughout the borough. Green Infrastructure will permeate from the core of the built environment out into the rural areas.

A net gain in Green Infrastructure will be realised through the protection and enhancement of existing assets and the creation of new multi-functional areas, assets and linkages to include promoting: recreation and tourism, public access (including walking and cycling), green education, biodiversity (incorporating the promotion of ecological networks and habitat connectivity), public health and well-being, water

management, the protection and enhancement of the local and national landscape character area and historic assets, the mitigation of climate change, green economic uses and sustainable land management.

Proposals will be supported which make an overall contribution to the Green Infrastructure network based upon the principles set out below:

- a. Securing provision, either on or off site, of an appropriate size, shape, scale and type and having regard to the nature of the development, its impact on the wider network and contribution to the overall quality of the area.
- d. Improving connectivity between new developments and the Strategic Green Infrastructure network and providing buffering to protect sensitive sites.
- h. Assisting with the integration of new development into the natural and historic environment.

Green Infrastructure assets can include:

- Managed and natural green spaces (including woodlands, gardens, allotments, recreational space (e.g. playing pitches), formal parks and amenity areas)
- Green corridors and assets (including footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths, disused railway lines, cycle lanes within the road network, greenways, waterways, street trees and other features that enhance links between habitats, places and tourist activities) (5.6.3)

It is recognised that such assets can perform multiple functions and opportunities which the above policy seeks to maximise through new development:

- Promoting social, health and mental well being
- Improving provision of and access to recreational and leisure opportunities
- Promoting sustainable transport modes
- Increasing accessibility to natural green spaces and into and out of the urban core to the outlying rural areas (5.6.4).

In partnership with Natural England (through the Yorkshire & Humber Green Infrastructure Mapping Project 2010) a strategic network of existing and potential Green Infrastructure has been identified at the regional scale [this is listed below]. This has provided a useful evidence base for the above policy and a strategic context for the development of further sub regional and local Green Infrastructure planning (5.6.7).



## Strategic and Local Green Infrastructure Corridors

### Dearne

Regionally important, providing linkages through Barnsley and the Dearne Valley. Opportunities include addressing accessible green space deficit, landscape and historic environment enhancement, biomass production and flood management opportunities.

### Don

Regionally important, is a broad and diverse corridor passing rural and urban areas with some parts remaining in heavy industrial use. Includes the Sheffield – Tinsley Canal, South Yorkshire navigation and the Trans-Pennine Trail. Within Rotherham investment could improve access to the river.

### Chesterfield Canal

Regionally important, this corridor extends outside South Yorkshire into Chesterfield. Enhancement opportunities can increase linkages between the river and surrounding water and wetland sites. Major development proposals at Waverley have the potential to create additional natural conservation and recreation features. Regionally significant for its connections through Rotherham from the River Trent to Chesterfield outside the Yorkshire and Humber region. Potential for a marina to be developed on the now reclaimed former Kiveton Colliery.

### Maltby

Of district importance, extends from the outskirts of north east Thurcroft to encompass the town of Maltby and surrounding areas. Opportunities exist

for future initiatives with the inclusion former Thurncroft Colliery site and wider Maltby urban area.

### Thrybergh

Of district importance, stretches from east of Rotherham town centre out across the urban fringe into countryside. Opportunities for enhancement exist in the urban and urban fringe locations of this corridor.

### Wentworth

Of district importance, extends north west from the edge of the Rotherham urban area to connect to the Elsecar corridor. Green Infrastructure projects would need to maintain and enhance the rural character of the area.

### Elsecar

Of district importance running from Harley in Rotherham, through Elsecar, Elsecar Canal and Knoll Beck to the River Dearne. Assets include Elsecar Heritage Centre, Elsecar Park and Elsecar Reservoir/ Elsecar canal. Opportunities include addressing accessible green space deficit and enhancing both the landscape and historic environment.

### Anston Brook and Sandbeck

Of local significance only, sweeping around the western edge of Dinnington, moving north-eastwards towards the stately home and Capability Brown designed landscapes of Sandbeck Park. Opportunities Anston Brook & Sandbeck for Green Infrastructure enhancement include creating links between existing urban areas and new developments into the wider countryside.

## **Delivery**

Support will be provided to any emerging Local Nature Partnership and Nature Improvement Area(s). The delivery of Rights of Way improvement plan will contribute to the Green Infrastructure network (5.6.15).

### **Policy CS 22**

**The Council will seek to protect and improve the quality and accessibility of green spaces available to the local community and will provide clear and focused guidance to developers on the contributions expected.**

Rotherham's green spaces will be protected, managed, enhanced and created by:

- g. Links between green spaces will be preserved, improved and extended by:
  - i. Retaining and enhancing green spaces that are easily accessible from strategically important routes as identified in the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan, and those that adjoin one or more neighbouring green spaces to form a linear feature
  - ii. Creating or extending green links where feasible as part of green space provision in new developments

## **Explanation**

Green space, sport and recreation are essential elements of sustainable communities that contribute towards health, quality of life, sense of place and overall well-being. They can add to an area's character, making it a place that is distinctive, stimulating and an exceptional place to live and work. Green space is defined as a wide range of public and private areas that are predominantly open in character and provide, or have the potential to provide direct or indirect environmental, social and/or economic benefits to communities. They include:

Informal open space parks - including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens (these may also consist of elements of formal provision); natural and semi-natural urban open spaces – including accessible natural green space, woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (such as commons and meadows), wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and derelict open land and rock areas; river and canal banks and towpaths, cycleways, and rights of way; small green or landscaped areas (public or private) which provide a setting for built development and which may offer opportunities for informal recreation close to home or work; allotments; churchyards, cemeteries and gardens of rest (associated with crematoria); accessible countryside in urban fringe and rural areas – including woodlands (5.6.61).

Improving green space provision is not just about individual sites. The value of green spaces can be greatly enhanced by linking them together in corridors giving safe, attractive access for pedestrians and, in some cases, cyclists. In this way, the recreational opportunities offered by one

site can be expanded to include those at other linked green spaces, as well as the enjoyment and health benefits of walking or cycling between them. To successfully achieve this enhancement measures could include creation of new access between adjacent green spaces, or between a green space and a public right of way, or new planting along such a route to improve its wildlife and landscape value (5.6.71).

### **Policy CS 28**

#### **Proposals for development should respect and enhance the distinctive features of Rotherham.**

They should develop a strong sense of place with a high quality of public realm and well-designed buildings within a clear framework of routes and spaces.

Development should protect or contribute to securing a healthy and safe environment, including minimising opportunities for crime, the risk of terrorism and addressing any specific risks to health or safety from the local environment. Encouragement will be given to incorporation of Secured by Design principles in new development and in the design of public spaces.

The design process shall take into account:

- a. the topography, landforms, Green Infrastructure assets, river and canal corridors, important habitats, waterways, woodlands, other natural features and open spaces that provide opportunities for an accessible choice of shade and shelter, recognise opportunities for flood storage, wildlife and people provided by multi-functional greenspaces.

## **5.2 Draft Local Plan 2013 – 2028**

The Council's local plan (previously called the local development framework) will provide a long-term development strategy, setting out policies and proposals for new housing, shopping and employment, and how local people travel in the area. The Local Plan will be used to make planning decisions and decide planning applications (3.7).

Rotherham's Local Plan will guide future development in the Borough until 2028, the plan is currently at draft stage but includes a number of references to access and rights of way. Again, relevant sections have been quoted, the full plan is available on line (3.8).

### **Policy SP 29**

#### **Sustainable Transport for Development**

Development proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that: As a priority, the proposals make adequate arrangements for sustainable transport infrastructure; promoting sustainable and inclusive access to the proposed development by public transport, walking and cycling, including the provision of secure cycle parking, and other non-car transport and promoting the use of green infrastructure networks where appropriate;

The Council expects that other measures to increase and encourage sustainable travel and movement habits through travel plan incentives, such as: ...and that opportunities to further enhance walking, cycling and appropriate measures to promote inclusive access, will be sought as appropriate.

## **Policy SP 32**

### **Canals**

The Council will be supportive of proposals for the sensitive restoration and maintenance, to navigable status, of the canals within its boundaries and will, wherever feasible, seek to protect the lines of those canals or an alternative, designated route from developments likely to prejudice any such future restoration and maintenance.

### **Explanation**

Canals can be a great source of recreational potential, particularly for leisure boating, fishing and walking. The Council recognises the contribution that the canals could make to the overall recreational provision in the Borough and the potential to attract tourists to the area. For the canals in Rotherham to realise this sort of potential a great deal of restoration work will be necessary. Wherever possible and feasible the Council will seek to protect the lines of canals and will be supportive of sensitive restoration proposals (8.117).

## **Policy SP 33**

### **Green Infrastructure and Landscape**

For major development of more than 10 dwellings, or more than 1,000 square metres of floorspace applicants are expected to undertake site survey, assessment and evaluation of their proposals prior to submission of any planning application, to set out how they have considered the elements listed below, and to clearly set out appropriate mitigation/ remediation and enhancement measures:

- the pattern, distribution and relationship of footpaths, cycleways and roads to settlements.

## **Policy SP 55**

### **Design Principles**

All forms of development are required to be of high quality, incorporate inclusive design principles and positively contribute to the local character and distinctiveness of an area and the way it functions.

In considering development proposals regard will be had to the following:

- e. the legibility and permeability of development to promote ease of movement, the creation of safe, secure and accessible environments and provide clear distinction between public and private spaces
  - lighting of the public realm and the built development will be particularly important.

# Right of Way Improvement Plan in Action



## Harthill Reservoir

Partnership can drive great local results. Harthill Parish Council funded the Tom Wakefield Way in memory of a local resident who loved the reservoir trails. The Access for All route was celebrated in a Doorstep Walk, and the bulk of funds was met by the parish council, however, contributions were made by both British Waterways and Rotherham Borough Council. On the back of this work, a Definitive Map Modification Order was made adding a public footpath along the southern most reservoir creating a much-used and loved amenity for all that enables all reservoirs to be accessed.

# Right of Way Improvement Plan in Action



## Trans Pennine Trail Main Route at Wath

The main Trans Pennine Trail from Southport to Hornsea passes through Rotherham. The multi-user route enjoys almost 200,000 users per year – walkers, cyclists, riders and the less able, and brings tourists and funds into the local economy. This sheer volume of use puts pressure on the surface of the trail, and during floods of 2007 the entire route was destroyed. The replacement – and restoring a 20 ton equestrian bridge that had been taken downstream by the force of water – costs almost £200,000, funds that had to be raised externally by officers.

# 6. Open Access Land

- 6.1 Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 extended the rights of the public to walk freely over:
- Mapped areas of open country; mountain, moor, heath (lowland areas with vegetation such as heather, gorse, bilberry, scrub and bracken) and down (semi-natural grassland in chalk or limestone areas);
  - Mapped areas of registered common land shown on official registers kept by the county council or unitary authority and;
  - Dedicated land, which is land that is not necessarily mapped, but dedicated by landowners or leaseholders.
- 6.2 The right of access is on foot (or by wheelchair) for open-air recreation including walking, running, climbing, picnicking and bird watching. Dogs are allowed but must be on a short fixed lead around livestock and between 1st March and 31st July, when birds are nesting. The CROW Act also sets out national restrictions on the right of access, these state that riding a horse or bicycle, driving a vehicle, camping or lighting fires, taking part in organised games or commercial activities, bathing, using boats, hunting, fishing, the use of metal detectors or the collection of flora, fauna, rocks or fallen wood are not included in the new rights of access. None of these restrictions affect existing rights or traditions or prevent the landowner from authorising such activities
- 6.3 Some areas are exempt from CROW access rights even when they occur within mapped areas. These areas are known as ‘excepted land’ and include buildings, gardens, livestock pens, ploughed land, quarries, golf courses, land covered by military byelaws, racecourses, railways, airports etc. CROW access rights do not affect public rights of way.
- 6.4 The government granted new powers to access authorities to use, lead and coordinate local arrangements for open access and to put in place the plans and resources necessary to carry out this role. The new powers include empowering the authority to make byelaws, appoint wardens, erect and maintain notices and improve means of access including the creation of new public rights of way.
- 6.5 The amount of access land in Rotherham is very limited, however, access opportunities exist in some council woodland sites and these are explored as part of this ROWIP

# Right of Way Improvement Plan in Action



## Vessey Close, Hardwick

Not everything goes to plan. A cul-de-sac bridleway at this location is of no practical use to local riders, however, the Local Access Forum and officers – aware of the need for better riding – tried to negotiate an extension of the bridleway so it could be used as a through route. Despite our best efforts a compromise does not seem to be possible at this time. Officers intend to revisit the proposal if any changes in circumstances occur at the site.

# 7. Ongoing Conclusions

- 7.1 The first ROWIP provided a comprehensive assessment of the network and the needs of user groups. Based on this initial assessment the first ROWIP sought to address concerns and opportunities and drew a number of conclusions, these are readdressed here.
- 7.2 The Borough Council has worked very closely with the Local Access Forum to seek to promote these opportunities on a local basis, and during this partnership it soon became clear that it was those very users – represented through the LAF – that best knew the localised improvements necessary to see that the opportunities were realised.
- 7.3 This targeting of local opportunities and potential soon manifested itself in a yearly plan, proposed by the LAF – under the umbrella of the ROWIP but delivered on a site by site basis, with the LAF acting as the conduit for ideas and aspirations. This methodology has had frustrations – particularly in the legal redefinition of certain routes – but it has also had some considerable successes.
- 7.4 Core to this partnership is the provision of a budget which is targeted by LAF members via the annual plans. This process ensures that the LAF are transparent and that the authority is seen to be delivering the wishes of local residents through the overarching ROWIP.
- 7.5 That this process has worked so well is due to the enthusiasm and commitment of the Rotherham Local Access Forum working in partnership with the Countryside and Rights of Way Officer. ROWIP 2 therefore reinforces that this partnership is crucial to the ongoing development of the rights of way network and should continue.
- 7.6 As part of this ongoing targeting of resources it is clear that a number of conclusions can be reached and these feed into Part 8 in the Statement of Actions. Measures to tackle these matters are detailed further below, but in brief, the needs of the network can be defined as:
- A need to ensure the network is easy to use
  - That the Definitive Map should be as comprehensive and accurate a document as reasonably possible
  - Unreasonable barriers should be removed to make the network available to as many users as possible, whilst acknowledging that:
  - Walkers are our most numerous customer and their needs must be catered for accordingly
  - There are simply not enough cycling and horse riding routes, and such routes need to connect better
  - One particularly challenging aspect of access is not its creation, but making sure people know where they can go
  - That where planning affects rights of way it is reasonable to expect such access to be enhanced

- As has been seen in projects such as Connect 2, partnerships with landowners can be particularly beneficial where there is a clear benefit for all parties
- There are a great number of people keen to help on their local rights of way network voluntarily
- Education of users and engendering an atmosphere of respect is something ROWIP2 should aspire to
- Major trails – and in particular the Trans Pennine Trail – should be widely promoted and well maintained
- While the amount of access land is small, the addition of securing areas of council owned woodland as open access could bring great benefits to local communities.



# Right of Way Improvement Plan in Action



## Kiveton Waters

An exceptionally positive input and lots of hard work by the parish council has led to a string of routes around this park area being upgraded or improved to encourage access for all. With a high number of local registered disabled people the Borough Council wants to promote as much access for all as can reasonably be achieved to enable people to enjoy their right of access to the beautiful countryside around us. The support and partnership of Wales Parish Council is an excellent example of what can be achieved through local commitment, positivity and partnership.

# 8. Statement of Action 2019-2024

## Aim 1 – A Rights of Way Network that is Easy to Use

Having a rights of way network in good repair encourages use and inspires further use; all crucial steps in building user's confidence, providing a positive experience and improving the use and quality of the network. RMBC has always prided itself upon its rights of way network, which consistently scores high in ease of use surveys. The authority has a statutory duty to maintain rights of way and keep them clear from obstruction. We will continue to strive to continue a good level of service despite recent pressures in budgets.

### Key Partners

Parish councils, feedback from users such as the Rambler's volunteer inspectors.

### Actions

1. The authority will continue to maintain rights of way to an acceptable standard.
2. All rights of way reports logged onto the Highways Asset System to enable officers to act upon trends in issues such as repeat ploughing offenders, vegetation issues in summer and so on.
3. In relation to ploughing and cropping, officers have the discretion to inform DEFRA directly of such transgression for repeat offenders, this may affect grant payments to farmers.
4. Continuing to carry out and publicise Ease of Use survey results and survey the whole network on a rolling basis.

5. The council shall identify a programme of works to identify where major surfacing works are required, this plan shall be prepared with a view to being able to immediately capitalise upon any funding, and will be designed to cover aspects such as transportation, community links, health and least restrictive options for all users.
6. All works shall be carried out under the approved Philosophy of Thinking (see Appendix B) to ensure fairness and reasonableness.

## Aim 2 – A Definitive Map

The council feels that a conclusive, completed definitive map is of vital importance to all, and will continue to work towards providing a full completed map within the constraints of legislation and to national targets.

### Key Partners

Parish councils, the LAF

### Actions

1. The Review of the Map shall continue on its parish by parish basis to enable the team to promote their time more effectively.
2. Where routes come under threat of permanent obstruction they will be reviewed out of parish order.
3. We recognise that there are gaps in the network where the Local Access Forum regards routes as of important strategic importance. We will review such routes out of order based upon recommendations made by the LAF through the annual plan, within the constraints of the actions

above. This review process should be subject to recommendations on an annual basis to allow time to investigate the priority routes and where these are not completed, they shall be carried into the next annual plan.

4. The rights of way team shall carry out a full assessment of all claims that may be on council owned or controlled land and work with the authority estate department to dedicate. Where routes are shown across council owned woodland sites we will press for the sites to become access land. Both reports will be presented to the LAF within a 12 month period from the launch of the revised ROWIP.

### Aim 3 – We will follow the principle of Least Restrictive Access and Promote it

Unreasonable barriers prevent access. Crucially, there is not enough awareness of routes that are available, as well as a need to assess the network as a whole. Whilst we recognise and strive to allow access for all wherever reasonable, we also acknowledge that it is the users themselves that are best equipped to identify where need and opportunities are greatest. With an increasingly ageing population, we are also aware that stiles can form a barrier to a larger number of people, stock-proof alternatives are widely used across the borough and country and where possible stiles should be phased out.

#### Key Partners

Parish councils, the Disabled Ramblers, the LAF.

#### Actions

1. We will continue to ensure that any unreasonable obstacles will be removed and such routes are made accessible..
2. We will investigate and continue to install kissing where there is a clear need and benefit for such work to the local community

### Aim 4 – The Benefit of a user-led Yearly Action Plan and LAF Involvement

Having an independent consultee on access and rights of way issues is an invaluable asset to both RMBC and the local community. The LAF act as a critical friend to the team and provide proposals and suggest opportunities to enhance the network. In officer's opinion the continuing involvement and work of the LAF is crucial to all aspects of this work.

Delivering tangible results is an important aspect of the Rotherham LAF, and gives them a stronger identity. It is for this reason that a yearly budget is allocated for LAF members to use.

The LAF supports localised access and yearly targets. This has proved to be a great success, with clear local aims and objectives enabling both LAF members and officers to focus upon genuinely democratically-led targets.

In our view, this targeted year on year approach is fundamental to the development of this ROWIP, and is a core part of it. The ROWIP can guide the principles of this work, but not its local delivery.

A sample plan is attached as Appendix C.

## **Key Partners**

The Rotherham Local Access Forum, adjacent LAFs and feedback to and from national LAFs

## **Actions**

1. Continue to encourage membership and promote of the LAF
2. Chair to work with members to continue to keep the profile of the LAF as high as possible.
3. Yearly Action plans should be widely publicised and their results promoted using the yearly reports.
4. The authority will continue to support the LAF.



## **Aim 5 – Walkers are our most numerous customer and user**

The vast majority of use of the network is on foot; whether as a simple dog-walk, training, health and well-being, tourism or travelling to and from work or amenities. Providing good local links that are well signed and easy to use form part of our wider thinking, as does the use of volunteers from walking groups to help us. Working proactively with these groups is a vital part of the ROWIP. It is also crucial to engender respect across user groups on more popular trails and we will continue to clearly sign and educate users.

## **Key Partners**

User groups

## **Actions**

1. Ensure that where diversions occur in enclosed routes or on headlands, that a minimum width of 2 metres is allowed.
2. Work with user groups to assist in identifying locations where stiles could be removed to enhance access, and to continue to work with volunteer groups to enhance walking.
3. Work proactively with volunteers as identified in point 10
4. Research, and formal identification of Lost Ways that will be lost under CROW Act 2000 2026 legislation.
5. Officers will work with the LAF to investigate options to educate users using on site and promotional aspects. National best practice will be implemented where reasonable.

## Aim 6 – There is a need for more horse riding and cycling routes

Although officers, the LAF, and the first ROWIP have worked hard to create more horse riding routes, and over 10 miles of new routes and access have been created, there are still too many gaps in the network. Creating better equestrian access is challenging but important as it not only involves amenity but also safety.

The LAF have set up a bridleways sub-group to identify gaps and priorities, and officers work with the group and through local opportunities to continue to increase the network of rideable routes. This connectivity within the network is also crucial in relation to public health – Aim 7 of this plan - the provision of easy to access routes for all users will assist in local residents being able to access local free exercise and enhance local health.

A further benefit of these routes is in the provision of sustainable transport, with viable links enabling people not only to walk, but cycle to work. The work undertaken by the local access forum and officers at Waverley shows how enhanced rights of way can play a viable part in the sustainable transportation network and reduce the reliance on vehicles for work.

### Partners

The LAF, local equestrian groups, the British Horse Society

### Actions

1. The LAF continue to work to prioritise gaps in the network.
2. Officers use the priority list set down by the LAF to guide their work in this aspect.
3. Suggestions from local riders and groups are welcome, and all such suggestions are passed to the LAF for feedback.
4. Where development opportunities (see below) offer significant planning gain, the default position on larger developments should be a requirement for multi-user routes unless there are extenuating circumstances.
5. Greater consideration should be given to wider planning gain issues, particularly in light of increased housing. Road safety experts from RMBC should be proactively involved in improving road safety where the number of vehicles is likely to increase. The LAF will investigate each such major site and officers will work with them to try to enhance safety.
6. Research, and formal identification of Lost Routes that will be lost under 2026 legislation.

## Aim 7 – Health, Wellbeing and Promotion

The NHS website identifies walking as a great way to a healthy lifestyle; health benefits from regular exercise are documented, but there still exist a large number of people who do not take any form of exercise.

The authority took this issue forward by providing all people in the borough with a local walk through the Doorstep Walk series, which presently has 20 titles. Opportunity exists to expand this series further if local people wish. The authority formed a partnership with the Ramblers in 2013 to use volunteers to check these routes, and to carry out minor works through their volunteer programme. The authority included the Ramblers logo on publications to promote this work.

The authority has implemented Miles without Stiles routes on the back of work carried out by the Lake District National Park Authority, and easy walking is being further encouraged though the work of the Access Group. Clearly more needs to be done.

### Partners

All local people

### Actions

1. The authority will continue to proactively promote walking, cycling and horse riding through a series of press releases – the language within each release will emphasise the local nature of access and the benefits involved.
2. The authority will continue to promote walking, disabled access, cycling and horse riding and provide easy access to its publications.

3. The authority shall work with its partners in the Ramblers to ensure existing doorstep walks are easy to use and follow.
4. The authority rights of way team will proactively work with the NHS and those promoting public health in the borough and play an active role in the promotion and enhancing the network to further the local health agenda.

## Aim 8 – Planning Gain Opportunities; Development can be good for Access

Officers have been working in partnership with the Ramblers for several years now to identify rights of way issues and potential gains in planning matters. Several successful examples are available where the council and partners have worked with development: Waverley, housing projects at Kiveton, Gullivers' Kingdom and developments at Wath continue to show that working with developers it is possible to enhance access and deliver construction projects. These provide enhanced access often with significantly reduced maintenance liability as paths are incorporated into development areas but often retain historic lines and continue to provide access into the wider network.

### Partners

Developers, the LAF

### Actions

1. That all large-scale projects continue to have the input of the LAF – as statutory consultee of the authority.

2. That the authority continue to press developers to work with claimants and local people to amicably resolve sites where development is affected by claimed rights of way and where reasonably possible.
4. Where amicable resolution is not possible, the authority shall not hesitate to carry out its statutory duties in relation to path claims.
5. That wider road safety issues be considered by LAF members for larger sites (point 6.5 above).

## Aim 9 – Partnerships with Landowners

There exists opportunities to enhance the rights of way network on a quid-pro-quo basis by working with larger landowners. The LAF has already investigated a number of options with Wentworth Estates.

The authority continues to support the LAF in its work to enhance the network through negotiation.

### Partners

Landowners, the LAF, parish councils

### Actions

The authority shall continue to work on the basis that if the LAF and landowner agree an amicable and acceptable network change, we will see through the legal processes and fund and provide the routes on the ground if funding is available.

## Aim 10 – The Use of Volunteers

Volunteers form a crucial arm of the work of the rights of way team; particularly in providing feedback on the state of the network and in volunteer work parties and trail rangers. Their work is to be applauded and is of great benefit to the local community and the council welcome and continue to encourage volunteer groups. In the 12 months previously to this ROWIP almost 1000 hours of volunteer work took place.

### Partners

The Ramblers, TPT rangers, various local volunteer groups and parish council.

### Actions

1. That a minimum of 12 volunteer days per year continue to be coordinated between volunteers and the authority.
2. That the council continues to support volunteers through the provision of tools and PPE.
3. That yearly reports on volunteer hours and values are included in the annual LAF report.
4. That the authority continue to seek to promote such work.

## Aim 11 – The Trans Pennine Trail

The council recognises that the TPT is a greatly appreciated asset for countryside access, providing a series of well-used routes through our countryside and encouraging cross-boundary work between users, LAFs and councils. It offers easy, clear access but has a significant potential maintenance factor; particularly as assets on the trail age. This is offset by the use of volunteer rangers who report on issues and offer practical support. This support could be further utilised to assist in wider issues; and in particular the signage of the trail, which offers its own unique challenges as many signs are unique to a specific location.

### Partners

The TPT Manager, TPT rangers

### Action

Officers work with the TPT rangers to investigate if signage could be improved and maintained as a partnership and that this partnership results in practical steps on the ground within 12 months of the date of this ROWIP commencing.

## Aim 12 – Access Land

The amount of access land within Rotherham is limited, but the LAF have already pressed for the dedication of council-owned woodlands to open access.

### Partners

The LAF, green spaces team Actions

1. An area of woodland is dedicated as open access during the first 12 months of the ROWIP.
2. That the situation at these sites be monitored and a report made back to the LAF and officers about the feasibility of increasing the number of sites.

## Aim 13 – Rivers and Open Water

To improve access to rivers and open water for all users.

### Partners

Canal & Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, local water sport clubs and landowners.

## Aim 14 – HS2

Continue to work with partners to ensure the maximum potential benefit for the Rights of Way Network.

### Partners

The local community, the TPT Manager, the LAF and HS2 and its partners.

# Right of Way Improvement Plan in Action



## Trans Pennine Trail at Aston

Upgrading a public footpath to bridleway to enable riders from local stables and cyclists at Swallownest to access Rother Valley Country Park seemed a very straightforward decision. Works proved very challenging; beneath a shallow layer of topsoil was thick wet clay which became clogged after the slightest rain. The works took almost a year to complete but now everyone local – including wheelchair users – can get into Rother Valley Park this way and enjoy the many miles of access it offers.

# Appendix A – Examples of Improvement works funded by the CROW Act Budget

By targeting resources at a local level, the LAF and CROW Act Officer continue to address dozens of sites on a yearly basis. These improvements bring immediate benefit for local people and offer a tangible link between the LAF, the ROWIP, and local residents.

## Hooton Roberts B6



## Kirby Lane, Thorpe Hesley



## Thurcroft F22 — Roche Abbey



## Ecclesfield F105b — Thorpe Hesley



## Maltby F13



## Maltby F30 — Roche Abbey



From April 2009 to March 2016 the CROW Act budget was used to fund approximately £125,000 worth of improvements. These improvements include;

- Replacing stiles with kissing gate.
- Boardwalks & drainage schemes over boggy areas of land.
- Surfacing schemes using netpave, recycled road materials and tarmacadam.
- Construction of steps and handrails on steep embankments.
- Revetment work to prevent path erosion.
- Clearance work to improve access on grass verges



# Appendix B – Rotherham’s Rights of Way Network - Our Philosophy

LAF members approved this overarching methodology, it is in essence a plain speaking outline of our collective approach as officers and LAF.

- Our whole rights of way network is a valuable asset and should be open and enjoyable to use.
- We want as many people as possible to use as much of our rights of way network as possible.
- We want this network to reflect contemporary needs whilst respecting its history.
- We want our network to be as easy to use as possible, whilst ensuring that a countryside experience should be just that.
- In all our actions we will work within existing legislation.

## **Our whole rights of way network is a valuable asset and should be open and enjoyable to use.**

When you go out onto our network you should not find any serious obstructions beyond natural seasonal growth.

- Every right of way has an historic reason to exist – the public should find paths easy to use – in other words be able to see where to go and be able to get there without being prevented from doing so by serious obstruction.

- We will identify and promote routes ideal for family use.

However, the public should always dress appropriately and be reasonably responsible for their own safety. Paths can get muddy at any time of the year, and what you wear on your feet is as important as what you wear if it rains.

- All our rights of way should be signed and easy to use.
- Seasonal vegetation is a natural problem with all rights of way; and whilst this should not prevent the public from being able to use routes (by preventing access altogether), they can expect to encounter such vegetation in summer and should be appropriately dressed for walking and riding.
- Public rights of way are a way of experiencing the countryside around us; the network should not isolate people from this experience.
- Those accessing the countryside should be responsible both for their own behaviour and safety.

## **We want our network to reflect contemporary needs whilst respecting its history.**

Rights of Way have been changing over the centuries and will continue to do so.

- Whilst we respect the history that has led to our rights of way network we acknowledge that issues affecting access today are very different from those in the 1950's when our original rights of way maps were first produced.
- We respect the views of local people and our user groups and will always try to work with them in a spirit of cooperation. We will always take the time to explain what we are doing and why.
- We want all our users to be able to enjoy our network as safely as possible and will seek to ensure that our network continues to reflect – as it always has done – contemporary needs.
- The Rights of Way network has taken centuries to develop, and

improvements generally require extensive consultation – a lot of people have to be consulted before work starts, rights of way alterations and improvements can take time to implement. From idea to inception generally takes around 18 months, this is partly due to the amount of works we have, but also crucially the time legislatively that is allowed.

**We want our network to be as easy to use as possible, whilst ensuring that a countryside experience should be just that.**

You should not expect to find rights of way surfaced or to encounter vegetation free routes.

- The majority of our paths are historically low maintenance features that blend into the rural landscape – a walk or ride in the countryside should reflect this. Surfaced routes should be the exception, rather than the norm, to ensure that this experience is distinct.
- The rights of way network is a reflection of the countryside around it, we do not wish to see an increase in the urbanisation of the network, and will use tarmacadam surfaces only in urban areas or where absolutely necessary from a maintenance or accessibility viewpoint.
- We surface paths commensurate with their level of use and are not responsible for private access.

**We want as many people as possible to use as much of our rights of way network as possible.**

If you want to know where to go on the rights of way network you should easily be able to find out

- Communicating the value of our rights of way network is vital — we will continue to work proactively to tell as many people as possible about our paths.
- Everyone has a right to be able to access a local walk. We will continue to expand on our award winning Doorstep Routes until every town and village in the Borough has one.
- We will continue to try to rationalise the bridleway network to ensure that long, safe rides are possible, and we will try to promote new links onto strategic routes so that they can be enjoyed by the largest possible number of people.

**In all our actions we will work within existing legislation.**

Rights of way law can sometimes be frustrating and slow.

- Legislation has developed over many hundreds of years and is complex, despite our best efforts it is not always possible to achieve the result as quickly as we would like to.
- Consultation is an integral part of rights off way legislation, and a single objection to any legal proposal to alter paths can lead to a public inquiry – which take a long time to organise and resolve.

# Right of Way Improvement Plan in Action



## Thurcroft Trail

The creation of the Thurcroft Trail was something local residents had been looking to achieve for many years. Working with officers and Sustrans, the trail was opened in 2006 and has been greatly used ever since. In recent years officers have extended the trail, incorporating it into the Bluebell Way, providing 7 miles of easy access from Thurcroft through Anston and onto Woodsetts. Officers greatly appreciated the help of the Rotherham Access Group in building the Bluebell Way, volunteers making suggestions such as large font signs for those with visual impairments, helping everyone enjoy the trail.

# Appendix C – Example Annual Improvement Priority List

## 3 Main LAF Objectives for 2015/16

- a) Develop regular contact with key organisations to build on last years achievements in raising the LAF profile.
- b) Identify potential network improvements for cyclists and horse riders.
- c) Review and update the ROWIP and evaluate the effectiveness of the annual planning approach.

## IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY LIST 2015/16

No.	Title	Description	Comments & Resources	Action	Progress	Costs
1.	Hardwick Lane creation agreement – Aston BW 18	Conclude action to take forward Path Order process.	Long-standing issue but LAF now agreed on creation option. ROW team will finalise negotiations and then progress Order if needed.	1. Conclude discussions (May) 2. Draft Agreement or Path Order (June) 3. Pursue action as appropriate	Process put on hold at present, see minutes of LAF 23.05.16	
2.	Riverside & canal paths improvements	Further explore scope for canal and riverside linkages improvement especially in the Blackburn Meadows, Kilnhurst and Meadowhall areas.	Inconclusive discussions with Canal & Rivers Trust representatives in 2013 have impaired progress. A new approach with different C&RT managers is now needed. Also important to build on contact with Rotherham Rivers Project (RRP).	1. Review improvement opportunities in Meadowhall, Kilnhurst & Blackburn areas, building on work by JH and KW in 2013. 2. Meet with C&RT and RRP to discuss overlaps. 3. Draft improvement plan and agree implementation method with RMBC.		
3.	Path surfacing & furniture	Improvements to ensure Rows are in good condition and accessible to all.	Continue programme from 2013 with funding from the £15k CROW budget. (Note: this work separate from routine maintenance.)	1. LAF members to help identify work items throughout year. 2. Progress to be monitored at meetings.	Scheme done at Brinsworth F1. Identified at Orgreave, Maltby.	

No.	Title	Description	Comments & Resources	Action	Progress	Costs
4.	Definitive Map Review	Improve the Definitive Map Review process by advising on priority cases and through monitoring of progress on ongoing cases.	Continue progress from 2013 referring to the weighting matrix when appropriate to advise the ROW team on priority order.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confirm agreed cases to be actioned in 2014.(May/June).</li> <li>2. Review progress on cases at each meeting.</li> <li>3. Identify any new cases that should be considered.</li> </ol>	Review Officer now in post and making excellent progress.	
5.	Liaison with other LAFs	Gather and share good practice with other LAFs through contact & communication.	To be achieved through contact with adjacent LAFs in South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire; by attendance at Yorkshire & Humberside Regional LAF; and, through the use of Huddle and liaison with Natural England.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arrange special meeting of LAF Chairs in South Yorks to discuss common issues and action.</li> <li>2. Attend some meetings of adjacent LAFs.</li> <li>3. Consider appointing a Huddle "champion" to better develop information flows.</li> </ol>	Meeting between SY LAF chairs took place on 19.01.15. No further update.	
6.	Consultation on major developments (e.g. HS2)	Advise on any relevant major development affecting the borough including HS2, road and motorway improvement schemes, and large scale housing and business development.	As was the case in 2013, major changes in national policy or significant local planning developments should be assessed and, where appropriate, a LAF response should be given.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Respond to consultation papers as they arise.</li> <li>2. Review position before end of year to determine if any proactive responses are needed.</li> </ol>		
7.	Promotion	Assess what further activity is needed to promote & publicise the work of the LAF and deliver as necessary.	Building on 2013 achievements, agree further work to broaden our influence and increase our membership.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess public awareness levels of existing ROW and access provision, e.g. TPT, Doorstep Walks, general information.</li> <li>2. Consider need for awareness publication (e.g. as in Bedford LAF).</li> <li>3. Deliver improvements as assessed.</li> </ol>		

No.	Title	Description	Comments & Resources	Action	Progress	Costs
8.	Links with Key Organisations	Establish and develop links with key organisations related to our LAF and introduce communication and reporting arrangements to strengthen liaison and joint working.	Good progress was made in 2013 but a step-up is now needed to realise the benefits of close liaison and working with key related organisations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confirm list of key organisations to target.</li> <li>2. Complete the assignment of LAF members ("ambassadors") to lead in making and maintaining contact.</li> <li>3. Agree report back arrangements so that all LAF is kept informed of developments.</li> <li>4. Evaluate effectiveness of the links between LAF and the organisations.</li> </ol>		
9.	Access provision for cyclists and horse riders	Review current access provision and produce improvement plan.	Recognising the imbalance in user provision, the LAF needs to review what action is needed to help widen access for equestrians and cyclists.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relevant representatives to form sub groups to assess current provision and identify scope for improvements.</li> <li>2. Produce proposal papers showing specific target areas – e.g. Cross Lane, Woodsetts.</li> <li>3. Papers to be discussed at full LAF meetings for approval.</li> <li>4. Start to implement</li> </ol>		
10.	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) revision	Undertake review of ROWIP and determine scope and content of new version.	Our current ROWIP was published in 2006 and is now in need of updating. The CROW Act 2000 requires the ROWIP to be reviewed not more than 10 years after publication. In the meantime, LAF members wish to see the continuation of our yearly planning approach.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Form sub group to manage the ROWIP review process.</li> <li>2. Determine timescales in line with related planning systems, e.g. the Local Transport Plan.</li> <li>3. Obtain LAF approval for revision approach and resources.</li> </ol>	Draft of ROWIP to be presented to LAF at August meeting	

No.	Title	Description	Comments & Resources	Action	Progress	Costs
11.	LAF Annual Plan	Produce and agree annual plan for 2014 and monitor actions to meet plan objectives. Evaluate effectiveness of plans.	The annual plan approach has been warmly endorsed by LAF members. Monitoring of the 2013 plan has shown that many of its objectives were achieved. To ensure this approach remains effective, a review is needed.	1. Produce draft 2014 plan. 2. Obtain LAF agreement to the plan. 3. Monitor progress in meeting plan objectives. 4. LAF to discuss effectiveness of current approach and recommend any improvements needed. (Could be done in sub group or in special agenda item.)		
12.	Training and development	Identify training and development needs of individual LAF members and agree programme to meet them.	LAF members range from inaugural members to members who have joined within the last few months. No formal training has been given although a session on the use of Huddle was provided at a LAF meeting in 2012.	1. Produce and issue a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) paper to identify members' needs. 2. Assess TNA responses. 3. Produce training and development plan based on TNA. 4. Start to deliver programme.	TNA sent to all LAF members, no responses	
13.	Access for people with mobility restrictions	Assess the provision for people with mobility and other restrictive issues and agree scope for access improvement.	Recognising the special issues and needs of people with mobility restrictions and the relative lack of access provision, LAF to review options for improvement.	1. Seek regular attendance of LAF member representing this user group. 2. Undertake review of current access provision. 3. Produce paper for LAF discussion on improvement proposals 4. Begin implementation of improvements. 5. Invite speakers on mobility access to LAF meetings (e.g. Field Fare Trust)	Representatives from Rotherham Access Group now attending LAF meetings and liaising as necessary	

