

Devon on the Move

Rights of Way Improvement Plan Version 3

Update to the Devon Countryside Access Forum, 18 September 2023

Introduction

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) is produced by Devon County Council in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and related guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and Natural England.

The key purpose is to encourage and guide improvements to the public rights of way network to provide a better experience for walkers, cyclists, horse riders, horse and carriage drivers, people with mobility problems, and people using motorised vehicles, for example, motorbikes.

The initial Rights of Way Improvement Plan (Devon on the move) was published in 2005. This was reviewed, with a summary document published in 2012 – available to view at [RoWIP](#)

Review

A review of the 2012 version of the RoWIP was initiated in 2022, initially co-ordinated alongside updating the Public Rights of Way Annex to the Highway Asset Management Plan, which has subsequently been approved and published at [Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan](#).

Consultation has included workshop sessions with local partners participating in the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme, with discussion focused on what has changed within the last 10 years which did or could impact on use and management of the Public Rights of Way network. Suggestions for priority actions were also sought for consideration as part of the updated RoWIP.

Internal and external stakeholders have also been contacted and invited to contribute – including representatives for transport planning, ecology, landscape, heritage, agriculture, rural economy; plus, protected landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks), and interest groups.

Drafting of the plan has been overseen by a Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF) working group, reporting back through the full Forum, with the review (including oversight) also being considered by the Devon County Council Public Rights of Way Committee (DCC PRow Committee).

Next Steps

Progress has been made, with emerging drafts of the revised RoWIP considered by the DCAF working group. However, further work is still

required to finalise the draft plan to a stage where endorsement and approval are appropriate.

The current proposal is to update the draft plan based on all the feedback to date; and for this to be distributed for further consultation, including more widely via the Devon County Council website at [Have your say | Help shape services across Devon](#).

Initial consultees, and other relevant stakeholders will also be contacted providing opportunity for additional comment.

The revised RoWIP will then be subject to final review through the DCAF working group, prior to consideration at the next Forum meeting.

Initial consultees, and other relevant stakeholders will also be contacted providing opportunity for additional comment. Suggestions from Forum members are welcome regarding specific groups to be included as part of this.

Revised Timetable:

- September 2023 – Revised draft completed.
- October 2023 – Additional consultation on the revised draft.
- November 2023 – Draft updated in liaison with the DCAF working group. Update report to the DCC PRow Committee.
- January 2024 – Final version considered by the DCAF.
- March 2024 – Final version considered by DCC PRow Committee.
- April 2024 – Revised RoWIP published.

Richard Walton
Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager

Devon Countryside Access Forum
Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review Working Group
Notes of meeting held on 29 June 2023

Issue/policy number	Comments	Actions	Who
Responses	<p>Some organisations did not respond. Range of inputs and good response internally and from National Parks.</p> <p>Next stage of consultation to wider public. Proposed that organisations contacted again to provide another opportunity.</p> <p>As part of the consultation it would be useful to draw out where there are new policies or substantial updates. Many of the new policies are around carbon reduction, climate change and biodiversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include in DCC weekly newsletter. • Put on 'Have Your Say' (DCC consultation page). • Send DCAF working group list of organisations consulted. DCAF to check for omissions. • Highlight major changes when sending out the wider consultation. 	<p>RW</p> <p>RW</p> <p>RW/DCAF Working Group</p> <p>RW</p>
Aims	<p>To inform Council and influence spatial planning across authorities and work with landowners. The RoWIP should inform the next iteration of the Local Transport Plan.</p> <p>Estimated that 2/3^{rds} of the draft document are existing policies with some amended wording and 1/3rd new policies to reflect changes in last ten years.</p>		
Summary document	Suggested that this is not included as an appendix but that elements are included in the main document as part of the introduction and background. The themes in the table are sometimes not directly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand introduction in RoWIP draft v.3 prior to consultation. 	RW

	reflected under the same headings in the main document, for example design and materials in development/housing cited in the summary document is included under F1 (Environment and Climate).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider whether to include document as a hyperlink or leave as internal background to development of the RoWIP. 	RW
Disability needs	This should be more specific and needs expanding as part of the introduction and background. Accessibility to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems is part of the statutory requirement of the RoWIP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add additional text to the introduction, perhaps including disability terminology from the Impact Assessment. 	RW
British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles BS:5709:2018 B5 (Management and Maintenance: Quality Standards) and C3 (Accessibility, Social Inclusion, Health, and Wellbeing)	<p>The BS for Gaps, Gates and Stiles is mentioned. It was noted this is advisory guidance and not a compulsory standard. There are issues with copyright and the document is not freely available.</p> <p>The reference to the British Standard should be included as part of the introduction/background.</p> <p>It was noted that for historic paths the footpath width is that 'habitually available.' There is no requirement to widen to the new BS. The Impact Assessment, probably published first, could include the historic aspects as part of this and as a limitation.</p> <p>More use should be made of the DCAF Disability Access Position Statement.</p> <p>Including the diagram of width requirements for different users from the Outdoor Accessibility document was suggested but this risked excluding those with other protected characteristics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference the British Standard as part of the introduction/background. Include a policy that states that widths from the British Standard will be used where new paths are created/improved. Impact Assessment to include reference to historic limitations. Provide a link to the DCAF Disability Position Statement under section C - Accessibility, Social Inclusion, Health, and Wellbeing. Consider including mobility scooters more specifically in section C. 	RW

C1 and C2	Although included in the RoWIP legislation, use of the term 'mobility problems' might give undue negativity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek advice from Jo Hooper on term 'mobility problems' used in C1 and C2. 	RW and Jo Hooper
Young people	No reference to young people and difficult to consult with that group. Their role and voice should be acknowledged in the document. For example, safe cycle routes for young people. Young people under fourteen cannot use a mobility scooter. Goes back to multi-use provision. Ties in with equality section of Impact Assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include statement about young people in section C, Accessibility, Social Inclusion, Health, and Wellbeing 	RW
Countryside Code	Reference should be made to the new Countryside Code.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference the Countryside Code, either in the introduction/background or in E, Information, Education and Technology. 	RW
Rangers	The Training Day on the Pebblebed Heaths demonstrated the importance of rangers. Ranger posts provide employment and opportunities for such roles to be undertaken by trained volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider inclusion of statement in E, Information, Education and Technology. 	RW
Coastal access A18	There is no mention of rollback. The England Coast Path name needs to be changed to King Charles 111 England Coast Path.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change references to coast path to new name A18. Include roll back provisions in A18. 	RW
Courtesy E7 and A8	References to safe and/or courteous use of roads should be expanded to include trails and paths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend policies A8 which refers to diversion and road safety, and E7 on education. 	RW
Guidance on mobility scooters E9	Including links within the main document where these is topic specific guidance would be useful, for example the outdoor accessibility document from the Sensory Trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include link to the Outdoor Accessibility guidance in E9. Gordon to email references to mobility scooters and suggested sections to include these. 	RW GG
Links	Consider including links where directly relevant within the text. The supporting documents could be included in table form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed topic specific links where appropriate. 	RW

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider presentation of list of relevant documents at the end of the RoWIP. 	RW
Special educational needs E10	The term had now changed to 'additional educational needs.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change wording in E10. 	RW
Information E13	Whilst appreciating the provision of parish maps on request and where appropriate, the policy should be updated to include QR codes and improving the digital offer. Important that adopt available and advancing technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh policy E13. 	RW
Electric scooters and ebikes.	A policy on electric scooters and cycles should be included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include wording in appropriate section. 	RW
Targets and dates	<p>These would be useful but may be difficult to set down. Nonetheless it would be useful to see what achievements have been made. There will be future targets when regulations arising from the Deregulation Act are put in place. Consideration should be given to identifying a target which captures the essence of a section. Some priorities from the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans could be included.</p> <p>The mid term review (5 years) will be an opportunity to assess progress and present to DCAF and PRow Committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider inclusion of targets where possible and logical. DCAF working group to provide any ideas. 	<p>RW</p> <p>DCAF working group</p>
Women	Making access to greenspace and public rights of way safer for women is now being considered by organisations. This should be included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include policy on women. 	RW
Greenspace Standards (Strategic context)	Accessible Greenspace Standards aim to promote access to good quality green and blue space within 15 minutes' walk from home'. This is not included in the policy statements but there could be a target to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include policy/target on Accessible Greenspace Standards, possibly in section C: Accessibility, Social 	RW

	identify deficiencies and poor connections from PRow.	Inclusion, Health, and Wellbeing.	
Mapping E5	This section could be expanded to include some links to interactive mapping as technology is developing rapidly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand E5 to include more information on mapping, or insert an additional policy. 	RW
Maintenance Section B: Management and Maintenance Quality Standards	Concern was raised about long-term maintenance of some assets, particularly wooden sections of major structures for example the Exe Estuary and Gem Bridge. The PRow team now had an asset renewal budget.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a policy about long-term maintenance and link to climate change in section B. 	RW
Next steps	Next steps and proposed timeline discussed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of good practice. Revise RoWIP following working group. Consultation (Have Your Say, DCC newsletter, consultation list) mid-July to mid-August. Revise RoWIP and prepare Impact Assessment and bring to DCAF – 18 September. Take to PRow Committee – November. Internal sign-off Publication early 2024 (commencement date January 2024) Mid term review – 5 years 	<p>RW/DCAF working group</p> <p>RW</p> <p>RW</p> <p>RW</p> <p>RW</p> <p>RW/DCC</p> <p>RW</p> <p>RW</p>