

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER OR OFFICER

This form can be used for any decision but **MUST** be used to record:

- any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Councillor
- a key decision taken by a Council Officer

In these circumstances the form must be completed and passed to the Head of Members' Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Head of Members' Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

Adoption of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2012-17, including the recommended amendments arising from the public consultation process

2. Date of decision

29 ~~30~~ June 2012

3. Reasons for decision

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires the Council to produce a ROWIP and carry out a public consultation on its content. Having carried out the public consultation on the draft ROWIP the Council needs to agree what amendments should be made to the final adopted plan in response to the consultation

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The Council has a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (section 60) to publish and review, at least every ten years, a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan'. The existing plan, which is countywide and was produced by the former County Council, included a 5 year action plan which expired in 2011.

5. How decision is to be funded

The delivery of the plan will be covered from within existing budgets and where successful external funding bids.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (if yes give details and date of dispensation)

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision DEM

Signed [Signature] Date 29/6/12
 Name of Decision Taker ... Portfolio Holder for Community & Regulatory Services

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Head of Members' Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 3rd July 2012

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 11m July 2012

For publication

Bedford Borough Council – Report to Sarah-Jayne Holland, Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder

Report by: Assistant Director, Environment and Communities

Date: 30 June 2012

Subject: Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012-2017 – Public Consultation Response

1. Executive Summary

Background

- 1.1 In accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, local authorities have a statutory duty to publish and review, at least every ten years, a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' (ROWIP). The aim of the ROWIP is to create greater access to the countryside for social and economic benefits, and to protect the environment.
- 1.2 In January 2012, the Council published its Consultation Draft ROWIP 2012-17 and embarked on a 12 week (23 January - 13 April 2012) public consultation process.
- 1.3 This report outlines the public consultation process followed, the various representations received and the Council's proposed response, including any recommended amendments to the final plan.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Portfolio Holder considers and, if satisfied, approves the adoption of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2012-17, including the recommended amendments arising from the public consultation process**

3. Reasons For Recommendations

- 3.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 requires the Council to produce a RoWIP and carry out a public consultation on its content. The consultation process is now complete and the Council needs to agree the necessary amendments to the final plan prior to its adoption.

4. Key Implications.

Legal Issues

- 4.1 The Council has a statutory duty under CROW Act 2000 (section 60) to publish and, at least every ten years, review a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' (ROWIP). The existing plan, which is countywide,

was produced by the former County Council in 2006 and has a five year action plan which expired in 2011.

- 4.2 There are no legal issues arising from the recommended amendments to the ROWIP.

Policy Issues

- 4.3 The proposed ROWIP has been produced in accordance with the local policy framework, including Sustainable Community Strategy, Corporate Plan, Local Development Framework and Local Transport Plan.
- 4.4 There are no policy issues arising from the recommended amendments to the ROWIP.

Resource Implications

- 4.5 The cost of delivering the ROWIP's action plan will be met through existing Council budgets supplemented by opportunities arising from bids to external funding sources such as lottery programmes, town and parish councils and business sponsorship. An assessment of the resourcing needs of each individual action is included in the ROWIP action plan table.
- 4.6 There are no additional resource implications arising from the proposed amendments to the ROWIP.

Risk Implications

- 4.7 There are no risk implications arising from the proposed amendments to the ROWIP.

Environmental Implications

- 4.8 The rights of way network will be managed in such a way as to both enable people to access and enjoy their environment as well as protect and enhance nature conservation, heritage and landscape value.
- 4.9 Enabling communities to use the rights of way network close to where they live for leisure and travel, will also help to contribute to reducing vehicle movements and associated carbon emissions.

Equalities Impact

- 4.10 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) to Level 1 has been undertaken to ensure that the ROWIP satisfies the legal obligations required of the Council (Appendix 3). This Assessment considered both positive and negative impacts of the service delivery on the following 'protected characteristics' held with the Equality Act 2010.
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment

- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

4.11 The EIA concluded that: the ROWIP is based on a principle of 'access for all' and so has a positive impact on equality, in terms of all the 'protected groups' and in particular those (age, disability, ethnicity and gender) which are currently adversely affected by the existing condition, management and promotion of the rights of way network. The EIA goes on to acknowledge that the Council's ability to follow the 'access for all' principle in all cases is constrained to varying degrees by issues of rights of way legislation, land ownership/ management practice and landscape suitability (ie. topography).

5. Details

5.1 The following section outlines the public consultation process undertaken on the Consultation Draft ROWIP 2012-17 (appendix 1), summarises the responses received and, for each one, the Council's response and any associated recommended amendments. For further details of the recommended amendments to the ROWIP arising from the public consultation process please refer to section 5 of the full report in appendix 2.

5.3 Public Consultation

5.3.1 Following Portfolio Holder approval of the Consultation Draft ROWIP (appendix 1) in December 2012, the Council carried out a 12 week period of public consultation to seek public and other stakeholder views. The methods of consultation included direct mailing to key stakeholders, such as Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum, Bedford Race Equalities Centre, Bedford Disabled Access Forum, user groups and town and parish councils; promotional displays in Council libraries and other public outlets and use of social media to share information and gather responses. Translation and inclusive media were made available upon request. Feedback and comments were captured through the receipt of both online and hard copy responses.

5.3.2 The consultation representations were analysed, in terms of their validity, and the results were used to inform the Council's response and any associated recommended amendments. A copy of the consultation report, including the individual, attributable comments, and the Council's response and recommended amendments to the draft ROWIP is included in Appendix 2.

5.3.3 Subject to the approval of this report, the draft ROWIP will be amended and published as an adopted plan. The adopted plan, together with the supporting full consultation report (appendix 2), will be made publicly available as a '.pdf' document on the Council website and a limited number of printed copies will also be produced, with hard copies available at Borough Hall Reception and all public libraries.

6. Summary Of Consultations And Outcome

6.1 The following parties have been consulted on the Consultation Draft ROWIP 2012-17 (appendix 1):

- Internal: Borough Members, Director of Environment and Sustainable Communities, Assistant Director Environment and Communities, Head of Communities, Local Transport Planning Unit, Planning Policy team
- External: Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum, parish/town/urban community councils, Bedford Disabled Access Forum, Bedford Race Equality Centre, National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Landowners Association (CLA), The Ramblers, British Horse Society, Cyclists Touring Club (CTC), Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF), Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC), Highways Agency, Neighbouring Local Authorities, Community Safety Partnership, Sport Bedford, Women's Institute, Statutory Environmental Bodies (English Heritage, Environment Agency, Natural England), Tourist Board

7. Ward Councillor Views

7.1 The plan will be delivered across Bedford Borough.

Report Contact Officer: Phill Fox, tel: 01234 276070

File Reference: AR 8/3/85

Minutes N/A

Background Papers: Bedfordshire Outdoor Access Improvement Plan 2006-2011

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Bedford Borough Rights of Way Improvement Plan, 2012 - 2017 (Public Consultation Draft)

Appendix 2 – Bedford Borough Rights of Way Improvement Plan, 2012 - 2017 (Public Consultation feedback report)

Appendix 3 - Bedford Borough Rights of Way Improvement Plan, 2012 - 2017 (Level 1 EIA and action plan)

A copy of the Appendices are available on the Bedford Borough Council website;
<http://apps.bedford.gov.uk/execdecisions/default.asp>

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012-17: Public Consultation Draft (January 2012)

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT

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1. Executive summary

The Borough Council has a statutory duty under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act) to prepare and publish a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' (RoWIP) for its administrative area. In undertaking this duty, the Council is required to assess the extent to which the local rights of way network meets present and future user's needs and to produce a statement of proposed network improvement actions. Local authorities are required to review their Plan no more than 10 years after its first publication. In Bedford Borough, the Council will review its RoWIP every 5 years at the same time as the Council reviews its Local Transport Plan (LTP).

The first RoWIP for the Borough of Bedford was produced by Bedfordshire County Council in 2006. This was a countywide plan encompassing both rights of way and wider outdoor access issues and needs.

The second RoWIP has been produced by Bedford Borough Council as a Unitary Authority. The plan covers the period 2012 – 17 and focuses on the Borough of Bedford's rights of way network. The Borough's wider outdoor access issues and needs, including parks and green spaces, are now addressed through the Borough's Green Infrastructure Plan and Green Space Strategy. At the end of this 5 year plan period, we will review whether there is any merit in consolidating the various plans into a single, integrated rights of way and green space strategy document.

The Council carried out a 12 week public consultation on the draft ROWIP 2012 - 2017 from 23rd January - 13th April 2012. This report summarises the consultation work undertaken and the responses received for each of the consultation questions posed, including a list of the supplementary comments received from each individual respondent. It concludes with a table summarising the various consultation comments received and the Council's response, including any recommended amendments to the draft plan.

2. Introduction

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 is a new five year programme to improve the public rights of way in Bedford Borough. The Council has to produce a plan which considers improvements to the rights of way network and to meet the present and future needs of users (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). Following DEFRA good practice the Council carried out a 12 week public consultation from 23rd January - 13th April 2012.

Bedford Borough Council is responsible for footpaths, bridleways and byways across the Borough and asked local residents to give their thoughts on how to improve the routes as well as how to encourage more people to take advantage of them.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) sets out the Borough Council's proposed aims, objectives and practical actions for increasing public use and enjoyment of the Borough's public rights of way network over the next five years, 2012-2017

2.1 Purpose of the report

The Council carried out a 12 week public consultation on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 - 2017 from 23rd January - 13th April 2012.

We are seeking public views and comment on the draft RoWIP 2012 - 2017, in order that it meets the current and future needs of the people living and working in the Borough of Bedford and those many visitors which enjoy our countryside.

Once the plan is published it will replace the Bedfordshire Outdoor Access Improvement Plan 2006 - 2011 (the OAIP) produced by Bedfordshire County Council and will complement the Bedford Borough Local Transport Plan (LTP3).

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The final plan will guide the work of Bedford Borough Council from 2012 - 2017 in managing, improving and marketing the public rights of way network in the Borough.

2.3 Background

The main audience for the 12 week public consultation were people living and working in the Borough of Bedford. The geographical scope was the Borough of Bedford and immediately adjoining countryside and rights of way networks.

Equality and environmental impacts have been considered.
Corporate risk assessment of impacts of the plan may be required.

The 70 page Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 draft document included a detailed action plan and maps.

The primary consultations products were:-

- **Draft plan summary leaflet**
- **Printed full draft plan**
- **Electronic pdf versions of above**
- **Website content**
- **Social network content**

The document was printed in Plain English. Translation and inclusive media were available upon request.

All responses were recorded, filed and a consultation summary produced. The final plan will be amended to incorporate those changes recommended for approval by the Portfolio Holder.

Consultation feedback will be shared with consultees and a consultation summary made available. The website will be used to share this information. Social media will direct people to those places where they can find shared information.

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Once the consultation process is complete the amended document will be approved by the Portfolio Holder and made available electronically as a pdf document on the website and a limited number of printed copies will also be produced. This version will be graphically enhanced and given a final design makeover.

The final RoWIP will be launched in summer 2012. This could be linked to events and activities yet to be planned and a communications plan will be designed to facilitate this.

3. Public consultation

3.1 We recognise the importance of improving customer satisfaction and listening to our communities to ensure they can continue to influence our service delivery and help us to meet the present and future needs of rights of way users. Any evidence resulting from this consultation plays an important part in informing our future rights of way improvements and prioritising investment.

3.2 The consultation exercise for RoWIP took the form of:

23rd January – 13th April 2012 – RoWIP Public Consultation
5th March 2012 – BoBLAF RoWIP consultation event with Key Stakeholders
20th March Council Members were invited to a presentation event

3.3 The consultation was advertised and/or accessible through:
Bedford Borough Council online consultation website; Printed copies of the consultation draft together with questionnaires placed at all libraries and customer access points across the Borough, Consultation exercise publicised through the Council website, Local free newspaper, press releases, and displayed on Face Book and Twitter social networks; Presentations to the Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum (BoBLAF).

3.4 In addition, individual letters or e-mails were sent to representatives of stakeholder groups including:-

Parish/Town/Urban Community Councils
Bedford Borough Council Members
Bedford Borough Council Officers
Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum
Bedford Disabled Access Forum
Bedford Race Equality Centre

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National Farmers Union (NFU)
Country Landowners Association (CLA)
The Ramblers
British Horse Society
Cyclists Touring Club (CTC)
Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF)
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC)
Highways Agency
Neighbouring Local Authorities
Community and Voluntary sector organisations
Safety Partnership
Sport Bedford
Womens Institute
Statutory Environmental Bodies (English Heritage, Environment Agency, Natural England)
Tourist Board

3.5 The RoWIP consultation draft contained an "Action Plan" (Delivery Plan) and identified key deliverables under 3 headline aims. A short questionnaire accompanied the draft RoWIP which asked the following questions:-

- 1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the plan's vision?*
- 2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the plan's aims and objectives?*
- 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we have identified the right access issues to be addressed by the plan?*
- 4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we have identified the right needs of the various rights of way users to be addressed by the plan?*
- 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the emerging outdoor activities identified by the plan?*

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6. *To what extent do you agree or disagree that we have identified the right actions in the action plan?*

7. *Please list below any other actions that you feel should be considered for inclusion in the plan*

8. *Please use the space below to provide any other comments you may have on the proposed plan. Please give the section/ page number wherever possible.*

9. *Equality questions*

10. *We are really keen to involve local residents in helping us to deliver the plan, including reporting path problems and helping with practical work to improve our rights of way network. To find out more about these volunteering opportunities, please provide us with your contact details below and we will send you an information pack and volunteer registration form*

11. *Are you responding as an individual, or on behalf of an organisation?*

12. *If you are responding on behalf of an organisation please tell us which organisation, and the name of the individual completing the form. If you are responding as an individual please tell us a little about yourself.*

3.6 The BoBLAF consultation meeting on 5th March 2012 aimed at key stakeholders and Parish Councils considered the key issues contained in the consultation draft, and stakeholders were asked to rank them in order of their priority. Stakeholders were invited to add their own key issues and similarly rank these as part of the exercise. The results together with feedback from the Public Consultation were used to help inform the Plan and produce a list of recommendations for the final Plan.

Participants who contributed to the event were:

BoBLAF Members including members of The Ramblers, British Horse Society, Trail Riders Fellowship, CTC, NFU, CLA, Sight Concern Bedford, Forest of Marston Vale, Long Distance Walkers, Wildlife Trust etc, Parish Councils, BBC officers, Portfolio Holder

4. Results of the consultation

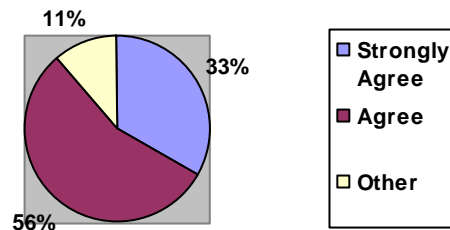
4.1 Together with the responses from the consultation exercise, the RoWIP has drawn on access related feedback from other recent consultations and surveys carried out by the Council. The BoBLAF consultation meeting also resulted in valuable feedback from the participants.

Feedback from consultation draft

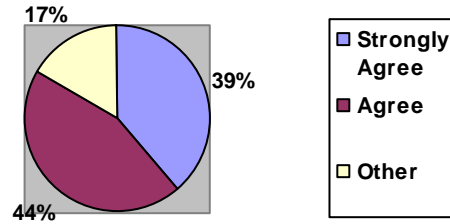
4.2 The following results were received from responses to the questions contained within the RoWIP consultation draft questionnaire, being accessible electronically through the Council's website, and also deposited as a hard copy in all libraries and Council customer access points during the consultation period.

Headline comments from questionnaire

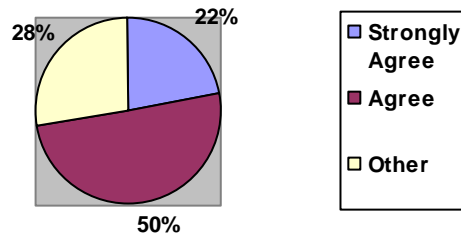
1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the plan's vision



2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the plan's aims and objectives?

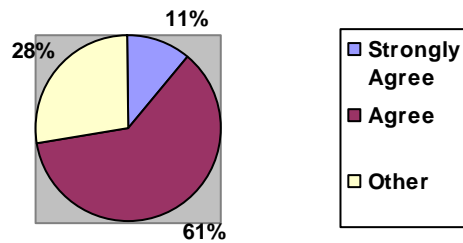


3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we have identified the right access issues to be addressed by the plan?

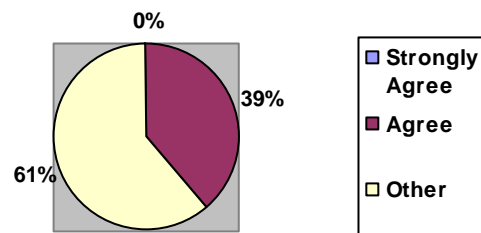


4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we have identified the right needs of the various rights of way users to be addressed by the plan

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

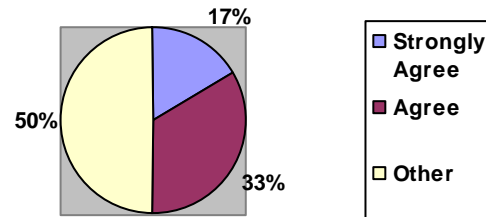


5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the emerging outdoor activities identified by the plan?



6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we have identified the right actions in the action plan?

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback



1. Introduction

Responses

"Renhold Parish Council has reviewed this document and would like to express that they feel it is a good representational document on this topic in the current climate."

"Wilstead Parish Council supports the vision and aims expressed in this Plan but feels that it may be very difficult to accomplish all of the actions identified to meet these aims because of the current economic climate and resource level. This section of the Borough, which according to our local footpath group sometimes struggles to support its current duties, is potentially a very soft target for budget cuts and will find it difficult to take on any additional workload, especially any expansion of the volunteer base, without additional resources"

"It doesn't say that the Borough does not have a statutory duty to implement the plan. Including this may limit expectations which may otherwise assume that the vast majority of the stated targets will be achieved" – Wilstead P3

"The Group really values the support given by the Rights of Way team over the 12 years since its launch. Without the encouragement & help with advice, training and equipment the group would not have been able to undertake much of the work it does and may well have 'withered on the vine'. However it must be said that the RoW's ability to respond quickly has decreased over recent years as their resources have declined. Whilst an established group such as ours is more resilient to such reductions in support, the concern is that any new volunteer group would struggle with the level of support currently available."

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

Whilst welcoming any plan to improve the Rights of Way in the Borough the group feel that in the light of reducing resources that any targets the plan sets should be SMART i.e. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant & with a Timescale. It is probably better to have fewer targets and achieve the majority than have lots of targets and achieve few.

The group are concerned that safety isn't specifically addressed especially where RoW cross A roads. The group would like to see a safety survey undertaken and any potential improvements identified. E.g. the two crossings of the A6 in Wilstead. (There are only four crossings of the A6 in the Borough). Any survey of Rights of Way should specifically address safety." – Wilstead P3

"Overall the RoWIP is good – much more concise than previous versions. The main comments are

The Delivery items are good but too many for the current economic climate - some need to be deleted and the rest prioritised,

There should be more points related to land owners and farmers – particularly positive actions" - BoBLAF

"This is a five year plan, resources are limited yet most of the actions begin in 2012 – this is not realistic. It is suggested that the timescale column is divided into 5 to indicate which years the item will be done. Furthermore, it is suggested that the items are prioritised – which are more important to give most benefit to users and which can be implemented more easily.

- 1. There are many site specific items (1.3b, 1.3c and sections dealing with NCN51 and the Green Wheel). It is suggested that these should be included in the annual work plans and omitted from the full RoWIP.*
- 2. There is overlap in sections 1.1 and 1.2 – can 1.1b and 1.1c be included in section 1.2.*
- 3. Section 1.4 (volunteering) is an example where prioritisation would be beneficial. Setting up a volunteering network in conjunction with Parish Councils and User Groups should be the key item. From this could be the development of maintenance groups and perhaps the CAMS work (when the technology is available). 1.1e may need rewording if this surveying initiative is carried out.*
- 4. Section 2 points are admirable and most have 'A 'attached. Can the current workforce cope with all these points at once? It is suggested that these need prioritised and spread over the years." - BoBLAF*

"In general we have been impressed by the improvements made of the past few years and are looking forward to the full implementation of your proposals included in your Consultation Document. The specific comments and observations collected from our members are as follows:

- 1. **Number all signposts** – to help with clarifying location when problems are notified to Rights of Way Officers.*
- 2. **Adapt footpath exits** - from fields so that they do not share an entrance gate with cattle for example were excess mud can be churned up.*
- 3. **Add reporting capability to web-site** - to make it easier for walkers to report problems (ideally provide feedback on web-site as to when and how problems were resolved).*
- 4. **On-line mapping system difficult to find** - requires navigation through many pages ,*

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

scrolling down through multiple screen, with lists of instructions all of which disappear when the first instruction is followed. And if you persist it loads and runs very slowly! Would suggest the process and procedures are modified with a non expert in mind.

5. Scale of Problem against proposed action - *In action plan for 1.1 c and d indicate scale of problem against which proposed action can be measured. e.g. the action 'replace 10 bridle sleeper bridges' needs be seen against the number of sleeper bridges needing repair to enable the benefit to be put into the appropriate context.* – **Rothsay Ramblers**

"On the whole a very good document and foundation to take the network forward – let's hope you get the resources to achieve this." – **Forest of Marston Vale**

"Where are resources coming from to deliver all this as not sure existing staffing levels is able???" – **Forest of Marston Vale**

"The overall document has been well thought through from a user perspective." – **The Ramblers**

"No formal comment from a Cambridgeshire perspective. Looks good!" – **Cambridgeshire County Council**

"I applaud your time and effort to prepare the document" - **Robert Bellamy**

- *establish a cost per linear meter of footpath --in each of a variety of materials. This assessment to cover the install, maintenance and repairs where needed. This would very quickly establish what projects are attainable within the existing budget, and also highlight the benefits of using alternative materials. By alternative materials I mean not only waste reuse/green materials but also cost effective solutions eg Foam concrete ---used extensively in holland --minimal depth excavated , and then pour from a single point foamed concrete--these specialist plants can easily pump 5km --its porous --and then a thin wearing surface eg black top --*
- *identify the easy targets--gain a few achievements*
- *establish which projects are dependant upon volunteer efforts and flag them up*
- *establish where the cost for repairs is going and why --what can be done to reduce this outgoing. --change design? change materials ??*
- *encourage parish councils to feel responsible for their own footpaths using the precept to fund work. grants for PCs ??*
- *target groups/ individuals with a passion for ROW and allow them scope to inspire others to participate --eg PC champions we have one at our PC*
- *encourage local buy in ---use local PC surgeries to boost the message*
- *dispel belief that footpath improvement is simply a precursor to more bridleways*
- *make it easier to close of footpaths that aren't used , or are of little or no value BUT create others that then complement or add to or either existing or virgin footpaths . I have no doubt that many landowners would recognise the benefits of a trade off.*
- *define ownership of the activities and plans* – **Robert Bellamy**

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

“that the Society supports the general aims and objectives of the draft Plan but would like to see some more emphasis given to horse-riding in certain respects” – British Horse Society

2. Our Strategy

Responses

“Under aim 2 the group would like to see an objective ‘to develop a system for the community to report problems and identify desired improvements’. This would entail having some sort of reference system so the location of any problems / improvements can be easily identified” – Wilstead P3

“The Vision is OK. The Aims and Objectives are probably too many but as they are interlinked they are acceptable. There is no need to prioritise the Aims and Objectives as they are just setting the scene for the more important section – the Delivery”. - BoBLAF

When looking at the document in more detail, there is support that the ‘vision and aims’ encompass many aspects, with a good scope and clearly defined targets, however, there is some concern about how achievable these will be unless all stakeholders buy in. The inclusion of ‘smart’ targets it is felt would be beneficial to ensure that the document aims are measurable, for example, instead of stating ‘100km of the network to be stile free’, state ‘x’ stiles per year.

The aims within the document in the opinion of the Forum in priority order are:

- b) Improve community use – it is felt that no point improving or extending the network further if it is not used*
 - a) Improvement – in order to maximise output on this the use of volunteers need to developed further*
- And, then c) Extend and maintain network*

The feedback in regards of the ‘aims’ is that these are accurate and good aims, suggestions for amendments within them are:

- Inclusion of an annual review – there does need to be a clear structure of how information is reported back to both the public and Forum, as well as an annual review to ensure there is accountability*
- Altering language use so it reads, for example, ‘promote’ rather than ‘market’*
- Landowners not mentioned – the Forum strongly feel that these stakeholders must be included within the document more than presently they are*

One clear consideration and inclusion that the Forum feel does need to be made throughout the document are references to land owners and farmers, with examples of how working with them will be done, as it is felt that they are a very important stakeholder within the process of developing access.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

A recurring preference for focus in relation to the 'objectives' within the document are the use of volunteers, as well as improved customer contacts and promoting network. Aims 1 and 3 are by far the more favoured, in particular items such as: signage, volunteers, marketing and supporting community led initiatives.

It is felt that the actions are representative of the aims and objectives of the document as a whole, though there is some concern that within the current financial climate that there may be too many actions, and how achievable and realistic is it that they will all be met. The delivery of the action plan is the most important part of the document and it is felt that these should be reduced and a realistic and manageable programme of each years action be included, resulting in a clear annual work programme for each year.

The Forum also feels that the following specific suggestions for amendment be made:

In Section 7.4 –monitoring performance and achievements, the involvement of the BoBLAF with this point, through being informed and updated for example with the annual work program, it is suggested that updates are given to the BoBLAF on the annual plan and achievements throughout the year, this action could be put in the overall Action Plan.

*In Section 7.5 RoWIP Action Plan 2012-2017 – prioritisation of these items and spreading them over the 5 year period of the plan. - **BoBLAF***

"Targets talk about achieving percentages of doing certain specific tasks i.e. replacing sleeper bridges removing stiles etc. Is it known how many of these items need replacing, where are they and how many are related to one another on the same trail or route ?

*Are these items shown and identified on a map? If so can certain routes be identified in order of high profile as they are promoted in various articles in guide books nationally or in local publications?" – **Graham Watson***

*"Some great ideas but zero direction or implementation ---zero plans for the dissemination of information" –**Robert Bellamy***

*"The Society strongly supports the vision and aims of the Plan and the only amendment that I would like to see on p7 of the Plan is to see a commitment that any extensions to the RoW network will be bridleways –on the basis of best value for money and maximisation of community usage." – **British Horse Society***

*"I think that you can safely add 'horseriding' to the Health benefit in the list on page 5. Furthermore, I think that this list could also be extended to refer to the psychological and social benefits that come from outdoor activity. I personally believe that this benefit applies also to walking and cycling, although in horse-riding, the relationship with the horse adds a further dimension to this benefit." – **British Horse Society***

3. The Policy context

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Responses

The relationship between planning gain and improvements / increase to the Rights of Way network could be explained. It should be a stated aim to proactively pursue RoW improvements from any mid to large development. The Wixams, a development of 4500 – 5500 houses, should be used in the targets (section 7) and as an example of how improvements could be obtained through planning gain. – Wilstead P3

3.3.4 Local Transport Plan.

The map showing the major roads & waterways in the borough shows 'Frank Branston Way' whilst according to the road signs it is 'The Branston Way'.

3.3.5. Active Travel Plan.

The background to the map showing the cycle network is too faint to easily put the routes shown into context. Why are Wilstead bridleways 11, 15 & 16 not shown on cycle network map? The Borough invested a large amount of money in improving the surfaces of BW11 & 15.

3.3.6 Green Infrastructure Plan.

Why isn't the John Bunyan Trail included as a strategic route. Just because it is a footpath in some places and a bridleway in others and crosses the Authority boundary shouldn't mean it isn't a strategic route. It is the main long distant path in Bedfordshire.

The group are glad to see the Bedford to Shefford multiuse / cycle way listed as a priority. Presumably this is utilising Wilstead bridleways 14 & 16. This cycleway need not just go to Rowney Warren but by using adjacent bridleways could go to Shefford itself. It is believed that some Wixams section 106 monies were put aside for this cycleway, though a large number of houses were to be built before release of these funds.

The group are interested in finding out what no 21 'Wixams Links and Loops' means in relationship to the Rights of Way network. This doesn't appear to be explained anywhere. Similarly no22 the Bunyan Trail links and loops isn't explained anywhere. There should be aims to link John Bunyan's birthplace in Harrowden to the Trail and also to link the Trail to Shocott Springs Wood.

Note. Inclusion of the Green Infrastructure Plan would be beneficial especially as the routes listed in the Improvement Plan have numbers and these are shown on the GI Plan. – Wilstead P3

"Section 3: The Policy Context... Highways Act 1980 "Keep DEFINITIVE MAP AND STATEMENT UP TO DATE AND AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION" As I understand it the Borough do not have a definitive map officer and do not appear to be having one because of financial restraints therefore if that is the case then the Borough will fail to meet its legal requirements." – The Ramblers

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"Page 11 and 12 states about the Local Development Scheme. I think they have got confused with this and taken the list from the policies that are planned to be replaced in the LDS, not the existing policies.

Page 17 of the document states about the Bedford Green Infrastructure Plan and includes a table which is taken directly out of the plan. I think it would read better if there was a title for each column and put more detail in about the 'other routes' such as which ones are proposed which is detailed in another part of the document. Otherwise it looks like the routes already exist.

The list of background documents on page 46 and 47 could also include the A-Z of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway A-Z Project Delivery Plan and the specific Planning documents ie. Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan and Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002 instead of the Bedford Borough Local Development Scheme.

*I'm not sure what the Bedford Borough Council Green Spaces Strategy 2007 is. If this is the Green Space Strategy that has draft on it, I don't think it should be mentioned as it wasn't adopted!" – **Sonia Gallagher (Senior Planner Bedford BC)***

4. Our rights of way assets

Responses

*"**Wilstead Parish Council** supports the promotion of the John Bunyan Trail, which it feels should be identified in the Plan as a Strategic Route being the County's only true long distant path. The Parish Council would like to see a specific aim in the Plan to link the Trail with Shocott Springs Wood which would then also link the Trail to Cotton End."*

4.1 The Public Rights of Way Network.

Is it the intention to continue BVPI 178 (or equivalent) and if so explain it and state the target 'Ease of Use %s' for the years 2012 -2017.

The group would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the Borough's annual Rights of Way survey. This is the kind of work that volunteers could easily do.

4.2.1 Bedford Green Wheel.

Suggest saying 'Started in 2009' rather than 'Starting in 2009'

*4.2.4. Bedford – Milton Keynes Water Park" – **Wilstead P3***

*"Inclusion of Clay Way and Timberland Trail on promoted routes – both of these give excellent views across the Marston Vale ridges as well as very obvious landscape changes both in geological and land use etc." – **Forest of Marston Vale***

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"I'm sure you are already aware of the parlous state of the section of the Ouse Valley Way just upstream of Roxton Weir. You will also be aware that it is an extremely popular walk situated as it is at the confluence of the Rivers Ivel and Great Ouse and is included in many walking books on our area.

I'm sure the pressures on your budget are great but I respectfully request that you prioritise improvement of this section in your forthcoming plan." – **James Livingstone**

"One thing I do hold dear is the Ouse Valley Way. The route passes through Willington so is used by my family quite a lot. At present I am working with Francine on the part through Roxton, hoping to improve things for my Health Group Walkers.

On from Roxton; the route has been disturbed by the bypass, so much that one footpath has been extinguished and the alternative is a bridge to a busy back road. There is no clear signage of the route although the explanation on the "Let's Go" web site is clear." – **Graham Watson**

"I have no significant comments other than it's good to see what seem to me appropriate references to NCN51 and the Bedford Milton Keynes Waterway on pages 17, 22, 23 and 43." – **Paul Vann**

"there is only one strategic bridleway in the Borough. But the Three Shires Way's use by horses is now under threat as a result of the decision (subject to possible challenge by Milton Keynes Council) to permit the creation of a wind farm surrounding the bridleway at Nun Wood, just north of Lavendon." – **British Horse Society**

There are two strategic cycle routes, most of which are not currently accessible to horse-riders. The Society seeks to obtain equestrian access to cycleways except where there is an express reason why this is not possible.

The off-road sections of NCN Route 51, if available to horse-riders, would provide a useful additional facility. So action 3.2(b) in the action plan should I believe say public bridleway not public highway.

"- That all sections of the multi user route that can be classified as bridleways, should be (even if they do not at the present time connect to other bridleways).

- That the opportunity should be taken wherever possible to ensure that the GW connects to existing bridleways that lead out into the rural areas.- That surface selection should take into account the preferences of horseriders, along with those of other users"

The map on p21 clearly illustrates one of the main problems faced by horse riders in the Borough – the lack of connectivity in the network available to horse-riders. I know that you are fully aware of the issue and of the safety concerns that arise when horses have to use busy roads to make connections between off-road routes.

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*The Society would like to see a long-term objective to ensure that each rural parish has a safe, largely offroad, circular horse route, ideally between 4 and 8 miles long, available to local riders. Such routes would be on bridleways and by-ways using quiet lanes and verges to link between the off-road sections and would not necessarily have to be entirely within one parish” – **British Horse Society***

5. Rights of Way management

Responses

“5.2 Maintenance.

The group would suggest that the responsibility for maintenance of overhanging and path surface vegetation is mentioned so that it is clear who is responsible for what.

5.6 Volunteers.

*There is no mention as to how the commitment ‘to recruiting and supporting greater volunteer involvement’ without additional resources will be achieved nor is there target growth figures for volunteers over the period of this Plan.” – **Wilstead P3***

*“Link BRVP and FOMV volunteer pool into new ROW volunteer groups etc” – **Forest of Marston Vale***

*“More emphasis on education and information on dog owners and responsible use of network i.e. dogs off lead and fouling etc” – **Forest of Marston Vale***

“I was delighted that there was a positive response from everyone to support and work closely with the Farming/Landowning community, and I would be very grateful if you could include some suitable words in the main aim to reinforce this view.

*I was also delighted to hear a number of speakers mention during the debate and also in the general discussion during the break, that they feel the relationship with Landowners and Farmers is very positive, which is generally good news.” – **Mark Egar (Southill Estate)***

*“too much reliance on topical phrases eg wildlife corridors but without any plan for the management of these corridors --eg the timing and frequency of grass cutting is critical to many species but doesn't warrant any consideration in the Plan and judging from those at the LF -- frequency per annum was far more important than any wildlife considerations” – **Robert Bellamy***

*The Society fully supports the involvement of volunteers in the development and maintenance of the RoW network and is willing to actively assist in the recruitment of such volunteers. – **British Horse Society***

6. Meeting present and future user needs

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

Responses

Wilstead Parish Council supports the Bedford – Rowney Warren cycleway using two of the parishes bridleways. When the Wixams was being planned it was stated in documents that some Section 106 monies would be made available for this cycleway.

6.4 Access issuesThe map showing deprivation areas would be more meaningful if names of parishes were included on the map.

6.5.4 Motorised vehicles.

The 2% quoted as doing off roading with vehicles seems high. In Wilstead this would mean 50 villagers involved in this activity. Byways are expensive to maintain and repairs are costly because of the damage done by motorised vehicles. The group feel that potential damage should be managed by the creation of preferably restricted byways but at least restricting access to motorised vehicles for some of the year. This would allow the limited resources available to be spent where they will benefit most users." – Wilstead P3

"I would urge all local authorities to allow horse riders to use cycle trails, routes and any other ways where it is in their power to do so, and to encourage that permission or dedication to happen where it is not in their power. Unless there are good and specific reasons not to expressly allow horse riders to use such routes, local authorities should take steps to accommodate them.

Local authorities should be making the most their off-road networks through integration of use. Multi user routes have been shown to be readily adopted and well appreciated by local people. Where they are done well they bolster community cohesion and create a better understanding between users. Horse riders are particularly vulnerable road users, and cycle routes can provide appropriate and important opportunities to avoid busy roads" – Richard Benyon MP

"Use of motorised scooters on access paths and potential increase in use and how this is managed." – Forest of Marston Vale

"there are web sites and links which only those at the centre are aware of --no effort has been made to enlighten the broader population" – Robert Bellamy

"safety is key to horse-riders and is one of the main reasons why riders value the RoW network so highly. Given the user group profile (female, wide age range from children to older women) and the sensitive nature of many horses, the ability to ride away from the increasingly busy roads is vital to horse-riders." – British Horse Society

"One difficulty facing horse-riders in gaining access to riding opportunities is the availability of parking for horse boxes

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

I would add to the list of needs, good sign-posting. This is even more important to horse-riders than to walkers or cyclists due to the difficulty of consulting a map whilst on horseback.

"I note that there is no mention of horse-carriage drivers. The by-way network, particularly in the North of the Borough, provides a facility for such users and their needs should really be addressed in the Plan" – British Horse Society

7. RoWIP delivery and action plan

Responses

"Wilstead Parish Council is extremely disappointed in the dropping of a study into the feasibility of avoiding Wilstead footpaths crossing the A6 on the level by use of an old cattle underpass. These are potentially dangerous crossings especially when approaching the southernmost path to Houghton Conquest on the A6 from the Clophill direction"

"7.5 RoWIP Action Plan 2012 -2017

The targets set in this section should be SMART. M is for measurable eg the number of way mark posts installed, the number of volunteers to be trained in undertaking the network survey etc

1.1.a Propose obtaining parishes' improvement priorities when discussing Seasonal Vegetation Clearance priorities with Parish Councils.

1.1.d Why not have a target number of sleeper bridges (footpath & bridleways) to replace with culverts rather than just bridle sleeper bridges?

1.2. a-c Will the 9 target parishes be same parishes for each action? How will they be chosen?

1.2.b Replacing stile with gaps on 100kms of RoW. Doesn't this depend on how many stiles there currently are on the selected 100kms.

1.3 1.4.a Set a target for the number of volunteers involved in surveys and maintenance tasks.

2.3.a Identify links to develop John Bunyan Trail e.g. to birthplace & Shocott Springs Wood.

2.4.a Include the development of a system for reporting problems / future improvements.

2.4.b Identify which targets will be reported on yearly.

3.1.c Very concerned that the proposed feasibility study into the use of an old cattle underpass to avoid Wilstead footpath 4 (& possibly 3) crossing on the level has been dropped from the draft ROWIP. If safety is a serious concern then the possibility of safety improvements should be investigated.

3.3.d What is the Wixams / North Marston Vale review and access plan?" – Wilstead P3

"Section 7.4 Monitoring performance and achievements

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It is hoped that the BoBLAF will be informed and involved at an early stage with the annual work program. It is suggested that updates are given to the BoBLAF on the annual plan and achievements throughout the year. This action could be put in the Overall Action Plan.

Section 7.5 RoWIP Action Plan 2012-2017.

There are about 50 items in this list, most of them beginning in 2012. That is too many for the current economic climate. However, you do not want to leave out what may be called the aspirational items, so it is suggested that the list of items are prioritised and spread over the 5 years of the plan. Suggestions on reducing the number of items are given below.

Two additional action points are suggested

- 5. Item 1.1a states that SVCs are discussed with Parish Councils and User Groups. It is suggested that Improvements to the RoW network in their parishes are also consulted on.*
- 6. Publicising what improvements have been made on the RoW network should be a high priority item. Good improvements are done by the RoW team but how do users know about them?" - **BoBLAF***

Additional action points are suggested:

- 7. Item 1.1a states that SVCs are discussed with Parish Councils and User Groups, it is suggested that Improvements to the RoW network in their parishes are also consulted on.*
- 8. Publicising what improvements have been made on the RoW network should be a high priority item, good improvements are done by the RoW team but users need to know about them.*
- 9. There are many site specific items (1.3b, 1.3c and sections dealing with NCN51 and the Green Wheel). It is suggested that these should be included in the annual work plans and omitted from the full RoWIP.*
- 10. There is overlap in sections 1.1 and 1.2 – can 1.1b and 1.1c be included in section 1.2.*
- 11. Section 1.4 (volunteering) is an example where prioritisation would be beneficial, setting up a volunteering network in conjunction with Parish Councils and User Groups should be the key item. From this could be the development of maintenance groups and perhaps the CAMS work (when the technology is available). 1.1e may need rewording if this surveying initiative is carried out.*
- 12. Section 2 points are admirable and most have 'A' attached, can the current workforce cope with all these points at once, it is suggested that these need prioritised and spread over the years.*
- 13. In Section 5 it does not state who is responsible for vegetation.*
- 14. There needs to be inclusion of and reference to the safety of users within the Plan, with details of how dangers are minimised.*
- 15. There should be reference to the Countryside Code and how the plan will encourage the responsible behaviour of users.*
- 16. It is felt more supporting information should be given regarding 'best value' and 'performance indicators', with this being explained within the document - **BoBLAF***

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*"The opening of 15 Kilometres of ROW between 2012 and 2017 may be step forward but unless we know the total mileage involved it would be difficult to make a judgement as to whether this is real progress or tinkering at the edges.
Page 39 1.1b If I remember correctly the LAF including the member who represents the 4x4 users felt this was an inappropriate use of money and perhaps those byways would be better reduced in status to Bridleways."* – **The Ramblers**

"The Improvement Plan makes reference to the Green Wheel access Improvements which the Council says its aim is to implement. Page 44 of the Plan refers to the implementation of access improvements to "develop FP24 Clapham to Brickhill Cycle Route". As with previous documentation issued by the Council or by its partners the suggestion and implication is the route is already opened to cyclists and the Council has the power to carry out these works. Neither is true.

Will you please amend the plan to ensure it is made clear that this is a private road and a public footpath but is not open to cyclists." – **Clapham Park Management Company Limited**

"I could not identify the "low hanging fruit"

I could not identify what were the priority targets and why these were priorities" – **Robert Bellamy**

"There is a great opportunity to provide equestrian access in the various Park projects currently in hand – the Waterway Park, The Forest of Marston Vale and Bedford River Valley Park. Marston Vale already makes some provision for horse-riders and provides good parking facilities for horse boxes." – **British Horse Society**

"The Society would be happy to assist in funding applications for RoW projects that benefit horse-riders and indeed carriage drivers." – **British Horse Society**

"1.4 – volunteers could also be used to improve signage on routes (obviously with the appropriate training, guidance and maps) – as noted above this is particularly important to horse-riders and would also protect landowners' interests by reducing the risk of riders accidentally riding off the right of way.

2.1 (e) – walks and rides

2.2 – I trust that you will continue to support our access rides in the Borough, as you have for the last two years." – **British Horse Society**

4.3 In addition to the above, written responses in the form of letters or e-mails were invited from members of the public together with formal responses from the following stakeholder groups/organisations:

Bedford Borough Council internal

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Elected members

Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum

Citizens Panel

Youth Parliament

Bedford Disabled Access Forum

Bedford Race Equality Centre

Neighbouring authorities

Countryside access groups (Ramblers, BHS, CTC, TRF etc)

Farmers and landowners (NFU, CBLA)

BRCC

4.4 All comments received throughout the consultation, including those mentioned earlier have been considered in terms of their validity. The following table (section 5 below) summarises each of these comments and details the Council's corresponding response and any recommended amendments to the plan. All recommended amendments are presented in bold text for ease of reference.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

4. Council's response

Comment ref.	RoWIP section & page ref.	Consultation results summary	Council's response/ recommended amendment (in bold)
Section 1. Introduction			
1.1	1.1 Page 5	Highway Authorities have a statutory duty to 'prepare and publish a ROWIP, but <u>not</u> to implement it	No amendment. Statutory duty of Highway Authority is correctly referenced in section 1.1
1.2	1.1 Page 5	Put plan in current economic climate context	No amendment. Economic context is beyond scope of plan; and Council's financial position is explained in section 7.1
1.3	1.1 Page 5	Better prioritisation of actions	No amendment. More detailed prioritisation of actions will be carried out as part of the annual work programming of delivery team. The action plan will be reviewed and updated annually, to reflect progress, available resources and changes in priority.
1.4	1.1 Page 5	Highlight projects dependent on voluntary effort	Identify specific actions where volunteer support will be particularly sought, as denoted by a 'V' in the 'Resource implications' column of table in section 7.5
1.5	1.1 Page 5	Identify rights of way 'champions' at parish level	No amendment. Plan already identifies commitment to engage volunteers, users and communities to help deliver

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Comment ref.	RoWIP section & page ref.	Consultation results summary	Council's response/ recommended amendment (in bold)
			ROWIP.
1.6	1.1 Page 5	Define ownership of actions/plans	Section 7.5 (page 38) - Amend to read: 'Delivery of each individual action in the plan will be led by the Council's Outdoor Access and Rights Way service staff working in partnership with key stakeholders, including landowners/ managers, parish/ town councils, user groups and volunteers.'
Section 2. Our strategy			
2.1	2.2 Page 7 Aim 2	Stakeholder buy in and community support	No amendment. Stakeholder buy in and community support is a clear thread running through the plan
2.2	2.2 Page 7 Aim 1	Introduce annual review and report	Section 7.4 - Insert new para between 2 and 3 to read: 'The action plan will be reviewed and updated annually, to reflect progress on its delivery, available resources and changes in priority. The results of this review will be reported to the Local Access Forum, who will have the opportunity to comment on any proposed revisions to the action plan, prior to adoption by the Council.'
2.3	2.2 Page 7 Aim 2	Revise plan to in include SMART targets	No amendment. Action plan already includes SMART targets where feasible.
2.4	2.2 Page 7 Aim 2	Scaling of issues/problems as a % of what?	No amendment. Sections 4.1.1 and 7.4 include commitment to continue to monitor performance using BVPI178, which takes into account path signage/ waymarking provision, obstructions and condition of furniture.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

Comment ref.	RoWIP section & page ref.	Consultation results summary	Council's response/ recommended amendment (in bold)
Section 3: Policy context			
3.1	3.3.3 Page 11	Explain relationship between planning gain and ROW improvements – give examples	No amendment Section 3.3.3 is designed to provide an overview of relevant planning policies, rather than go into any detail on any specific one. Section 7.3 (para 3) already includes commitment to work to maximise benefits through the planning process and developer contributions.
3.2	3.3.6 Page 11	Show Bunyan trail as a strategic route	No amendment The green infrastructure access priority list is taken from the Bedford Borough Green Infrastructure Plan, which doesn't include Bunyan Trail as a 'strategic route', so would be wrong to show it as such.
3.3	3.3.6 Page 11	Say more about Wixams links	No amendment The green infrastructure access priority list is taken from the Bedford Borough Green Infrastructure Plan, which doesn't include any more detail on 'Wixams links and loops' entry (number 22.). Unclear of justification to say more about this particular entry than any other on the list.
3.4	3.3.9 Page 18	Definitive map and meeting legal duties	No amendment. Covered adequately in section 5.
3.5	3.3.3 Page 11 and 12	Revise table and references to Local Development Scheme	Revise tables and references in accordance with amendments provided by Planning
Section 4. Our rights of way assets			
4.1	4.1.2 Page 22	Promotion and management of Bunyan Trail, Ouse Valley Way and other promoted routes	No amendment The issue of promotion and management of promoted routes, including Bunyan Trail and Ouse Valley Way, is addressed as a result of section 7.5,

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Comment ref.	RoWIP section & page ref.	Consultation results summary	Council's response/ recommended amendment (in bold)
			action 2.1 b.
4.2	4.2.2 Page 22	Equestrian access to cycleway NCN 51	No amendment Reference in section 4.2.2 is factually correct as it stands. Section 6.4 – Add new bullet point to read: 'Provision of increased equestrian access to multi-user routes where these link with existing bridleway and byway network'
4.3	4.2.2 Page 22	Multi user routes should all be dedicated bridleways	No amendment May not be appropriate or feasible for all multi-user routes to be dedicated as bridleways, especially where they don't link with existing bridleway/ byway network; and/ or if affected landowners are unwilling to agree to dedication. See also proposed additional bullet point amendment to section 6.4 above.
4.4	4.1.1 Page 22	Connectivity of network for more users through bridleways improvements	No amendment Issue of connectivity of network is picked up in a number of the issues listed in section 6.4
Section 5. Rights of way management			
5.1	5.2 Page 25 – appropriate management	Management issues – biodiversity awareness etc	Section 5.2 – Add bullet point to list under last para to read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have regard to protecting and enhancing biodiversity interest (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2007)
5.2	5.6 Page 26	Importance of volunteers to Rights of Way management	Section 5.6 – Amend para 2 to read: 'Over the years, volunteers, under the Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme have played an important role in supporting the Council with its

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

Comment ref.	RoWIP section & page ref.	Consultation results summary	Council's response/ recommended amendment (in bold)
			rights of way management, including clearing routes leaflets.'
5.3	5.7 Page 27	Better references to the Countryside code	Section 5.7 – Amend last para to read: 'The Countryside Code (2012) is It promotes a sense of shared respect and responsibility between the public who visit the countryside and the people who manage it and we will support and promote its use.'
5.4	5.7 Page 26	Contribution of land owners and farmers to ROW improvements	Section 5.7 – Amend para 1 to read: '..... Their continued goodwill, understanding and contribution is essential in enabling us to realise the plan's vision, aims and objectives and to deliver the associated rights of way improvement actions.'
Section 6. Meeting present and future needs			
6.1	6.3 Page 30	Good signage for all users	Section 6.3 – Amend 3rd bullet under para 1 to read: 'Absence of knowledge the countryside, including poor rights of way signage and waymarking'
6.2	6.4 Page 30	More references to safety of users and details of how dangers can be minimised	Section 6.4 – Add bullet point to read: 'Consideration of the health and safety of network users and how any identified risks can be minimised through effective network management'
6.3	6.4 Page 30	Availability of parking for horse boxes and to unload mobility scooters	Section 6.4 - Add bullet point to read: 'Availability of sufficient parking at key points to enable users to access the network, including walkers on a promoted route or those wishing to unload/ load a horse, bike or mobility scooter'

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6.3	6.5.3 Page 33	Develop more cycle routes but allow horse riders to use them	No amendment Issue of multi-user routes and equestrian access is addressed through proposed amendment to section 6.4 under comment 4.2 above.
Comment ref.	RoWIP section & page ref.	Consultation results summary	Council's response/ recommended amendment (in bold)
6.4	6.5.3 Page 33	Safety for horse riders and ability to ride away from busy roads	Section 6.5.3 – Amend 1 st bullet in para 2 to read: 'Safety, ease of access and avoidance of busy roads'
6.5	6.5.4 Page 33	Consider making byways more accessible for carriage drivers	No amendment The legitimate use of byways by carriage drivers is acknowledged in para 1; and consideration of management prescriptions of each byway is covered in para 4 and the associated Byways Management Plan.
6.7	6.7 Page 35	Improved web sites and links to enlighten the wider population – emerging technologies	Section 6.7 – Amend last para to read: 'Reaching target groups. We will also use other communication tools, such as the internet and social media.'
6.8	6.8 Page 35	Increasing use of motorised mobility scooters on rights of way	Section 6.8 – Add additional bullet point to read: 'Off road ('tramper') mobility scooters'
Section 7. Delivery			
7.1	Aspirational - Long term	A6 underpass feasibility at Wilstead	No amendment Not a rights of way issue. Forward on to Borough Highways to respond to
7.2	Insert Action 1.1 Page 39	Consult parish councils re: their improvement priorities	Section 7.4 – Amed para 2 to read: 'The ROWIP action plan We will inform partners, including town, parish and urban community councils, of our delivery progress and work with them to identify specific network improvement priorities within each parish.'
7.3	Amend 1.1 d Page	Replace FP and BW sleeper bridges with	Action 1.1 d. - Amend to read:

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	39	culverts	'Replace 10 sleeper bridges with culverts'.
7.4	Insert 1.4 d Page 40	Set a target for number of volunteers involved in surveys and maintenance tasks	Section 7.4 – Amend last para to read: 'We recognise We will continue rights of way services. We will also monitor the level of volunteer support received on rights of way management, including number of volunteer hours and surveys and practical maintenance works undertaken.'
Comment ref.	RoWIP section & page ref.	Consultation results summary	Council's response/ recommended amendment (in bold)
7.5	Modify 1.4 a Page 40	Development of a system for reporting problems and future improvements	No amendment The development of such a system will be one of the outputs arising from this action, as the successful delivery of this action is contingent on such a system being in place.
7.6	Insert action 1.1 Page 39	Identify yearly targets and report annually	No amendment Plan already includes annual targets for individual actions. Following the establishment of a baseline for BVPI178 performance indicator in 2011/12, annual targets will be set against this and reported on as part of the performance monitoring framework referred to in section 7.4.
7.7	Insert action 1.1 Page 39	Produce annual work programme and share with BoBLAF	No amendment Response already covered by recommended amendment in comment 2.2 above.
7.8	Insert action 1.1 Page 39	Refocus spread of actions and priorities over next 5 years	No amendment Response already covered by recommended amendment in comment 2.2 above.
7.9	Insert action 2.4 Page 42	Need to publicise any improvement made	Section 7.5 – Amend action 2.4a: 'Develop content of Rights of Way interactive website to publicise latest condition survey results and improvements made'

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 – 2017 consultation feedback

7.10	Insert action 1.1 Page 39	Discuss/consult on ROW improvement s with parish	No amendment Response already covered by recommended amendment in comment 7.2 above.
Comment ref.	RoWIP section & page ref.	Consultation results summary	Council's response/ recommended amendment (in bold)
7.11	Insert action 1.4 Page 40	Volunteering network should be a key item	No amendment Volunteer engagement already acknowledged as key item in objective 1.4
7.12	Delete action 3.4 e Page 44	Amend plan to remove reference to FP24 Clapham/Brickhill	Section 7.5 - Delete Action 3.4 e. on legal grounds
7.13	Insert action 3.3 Page 43	Equestrian access to FMV and BRVP	No amendment Wording of 3.3. b. and d. already encompass 'access link' improvements to both BRVP and north Marston Vale, associated with strategic plans/ development opportunities
Section 8. Further information			
8.1	8.1 Page 51	Make better use of website and information technologies	No amendment Response already covered by recommended amendment in comments 6.7 and 7.9 above.
8.2	8.1 Pages 46 - 47	Amend background documents	Section 8.1 – Delete reference to 'Bedford Borough Green Space Strategy (2007)' as document only at consultation draft stage and so yet to be adopted



Equality analysis report

Title of activity: Borough of Bedford Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2012 - 2017

Summary of activity: The ROWIP is statutory 5 year plan which assesses the extent to which the Borough of Bedford's 900 kms of public rights of way meets present and future user needs and sets out a statement of proposed actions to improve this network in accordance with these needs and to maximise community use and enjoyment of it as a valued public asset.

Lead officer: Phillip Fox (Access Development Officer)

Equality analysis team: Phillip Fox (Access Development Officer), Simon Fisher (Parks & Countryside Manager), Joel Carré (Head of Communities)

Relevance

An equality analysis of this activity is required.

Level 1 Equality Analysis

Scope of equality analysis

Impacted by activity:

The Borough of Bedford Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2012 - 2017 sets out a framework for the improved management and development of the rights of way network for Bedford Borough and to encourage greater participation by a wider range of users. The production of the ROWIP is a statutory requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.

The main groups of people impacted on by the ROWIP 2012-17 are current and future users/ non users of the Borough's rights of way network.

The other main stakeholder groups are farmers and landowners, Council officers, town and parish councils and Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum.

The CROW Act 2000 states:

“Each local highway authority is required to publish a rights of way improvement plan covering all of their area. In drawing up the plan, authorities are required to: 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 (and in particular by footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways) for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of their area; the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems; and such other matters relating to local rights of way as the Secretary of State may direct (section 60(1)-(2)).”

Protected equality groups:

The plan is relevant to **all** protected equality groups as it is underpinned by the principle of ‘access for all’. The outcomes of the plan will be a range of right of way improvement actions (both practical and promotional) which will meet the ‘present and future needs of all users and have regard to “the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems; and such other matters relating to local rights of way as the Secretary of State may direct (CROW Act, 2000, Section 60(1)-(2)).”.

Despite the intention of the RoWIP to provide “access for all” it will always be constrained to some extent by issues of rights of way legislation, land ownership rights, land management practice and landscape suitability (eg. topography/ geology).

General Equality Duties:

The ROWIP is intended to be fully inclusive to all making it easier to use the rights of way network through improved maintenance, signage and furniture; involvement of volunteers/communities in its management and better information on its availability in a variety of formats. Wider benefits identified include improvement in health through increased physical activity and mental well-being, and greater social inclusion.

Evidence

What relevant evidence is there about the activity?

The first ROWP for Borough of Bedford was produced by Bedfordshire County Council in 2006. This was a countywide plan encompassing both rights of way and wider outdoor access issues and needs. This, the second ROWIP for the Borough, is focused exclusively on the Borough Council Unitary Authority’s administrative area and its 900 kms of public rights of way. The following rights of way user/ non user evidence base has been used to inform its production and is of relevance to this equality assessment:

- Bedford Borough Citizens Panel Summer 2011 Survey
- Bedford Borough Parish Council Rights of Way Satisfaction Survey, 2009

- ADAS rights of way user/ non user research to inform Bedfordshire Outdoor Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2005
- Anecdotal evidence from recorded Borough Council rights of way service complaints
- National user dataset
- Census 2001

What does this evidence tell you about the different protected groups?

23% of the 502 respondents to Bedford Borough Citizen's Panel Summer 2011 Survey reported they were unable to use the Borough's countryside rights of way network due to mobility difficulties associated with factors such as older age, wheelchair or pushchair use.

The Borough's resident population rose from 148,000 people in 2001 to 159,000 in 2009, an increase of 6.7%, with the increase concentrated in the older age group, including a 22% increase in number of people aged 80+. Between 2009 and 2021, the number of people in the 65-79 year old age group is forecast to increase by 34%, and those in the aged 80+ year age group by 42%. The incidence of physical disability, such as mobility/ sight impairment, increases with age.

Anecdotal evidence that BME community is under-represented in terms of countryside access, including rights of way. There is no user evidence available to assess level of rights of way use by Borough BME community. 2001 Census figures show Borough BME community represents 19.2% of the population.

Anecdotal evidence from the Borough Council rights of way service complaints records cites age/ disability (ie. mobility impairment) when complaining about existence of stiles inhibiting rights of way ease of access.

What further research or data do you need to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the activity?

Borough Council is in process of completing baseline rights of way survey to determine condition of path surfaces and furniture (signs, gates bridges etc, to be continuously monitored and updated in accordance with the ROWIP. This will enable the Council to assess general physical condition/ ease of use of individual paths and overall network and identify those paths, whose condition/ type of furniture may present a physical barrier to disabled (mobility/ sight impaired) and older/ younger persons (mobility impaired/ wheel chair and pushchair users) access.

Further research/ data is required on views of rights of way user/ non user groups in terms of their respective reasons for use/ non-use of the network and how their respective needs could be met through the ROWIP to increase their enjoyment/ use of the network. In undertaking this, particular focus should be given to establishing the views of following protected groups: **'disability', 'age', 'race' and 'gender'**, as these tend to be most impacted on

by the ROWIP.

Have you thought about commissioning new data or research?

Yes, as above, subject to available funding.

Adverse affect on equality

Age: Rights of way structures, such as stiles and gates, and surface condition (overgrowth) can act as a physical barrier to older persons (often due to mobility/ sight impairment) and to young children (if overgrown/ unable to be carried for any long distance and reliant on pushchair).

Disability: Rights of way structures, such as stiles and gates, and surface condition (overgrowth) can act as a physical barrier to disabled persons (mobility/ sight impaired).

Gender reassignment: No direct impact on the protected group characteristic

Pregnancy and maternity: Stiles can act as a physical barrier, if mobility impaired as a result of pregnancy.

Race: Cultural perception of rights of way and countryside, may act as an inhibitor/ barrier to increased use by BME community.

Religion or belief: No direct impact on the protected group characteristic.

Sex (gender): Isolated location and limited level of public use may result in women feeling unsafe using rights of way, which may act as an inhibitor/ barrier to increased use.

Sexual orientation

No direct impact on the protected group characteristic

Marriage & civil partnership (in relation to eliminating discrimination)

No direct impact on the protected group characteristic

Other identified groups (e.g. carers, different socio-economic, other groups experiencing barriers to access)

- Low income could be an increasing constraint for some people to access the rights of way network.
- Role of carers in enabling visits for people to the countryside has to be understood and supported.

Positive affect on equality

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

ROWIP is based on principle of fostering positive working relations between landowners/ managers and rights of way users groups; and between the different user groups themselves. ROWIP is committed to increasing under-represented group use of rights of way, such as BME and disabled and to engaging individuals and groups as volunteers in rights of way management.

2. Advance equality of opportunity

Access for all is a key principle underpinning the ROWIP and operation of the Outdoor Access and Rights of Way service, both in terms of present and future needs of users. This will include replacing stiles with gaps; or if not feasible due to land management practices, gates.

ROWIP is committed to increasing under-represented group use of rights of

way, such as BME and disabled and to engaging individuals and groups as volunteers in rights of way management.

3. Foster good relations (including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between different protected groups)

ROWIP is based on principle of fostering positive working relations between landowners/ managers and rights of way users groups; and between the different user groups themselves. ROWIP is committed to increasing under-represented group use of rights of way, such as BME and disabled and to engaging individuals and groups as volunteers in rights of way management. ROWIP is committed to audience development work and instigate projects and events which are inclusive to all (thereby involving the protected groups as well).

4. Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

ROWIP actions include development and promotion of joint events and activities involving disabled people.

5. Take account of disabled people's disabilities

In producing ROWIP, Council has a legal duty to have regard to accessibility of rights of way to disabled people.

Summary of analysis

The ROWIP is based on the inclusive principle of 'access for all'. It is a statutory document, with a legal requirement to have regard to: "the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems; and such other matters relating to local rights of way as the Secretary of State may direct which has regard to disabled people and strives to meet the present and future needs of countryside users."

The analysis identifies a need to carry out further rights of way 'audience development' work in order to gain a better understanding of the views of users and non users and how their needs could be met resulting in increased satisfaction, enjoyment and use of the network.

The condition, management and promotion of the existing rights of way network presents a number of adverse impacts on the ability of 'disability'; 'age'; 'gender' and 'pregnancy' groups. However, the ROWIP includes various aims, objectives and delivery actions to address these and deliver an overall positive impact on equality. That said, its ability will always be constrained to some extent by issues of legislation, land ownership and management practice and landscape suitability.

Analysis Findings

Analysis findings

Positive impact

The above analysis shows that the ROWIP is based on a principle of 'access for all' and will have a positive impact on equality, in terms of all the 'protected groups' and in particular those (age, disability, ethnicity and gender) which are currently adversely affected by the existing condition, management and promotion of the rights of way network. The proposed actions in the equality action plan at the end of this assessment will help to maximise the positive impacts of the ROWIP.

Monitoring and review

The following monitoring and review activity will be delivered by the Outdoor Access and Rights of Way service staff:

1. The action plan will be reviewed and updated annually, to reflect progress on its delivery, available resources and changes in priority. This will be reported to representatives from the protected groups adversely impacted upon by the existing rights of way network, including Borough of Bedford Disabled Access Forum (BDAF) and Bedford Race Equality Council (BREC).
2. Carry out audience development work to reach out to and better understand users and non users, especially from those protected groups adversely impacted upon by the existing rights of way network.

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Action plan

Issues	Actions	Target date	Lead	Resources required
Adverse impacts:				
1. Physical condition of network creating barrier to 'disabled'/ 'age' groups	Baseline surveys of rights of way network with subsequent ongoing monitoring/ updating	31 March 2013	Rights of Way Officers	Time allocation in staff work programme Volunteers to assist staff with surveys/ audits
2. Physical condition of network creating barrier to 'disabled'/ 'age' groups	Annual ease of use surveys	31 March 2013	Rights of Way Officers	None – already committed to this as part of performance management programme
3. Physical condition of network creating barrier to 'disabled'/ 'age' groups	Accessibility audits of selective routes involving volunteers from 'disabled'/ 'age' groups	31 March 2013	Rights of Way Officers	Time allocation in staff work programme Volunteers to assist staff with surveys/ audits
4. Lack of knowledge of impact on 'disabled', 'age', 'ethnicity' and 'gender' (women) groups	Biannual user/ non user survey	31 March 2013	Access Development Officer	Time allocation in staff work programme Volunteers to assist staff with surveys/ audits
Positive impacts:				
5. Opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations	Representation of Disabled and BME protected groups on Borough of Bedford	30 Nov 2012	Access Development Officer	None

	Local Access Forum (BOBLAF)			
6a) Engagement and involvement	Further audience development work targeting disabled', 'age', 'ethnicity' and 'gender' (women) groups	31 March 2013	Access Development Officer	Time allocation in staff work programme Volunteers to assist staff with surveys/ audits
6b) Engagement and involvement	Promote rights of way volunteering opportunities targeting disabled', 'age', 'ethnicity' and 'gender' (women) groups	30 Sept 2012	Access Development Officer	None
7a) Dissemination of analysis	Publication of ROWIP annual review, including results of surveys undertaken	30 April 2013	Access Development Officer	None
7b) Dissemination of analysis	Website updates to publicise progress on actions and opportunities which deliver positive impacts for protected groups	Ongoing	Access Development Officer	None
8. Equality information, data and evidence	Biannual user/ non user survey	31 March 2013	Access Development Officer	Time allocation in staff work programme Volunteers to assist staff with surveys/ audits

Sign off
Name of Executive or Assistant Director: Stewart Briggs/ Steve Tomlin
Date: 30 June 2012
Review date: 30 June 2013

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**Borough of Bedford
Rights of Way Improvement Plan
2012 – 2017
(Public Consultation Draft)**



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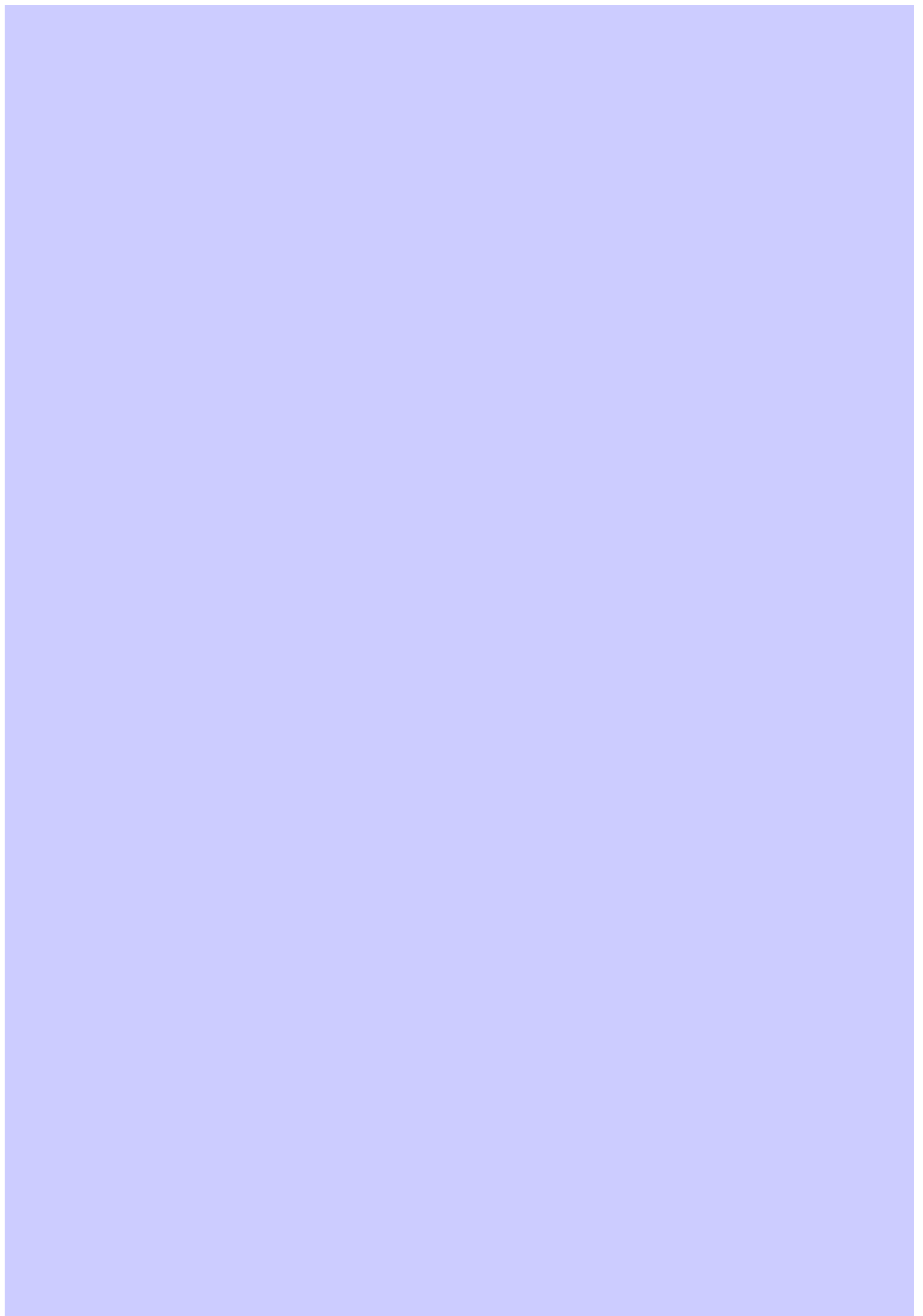
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Foreword by Councillor Sarah-Jayne Holland, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Regulatory Services

It gives me great pleasure to introduce you to the Borough of Bedford's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

This important document sets out the Borough Council's proposed aims, objectives and practical actions for increasing public use and enjoyment of the Borough's public rights of way network over the next five years, 2012-2017.

The Borough's public rights of way network is an important community asset, which requires our ongoing protection, improvement and promotion. At over 980kms in length, it provides a vital leisure resource for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and others wishing to enjoy the great outdoors. Public rights of way are an important part of our cultural heritage and enable young and old alike to explore the local countryside and experience its rich and diverse history, wildlife and landscape. Public rights of way are also an important means of helping people to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life, to get back to nature and keep physically and mentally fit.

I therefore fully support and endorse this important plan and look forward to seeing more and more people out using and enjoying the Borough's public rights of way.

A word from the Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum



The Local Access Forum welcomes the production of this vitally important plan. As the newly formed Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum we were pleased to be involved in its production. Our Forum is an independent advisory group which facilitates discussion about countryside recreation and access matters between farmers, landowners and user groups, as well as the general public.

Improved countryside access brings economic benefits to farmers, landowners and leisure providers and helps bridge the gap between town and country. This plan represents a good starting point and the Forum looks forward to working with the Borough Council to see that its aims and objectives are fully met.

Bob Wallace - Chairman, Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum

1 Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2012 - 2017



1. Introduction

1.1 The rights of way improvement plan

The Borough Council has a statutory duty under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act) to prepare and publish a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' (RoWIP) for its administrative area. In undertaking this duty, the Council is required to assess the extent to which the local rights of way network meets present and future user's needs and to produce a statement of proposed network improvement actions. Local authorities are required to review their Plan no more than 10 years after its first publication. In Bedford Borough, the Council will review its RoWIP every 5 years at the same time as the Council reviews its local transport plan (LTP).

The first RoWIP for the Borough of Bedford was produced by Bedfordshire County Council in 2006. This was a countywide plan encompassing both rights of way and wider outdoor access issues and needs.

This, the second RoWIP has been produced by Bedford Borough Council as a Unitary Authority. The plan covers the period 2012 – 17 and focuses on the Borough of Bedford's rights of way network. The Borough's wider outdoor access issues and needs, including parks and green spaces, are now addressed through the Borough's Green Infrastructure Plan and Green Space Strategy. At the end of this 5 year plan period, we will review whether there is any merit in consolidating the various plans into a single, integrated rights of way and green space strategy document

1.2 Why are rights of way important?

A summary of the key benefits/ value of rights of way to the local community is included below: -

- **Recreation** and heritage - The rights of way network is a significant 'cultural asset'. Free access to enjoy the local countryside and heritage through a wide variety of experiences and pursuits
- **Sport** – Many sporting activities both formal and informal take part on the rights of way network.
- **Health** - Walking and cycling provide easy opportunities for many people to improve their health by incorporating physical activity
- **Biodiversity and the natural world** – the rights of way network provides wildlife corridors through much of the agricultural landscape and gives people contact with the natural world which contributes to their well being

- **Transport and travel** - Active travel (walking and cycling) offers significant environmental benefits, as the replacement of even a small proportion of car journeys by cycling and walking will contribute to a reduction in the levels of congestion and emissions and help us tackle climate change
- **Safety** – Rights of way offer a safe alternative to busy roads.
- **Education and art** – the network provides an extensive learning resource for all ages close to where most people live which is both stimulating and exciting
- **Economic** – Rights of way link people to many local tourist and visitor attractions, rural businesses, pubs and shops
- **Value for money** - At a time when public finances are under increasing pressure, the rights of way network offers a potential low-cost, sustainable option to tackle a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues and provide real public benefit

2 Our strategy



2. Our strategy

2.1 Vision

To maximise community use and enjoyment of the Borough's rights of way network and involvement in its ongoing protection and management. This will be achieved by ensuring that the network is improved, marketed and valued as a key public asset, capable of meeting the current and future needs of the Borough's communities.

2.2 Aims and objectives

RoWIP aim - 1. Improve management of the rights of way network

Objectives

- Develop a structured, pro-active approach to rights of way network management, based on targeting and prioritisation of resources
- Improve accessibility works to structures and signage and waymarking on rights of way
- Invest in capital asset management system for rights of way
- Develop a system for recruiting and managing volunteers in the protection and management of rights of way

RoWIP aim - 2. Increase community use and enjoyment of the rights of way network

Objectives

- Market rights of way network to sustain existing and attract new users
- Support community led initiatives such as health walks, guided walks/ rides and events
- Support promoted route development/ management linked to marketing plan, rural business development and visitor attractions
- Develop a system for managing improved customer contact

RoWIP aim - 3. Extend and enhance the rights of way network

Objectives

- Reduce rights of way network fragmentation
- Link, improve and extend National Cycle Network route 51 with rights of way network
- Integrate rights of way principles, policies, and guidance notes into emerging strategic plans and maximise planning gain
- Implementation of Green Wheel access improvements

3 The policy context



3. The policy context

This section summaries the key legislation, plans, policies and developments that are of relevance to the RoWIP.

3.1 Statutory/legal responsibilities

Relevant key legislation and associated duties:

Legislation	Duty
Highways Act 1980	<p>Maintain the rights of way in a safe condition for use by the public</p> <p>Ensure that paths remain free of obstructions.</p> <p>Ensure that paths are signposted where they leave a metalled highway and are easy to follow.</p> <p>Consult before entering into agreement to create a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway</p> <p>Give notice of the dedication of a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway</p> <p>Consult before seeking public path orders</p> <p>Survey new footpath, bridleway or restricted byway</p> <p>Carry out specified works to footpath, bridleway or restricted byway so fit for purpose</p> <p>Compensate land owner for damage caused by public path orders</p> <p>Have regard to agriculture, forestry and nature conservation when carrying out public path functions</p> <p>Keep the Definitive Map and Statement up to date and available for public inspection.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to divert create or extinguish rights of way.</p>
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Manage species and habitats in accordance with legislative duties
Town and Country Planning Act 1990	Modify rights of way network to accommodate planned development
Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000	Prepare and publish Rights of Way Improvement Plans (but not implement)
	Establish an appointed Local Access Forum (LAF) to advise on improvements of public access to land for open air recreation and enjoyment
	Have detailed provisions concerning the establishment, membership and administration of LAF.
	Record, protect and maintain the public rights of way network

3.2 National strategies/ plans

There are a number of national government strategies and plans which relate to rights of way and their management. These include:

- Rights of Way Improvement Plans - Statutory Guidance to Local Highway Authorities in England (Defra Nov 2002)
- LTP and RoWIP Integration (Natural England 2009)
- Guidance on Local Transport Plans (DfT 2009)
- Guidance on Local Transport Plans and the Natural Environment (Natural England 2009)
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (Dept. for Communities and Local Government 2004)
- Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (Dept. for Communities and Local Government 2002)
- The Natural Choice – Natural Environment White Paper (Natural England June 2011)-

3.3 Local strategies/ plans

3.3.1 Bedford Borough Sustainable Community Strategy

The Bedford Borough Partnership Board is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the Borough and represents an inclusive confederation of all the organisations and bodies who are working to improve the quality of life of people in the Borough. The Partnership Board brings together representatives from the Borough Council, the Police, NHS Bedfordshire, Parish and Town Councils, schools, voluntary organisations, business and community groups. The Board is responsible for pulling together the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Borough and making the goals and aims of the Strategy a reality.

The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the Partnership's vision for the future of Bedford Borough through the goals that the Partnership is seeking to achieve.

Key goals, which rights of way and this plan contribute to include:

A Thriving Borough - Economic Development, Regeneration and Enterprise - the rights of way network brings customers to rural businesses, e.g. pubs, visitor attractions, cafes, shops and B&Bs

A Greener Borough - Environment and Climate Change – the rights of way network enables people to enjoy the local countryside and associated heritage interest and to reduce their carbon footprint through increased walking/ cycling

An Aspiring Borough - Children and Young People – rights of way offers a stimulating environment for play, learning, growth and self development

A Healthy Borough - Adult Health and Well Being – rights of way enable people to be more active through walking, cycling, horse riding and a wide range of other activities

A Safer Borough - Safer Communities – the rights of way network provides an alternative to busy roads in many places and enables safe travel to school and work and for leisure and recreation

An Inclusive Borough - Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture – the rights of way network is a free cultural asset close to where people live which can be enjoyed by all

A Growing Borough – Housing and Transport – rights of way can be planned and built into the infrastructure of new housing developments and incorporated into transport projects

3.3.2 Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan

The Borough Council's Corporate Plan identifies 8 priority areas for service delivery over the period 2009 – 2012. In broad terms these correspond with the vision, and goals of the Sustainable Community Strategy, which as we've shown above, rights of way and this plan have an important role in contributing to.

3.3.3 Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework is part of a suite of Local Development Documents (LDDs) which sets out the spatial planning strategy, policies and proposals for the Borough. A summary of the key policies included in the Local Development Scheme of relevance to this plan are included below:

Local Development Scheme planning policies relevant to RoWIP	
NE4 Trees and hedges	Development Management Policies
NE6 Woodlands	Development Management Policies
NE7 Wildlife corridors	Allocations and Designations
NE9 Conservation management	Development Management Policies
NE10 Contributions to nature conservation	Development Management Policies
NE11 Access to the countryside and interpretation facilities	Development Management Policies
NE13 Landscape management and protection	Development Management Policies
NE16 Flooding	Development Management Policies
NE17 Open spaces	Allocations and Designations
NE20 Landscape & environment improvement	Development Management Policies
NE21 Forest of Marston Vale	Allocations and Designations
NE22 Bedford Linear Park	Allocations and Designations
NE23 Bedford River Valley Park	Allocations and Designations
BE15 Protecting views and open spaces	Development Management Policies
BE23 Archaeology	Development Management Policies
BE24 Archaeology	Development Management Policies
BE25 Archaeology	Development Management Policies
BE26 Historic Parks and Gardens	Development Management Policies
BE32 Development on the edge of urban	Development Management Policies

areas and villages	
BE34 Development adjoining main road and rail routes	Development Management Policies
BE38 Landscaping	Development Management Policies
BE39 Landscaping	Development Management Policies
BE40 Landscaping	Development Management Policies
BE43 Public spaces	Development Management Policies
BE45 Community safety and crime prevention	Development Management Policies
BE47 Overhead power lines and electromagnetic fields	Development Management Policies
BE48 Accessible environments	Development Management Policies
BE49 Accessible environments	Development Management Policies
H26 Housing in the open countryside	Development Management Policies
H28 Replacement dwellings in the open countryside	Development Management Policies
H29 Extensions to dwellings in the open countryside	Development Management Policies
E11 Thurleigh Airfield	Save until development completed
E21 Farm diversification	Development Management Policies
E22 Equestrian development	Development Management Policies
E23 Encouraging tourism	Development Management Policies
E24 Provision of signposting	Development Management Policies
E25 Tourist accommodation	Development Management Policies
E26 Touring caravans	Development Management Policies
SH11 Farm shops	Development Management Policies
T3 Strategic routes in the rural area	Allocations and Designations
T13 Pedestrian Routes	Allocations and Designations
T14 Cycle routes	Allocations and Designations
T21 Accessibility for less mobile people	Development Management Policies
LR4 Rowing course	Development Management Policies
LR7 Use of River Great Ouse	Development Management Policies
LR10 Access to countryside	Development Management Policies
LR17 Provision of general amenity open space	Development Management Policies
LR18 Recreation / community uses	Development Management Policies
U2 Floodplain	Allocations and Designations

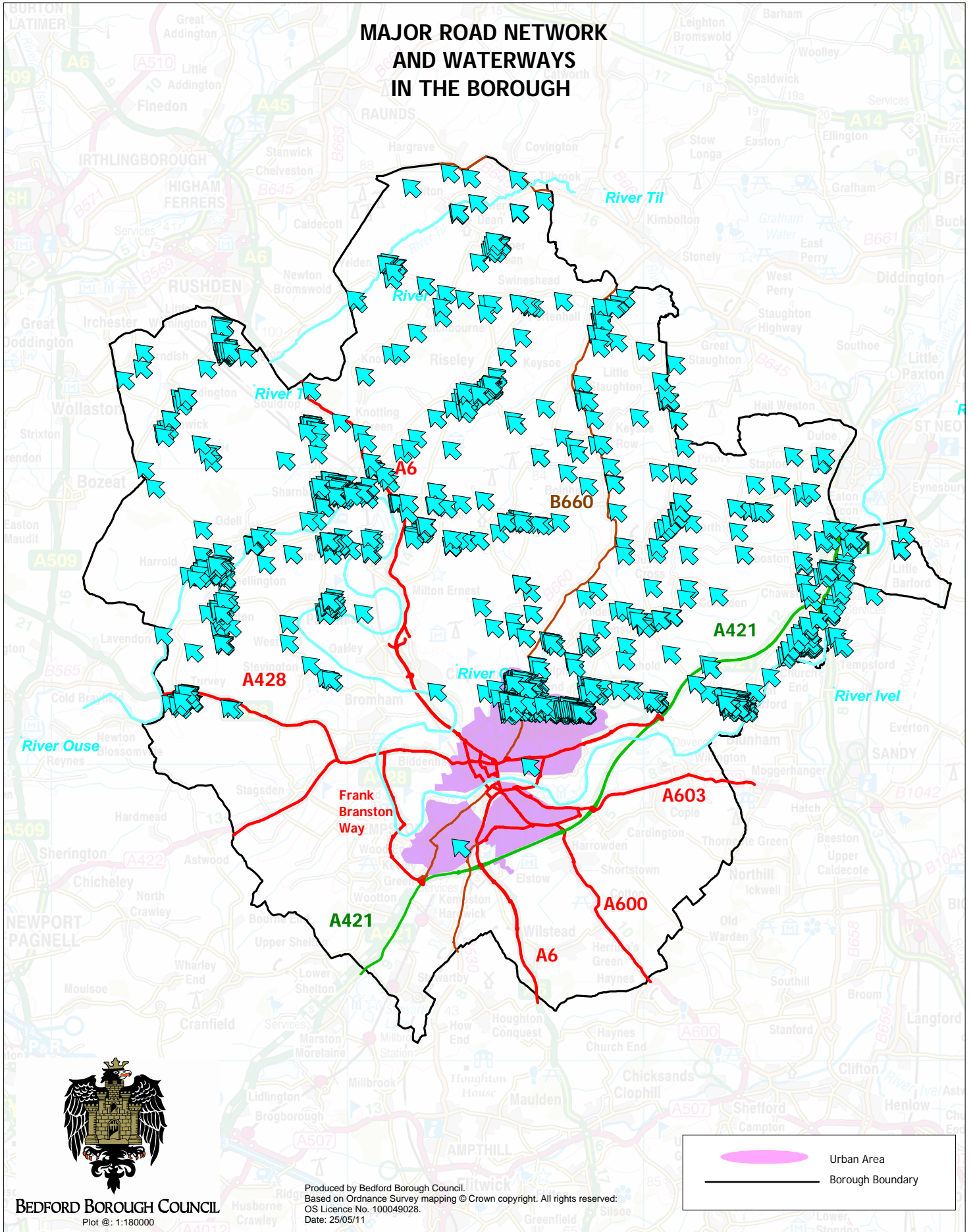
3.3.4 Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the transport aims and ambitions for Bedford Borough and identifies the key supporting strategies, schemes and initiatives necessary to deliver it.

The Department for Transport (DfT) advises authorities to consider the national transport goals as over-arching priorities for their Local Transport Plans (LTPs). Accordingly the goals of the Borough's LTP for the period 2011-21 can be summarised as follows:

Bedford's LTP3 Transport Goals	
Bedford's Goal 1.	A strong local economy, delivering high levels of sustainable growth and employment for the benefit of the Borough's existing and future residents. <i>(In line with National DaSTS* Goal: Support economic growth)</i>
Bedford's Goal 2.	A natural environment which is valued and enjoyed by all; which encourages biodiversity reduces emissions and contributes to the

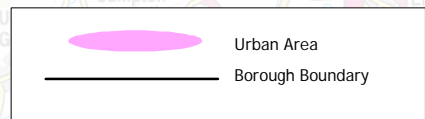
MAJOR ROAD NETWORK AND WATERWAYS IN THE BOROUGH



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

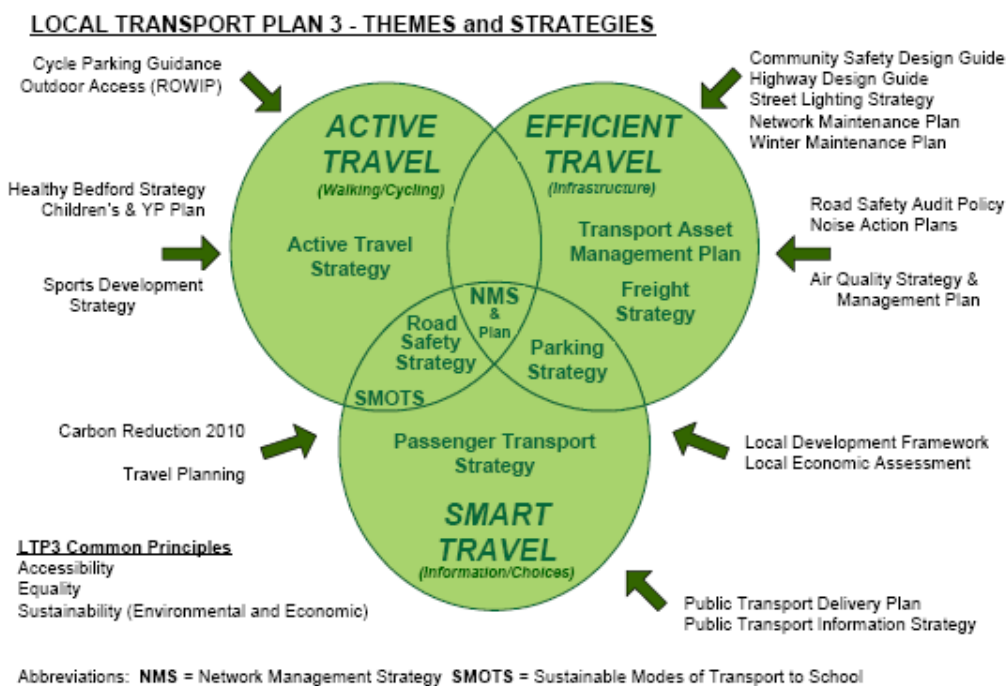
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	development of a low carbon community capable of adapting to the impacts of climate change. <i>(In line with National DaSTS* Goal: Tackle climate change)</i>
Bedford's Goal 3.	Equal access to opportunities for all residents. <i>(In line with National DaSTS* Goal: Promote equality of opportunity)</i>
Bedford's Goal 4.	A Borough where people live safer (and healthier) lives. <i>(in line with National DaSTS* Goal: Contribute to better safety, security and health)</i>
Bedford's Goal 5.	A healthy natural (and built) environment, which is valued and enjoyed by all, and people feel part of the wider community. <i>(In line with National DaSTS* Goal: Improve quality of life)</i>

Clearly, rights of way and this plan have an important role in helping to contribute to each of the above goals. The following drawing shows how the RoWIP is an integral part of the overlapping strategies within LTP3.



3.3.5 Active Travel Plan (Cycling and Walking)

The Active Travel Plan aims to increase levels of physical activity (ie walking and cycling) in travelling, while at the same time reducing congestion and improving air quality in fulfilment of the following vision:

'To create an environment and culture in which walking and cycling are seen as the natural choices of travelling because they are convenient, safe, comfortable, healthy and attractive'.

Over the next 10 years, to get more people walking and cycling, the Borough Council will employ three approaches, often combined together in programmes and schemes:

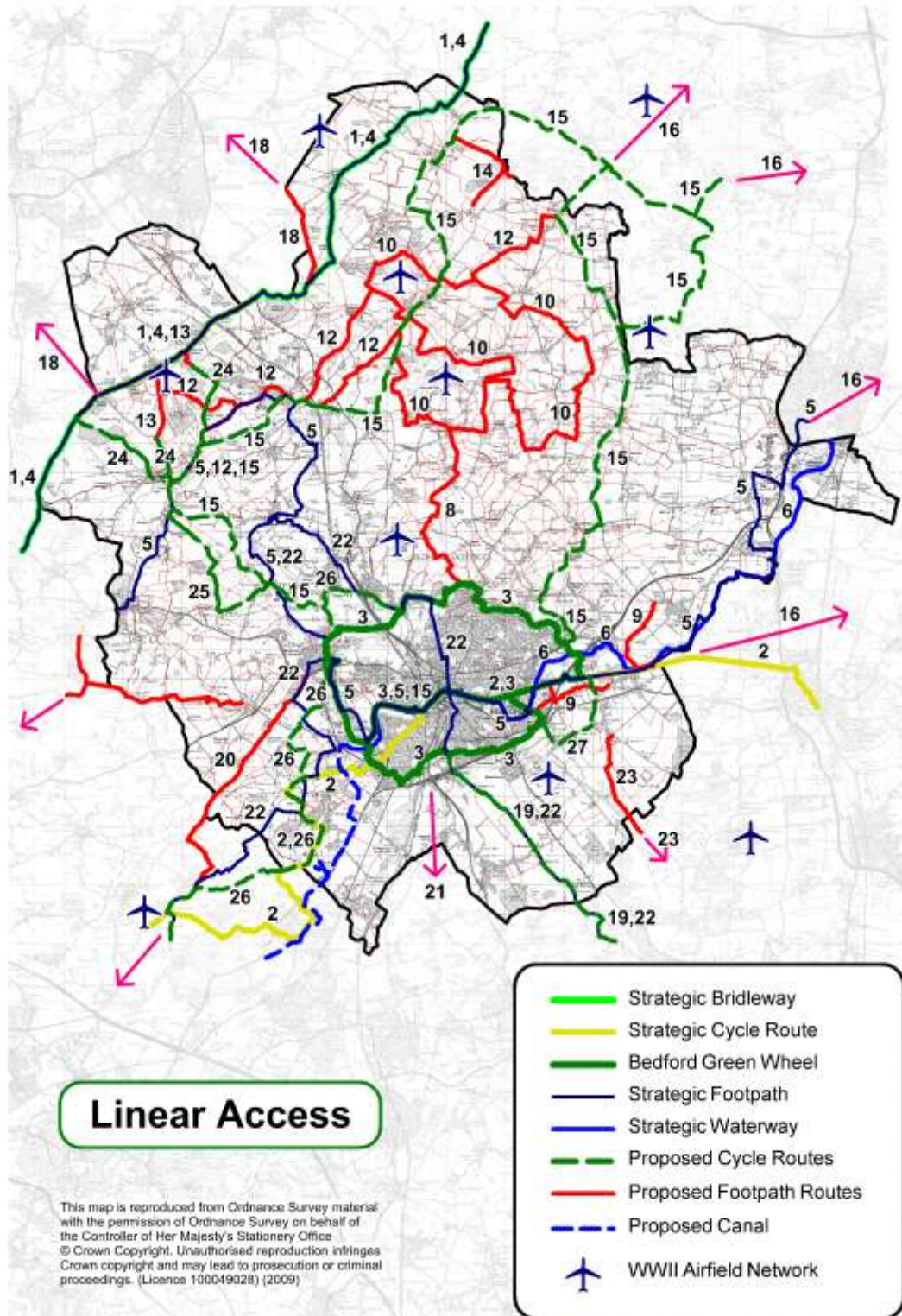
- Promotion, Marketing, Training and Information
- Getting the Built Environment Right
- Integration of Active Travel with Community and Public Transport

3.3.6 Green Infrastructure Plan

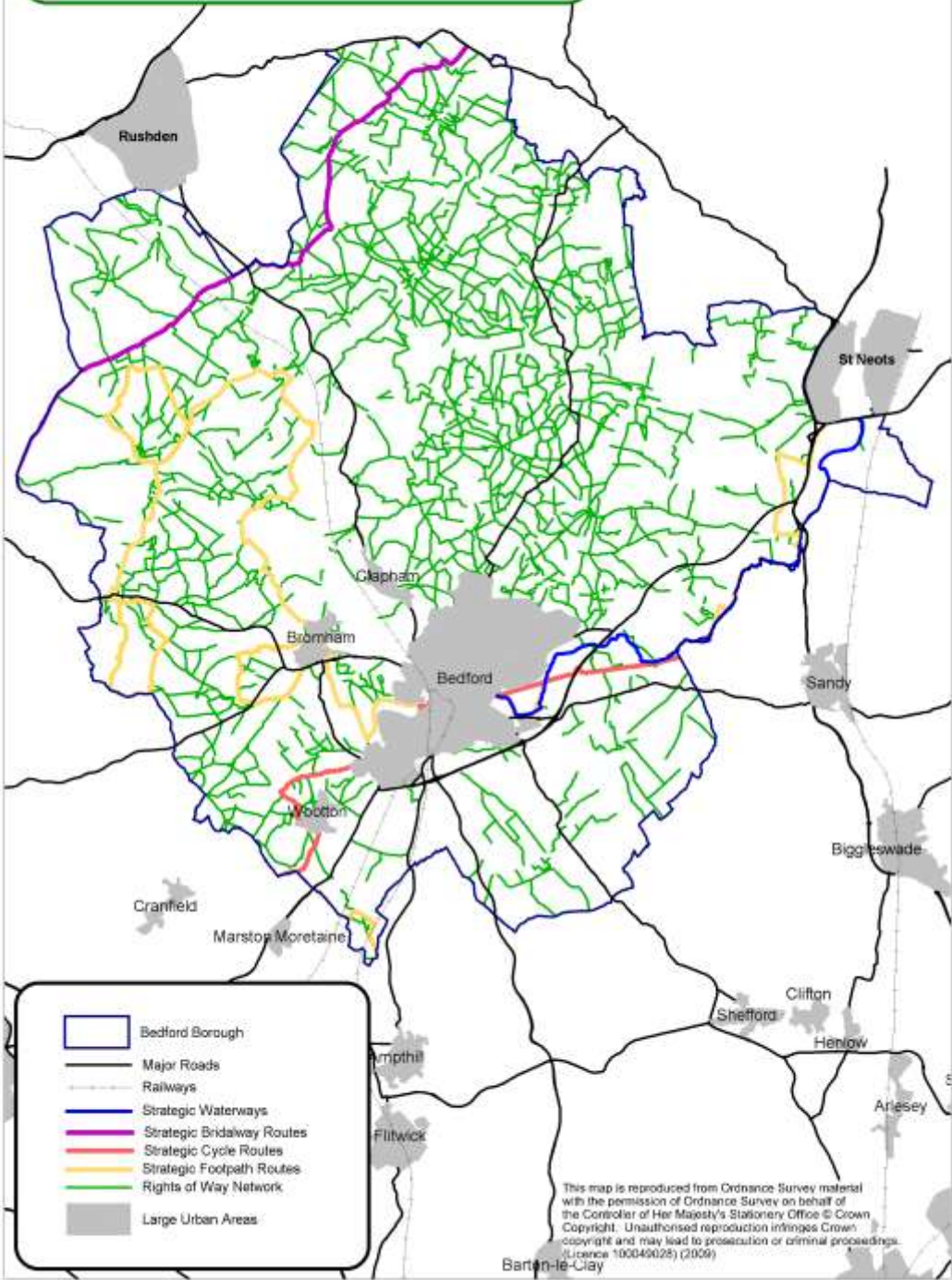
The Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan for Bedfordshire and Luton (2007) identifies a broad, spatial vision for green infrastructure (GI) across the area. This is interpreted locally through the Borough of Bedford Green Infrastructure Plan 2009 which identifies more detailed spatial priorities across Bedford Borough and provides detailed background information to support policies and proposals in the Bedford Borough Local Development Framework.

Rights of way are a key component of the Borough's GI, both for their countryside access function but also for their cultural heritage value. This plan is a key vehicle for delivering the spatial access priorities within the Borough's GI Plan. A summary of the key GI plan's countryside access priorities is included below (numbers correspond with those on plan).

Strategic bridleway routes		
1.	Three Shires Way Bridleway	North west Bedfordshire
Strategic cycle routes		
2.	National Cycle Network Route 51	Milton Keynes – Bedford – Sandy
3.	Bedford Green Wheel	Bedford and links to rural hinterland
Strategic footpath routes		
4.	Three Shires Way	North west Bedfordshire
5.	Ouse Valley Way	Linking Bedford and Sandy
Strategic waterway routes		
6.	River Great Ouse	Bedford - St Neots
7.	Bedford – Milton Keynes Waterway Park	Bedford and the Marston Vale
Other routes		
8.	Brickhill – North Bedfordshire Wolds	North Bedfordshire Wolds
9.	Bedford River Valley Park	Great Ouse Valley east of Bedford
10.	North Bedfordshire Wolds network on Clay Plateau	North Bedfordshire Wolds Plateau
11.	North Bedfordshire WW II Airfields network	North Bedfordshire Wolds Plateau
12.	Sharnbrook and Riseley links	North Bedfordshire Wolds Plateau
13.	NW Bedford Byway network in Wooded Wolds	North West Bedford Wooded Wolds
14.	Green Lane linear Park	Forty Foot Lane and Swineshead
15.	Priory Country Park, Harrold Country Park to Grafham Water cycling triangle link	Great Ouse valley Bedford and Cambridgeshire
16.	St Neots and Cambridgeshire network links	North East Bedfordshire Wolds and Valley
17.	Wyboston (Rookery Road) to Eaton Socon. Cycle link	East Bedford Great Ouse Valley
18.	Rushden and Northants network links	North West Bedford Wooded Wolds
19.	Bedford to Shefford (Rowney Warren) multiuse/cycle route	South East Bedford, Marston Vale and Greensand slopes
20.	Clay Way	South West Bedford



Existing Strategic Access Routes



21.	Wixams links and loops	South Bedford, Marston Vale Greensand slopes
22.	Bunyan Trail links and loops	South and West Borough of Bedford
23.	Links across the vale to Greensand country	South Bedford, Marston Vale Greensand slopes
24. R	Harrold - Odell Country Park to Priory Country Park Off Road Cycle Route 1	Harrold - Odell to Wooded Wolds and Northants
25.	S Harrold - Odell Country Park Off Road Cycle Route 2	Harrold - Odell to Priory Country Park Bedford
26. T	Green Cycle Link: Bedford –Clapham- Bromham- Cranfield	Bedford – Clapham – Bromham- Cranfield
27. U	Green Cycle Link to Green Wheel – Cardington to Mowsbury Bedford East	Bedford East
28.	Ouse Valley West Ridge link	Ouse Valley Ridge Stagsden and west
29.	Ouse Valley Ridge to Milton Keynes extension	Ouse Valley Ridge to Milton Keynes
30.	Milton Keynes and Marston Vale extension	Cranfield to Milton Keynes and Marston Vale extension

3.3.7 Green Space Strategy

The Greenspace Strategy for Bedford Borough provides a framework for the Borough Council and its partners to effectively protect improve and sustain all of the area's accessible greenspaces. It is currently under development and will provide a comprehensive and co-ordinated plan for green space provision and management. The RoWIP will play a critical supporting role in the delivery of the strategy, in terms of enabling people to access and enjoy the Borough's publicly accessible green spaces using the rights of way network.

3.3.8 Biodiversity Action Plan

The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) takes national biodiversity priorities, merges them with local priorities and sets shared objectives and targets for the conservation and enhancement of important habitats and species.

Bedfordshire and Luton has its own BAP which has been developed by a Forum of partnership organizations, including Bedford Borough Council.

Many rights of way particularly byways act as wildlife corridors in predominantly agricultural and amenity landscapes. They represent linear wildlife corridors throughout the Borough and provide additional asset value beyond their access function. Appropriate management of certain rights of way for wildlife will contribute to meeting local and national Biodiversity objectives

3.3.9 Rights of Way Policies Framework

The Borough Council is developing a rights of way policy framework to ensure a consistent approach in the delivery of its statutory duties and the RoWIP.

The framework will include a set of guidance notes and, once adopted, will be available in full on request from the Parks and Countryside Service at Bedford Borough Council or http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/countryside/rights_of_way.aspx

3.3.10 Economic Development Strategy

Bedford Borough Council has led on the development of an Economic Development Strategy on behalf of its Partners for the period 2011-14.

The plan recognises the value of spending in the rural economy arising from countryside access (including through use of rights of way network) and the need to support rural enterprise.

The national average spend per person on a visit to the countryside is £28.78. In England 2009 -2010 there were an estimated 709 million visits involving expenditure and it is estimated that £20.4 billion was spent on visits to the natural environment.

3.3.11 Healthy Bedford Strategy

The Healthy Bedford Borough Strategy sets out the health and wellbeing priorities for Bedford Borough and provides a broad overview of the strategic direction in order to impact on, and improve, the health and well-being of our local community. As a free public leisure and recreational resource available and accessible to all, rights of way have an important role to play in the delivery of this strategy, both for peoples' physical and mental health and well being.

4. Our rights of way assets



4. Our Rights of Way assets

4.1 The public rights of way network

4.1.1 Quantity and quality

There are over 980 kilometres of rights of way in the Bedford Borough area – see map next page. The Borough Council is legally responsible for the protection and management of this network, which is comprised of

- 600 kilometres of Public Footpath – available to walkers
- 350 kilometres of Public Bridleway – available to walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- 34 kilometres of Public Byway (BOAT) – available to walkers, cyclists, horse riders, horse drawn carriages and motorised bikes/ vehicles

Our rights of way have been quality assessed for their 'ease of use' for many years as part of the Government's best value performance indicator 178 (BVPI 178). Prior to Bedford Borough Council achieving unitary status in 2009, this was done on a countywide basis by the former County Council.

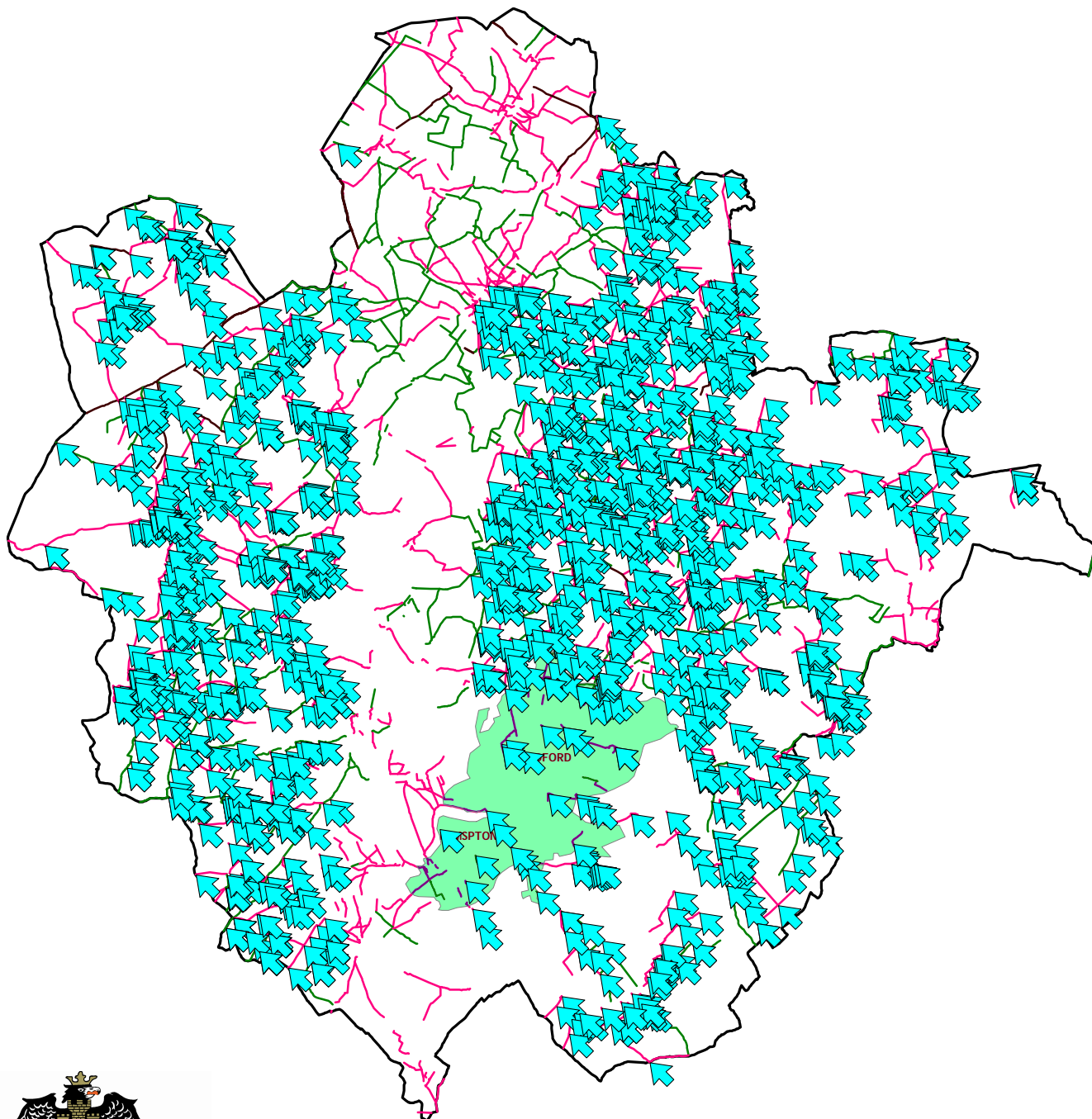
Rights of Way BVPI 178 - 'Easy to use' means:

1. Sign posted or way marked (ROW) where they leave the road in accordance with the authority's duty under s27 of the Countryside Act 1968 and to the extent necessary to allow users to follow the path (a public right of way wholly in a built up area and with a hard surface provided for its complete length and with a clearly defined route may be excluded from measurement)
2. Free from unlawful obstructions and other interferences (including overhanging vegetation) to the public's right of passage.
3. Surface and lawful barriers (i.e. stiles and gates) in good repair and to a standard necessary to enable the public to use the way without any undue inconvenience

Our annual performance using this indicator since becoming a unitary authority is:

Year	Ease of use %	Cost per metre (pence)
2009 -2010	57%	73.2
2010 -2011	70.5%	64.9
2011 - 2012	58.2	58.9

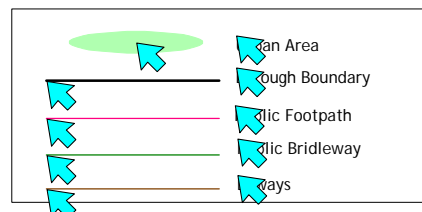
RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK IN THE BOROUGH



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scale: 1:180000

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Date: 23/05/11



Although, this shows variable performance, the methodology has a number of limitations, which mean that comparing year by year comparisons can be misleading. Instead, general trends over time are more meaningful. We also are carrying out a programme of more detailed rights of way condition surveys covering 44 Parishes and nearly 1000. If resources allow we would aim to continue condition surveying a third of the network on an annual basis over a 3 year cycle and sharing this information with users through the interactive mapping found on the Council's website. This work could be carried out by staff and trained volunteers.

The data from the condition survey and quality assessment enable us to work towards bringing the cost of maintenance down and to make better informed decisions as to where and how we should be allocating our resources.

4.1.2 Promoted walks and rides

The principal long distance promoted paths are the Ouse Valley Way, Three Shires Way, North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail and the Bunyan Trail. There are also over 50 locally promoted, shorter routes, which have been developed by a range of bodies including community groups, parish councils and user groups. These are included on the 'Let's Go' website and database at www.letsgo.org.uk. This website aims to make routes easily accessible to local people and visitors with details and maps to enable planning of trips and days out.

4.2 Strategic rights of way/ linear access projects

4.2.1 Bedford Green Wheel

The Bedford Green Wheel is a major project to improve and extend the existing network of traffic free paths and quiet routes for cyclists and walkers around the Bedford/Kempston conurbation linking parks, nature reserves, countryside and homes. Starting in 2009, the Green Wheel network will unfold over a number of years as opportunities and funding become available

. Some of the main features will be:

- Links to nearby villages
- New places to play and relax
- Signage, seating, information points and public art
- Improvements to the river corridor from Kempston Mill to Castle Mill
- Safe access to Priory Country Park, the proposed Bedford River Valley Park and future country parks at Biddenham and Brickhill

It is envisaged that some Green Wheel routes will primarily provide recreational walking and cycling opportunities between the towns many green space, while others will be

more suited to local 'utility' trips, journeys to work, school and the shops – so important in terms of reducing the use of and dependence upon the private motor car.

4.2.2 National Cycle Network route 51 (NCN51)

NCN51 is a long distance cycle route running broadly east-west connecting Colchester and the port of Harwich to Oxford via Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge with the Borough of Bedford right at its heart. The route forms part of the National Cycle Network, developed by Sustrans and locally provides a strategically important link through Bedford/Kempston west to Marston Vale, Forest Centre and Milton Keynes; and east through the emerging Bedford River Valley Park (see 4.2.2 below) to Willington and Sandy. The Borough Council is currently working with Sustrans, Marston Vale Trust and Bedford-Milton Keynes Waterway Park to realign the existing route between Bedford and Forest Centre, Marston Moretaine, to an off-road alignment.

4.2.3 Stevington Country Walk

This is a 5 kilometre walk along the former Bedford - Northampton railway line between Bromham and Stevington, providing views over the Ouse Valley and links with Stevington Windmill, which is a heritage attraction owned and managed by the Borough Council.

4.2.4 Bedford – Milton Keynes Waterway Park

This strategic waterway project was first proposed by the local business community in 1810 to complete a missing link in the national waterway network between the River Great Ouse and the Grand Union Canal and bring trade and prosperity to the area. In 2010 the Mayor of Bedford saw the Bedford Waterway Park as an important means to help regenerate the Bedford/ Kempston/ Marston Vale area economically and to provide a nationally important recreational resource

The Waterway Park is currently being progressed in stages as opportunities and funds become available. The project aims to incorporate walking and cycle access into its infrastructure as well as accommodate parts of the NCN 51 cycleway west of Bedford through new housing areas (see above).

4.3 Strategic access/ visitor destination projects

4.3.1 The Forest of Marston Vale

The Forest of Marston Vale covers 61 square miles and contains some 240 kilometres of rights of way network. As 1 of 12 nationally designated Community Forests, it has set out to repair and regenerate the damaged landscape of the old brickfields in the Borough by

creating new woodlands and seeking new opportunities for public access to the countryside. The development of the Community Forest is guided by a Forest Plan.

4.3.2 Bedford River Valley Park

Bedford River Valley Park is a major regeneration project to create a new 868 hectare country park between Bedford and Willington. Situated within the flood plain of the River Great Ouse, the project is guided by a master plan focused around an international water sports lake, floodplain forest and network of recreational trails.

5 Rights of way management



5. Rights of Way management

5.1 The Definitive Map

All rights of way are recorded on 'the Definitive Map' (DM) which the Borough Council holds and maintains as the legal record of the area's legal rights of way. This document serves to protect the rights of the public (the Council's legal duty) but also to advertise the network to landowners, developers, planners, walkers and riders and anyone else interested in access to the countryside. It is possible to view a hard copy of the map at Borough Hall records office and a digital interactive version is available on our website

http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/countryside/rights_of_way

The Borough Council has a legal duty to create and maintain a Definitive Map and Statement. The DM gives legal protection to those routes which are included and must be constantly reviewed. The CROW Act proposes the closure of the Definitive Map in 2026, whereby no further routes can be added. A legal process is required whenever a path needs to be created, moved or closed. There are some deficiencies in the Definitive Map which the Council will work to address over the period to 2026.

5.2 Maintenance

The majority of rights of way are maintainable at public expense, although landowners/occupiers do share some of the responsibility. The landowner/occupier must maintain stiles and gates on their land, as well as reinstate paths which are disturbed through ploughing and cropping. The responsibility for bridges varies according to the location and type of bridge, for example, bridges over railways are usually the responsibility of Network Rail, and some bridges may also be scheduled ancient monuments or listed structures.

There is an extensive public rights of way network in the Borough, covering 984 kilometres, which extend over a wide variety of landscapes and terrains. These include many different types of paths;

- Paths from a few metres to over 3km in length
- Flat tarmac surfaced paths to steep earth paths
- Paths varying in width from less than a metre to over twenty metres
- Paths which see few walkers each year to those used by many people on a daily basis
- Fenced in alleyways in built up areas contrasted with unfenced paths across fields with livestock

In order to maintain the rights of way network and carry out its statutory duties the Council is required to:

- Maintain existing surfacing and infrastructure
- Provide infrastructure such as bridges or new lengths of surfacing (often as part of new developments)
- Signpost and way mark routes
- Give advice and guidance to landowners and occupiers who have rights of way crossing over and through their land
- Take enforcement action where the right of way is interfered with e.g. obstruction

5.3 Enforcement

The Borough Council has a legal duty arising from the Highway Act 1980 'to assert and protect' the public's right to use the public rights of way network. The Borough Council uses its enforcement powers to prosecute illegal actions and misuse by both landowners and users. The Park and Countryside Service team are responsible for instigating and serving enforcement actions

5.4 Rights of Way staff and financial resource

The Borough Council's Parks and Countryside Service has a skilled and experienced staff team. A diagram showing the existing team structure is included in the further information section of this RoWIP.

As well as its staff resource, the team also currently has an operational revenue budget of £140k. Although there is a limited capital budget for 2011 -2012 the Borough Council will use the RoWIP and associated asset investment programme to bid for capital budget funds if and where required in the future.

Many services within the Borough Council can help to contribute to improving rights of way and outdoor access in general, including Planning, Highways, Education, Heritage, Economic Development, Libraries and Archives. We aim to continue to develop links with these important service areas as well explore how we can work more closely with Adult and Children's Services to use rights of way to fulfill their aims.

5.5 Local Access Forum

The Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum was created in May 2009 (its predecessor was a countywide Joint Local Access Forum from 2003-2009) and is an independent advisory group made up of local volunteers from a variety of backgrounds which include both user groups and landowners. The role is to provide advice and opinion on all forms of countryside recreation and access to the Borough Council and a wide range of other statutory organisations.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires all Highway Authorities to support and maintain a Local Access Forum for their area and to treat them as a statutory consultee.

The Local Access Forum is a key partner. With its network of national, regional and local contacts, it has helped inform the development of the plan. It will serve as a sounding board for setting priorities in implementing the plan and monitoring its progress. With its diversity of experience and interests, the Forum can provide practical advice and help to balance improvements to outdoor access for different types of users whilst taking account of land management interests.

5.6 Volunteers

We have had success in building effective and positive links with local communities in our work on rights of way, such as with Parish Paths Partnership groups (P3) clearing routes, installing easy access structures, waymarking, providing guided walks and preparing leaflets.

The Borough Council has just completed a review of its environmental volunteering activity and is committed to recruiting and supporting greater volunteer involvement, in rights of way and its own parks and Greenspace and wider public realm management.

5.7 Landowners and managers

The Borough's countryside is a dynamic workplace. Its' character is the result of the activities of many different farmers and landowners, who have an important role to play in protecting and improving access to and enjoyment of the countryside. Their continued goodwill and understanding is essential in making the improvements in our RoWIP happen.

Members of the National Farmers Union and the Country Land Owners Business Association are working hard to accommodate responsible access to the countryside on public rights of way on their land. Many have created permissive paths on their land in the past linked to the Higher Level Payment scheme. However HLS payments for public access ceased in 2011 and many of these routes will disappear over the next 10 years.

We will continue to undertake an annual ploughing and cropping campaign reminding land owners/managers of their responsibilities to reinstate cross field paths after cultivation. Where possible we will always aim to secure changes and improvements by negotiation with landowners and user groups

The Countryside Code (2004) is important in dealing with those issues of concern between landowners and users over countryside access such as managing livestock where there is public access and dog walking. It promotes a sense of shared responsibility and we will support its use.

5.8 Other rural businesses

Outdoor access, supported by a high quality rights of way network, makes a significant contribution to the local economy of the Borough and is an integral part of its economic development

In September 2003, the Ramblers Association published a report on 'The economic and social value of walking in England'. They estimated that over 527 million walking trips were made annually in England and valued spending associated with this activity at over £6.14 billion. The income generated by this spending was estimated to be between £1.4 billion and £2.7 billion and supporting between 180,559 and 245,560 full time equivalent jobs. Added to this there is the value of access for equestrian activities and a wide range of other leisure and sporting activities which depend on a good quality rights of way network

Horse riding activities make an important contribution to the rural economy and nationally the equestrian industry is worth £4.6 billion a year. There are 19,000 equine businesses employing over 28,000 people nationally. This includes riding for relaxation, riding schools, cross country events, endurance rides and carriage driving. Although there are, many classes of user all riders require safe off road routes to enjoy the countryside.

Significant progress has already been made on the sustainable tourism project 'Hidden Britain Bedfordshire Wolds' which has initially focused on outdoor access using the rights of way network as part of the visitor offer by local rural business operators. This group of local business and community volunteers has produced 9 walks leaflets, 4 information panels and other promotional materials to encourage people to come to, stay and spend money in their area in the north of the Borough.

Work in 'sustainable' tourism aims to reduce car use, encourage the development of 'green' businesses and promote quiet recreational opportunities which are appropriate to the area. Tourism initiatives are being developed in the Borough which helps conserve and promote our local landscape features and support the Borough's local distinctiveness. Skilful marketing of the opportunities from tourism can encourage use of specific local businesses by local residents and visitors to the Borough. The rights of way network is an important tourism asset which plays an important part in this process.

5.9 Neighbouring authorities

We work with other local authorities and government agencies, including our neighbouring highway authorities of Milton Keynes Unitary, Northamptonshire County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and Central Bedfordshire Unitary to make improvements to the network of rights of way and access opportunities that connect across the Borough boundaries.

6 Meeting present and future user needs



6. Meeting present and future user needs

6.1 Borough population profile

- Bedford Borough's population rose from 148,100 in 2001 to 158,000 in 2009, an increase of 6.7%. Growth was concentrated in older age groups, including a 22% rise in the number of people aged 80+. Numbers aged 0-15 have been largely stable since 2001.
- Much of Bedford Borough is situated in one of the growth areas of the former Milton Keynes and South Midlands (MKSM) Strategy¹ and approximately 10,500 new homes are planned for the period 2010-2021. As a result, the Borough's population is expected to grow significantly to around 171,000 by 2021.
- The number of older people is forecast to grow at a much higher rate than the 8.4% increase forecast for the total population between 2009 and 2021, with 65-79 year olds increasing by 34% and those aged 80+ rising by 42%. This will represent a significant ageing of the Borough's population.
- The number of births in Bedford Borough rose significantly in 2008 and 2009 compared to earlier years, with much of the increase attributable to mothers born outside the UK. If this trend continues it will result in an early rise in pre-school and younger school age populations, and in a need to raise population forecasts.
- There are major differences between the demographic profiles of the Borough's urban and rural areas. The population of Bedford and Kempston towns is much younger on average, with only 45% of the population aged 40+ compared to 55% in rural areas.
- Bedford Borough has an ethnically diverse population. In 2001, 19.2% of the population was from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, compared to 13% nationally, and there has been an increase since 2001 due to significant international in-migration. The BME population is largely concentrated in the urban area of Bedford and Kempston with particularly large BME communities in Queens Park (57.8% in 2001) and Cauldwell (43.8%) wards.
- The Borough has received a large number of new migrants since 2001, particularly from the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007, including significant numbers from Poland. More recently, several new migrant communities, such as those from Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, have also developed in the Borough.

- Bedford Borough has higher average life expectancy than England, both at birth and at the age of 65, but is slightly below regional averages. The most deprived areas of the Borough experience significantly lower life expectancy, with a difference of up to 9 years in life expectancy at birth between the most and least deprived wards.
- Profiles have been prepared for 10 Low Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the Borough, which were selected entirely upon their deprivation levels. These areas in the Borough were in the Top 20% most deprived areas in England based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010.

6.2 General public use of the countryside

The frequency of visits to the countryside by the adult population is 11% visit every day, 22% visit several times a week and 21 % visit at least once a week. The English adult population is estimated to have made 2.86 billion visits to the countryside in 2009 -2010

The highest numbers of visitors are white aged between 45 – 65 years and in employment. They are represented mostly in ABC 1 socio economic groups.

The lowest number of visitors comes from the oldest age groups, BME groups and members of DE socio economic groups. These groups usually live in some of the most deprived parts of the borough.

Of all visits to the countryside 48% of visitors go to the countryside and some 41 % of visitors go to urban green spaces and parks.

Just under half 48% of all visits to the countryside are by dog walkers which clearly reflects the impact dog walking has as an outdoor access activity.

People of all ages use the countryside for a wide variety of purposes.

- Simply getting from 'place to place' in their local area
- Peace, quiet and relaxation; simple enjoyment of the landscape, Wildlife – enjoying flowers and trees, bird watching, feeding birds
- Getting 'fresh air' and exercising
- Outings such as picnics, barbeques and organised events and activities,
- Sporting activities. Playing and watching sports and games

6.3 Access for everyone

Access to the countryside may be difficult for a range of different groups and individuals within our community, including those facing:

- Transport difficulties or lack of transport.
- Concerns over personal safety and security in an unknown environment.
- Absence of knowledge and lack of information about the countryside.
- Physical barriers such as stiles, gates, narrow paths or uneven surfacing.

In addition 'social exclusion' may also be a factor in an individual's ability to access the countryside. This is the term used to summarise the fact that some people in our communities do not benefit from the opportunities that most of us take for granted. There are many reasons for this including: low income, poor health, inadequate housing, lack of education and training, and difficulties in using local services.

Our household survey indicated that 8% of the respondents have some sort of mobility difficulties, with the likelihood of having a disability increasing with age. Bedford is a relatively prosperous Borough but has some significant areas of social deprivation in parts of the town

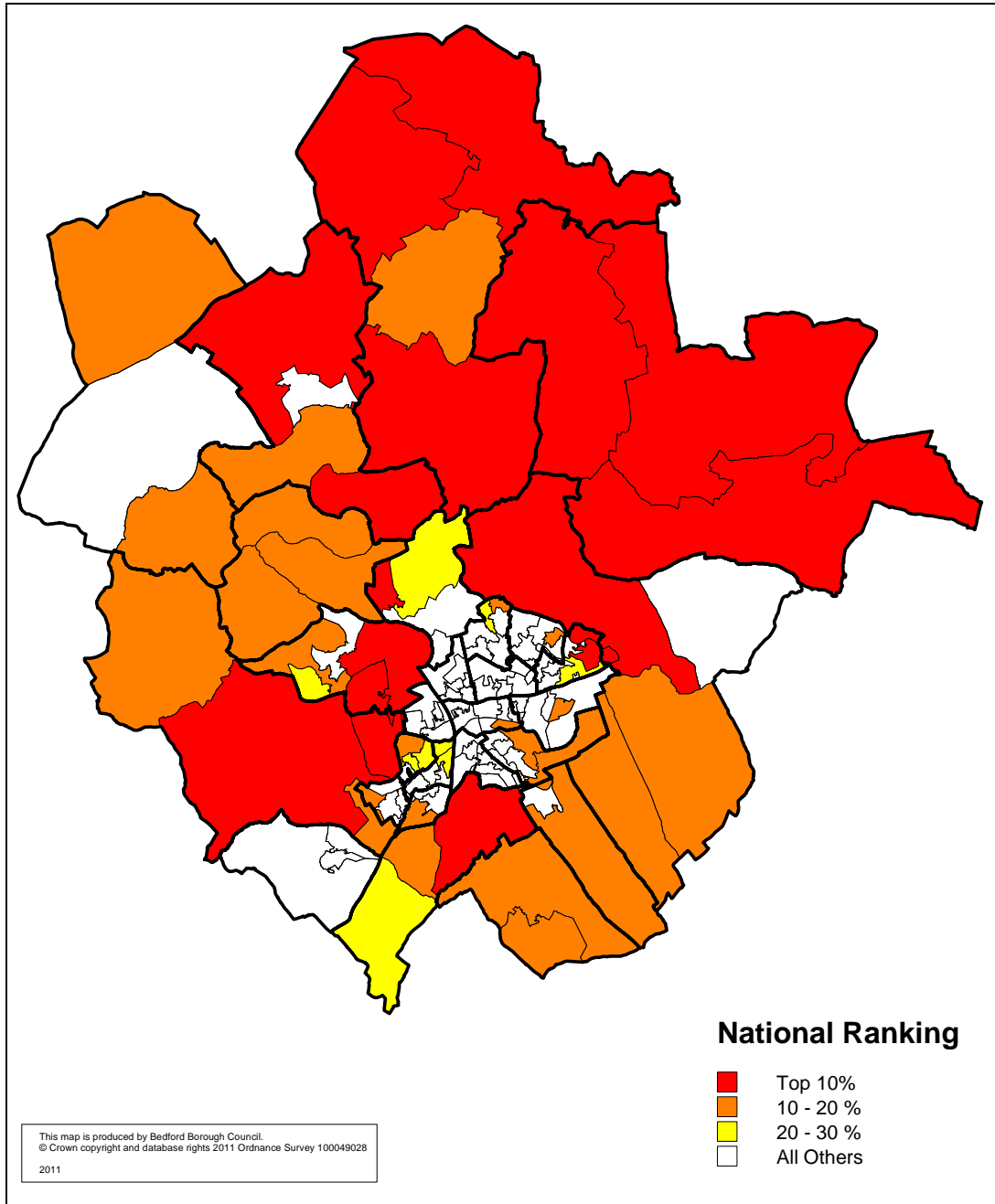
Note: for 'rank', 1 is the most deprived - out of a total of 102 LSOAs in Bedford Borough, and 32,482 LSOAs in England.

The Council is committed to addressing these issues so that everyone has the chance and opportunity to benefit from rights of way and outdoor access.

6.4 Access issues relating to use of the countryside

- Improvement to the network of routes by 'modification' - filling critical 'missing links' e.g. connecting bridleways to improve access for riders and cyclists
- Improvement of links between the rights of way network and the wider highway network e.g. considering 'quiet lanes' as important elements in creating quiet and attractive routes for riding and cycling which can be used with footpaths, bridleways and byways; and enhancing roadside verges to improve links for users
- Enhancing major routes to bind the network more strongly into the wider regional network and countryside sites; and development of links off these routes which can benefit the rural economy e.g. to local businesses such as pubs and restaurants, hotels and guest houses, art and craft venues, and tourist attractions.
- Greater links between urban and rural open spaces; and greater priority generally to improving and providing routes close to where people live such as links with shops, pubs, schools and neighbouring communities.
- Auditing and promoting the available access opportunities within the network which are suitable for use by those with restricted mobility.

Bedford Borough deprivation areas



- Creation of safe but challenging places for people to use recreational motor vehicles other than byways to help address localised pressure and concerns by other users about use of byways.

6.5 Existing users

6.5.1 Walking

Recent national research showed that in almost half of all households at least one person walked in the countryside in the last year and those questioned said they would walk more if access was better. Walking is the main use of our countryside. In our household survey, 88% of respondents said that they walk in the countryside on a regular basis (at least once a month) and this would give us an estimated 100,000 people in the Borough making walkers and dog walkers our largest 'group' of countryside users by far.

Walkers can use all forms of rights of way, footpaths, bridleways and byways which mean that they make use of the total rights of way network of 980 kilometres. Market research in 2003 showed that local walkers had recognised many recent improvements to the network in the Borough but also they felt that there was scope for further improvement. This work identified some particular needs of dog walkers, casual walkers and ramblers.

The following needs are important for anyone walking in the Borough:

- Routes which are safe and easy to use with clear waymarking
- Fewer path obstructions caused by heavily overgrown vegetation and ploughing

Other issues that have emerged from our surveys include:

- Support for varying the standards we set to maintain routes according to their popularity and use e.g. more maintenance for well used shorter circular routes, routes to schools, shops and pubs, and other walks close to and linking village settlements.
- The need to consider and balance the needs of those with restricted mobility as part of offering everyone an opportunity to access the countryside
- The increasing importance of the countryside – both rights of way and sites in supporting health improvements through Walking 4 Health
- The 'cultural' significance of getting out and using the countryside to which there is public access – how it helps provide people with a sense of place and with links to the past through their local history

6.5.2 Cycling

Cycling is a form of transport and a leisure and sporting activity, ranging from informal family riding, commuting using off-road cycle routes, off roading, touring and competitive racing. Cyclists benefit from a variety of on and off road terrain offered by the Borough's extensive network of rural roads and some good bridleway coverage. 26% of Borough survey respondent's cycle in the local countryside for recreation and we estimate that about 30,000 local residents claim to cycle in the countryside at least once a year.

Cyclists are able to use public bridleway and byways, but not public footpaths. This means an available rights of way network of 384 kilometres (see map on following page). Some 3% of all visits to the countryside in England 2009 – 2010 were for cycling or mountain biking.

The following needs are important for anyone cycling in the Borough:

- Touring and specialist biking routes which benefit the local economy
- Contribution cycling can make to improve travel needs in a more sustainable and 'green' way than the car
- Safety, usable surfaces and ease of access on routes
- Good linking of bridleways with the road and cycling network
- All terrain cycle courses

6.5.3 Horse riding

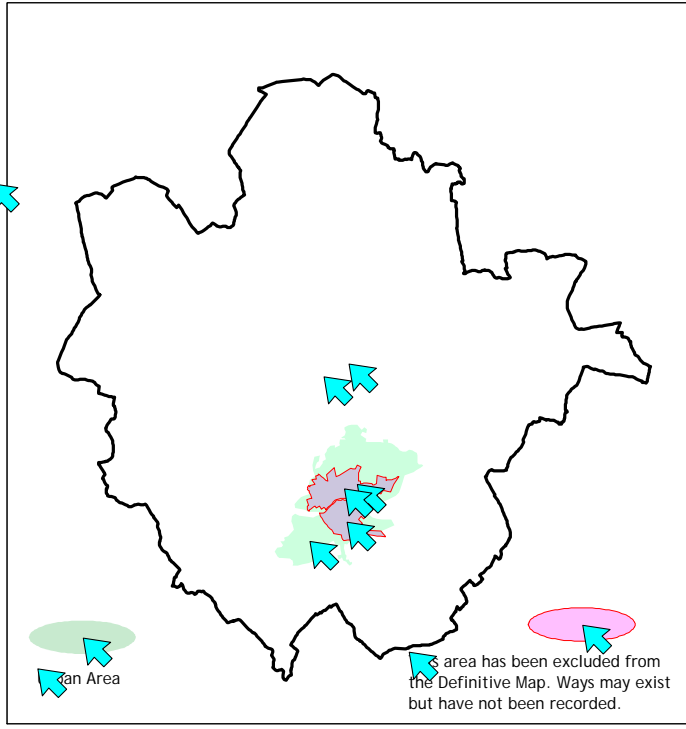
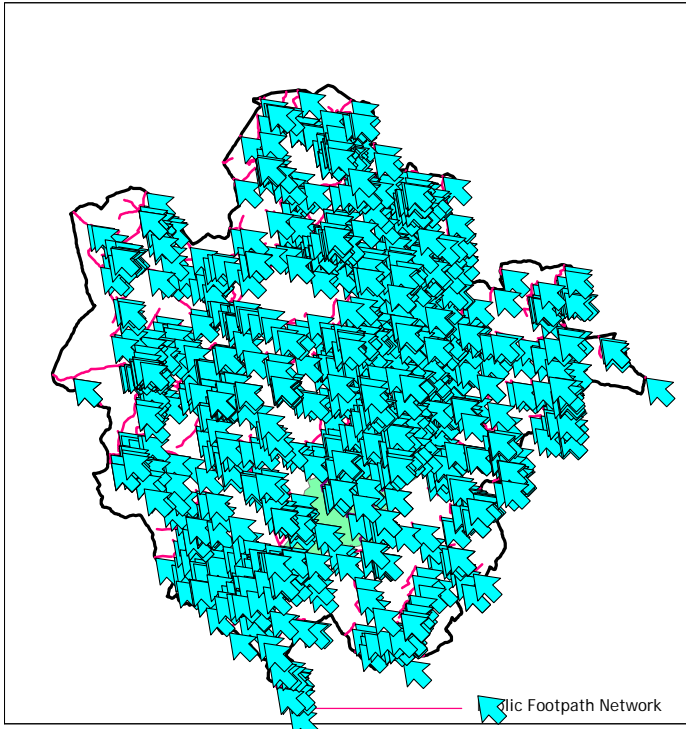
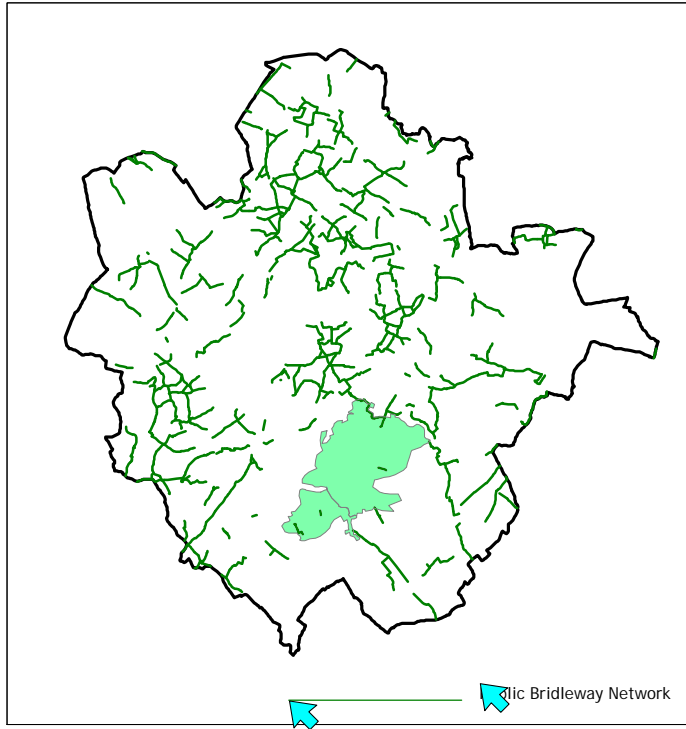
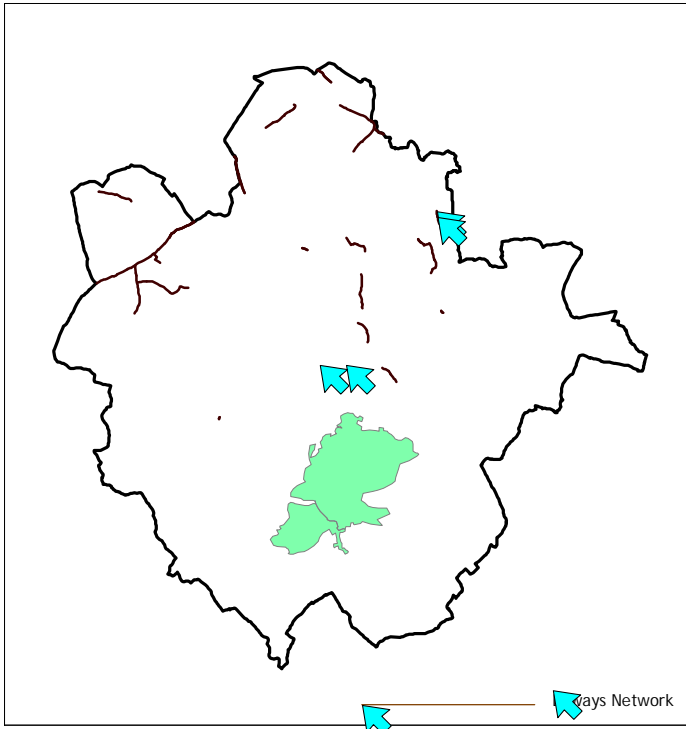
Horse riders are able to use public bridleway and byways, but not public footpaths. This means an available rights of way network of 384 kilometres. 4% of respondents in our household survey were horse riders which give us an estimated 5000 riders in the Borough.

The following needs are important for anyone horse riding in the Borough:

- Safety and ease of access for riders
- Better linking of bridleways throughout the network
- More and enhanced circular routes
- Increase the ease of using roadside verges and field headlands
- Easy to use and well maintained bridle gates
- Maintain surfacing to suit horses
- Horse riders also value Country Parks as places to park their boxes safely and meet to arrange routes and rides.

6.5.4 Motorised vehicles

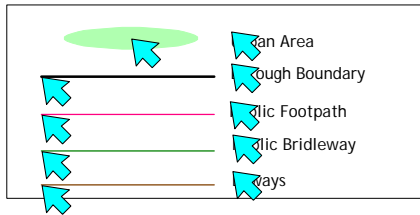
The Council manages 34 kilometres of Public Byway spread across the Borough. These can be used by walkers, cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers, trail riders and other



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Map Plot @: 1:400 000

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 Date: 23/05/11



motorised vehicles. Many of these byways are managed using temporary or permanent 'Traffic Regulation Orders' which close/restrict usage at some time during the year to reduce surface damage to these lanes. Any motor vehicle which uses a Public Byway must be taxed, tested, insured and 'street legal'.

Only 2% of those in our local resident survey told us they took part in 'off roading' with vehicles (both 2 and 4 wheels) which suggests about 2,500 local people could be involved in this form of countryside access but not solely our byways because of their increased mobility and range. Many users from outside of the Borough also visit the Byway network which has links well into Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.

The motorised vehicle users identified the following needs as important for using byways in the Borough:

- Better signs and information
- A greater useable network of byways
- Easily understood seasonal closure process
- More accessibility generally

There is a clear need to provide user awareness signs on byways to enable people to fully understand the extent of legitimate motorised use plus any rights and responsibilities particular to this type of public right of way

The Council is developing a Byways Management Plan to inform the decision making process for managing the Byway network. User groups and local communities have all made an input to the plan. The Byways are seen as a special recreational, cultural and environmental asset and there has to be a balance between user interests and heritage to ensure their different qualities are maintained. A sensitivity index has been developed and applied to each byway. The results of this application have been used to develop management prescriptions for each individual byway which can be used to inform temporary closures, resurfacing, signage, nature conservation and heritage issues.

We are working closely with Bedfordshire Police and locals landowners to reduce illegal access by motor vehicles on the rights of way network, the wider countryside and the farming landscape.

6.6 Other rights of way user groups

There are a number of 'walking for health' groups which have been established and run by volunteers under the Natural England 'walking for health' initiative. These groups offer regular short walks over easy terrain and are aimed at people who are new to walking and have little or no confidence to walk independently using local right of way. The

majority of the groups are organised and led by volunteers, who are trained up and supported through the national initiative.

The Council is committed to support health walks as a means of increasing public use of rights of way and improving individual's physical and mental health. For further details on health walks, please contact the Access Development Officer on 01234 276070.

Running has become a popular activity over the last 40 years with the countryside as an increasingly important and popular venue. From gentle, informal 'jogging', through organised running club sessions to highly organised events such as the Borough cross country championships. Orienteering, using either a specific site with mapped formal checkpoints and markers or more informally in relay (along for example the Greensand Ridge) is becoming more popular with schools, running clubs and families who can all take part together.

6.7 Current non users

The generally gentle nature of the landscape in the Borough means the rights of way network is relatively easy to use for outdoor access and recreation. Despite this and the fact that the network is free to use, there are a large number of people living in the Borough who do not take advantage of this and use it.

We know little about possible demand and interest from those who do not currently visit the countryside and/or use the rights of way network and the reasons why. Some people may be simply less comfortable and less confident about using the countryside, perhaps knowing little about what is available to them; or don't perceive it to be of interest to them.

These might be people with mobility difficulties or disability. There is limited information, for instance, on existing routes and facilities which are suitable for those with disabilities or those which could easily be modified for their use.

Reaching out to these people to encourage them to take advantage of the rights of way network will involve us in looking at a wide range of issues such as the language and images we use to market rights of way and the benefits on offer to different non user target groups.

6.8 Future trends

There are many new outdoor activities emerging which are often made possible with new technologies and materials. We will have to consider how we can enable people to take part in these activities and whether the rights of way network can sustain these types of

use. Rights of way legislation is often very slow in catching up with new user needs and has only relatively recently accepted the legal use of bridleways by cyclists. Emerging activities include:-

- Geo caching
- All terrain skate boards
- Horse boarding
- Parkour/free running
- Running with dogs
- Dog sleds
- Llama trekking

7 Delivery



7. Delivery

7.1 Funding and resources

We have a limited capital budget for 2011/12 but then no allocation in subsequent years. The Council's medium term financial strategy, 2012 - 2016 requires a further 20% reduction in budget. Although the precise impact of this on the Council rights of way team is unclear at this stage. The broad strategy is to focus on statutory/mandatory services, invest to save and maximizing the value of its assets. This plan and its associated action plan have been developed in accordance with this broad strategy.

The Council will be seeking to work in partnership with others to secure additional support and funding for delivery of this plan

7.2 Delivering the Plan

The delivery of the plan will be through a rolling 5 year action plan, 2012 – 17.

Our action plan has been developed based on what can realistically be achieved over the 5 year timeframe and current funding and staff levels. In light of the Council's financial strategy

We will also make the most of new funding made available for the development of green infrastructure which could provide benefits for outdoor access and the rights of way network arising from the Growth Area and associated planned development.

7.3 New funding sources

The RoWIP will be used to inform bids to fund rights of way improvement work and we will make the most of any relevant fundraising opportunities. In some cases we will use existing resources as match funding for more extensive projects which involve our partner organisations. We will always aim to get significant gearing and a greater return on the initial funding we might have committed.

The Local Transport Plan is a recognised source which the Parks and Countryside Service have previously used to fund access improvements however there is now increased competition. Many of the themes identified in our plan are reflected in the current Local Transport Plan and will be incorporated in its five year work programme particularly in the 'Active Travel' theme.

We will continue to work with Council planners to maximize the benefits through developer contributions, such as section 106 agreements and on site development plans.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has placed greater emphasis on access to our heritage and Sport England on encouraging physical activity. Both still present potential funding opportunities in the future, particularly following the Olympic Games in 2012.

The Borough Council and its partners have benefited greatly from Central Governments 'Growth Area Fund', which has included funding for green spaces since 2003. We are prepared to bid into this fund should any future rounds be announced, using this plan and the Green Infrastructure Plan as part of the evidence base.

With the government's new emphasis on 'Localism and Big Society', we anticipate some possible fundraising opportunities being created which are appropriate to our RoWIP actions.

7.4 Monitoring performance and achievement

Progress on the plan will be monitored by the Council and there will be regular updates on our progress to the Local Access Forum. An equality and access group has been established to work in partnership with local restricted mobility groups to monitor and review our performance and achievement on these issues.

The RoWIP action plan will be central to the annual work planning process for the Parks and Countryside service where individual officer work programme targets and accountability will be recorded. We will inform and involve our other partners through our regular monitoring meetings with them.

We recognise that good quality information about levels of outdoor access and the public benefits from the rights of way network will be important as an evidence base to support future plans and funding bids. We will continue to monitor our performance against BVPI 178 which will allow for benchmarking against other Council rights of way services.

7.5 RoWIP Action Plan 2012 – 2017

Please note the resource implications shown in the action plan are:-

Available resources from existing Parks and Countryside budgets – **A**

Extra resources from other Council budgets subject to availability – **XC**

Extra resources from external funding sources – **XE** (e.g S106 Agreements, Landfill Tax, Lottery, Sport England, Town and Parish Councils, Grant aid or Business sponsorship)

ROWIP aim - 1. Improve management of the rights of way network

Objectives 2012- 2017

1.1 Develop a structured, pro-active approach to rights of way network management, based on targeting and prioritisation of resources

1.2 Improve accessibility works to structures and rights of way signage and waymarking

1.3 Invest in capital asset management system for rights of way

1.4 Develop a system for recruiting and managing volunteers in the protection and management of rights of way

Key priorities 2012 – 2017

Deliverables	Timescale	Resource implications Available, eXtra Council (XC) or eXtra External (XE)	Policy link
1.1 Develop a structured, pro-active approach to rights of way network management, based on targeting and prioritisation of resources			
a. Specify and prioritise seasonal vegetation clearance (SVC) programme in collaboration with parish councils and user groups	May 2012	A	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset
b. Carry out programme of works to byway network arising from the 2011 management plan	2012 - 2016	A (<i>small scale improvements</i>) & XE	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset
c. Review bridle gates to consider removal or replacement of 10 structures per year with assistance of landowners and volunteers.	2012 - 2017	A	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements

d. Replace 10 bridle sleeper bridges with culverts per year	2012 - 2017	A	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
e. After initial baseline survey carry out a rolling annual inspection and condition survey over one third of the rights of way network per year and share results with users	2012 - 2015	A	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset
F. Compile list of bridges to be inspected and integrate with Highways bridge inspection process	2012	A	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset
g. List and inspect those structures not covered by Highways bridge inspection process	2012	A	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset
1.2 Improve accessibility works to structures and rights of way signage and waymarking			
a. Deliver a rolling programme of erecting signposts with destination and distance information and yellow topped 'Hi-Vis' way markers (targeting 9 parishes per annum)	2013 - 2016	A	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset
b. Pursue a strategy of replacing stiles with gaps or gates on 100 kilometres of rights of way by 2016, (targeting 9 parishes per annum)	2112 - 2016	A	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
c. Work with landowners to remove 30 stiles or upgrade 30 existing gate structures to easy access standard per year (targeting 9 parishes per annum)	2012 - 2017	A	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
1.3 Invest in capital asset management system for rights of way			
a. Develop a capital asset investment programme based on condition survey and assessment of key assets (bridges/ surfaced paths, etc)	2012 - 2013	A (small scale improvements)& XE	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset

b. Install revetments to 20 metres of footpath adjacent to River Great Ouse at Roxton	2013	A (small scale improvements)& XE	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset
c. Replace/upgrade Kempston back channel bridge	2016	XE	ROWIP Policy A – Managing the network asset
d. Deliver a programme of access improvements in Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) linked to BRVP framework plan	2011 - 2016	A (small scale improvements) & XE	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
1.4 Develop a system for recruiting and managing volunteers in the protection and management of rights of way			
a. Develop and support volunteer engagement in reporting problems and undertaking basic routine maintenance tasks	2012 - 2017	A	ROWIP Policy C – Communities and volunteers
b. Pilot use of CAMS volunteers module for Borough wide bridleways survey and programme work tasks	2012 -2014	A	ROWIP Policy C – Communities and volunteers
c. Train volunteers to assist in updating the ROW network condition survey	2012 - 2014	A	ROWIP Policy C – Communities and volunteers

ROWIP aim - 2. Increase community use and enjoyment of the rights of way network

Objectives 2012 - 2017

2.1 Market rights of way network to sustain existing and attract new users

2.2 Support community led initiatives such as health walks, guided walks/ rides and events

2.3 Support promoted route development/ management linked to marketing plan, rural business development and visitor attractions

2.4 Develop a system for managing improved customer contact

Key priorities 2012 - 2017

Deliverables	Timescale	Resource implications Available, eXtra Council (XC) or eXtra External (XE)	Policy link
2.1 Market rights of way network to sustain existing and attract new users			
a. Contribute to development of outdoor access (ie. parks, rights of way, etc) marketing plan	2012 - 13	A	ROWIP Policy G – Promotion and public awareness
b. Carry out a review of all promoted walks and rides against recreational route policy	2012 - 13	A	ROWIP Policy G – Promotion and public awareness

c. Develop and deliver a programme of targeted rights of way promotional material, events and activities	2012 - 2016	A	ROWIP Policy G – Promotion and public awareness
d. Maximise use of web/ phone based digital technology to promote rights of way.	2012 - 2017	A	ROWIP Policy F – Information
e. Put all promoted walks information on Let's Go website	2012 - 2017	A	ROWIP Policy F – Information
f. Deliver rights of way element of marketing plan, targeting non/low user groups.	2013 - 2016	A	ROWIP Policy G – Promotion and public awareness
2.2 Support community led initiatives such as health walks, guided walks/ rides and events			
a. Support 10 health walks in the Borough through walk leader training, improved infrastructure, signage and promotion	2012 - 2017	A & XE	ROWIP Policy C – Communities and volunteers
b. Train volunteers to lead health walks/ guided walks/ rides	2012 - 2017	A & XE	ROWIP Policy C – Communities and volunteers
2.3 Support promoted route development/ management linked to marketing plan, rural business development and visitor attractions			
a. Develop and promote John Bunyan trail with Ramblers Association and Economic Development team	2012 - 2014	A	ROWIP Policy C – Communities and volunteers ROWIP Policy G – Promotion and public awareness
b. Research demand/ need for x-country mountain biking route targeting Green Lane network/ bridleways.	2012 - 2013	A	ROWIP Policy G – Promotion and public awareness
c. Promote 6 themed walks/rides per year using digital technology	2012 - 2016	A	ROWIP Policy G – Promotion and public awareness

2.4 Develop a system for managing improved customer contact

a. Improve and extend content on Rights of Way interactive web site using latest condition survey data	2012 - 2014	A	ROWIP Policy F – Information
b. Publish ROW performance Indicator methodology and results relevant to different types of users online	2012 - 2017	A	ROWIP Policy F – Information

ROWIP aim - 3. Extend and enhance the Rights of Way network

Objectives 2012 - 2017

3.1 Reduce rights of way network fragmentation

3.2 Link, improve and extend National Cycle Network route 51 with rights of way network

3.3 Integrate rights of way principles, policies, and guidance notes into emerging strategic plans and maximise planning gain

3.4 Implement Green Wheel access improvements to achieve 20 kilometres of total route by 2017

Key priorities 2012 - 2017

Deliverables	Timescale	Resource implications Available, eXtra Council (XC) or eXtra External (XE)	Policy link
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3.1 Reduce rights of way network fragmentation

a. Open 15 kilometres of previously unusable path through resolution of Definitive Map anomalies by 2016	2012 - 2017	A & XC (subject to statement of priorities plan identifying scope of work and resource needs for definitive map programme)	ROWIP Policy D – The legal record ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
b. Quantify, identify and cost out routes which could offer benefits to reduce fragmentation through Public Path Orders	2012 - 2017	A & XC (subject to statement of priorities plan identifying scope of work and resource needs for definitive map programme)	ROWIP Policy D – The legal record ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
c. Work with Highways to develop an action plan to improve strategic/significant road crossings and maximise access opportunities associated with management of verges	2013 - 2014	A	ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network?
3.2 Link, improve and extend National Cycle Network Route 51 with rights of way network			
a. Link Great Barford to NCN 51 by cycle route	2013 - 2014	A & XC (LTP3) & XE	ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
b. Support development of NCN Route 51 (Bedford- Sandy) to NCN standard and adoption/ maintenance as public highway	2013 - 2014	A & XC (LTP3) & XE	ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
c. Support development of NCN Route 51 (Bedford-Marston Moretaine) realignment project and adoption/maintenance as public highway	2012 - 2016	A & XC (LTP3) & XE	ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
3.3 Integrate rights of way into emerging strategic plans and maximise planning gain			

a. Produce training/ guidance for planners and developers on managing and improving rights of way through the planning system	2012 - 2013	A	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
b. Improve access links to/ within Bedford River Valley Park	2012 - 2016	XE	ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
c. Improve access to/ within Biddenham Loop country park	2013 - 2015	XE	ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
d. Undertake Wixams / North Marston Vale review and implement access plan	2012 - 2017	A	ROWIP Policy E – Changing the network
3.4 Implement Green Wheel access improvements to achieve 20 kilometres of total route by 2016			
a. Enhance the waymarking and ancillary features of 8 kilometre of the Green Wheel	2012 - 2014	A	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
b. Duchess Road Green Wheel Link (0.5 km)	2013 - 2015	XC (LTP3) & XE	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
c. Freemans Common Green Wheel Link (0.7km)	2013 - 2015	XC (LTP3) & XE)	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
d. Biddenham Country Park missing access section (1.2km)	2015 - 2016	XC (LTP3) & XE	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
e. Develop FP24 Clapham to Brickhill Cycle route (2.0km)	2015 - 2016	XC (LTP3) & XE	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements
f. Explore feasibility of river crossing at Clapham Ford –	2013 - 14	A	ROWIP Policy B – Network Improvements

8. Further information



8. Further information

Bedford Borough Sustainable Community Strategy (2009)
Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan (2009)
Bedford Borough Local Development Scheme (2011)
Bedford Borough Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) (2011)
Bedford Borough Green Infrastructure Plan (GI) (2009)
Bedford Borough Green Spaces Strategy (2007)
Bedford Green Wheel Master Plan 2009)
Bedford River Valley Park Plan (2009)
Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (1999)
Bedford Borough Rights of Way Policies Framework (2011)
Bedford Borough Active Travel Plan (Cycling and Walking) (2011)
Bedford Borough Economic Development Strategy 2011 - 2014
Healthy Bedford Strategy (2009)
Bedford Borough Profile – Demography (2010)
Bedford Borough Profile – Deprivation and Worklessness (2010)
Bedford Borough Profile – Housing and Households (2010)
Monitor of engagement with the Natural Environment: The national survey on people and the natural environment – Natural England (2010)
Monitor of engagement with the Natural Environment: Comparison of MENE and England Leisure visits survey 2005 – Natural England (2010)
Forest of Marston Vale – Forest Plan (2000)
ADAS Consulting Ltd (2003) Economic Benefits Analysis
ADAS Consulting Ltd (2003) Needs of Walkers Survey
ADAS Consulting Ltd (2003) Key issues Study
The Economic and Social Value of Walking Ramblers Association (2003)
DEFRA (2002) Rights of Way Improvement Plans - Statutory Guidance to Local Highway Authorities in England DEFRA, London
Entec (2001) Rights of Way Use & Demand Study
Social and Community Planning Research (1996) UK Day Visits Survey 1996 SCPR, London
Walking for Health Initiative - Medical evidence of benefits of walking (2004)
Rights of Way - A guide to law and practice (3rd Edition) (J. Riddall & J. Trevelyan, 2001.)
2001 Census - Key Statistics (HMSO 2003)
Bedfordshire Access for All Fieldfare Trust study (2003)
Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy (2005)

Visit the rights of way webpage at –

http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/countryside/rights_of_way.aspx

How can you get involved?

We are looking for volunteers (individuals or groups) to help us to protect and improve the rights of way network in accordance with this plan. If you want to get involved in helping to make improvements to the rights of way network where you live, consider joining your local ROW volunteers group.

In particular we are looking for volunteers to:

1. Keep an eye on local paths and report problems.
2. Undertake basic maintenance work, trimming back overhanging vegetation, putting up way marker discs.
3. Undertake practical improvement tasks, such as installing kissing gates and way marker posts.
4. Basic surveys of the condition of the rights of way network

Full training, support and equipment will be provided. For further information use the following contact details.

Or look out for the details of links to many other organisations making a positive contribution to outdoor access and improving the environment on our web site

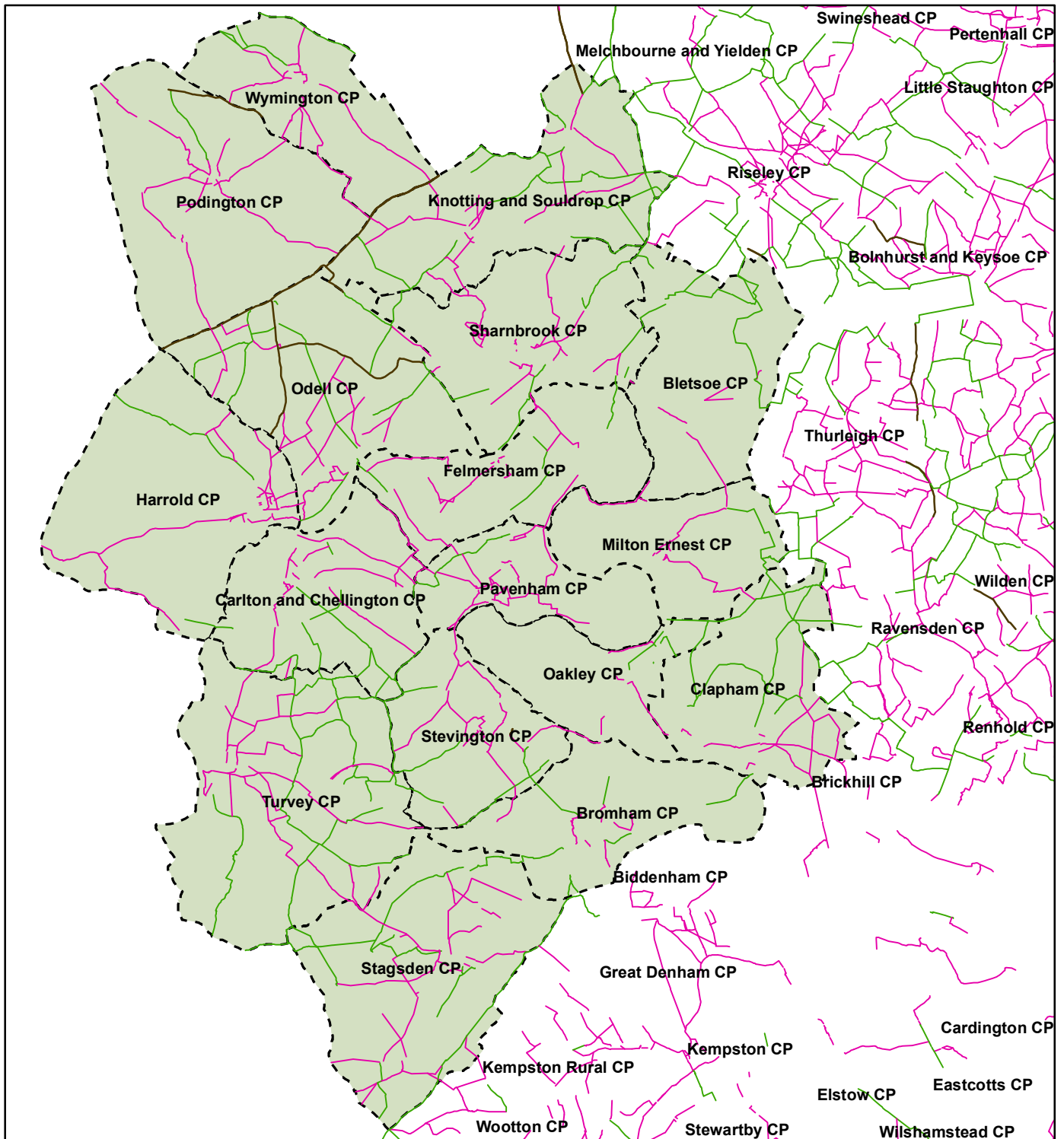
Rights of Way Officers – Area Maps

See maps opposite

Contact us

Rights of Way
Parks and Countryside
2nd Floor Riverside House
Town Hall
St Paul's Square
Bedford
MK40

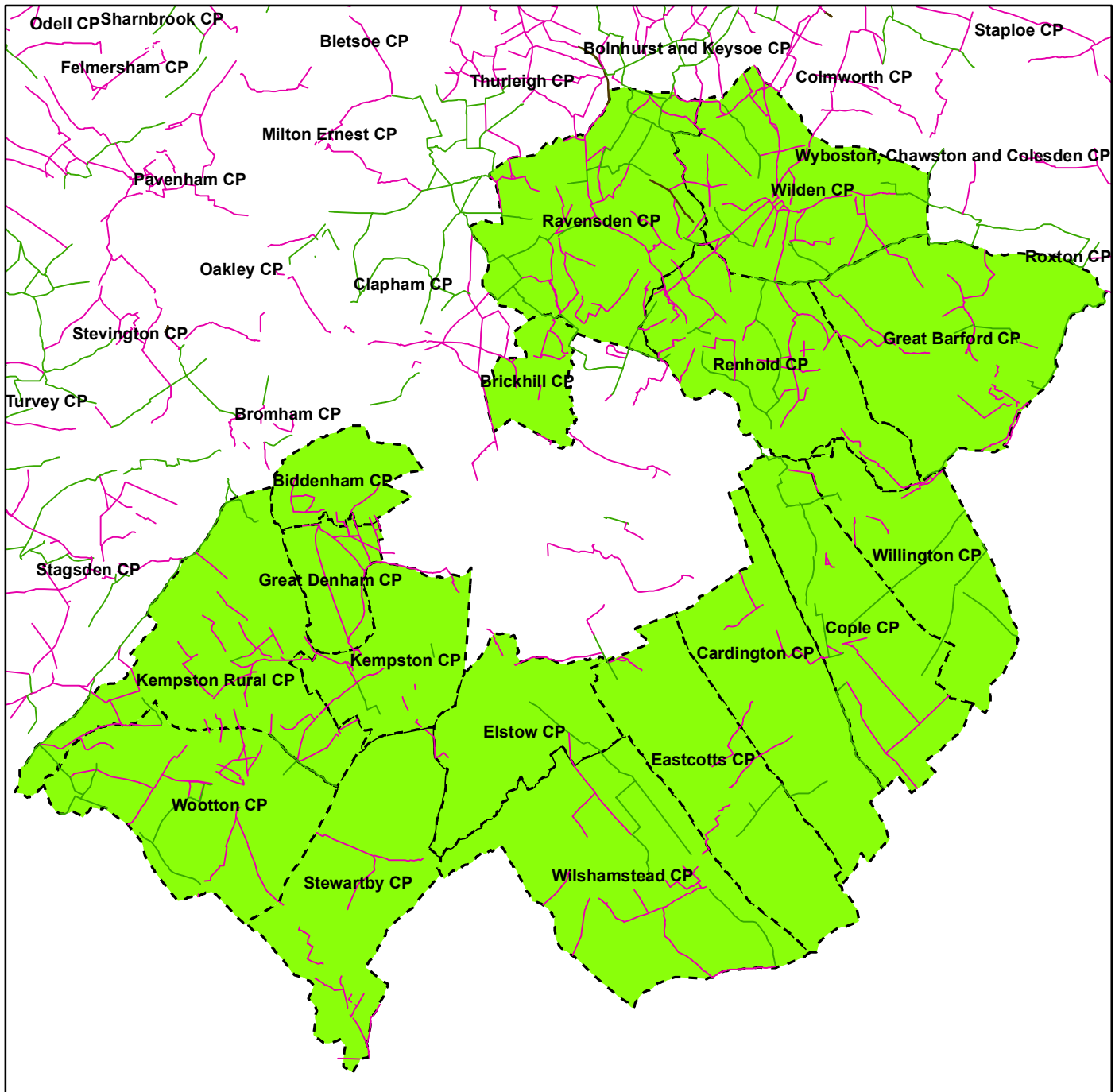
Phill Fox
Outdoor Access Development Officer
phillip.fox@bedford.gov.uk
Telephone: 01234 276070



North West - Rights of Way Officer area



North East - Rights of Way Officer area



Bedford and South - Rights of Way Officer area

