

Division(s):

Cabinet - 25 NOVEMBER 2014

Rights of Way Management Plan 2015-2025

Report by Director for Environment and Economy

Introduction

1. It is a statutory duty for the highway authority to prepare, publish and review a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). The RoWIP provides the strategy framework for public rights of way recording, management and development.
2. Oxfordshire's first RoWIP 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.
3. The first consultation on the review of the RoWIP ran from November 2012 to January 2013. This secured broad agreement of the principles outlined for continuation into a new plan. In light of these consultation responses the draft second Rights of Way Improvement Plan was developed. In recognition of the need to maintain existing rights of way as well as seek improvements to the network as a whole it was decided to amend title of the document to a Rights of Way Management Plan (RoWMP)
4. On 9 January 2014 the Cabinet Member for Environment authorised the publication of the draft Rights of Way Management Plan 2014-2024 for public consultation and to extend the lifespan of the current plan until such time that approval for the finalised Rights of Way Management Plan document has been confirmed.
5. The public consultation ran from January to May 2014. In total 68 representations were made, including the Local Access Forum for Oxfordshire. All representations were considered and analysed. The final draft version of the Rights of Way Management Plan takes account of these representations. Overall, the plan's strategic aims are the same as for the original Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The revised final draft plan is now proposed to run from January 2015 so the current plan's validity date will need to be extended.
6. This report accompanies the draft final version of the Rights of Way Management Plan and recommends that the plan is adopted

Results of public consultation

Consultation on the review of the first RoWIP and outline replacement

7. Under s61 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, before preparing or reviewing a rights of way improvement plan, Oxfordshire County Council is required to consult with certain authorities, organisations and local communities. All of these were sent the first consultation which took the form of a document containing a simple review of the first RoWIP and a survey form. The review was based around five questions that covered the plan's achievements, shortcomings, evidence, and community involvement. There were also suggestions made for how partner organisations' roles might evolve and the outline structure and timings of the second RoWIP
8. The consultation responses indicated broad agreement with the review of the first Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the direction of travel for the production of the second Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The results of the consultation are summarised in Document A, a copy of which is available by copying the following address into your web browser: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip>

Consultation on the draft Rights of Way Management Plan

9. Under s61 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, in preparing or amending a rights of way improvement plan, Oxfordshire County Council is required to publish a draft of the amended plan, publish notice of how a copy of the draft can be inspected or obtained and how representations on it can be made to them, and consider any representations made in accordance with the notice.
10. The County Council issued a consultation on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan which ran from January until May 2014. Sixty eight representations were made through the dedicated website consultation facility and through email and letter using the structured survey form or freehand responses. Many of these representations provided detailed comments. All of these were considered, grouped and assessed.
1. The consultation report, Document B, (a copy of which is available by copying the following address into your web browser: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip>) shows the scoring for those 37 respondents that used the structured survey form to make their response. In addition a number of specific representations were made. These completed forms and the other representations show that there is broad agreement with the content and scope of the draft Rights of Way Management Plan – with many useful suggestions for amendments. Each of the representations and the associated response is included in Annex 3. This includes a list of the key changes made to the document.

2. Where appropriate, the final draft version of the Rights of Way Management Plan takes account of these representations. Overall, the plan's strategic aims are the same as for the original Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
3. The RoWMP is a high level plan covering a ten year period and so includes more generalised actions. A more detailed bi-annual Rights of Way and Countryside Access delivery plan, based on known resources, will set out aspirations and actions for the coming period covering all operational areas and this will feed into team and individual performance plans and reports to stakeholders.

Financial and Staff Implications

4. The adoption of the Rights of Way Management Plan has no cost and implementing the actions within the plan can be done within current staff and resource capacity over the life of the plan.

Equalities Implications

5. See separate Social and Community Impact Assessment, Annex A. There are no implications for equalities arising from the adoption of the Rights of Way Management Plan

RECOMMENDATION

6. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:
 - (a) note the results of the consultation on the draft Rights of Way Management Plan;
 - (b) approve the proposed changes to the consultation document;
 - (c) adopt the Rights of Way Management Plan for the period January 2015 - December 2025; and
 - (d) extend the lifespan of the current Rights of Way Improvement Plan to December 2014.

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Background papers:

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