

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

24 November 2005

Rights of Way Improvement Plan
RoWIP Implementation Grants

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform all local access forum members about the creation of funds to support the delivery of RoWIPs.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Local access forums are required to provide input into the production of Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs). There are three local access forums in North Yorkshire, one for North Yorkshire outside the National Park Authority areas and one each for both the North York Moors National Park and Yorkshire Dales National Park.
- 1.2 One Rights of Way Improvement Plan is being prepared for the whole of the County which will gradually be merged into the Local Transport Plan for North Yorkshire.
- 1.3 Up until receipt of the attached letter from the Countryside Agency, the only funding which was to be made available by the Agency related to the preparation of the actual RoWIP itself. This funding was made available to all local highway authorities.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The statutory guidance for a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (Defra 2002) looks at the preparation of a statement of action (section 2.4 'Preparing the statement of action'). This details how highways authorities will secure an improved local rights of way network.
- 3.2 The items to be taken forward in this statement of action are derived from those issues that have been identified whilst assessing the local rights of way network. These relate to improving the definition of the network so that it better links together, promoting the network, integrating the assessment of local rights of way with the availability and issues regarding other highways, notably roads and the availability of other public access and green space provision. The statement of action will therefore be built up from the key issues which are contained within the 2 page reports which are being prepared for each service centre and landscape character area in North Yorkshire and which will be circulated shortly to all local access forum members for discussion at a workshop meeting on the 9th January 2005.
- 3.3 The statement of action will set out 'objectives and targets for managing

and improving local rights of way in respect of each user, For each conclusion, the local highway authorities should establish:

- Their proposed action;
- The estimated cost;
- The key organisations that they intend to involve in the proposed action; and
- The timescale within which they propose to complete the action'. (Defra 2002)

- 3.4 The statutory guidance highlights the need to have regard to both small scale improvements (section 2.4.4) and securing improvements to the network (section 2.4.6 – 2.4.10) which involve partnership arrangements with other public and private organisations, applying for external funding from a variety of sources, linking to broader policy objectives including health, reduced dependence in car journeys, tourism, safe routes to school and accessibility for people with different abilities or socially excluded groups. Authorities are also encouraged to enhance volunteer assistance, negotiate with landowners to achieve a network which serves the needs of both users and landowners and utilise other public bodies with funding and powers to improve the rights of way network.
- 3.5 Guidance from the Department for Transport which contained the guidance for the preparation of Local Transport Plans (DoT 2005) supports the gradual merger of the RoWIP into the LTP. Full merger is anticipated to happen in 2011 when the third round LTP is prepared. The gradual merger of the RoWIP with the Local Transport Plan for North Yorkshire has offered a means of funding and improving the local rights of way network where a transportation need has been identified. This means that schemes that enable safe routes to school and access to goods and services for example will be added to the current list of schemes which are gathered for implementation in the period of an LTP. The list of schemes which are assimilated by the LTP is large, given that it contains many pedestrian schemes, road schemes and cycling schemes for example and therefore RoWIP improvements are in competition with LTP schemes and are also prioritised with such schemes. There are many schemes which do not fall within the remit of an LTP.
- 3.6 The Countryside Agency are now prepared to grant fund some RoWIP projects however this will only support projects to a maximum of 50% of the total value of the scheme. There are also various criteria for the implementation of grants which are contained in the attached letter, not least of which is the production of a draft RoWIP.
- 3.7 The Countryside Agency highlights schemes which it deems as suitable for support. The list is not exclusive and the RoWIP Officer will seek to find out which other schemes may also be grant funded.
- 3.8 Current discussions with the Countryside Agency indicate that initial funding is available for next financial year only at present however

discussions are underway between the Agency and Defra in order to look at providing funding for a possible further year or two year period.

- 3.9 The total funding which is likely to be made available for grant funding RoWIP schemes has not yet been confirmed. Further clarification will be sought by the RoWIP Officer in order to confirm likely funding amounts, the availability of funding for the North Yorkshire RoWIP given that overall schemes will have been identified by January 2006, whether the funding will be available for up to a three year period and other details of the grant scheme.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- a) This report and the attachments are received for information.

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