

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT - 9 JANUARY 2014

PRE-CONSULTATION DRAFT COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Report by Deputy Director Commercial Services

Introduction

1. A Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) sets out the assessment of the adequacy of the rights of way network and provides the strategy framework for rights of way management, maintenance and development. RoWIP1 was adopted on 21 February 2006 and ran until the end of 2011/12.
2. On 22 March 2012 the then Cabinet Member for Transport authorised the extension of the current RoWIP validity date to March 2014 and the development of its replacement.
3. This report accompanies the draft Countryside Access Management Plan and authority is sought to issue a draft document for public consultation with a view to submitting a finalised draft to Cabinet for consideration later in 2014.

Background

4. It is a statutory duty for the highway authority to prepare, publish & review a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). The RoWIP provides the strategy framework for public rights of way recording, management and development. RoWIP1 was adopted on 21 February 2006 and ran until the end of 2011/12. On 22 March 2012 the Cabinet Member for Transport authorised the extension of the current RoWIP validity date to March 2014 and the development of its replacement.
5. Since then the Countryside Access Team has worked with staff and stakeholders, especially the Oxfordshire Local Access Forum to review the first RoWIP and develop the second draft RoWIP document.
6. It is proposed to revise the name of this second document to the Countryside Access Management Plan. This change is proposed to firstly, recognise that the Rights of Way network forms an integral part of the County's leisure, travel and health strategies and therefore needs to integrate with the Council's Highway Asset Management Plan and Local Transport Plan (and in particular accessibility strategies) in order to fully realise the potential of the Rights of Way network to ensure that they are both accessible and useable. Secondly, the County has a rights of way network that it can be proud of and which is held in high public regard, nevertheless in the current economic climate it may be that the Council is unable to continue to commit to improving this network

as it has done in the past. A consultation to assess the review of the first RoWIP secured broad agreement with the direction of travel.

7. The draft CAMP has a similar vision and aims to be the first RoWIP developed through compliance with legislation and statutory guidance as well as through extensive public consultation and liaison with key user and interest groups.
8. A new countryside access management framework has been developed that shows the integration of the various elements of OCC and stakeholder work and how this contributes to economic and social growth and sustainability. An outline of the expected direction of travel over the life of the plan is included. As well as existing work it also sets out how local communities, volunteers and groups may work on the public rights of way and countryside access network, and the outcomes sought from the development planning process.
9. The CAMP is a high level plan and it is intended to include a small number of targets for action at this level to provide a meaningful indicator of performance and assist in targeting resources. A more detailed annual CAMP delivery/business plan will set out aspirations for the coming year covering all service areas and this will feed into team and individual performance plans and reports to stakeholders

Proposal

10. It is proposed, in liaison with the County Council's communication team, to submit this document for broad public consultation to ensure that the needs and requirements of users, landowners, voluntary groups and other stakeholders can be fully understood and considered in developing the Councils finalised proposals.

Financial and Staff Implications

11. Depending on the final form of consultation there may be a small cost to this proposal which will be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation

12. The Cabinet Member for Environment is **RECOMMENDED** to:
 - (a) approve the proposed change to the title of the document from Rights of Way Improvement Plan to Countryside Access Management Plan;
 - (b) agree to the submission of the draft Plan for public consultation with a view to submitting a finalised document to Cabinet in early summer 2014;
 - (c) agree to extend the lifespan of the current Rights of Way Improvement Plan until such time that approval for the finalised Countryside Access Management Plan document by Cabinet has been confirmed.

CMDE9

MARK KEMP

Deputy Director For Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Contact officer: Steve Smith 01965 810435