

Draft

Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-2028

Contents

Introduction	1
Achievements of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007- 2017	3
Management of the Asset	4
Themes and Actions	6
Theme 1 - Network Maintenance and Access	6
Theme 2 - Communication, Public Awareness and Signage	8
Theme 3 - Routes for Local Journeys and Multi-User Routes	10
Theme 4 - Short Circular Walks	12
Theme 5 - The Definitive Map and Statement and Other Statutory Records	13
Further Improvement Plan Aims	15
Statement	17
Appendices	
Appendix A: Assessment of the Local Rights Of Way Network	18
Appendix B: First Rights Of Way Improvement Plan Actions Summary	24

Introduction

Public Rights of Way (PROW) are a significant part of our heritage and a major leisure resource. They provide access to the countryside and offer opportunities for exercise and recreation. They are also an important asset in terms of sustainable transport, health and wellbeing, social inclusion and tourism.

A Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) sets out how a Highway Authority intends to manage and secure an improved PROW network in order to meet the demands of walkers, cyclists, horse riders, horse and carriage drivers, people with mobility problems and people using motorised vehicles. A ROWIP is a statutory requirement and should be assessed and reviewed not more than every 10 years.

This is Bolton Council's Second ROWIP and is built on the success of its First ROWIP. It has taken into account changes in national policy, the current economic climate and reflects the available resources and level of funding available for the management of PROW. Nevertheless, where resources allow we will strive to implement the key priority areas of this ROWIP and make Bolton a great place for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Bolton Council's First ROWIP was adopted in 2008 and established a plan for the improvement of PROW and countryside access initially over a five year period. Since it was adopted many achievements have been accomplished and improvements made to the existing network.

In developing our First ROWIP, stakeholder groups were asked to make comment and a comprehensive assessment and survey was carried out to help the Council understand the current state of the network and the needs and demands of current and future users. People's thoughts on the most important issues and priorities for access and the PROW network formed the basis of its objectives and it was designed to be ambitious and expressed the optimistic and ambitious mood at the time. The aim of the Council's Second ROWIP is to rationalise the aspirations of our First ROWIP and provide a set of realistic future objectives taking into account a mixture of statutory obligations, customer needs, and resource limitations.

The Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has advised that existing guidance is still valid and consistent with current objectives. However, authorities have been asked to consider access to woodland as well as other land types when reviewing their plans.

The current economic climate has made it necessary for Bolton Council to consider the benefits of undertaking further public consultation and detailed network

assessment. We have also considered how the extent of the network has changed. Although we have made many improvements to the PROW network, the extent of the network has not substantially changed and it was considered that the network assessment and the consultation on the needs of users undertaken for the First ROWIP are both still valid for our Second ROWIP. A summary of the assessment of the extent to which our PROW meets the present and likely future needs of the public is included in Appendix A.

This improvement plan contains both site-specific proposals and broader, general issues, which are the focus of our new statement of actions for the management of PROW within Bolton and for securing an improved network. These actions are stated below and have been organised into the following themes:

1. Network Maintenance and Connectivity.
2. Communication, Public Awareness and Signage.
3. Short Circular Walks.
4. Routes for Local Journeys and Multi-User Routes.
5. The Definitive Map and Statement and Other Statutory Records.

Implementation of the ROWIP can contribute towards our corporate priorities and also help achieve many of the objectives and goals in the following strategies and plans:

- Bolton 2030 - *a vision for Bolton's Future*.
- Bolton's Core Strategy Development Plan.
- Bolton Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- Bolton Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040.
- Greater Manchester Mayor's Walking and Cycling Report – "*Made to Move*".
- A Greater Manchester Congestion Deal.
- Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
- Greater Manchester Cycling and Walking Strategy.
- Greater Manchester Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Achievements of the First Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The First ROWIP published in 2008 set out a series of actions we intended to undertake. Since 2008 Bolton Council has achieved many of the actions including:

- Developed guidance notes for developers.
- Continued to identify new schemes that improve pedestrian links.
- Helped to provide access improvements for safe routes to schools.
- Created new rights of way.
- Created the Bolton East Cycle Way for Walkers, Horse Riders and Cyclists.
- Created bridleway feeder routes as part of the West Pennine Moors Bridleway Strategy.
- Made available public rights of way maps and supporting information on the Bolton Council website.
- Worked in partnership with volunteer groups.
- Improved signage.
- Introduced Health Walks.
- Created a new network of footpaths and byways at the Logistics North development site (Previously the Cutacre Coal Site).

However, some actions were not delivered with such success, primarily due to the lack of resources they include:

- Creating new routes.
- Resolving 10% of anomalies each year.
- Many upgrades of footpaths to bridleways.

A more detailed review of the first plan's actions is included in Appendix B. Actions not achieved in the previous plan have been kept on record and, if still appropriate, be actioned as and when resources allow. These are listed in the section "Further Improvement Plan Aims" below.

Management of the Asset

The current PROW network comprises:

Asset	Length or Number
Footpaths	187 miles
Bridleways	2 miles
Restricted Byways	30 miles
Sign's	+ 500
Stiles and Gates (those fully maintained by Bolton Council)	190
Footbridges, Retaining Walls and Boardwalks	134
Other assets maintained by Bolton Council (e.g. steps)	+ 480

Of the 219 miles of rights of way approximately 141 miles are fully maintained by the PROW team, the remainder is either maintained by landowners, or other Bolton Council departments.

In addition, there are around 3.5 square miles of Open Access Land in Bolton; this is private land where a public right of access has been granted. This is mainly the moorland in the north of the borough around Smithills Moor and Winter Hill.

Bolton Council as the highway authority has a statutory duty to:

- Keep the surface of PROW's which are maintained at public expense in a fit state for public use.
- Make sure obstructions are removed.
- Maintain some bridges over natural watercourses.
- Ensure structures for the control of animals, e.g. gates or stiles, are to an appropriate standard.
- Make sure there are no notices that prevent or discourage the use of a PROW.
- Add signs where a PROW leaves a surfaced road.
- Make sure the public's rights to use a PROW are protected.
- Make sure landowners carry out their duties, and take action if they don't.

It is estimated that around 90% of the network is adequately signposted where a PROW leaves a surfaced road. Maintaining waymarking where PROW cross through open country or rural settlements is an ongoing challenge. Unfortunately, due to wear and tear, and deliberate theft or damage, there is a need for an annual programme of sign and waymarking replacement and upgrading to fulfil our statutory obligations.

Surface condition, in particular flooding and up-growth in summer, continues to be an issue on many routes. It is the council's responsibility to cut back and keep down

vegetation growing from the surface of some rights of way. The Council has an annual cutting-back programme to tackle up-growth on PROW. Each year around 36 miles of path are cleared. This programme is now generally limited to a single cut per year, though it is recognised that this is not frequent enough to keep certain paths clear throughout the year.

Invasive weeds such as Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed are problematic on some routes, in particularly within the River Irwell valley, annual treatment of these weeds is required to keep the public safe and prevent the weeds spreading further.

Due to the exposed location and environment of some paths, their surfaces can be severely affected by the impact of weather events. This has led to closures of paths in recent years, and costly repairs following the occurrence of storms that resulted in severe erosion and landslips.

Annual investment of both revenue and capital is required to maintain paths to an adequate standard that meets our statutory obligations and to limit deterioration of the assets. It is likely that in the short to medium-term investment needs will not be met which may result in a decline in the overall condition of the network.

Customer complaints and routine inspections are compiled to produce a list of candidate schemes that would make improvements to the network by repairing existing assets or making surface improvements. Many of the surface improvement schemes are to resolve muddy or flooded sections of path or to introduce hard surfacing to encourage increased usage by a wider group of people. At March 2018 there were around 180 projects on the schemes list having an estimated cost between £1,000 and £50,000 and having a total estimated cost of £675,000.

Condition surveys are regularly undertaken by in-house staff and by volunteer groups. From these surveys we can monitor the network and identify problem areas. The current condition of the 141 miles of surfaces maintained by the PROW team is indicated below.

Network Condition at April 2018

Asset	Asset Condition : Number of PROW closed (for safety) or frequently impassable.	Asset Condition : PROW surfaces passable but in poor condition.
Public Rights of Way (total =141 miles)	8 No. (totalling 2.5 miles)	85 No. (totalling 13 miles)

Themes and Actions

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local highway authorities to prepare a statement of the action they propose to take for the management of PROW, and for securing an improved network. Together the 'Themes and Actions' and the 'Further Improvement Aims' sections below provide a statement of the proposed actions we intend to take to improve PROW and access for all.

Although it is a statutory duty to produce a ROWIP and to review it when required, there is no similar duty to implement it. Currently there is no revenue or capital funding for improvements and it is unlikely that there will be any dedicated funding to deliver all of the following actions.

Theme 1: Network Maintenance and Access

Summary: Bolton Council seeks to provide an accessible network in an improved overall condition that meets the requirements of all users. The condition of sections of the network, the risk to users and how condition is considered to hinder use by a wide range of users are issues that are often raised. Highway Authorities have a statutory duty to keep the surface of PROW's which are maintained at public expense in a fit state for use. However, due to the size of the network, implementing this duty requires a level of prioritisation; this in turn relies on regular inspection and monitoring of the network.

Objective: To adequately monitor and maintain the PROW network and to prioritise maintenance work using multiple criteria in order to maximise user satisfaction and focus work on locations that return the greatest benefit.

Why:

- Surfaces, gates and stiles that are in a poor condition deter usage, particularly by users who are less mobile or those with a disability.
- Stiles inappropriate for a location deter usage.
- Well maintained routes will lead to an increase in walking, horse riding and cycling amongst the section of the public less confident and familiar with PROW, leading to improved health and wellbeing outcomes.
- To encourage sustainable transport and consequently contributes to a reduction of carbon emissions.
- To improve the quality of life for residents.

Delivery Actions:

Aim	Action	Timescale
Ensure PROWS are regularly inspected and monitored	Record condition surveys in an asset management database. Work with partners to closely monitor PROW conditions.	On-Going
Ensure surfaced urban routes are inspected and maintained to an appropriate standard.	Better align inspection, condition and maintenance standards of urban paths with the Code of Practice 'Well-managed highway infrastructure'.	Review Annually
Keep an up-to-date database of photographs recording network condition to assist in enforcement and maintenance matters.	Maintain and keep up to date a photographic condition recording database to meet current and future operational needs.	On-Going
Assist landowners to remove, repair, or modify gates and stiles to assist access for less mobile users.	Working with stakeholders and user groups to identify stiles which are unnecessary or not easily accessible. Work with landowners to have these improved or replaced to the least restrictive option (that is a gate, before a kissing gate, before a stile, will be encouraged) conforming with the British Standard BS 5709 specification for gaps, gates and stiles.	On-Going
Ensure the rights of the public are protected and asserted.	Continue to address unlawful obstructions throughout the network.	On-going
Prioritise maintenance of key routes using an asset management approach.	Prioritise maintenance on routes using a prioritisation matrix, based on statutory requirements, user value, strategic policy alignment and financial implications. Seek to encourage more volunteers to get involved in routine maintenance.	On-going
Utilise the development control process to provide opportunities to improve, enhance and protect the network.	Continue to work with the planning department to identify opportunities and threats arising from planning applications.	On-Going
Monitor the condition of the network, and ensure that it is well maintained and appropriate for use by all. For example, by users with mobility problems, elderly or a visual impairment.	Endeavour to prioritise maintenance of stile-free or easy-access routes (small circuits or linear connections, not isolated paths). Paying specific attention to the particular needs of disabled and visually impaired users.	On-Going
Better connect green spaces and woodland with communities and urban areas.	Work with partners to enhance links to woodland via the network.	On-Going

Theme 2: Communication, Public Awareness and Signage

Summary: The Internet has transformed the means by which data can be provided and shared, and a growing number of people use it to access information. This not only allows the public to access information whilst at home but also enables information to be accessed using mobile devices in the countryside.

There are many residents of Bolton who do not regularly use PROW or may not be informed about the opportunities available to them to explore the PROW network and local access land. We know from the assessment carried out for our First ROWIP, and from national surveys that utilisation of the outdoors for exercise in Bolton is poor when compared to other areas¹.

It is accepted that regular exercise, and in particular walking in an outdoor environment, leads to improvements in physical and mental health. We want to encourage new users, and increase awareness of the benefits of regular exercise on the PROW network. The actions under this theme aim to focus on looking for ways to provide information, engage with potential users and work with partner organisations.

Objective: Maximise the potential of the internet and other media to improve the provision of information about the PROW network and countryside access, thereby encouraging and promoting the use of the network and access land.

Why:

- To improve the opportunity for people to interact with their local environment and create a sense of place.
- To communicate information on how to travel between local communities on foot or by bicycle.
- To maximise the availability information on PROW.
- To improve the health and wellbeing of our residents, so that they can live healthy, fulfilling lives for longer by increasing public awareness of the many opportunities available locally to utilise the outdoors for regular exercise.
- To promote sustainable transport by encouraging and supporting non-recreational journeys without a car.
- To improve the user experience of Bolton's urban and rural PROW.
- To increase the economic benefits of attracting visitors to Bolton.

¹ Public Health Outcomes Framework (2018) Available: <http://www.phoutcomes.info/> – Indicator 1.16 'Utilisation of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons'

Delivery Actions:

Aim	Action	Timescale
Use the Council's website to communicate information on PROW matters. Ensure enquiries regarding the network are easily made by the public.	Ensure our website contains a comprehensive range of material including general information, advice, answers to frequently asked questions, policies, downloadable forms, promoted route information and an online problem reporting form. Provide a dedicated single point of contact by email.	Review annually
Use the Council's website to provide PROW location and access information to encourage greater use.	Maintain online systems to meet the needs of users. Improve information provided to the public and make the best use of new technology.	Review annually
Explain what is and is not allowed on PROW to encourage greater responsible use of routes in the countryside.	Provide clear guidance to the public on using PROW and relevant countryside issues.	Review annually
Reduce opportunities for conflict and help users to have confidence in locating and being on a PROW and access land by monitoring, maintaining and improving signing of routes.	Continue with a programme of maintaining and improving signposting and way-marking. Destination signs may be considered on strategically important routes.	On-Going
Publicise routes following the completion of improvement works.	Utilise the Council's website to publicise improvements.	On-Going
Publicise information on PROW notices and temporary closures.	Utilise the Council's website to publicise rights of way legal orders, restrictions, temporary closures, and maps showing diversion routes.	On-Going
Work with internal departments and partner organisations to promote use of the PROW network	Work with others and partner organisations to promote utilisation of the outdoors for exercise.	On-going

Theme 3: Routes for Local Journeys and Multi-User Routes

Summary: The UK is working towards a form of mobility that is sustainable, energy-efficient and respectful of the environment. By promoting multi-user routes linking communities with places of work, schools and local facilities, we increase the opportunities for local travel using sustainable transport and establish improved provisions that avoid busy roads for cyclists and horse riders. Multi-user routes have the most benefits to the widest range of users including those with mobility problems, or hearing loss, or the visually impaired. The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework will help ensure that new development is located where it can be highly accessible by cycling, walking and public transport, to reduce reliance on the car, particularly for short journeys.

Objective: Utilise investment programmes across Greater Manchester such as the Cycling City Ambition Grant (CCAG) and the planning process during new development to establish and promote multi-user routes linking communities with local facilities and help people travel through developed areas.

Why:

- To encourage the use of sustainable transport within the community.
- To encourage exercise especially by individuals whose well-being, disability, or lack of confidence prevents use of the more challenging parts of the footpath network.
- To promote healthy lifestyles; cycling or walking to work can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease by up to 46%.²
- To provide opportunities for non-recreational and recreational use by walkers, horse riders and cyclists for exercise and have the additional benefit of attracting visitors to Bolton to enjoy off-road cycling facilities.

Delivery Actions:

Aim	Action	Timescale
Increase the number of multi-user routes.	Utilise the planning process to maximise the opportunity to increase the provision of multi-user routes during new development and to upgrade any existing routes	On-Going

² UK Biobank (2017) "Association between active commuting and incident cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mortality: prospective cohort study"

Aim	Action	Timescale
Remove, where feasible, barriers and obstructions on routes.	Ensure the least restricted route possible and ensure maximum accessibility for all users.	On-Going
Identify and develop routes that can be used to make the PROW network more interlinked with the cycling network and increase links between the bridleway and restricted byway network.	Utilise the planning process to maximise opportunities to provide new bridleway and restricted byway links.	On-Going
Pursue funding for projects to improve the multi-user network.	Pursue funding from local transport programmes, such as CCAG or other sources to improve the multi-user network.	On-Going
Improve the multi-user network on Access Land.	Landowners will be encouraged to consider the dedication of horse-riding and cycling rights on Access Land, or along a particular route across such land.	On-Going
Seek to utilise disused canal and railway line corridors as multi-user routes.	Examine the potential for disused canal tow paths and disused railway lines to be developed into multi-user routes that provide connections within Bolton and to further afield.	On-Going
Improve the safety and availability of public rights of way affected by main or busy roads.	Identify lengths of highway verge, existing unclassified roads, disused railway lines, quiet lanes and canal towpaths that could act as safe multi-user links between public rights of way.	On-Going

Theme 4: Short Circular Walks

Summary: Consultation during the First ROWIP process and the findings of national surveys undertaken by Natural England, indicate that it is important to people to have short walks which are close to or within two miles of their homes where they can access green space³. We also know that data from Public Health England surveys indicate that the percentage of adults that are physically active in Bolton is below average⁴. We want to encourage our community to explore and utilise the opportunities provided by access to the rights of way network.

Objective: To encourage local access to green space for short walks and exercise in and around Bolton's urban areas with the priority on walks of thirty minutes to an hour.

Why:

- To increase use of the outdoors and public rights of way for exercise.
- To increase exercise by people whose physical and mental health is most likely to benefit from use of the public rights of way network.
- To focus some of our actions in and near communities suffering health inequalities to encourage routine healthy walking.

Delivery Actions:

Aim	Action	Timescale
Ensure the availability of short walks accessible from urban areas to local green space.	Adequately maintain short easy access walks from where people live to green space, with a focus on communities experiencing health inequalities.	On-Going
Improve access to greenspace and woodland from the urban area.	Identify missing links and work with local partners to create new accessible walks that link green spaces and woodland with urban communities.	On-Going
Encourage more people to take short walks which are close to or within two miles of their homes	Support Bolton Council's Get Active Team who are delivering a Health Walk Programme.	On-Going

³ Natural England (2013) 'Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: The national survey on people and the natural Environment'

⁴ Public Health England (2017) – 'Bolton - Health Profile 2017'

Theme 5: The Definitive Map and Statement, and Other Statutory Records

Summary: The definitive map and statement form the legal record of all known PROW and provides conclusive evidence of their existence. The PROW service is responsible for investigating and processing definitive map modification orders where there is evidence that the definitive map and statement is incorrect; this is a statutory duty. We also have the power to make public path orders to create, divert or extinguish public footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways. The existence of an accurate legal record of PROW is fundamental to securing the public's use of the network. Other statutory records include registers of; Highways Act and Commons Act map deposits, and claims for rights of way under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Objectives: Make publicly available an up-to-date copy of the Definitive Map and Statement and other relevant records to allow access to information, with aim of informing and educating users, and landowners.

Why:

- To provide clear advice and guidance to the public and landowners on their legal rights and responsibilities.
- To counter the potential loss of important routes.
- To ensure we fulfil our statutory duties.
- To ensure our records are up-to-date, accurate and able to form a sound basis for the management of the network.

Delivery Actions:

Aim	Action	Timescale
Promote the creation of new links and the improvement of popular routes to enhance the network.	Consider sharing or defraying the cost of creation agreements with landowners who are willing to create new links or improve popular routes and encouraging the creation of multi-user routes where appropriate.	On-Going
Reduce the number of definitive map anomalies and inconsistencies.	Prioritise resolving definitive map anomalies and inconsistencies; for example, existing PROW that end in cul-de-sacs and those that have different rights along their extent.	On-Going

<p>Promote the use of path orders to ratify and make improvements to the network for users</p>	<p>Take opportunities to resolve long-standing issues on the network including minor obstructions or anomalies where they can be resolved through path order progression. Where benefits for users are clear, promote the funding of orders to facilitate a change.</p>	<p>On-Going</p>
<p>Prevent the loss of currently unrecorded routes.</p>	<p>Work with local stakeholders to identify unrecorded rights of way which were in existence before 1949 prior to the 2026 cut-off date.</p>	<p>On-Going until 2026</p>
<p>Support the principle of diverting PROW out of working farmyards where it is clearly shown to enhance the public rights of way network.</p>	<p>Promote diverting PROW out of working farmyards where it is clearly in the interest of farming practice and an alternative route of equal or greater public benefit will be offered enhancing the network.</p>	<p>On-Going</p>

Further Improvement Plan Aims

In addition to the general aims and actions listed above in the 'Themes and Actions' section, there are improvement plan aims that have been identified relating to specific geographic locations or areas. Some of these aims have been carried forward from the previous improvement plan. The timescale for these aims would be over the lifetime of the plan and actioned as and when resources allow.

No	Aim	Comment	Estimated Cost, £k
Theme 1 : Network Maintenance and Access			
1	Improve footpaths linking Arley Woods with the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.	Improves access to and from Wigan and Chorley with the canal towpath.	16
2	Maze Street, Darcy Lever. Dedication of footpaths linking into Moses Gate Country Park.	To secure this important access to the Country Park.	5
3	Printers Lane. Re-opening.	Secure re-opening of important link between Bradshaw Hall and Turton Road	100
4	Create a link footpath from Grange Road to the bridge south of the Jumbles reservoir	Improves and formalises access to this important recreational area.	16
5	Footpath 2 - Turton Eagley. Create safe stepped access leading to network of paths to the north of the Last Drop Village.	Improves access to this important recreational area.	12
Theme 2: Communication, Public Awareness and Signage			
6	Promoting recreational routes from major links with the Public Transport network.	Raise awareness of easy access to local greenspace.	N/A
Theme 3: Short Circular Walks			
7	Create a circular route in the Eagley Valley.	Link Halli'th wood and Astley Bridge utilising existing informal routes.	24
8	Create a surfaced circular route linking Great Lever to Highfield.	Utilise the national cycle route 55 and paths around Bolton Hospital.	36

Theme 4: Routes for Local Journeys and Multi-User Routes			
9	Disused Railway Lines: Secure agreements to create multi-user routes along disused railway lines.	We are continuing to examine the remaining sections of disused railway within Bolton for the potential for multi-user routes.	N/A
10	Upgrade Footpaths to Bridleways within urban areas where appropriate.	Support the use of all forms of sustainable travel by allowing use by bicycles.	N/A
11	River valley routes: Create formal multi-user routes along existing informal routes along the river valley network.	Create formal multi-user routes alongside the River Croal and Irwell, connecting to urban areas to the east and south.	N/A
12	Westhoughton Railway Station. Widen and re-surface footpath 104 linking station to Manchester road (A6).	With a view to formalising cycle use.	30
13	Footpath 5 - Little Lever. Upgrade to Public Bridleway	To improve use and divert pedestrians and horses off Radcliffe Road	36
14	Create a formal route from Lucas road along the former mineral Railway line in Farnworth, linking with routes on Farnworth and Great Lever Golf Course.	To increase the potential for sustainable travel to the Logistics North employment site.	36
Theme 5: The Definitive Map and Statement, and Other Statutory Records			
15	Create formal routes on existing permissive routes.	Where appropriate obtain creation agreements with landowners to formalise known permissive routes.	N/A
16	Amend the definitive map and statement where anomalies exist.	Where demonstrably a historic physical obstruction, amend the map as appropriate.	>100

Statement

The ROWIP follows on from the Council's First ROWIP and continues to promote the vital contribution the PROW network and Access Land makes to wider environmental, social, health and economic agendas and to supporting Bolton Council's corporate goals.

Bolton Council's PROW network provides more than 219 miles of opportunities for walking, riding and cycling for recreation, travel and enjoyment.

It is recognised that a functioning rights of way network will help:

- Contribute to the quality of people's lives, their health, fitness and wellbeing.
- Provide sustainable means of travel to schools, work and key services, and reduce the reliance on cars.
- Improve the environment.
- Increase accessibility and opportunities to enjoy green spaces, the countryside, leisure facilities and tourist destinations.

Challenges to the network are posed by the financial resources available in the short to medium term to undertake maintenance and physical improvements, and it is likely that some deterioration of the network from its current condition will occur due to natural erosion and use.

Progress in implementing improvements is likely to be slow, although opportunities will be taken to secure rights of way improvements whenever this is possible through the resources of other partner organisations or through the planning process as a result of development.

Appendix A: Assessment of the Local Rights Of Way Network.

As part of this assessment and review of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) we have considered how the extent of the public rights of way network has changed. Although we have made many improvements to the public rights of way network, the extent of the network has not substantially changed and it was considered that the network assessment undertaken for the First ROWIP is still valid for our Second ROWIP.

The previous assessment used a variety of sources of information. These can be grouped together as:

- A physical analysis of the network, which has involved the accumulation of information from a number of field surveys and previously reported problems.
- An analysis of the responses from our various user surveys.
- An analysis of the views and recommendations of professional partners and colleagues, who are involved in various activities such as producing school travel plans and active health strategies.

The assessment is summarised below and states an overview of the local provision and issues for the following users:

- walkers
- cyclists
- horse riders
- horse and carriage drivers
- people with mobility problems
- people using motorised vehicles.

It explains in summary how improvements can be made by the local authority to the public rights of way network to provide a better experience for these users.

Some minor changes to the original text of the assessment in relation to the provision for off-road cycling have been made to bring the assessment up to date and make it relevant following changes in the network.

Assessment Summary

USERS	
Walkers	We have found that across the Borough the provision of pedestrian routes for walkers tends to vary greatly. There are distinct differences between the opportunities available in rural and urban areas, as well as our managed parks, so we will look at them separately. The assessment regarding walkers is discussed in more detail below in the sections titled “ Urban Walking Locations ” and “ Rural Walking Areas ” below.
Cycling - Off Road Cyclists	Overview - We have found that facilities for off-road cyclists tend to be fragmented in much the same way as they are for horse riders. Most hard standing off-road routes tend to be located on the network of restricted byways within the central Bolton area. These routes vary greatly in terms of standard of surface.

	<p>The main provision for off road cycling is at the following locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 4.5 mile long shared footpath and cycleway has been created from central Bolton to Middlebrook at Horwich, via the Middlebrook river corridor. • A 2 mile long shared footpath and cycleway has been created (in part) from Central Bolton to the border with Salford and forms part of the National Route 55 of the National Cycle Network. This route connects to a larger cycle network connecting Bolton with Salford and Manchester that is largely traffic free. • A 2 mile long walking and cycling route connecting Red Rock in Wigan and Adlington passes through the north west of the borough. This also forms part of the National Route 55 of the National Cycle Network • A 2 mile long shared footpath and cycleway was completed in 2016 between central Bolton and Bury. This is mostly off the public rights of way network but has greatly improved local provision for cyclists. <p>Off-road facilities linking other areas of the Borough to these routes are missing. A lack of signage, particularly information regarding destinations and distance was also identified as a problem.</p>
	<p>Summary - The current network (although mostly not on public rights of way) for cyclists is greatly improved and improving but lacks some connectivity. The emerging network helps the Council in achieving key strategic aims such as reducing levels of obesity and additionally helps to encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport.</p>
<p>Cycling - Mountain Biking</p>	<p>Overview - Facilities for mountain bikers vary across the Borough. The countryside north of the Bolton town centre area contains a network of Restricted Byways and informal routes that many riders enjoy riding on. There are problems associated with these routes though. Firstly, use of Restricted Byways and Bridleways is not the exclusive right of cyclists, so the potential for conflict between fast moving cyclists and other users is high. Secondly, having consulted with mountain bike riders, the type of surfacing found on Restricted Byways is not necessarily what is needed for a challenging ride. Thirdly, due to the demand for challenging routes many footpaths, particularly in the Winter Hill area, are incorrectly used by mountain bikers which present maintenance and environmental problems due to surface damage.</p>
	<p>Summary - There are no routes exclusively for mountain bikers within Bolton, but demand is growing steadily each year. A dedicated mountain bike park exists at Healey Nab in neighbouring Chorley, which will be the nearest such facility for people within the Bolton area. The Council will work with land owners to improve and formalised mountain biking provision particularly in the moorland areas.</p>
<p>Horse Riders</p>	<p>Overview - Our Country parks were identified as the locations most often used for horse riding, followed equally by areas of open countryside and moorland. All of the horse riders we have spoken to</p>

	<p>and heard from ride for recreation, but many also recognised the health benefits of riding. The main problem with the bridleway network is its fragmented nature. Busy roads or connections with footpaths prevent longer distance rides. Access to the wider bridleway network, such as the Pennine bridleway feeder route was amongst the most requested improvements.</p> <p>There were several concerns relating to existing bridleways. The most common concern was a lack of correct signage. Some routes were described as too narrow which often led to difficulties when passing other users. Low growing trees and an almost complete lack of mounting blocks were other problems mentioned.</p> <p>Accessing bridleways invariably means using one or more roads where traffic will be encountered. This was identified as a major issue that riders wanted to see addressed. Pegasus crossings, appropriate warning signs, traffic calming, better use of highway verge and more bridleways were identified as possible improvements.</p>
	<p>Summary - The bridleway network is too fragmented. It is not always directly accessible from local stables meaning that use of vehicular highways is often unavoidable. Longer distance routes are possible but are not circular in nature. Connection with the Pennine bridleway feeder route (and the rest of the country) and more off road bridleways are seen to be priorities.</p>
Horse and Carriage Drivers	<p>Overview - This activity can only be undertaken on the network of Restricted Byways within the former Bolton Borough area. Most of these routes are free from vehicular traffic, but are often isolated or cul-de-sac routes. All of these routes are signed, but do not necessarily show wider destinations. The majority of Restricted Byways are sufficiently free from the levels of vegetation that would prohibit their use, but formal turning facilities are often limited or non-existent.</p>
	<p>Summary - Our surveys indicate that carriage driving is not a particularly popular pursuit in the area. We did not hear from any carriage drivers, and do not anticipate any significant increase in demand for suitable routes in the future.</p>
People with mobility problems or visually impaired	<p>Overview - Our disabled user survey revealed that collectively, all areas of Bolton are used for either health or recreation walks. The survey identified several common problems.</p> <p>The hilly nature of much of Bolton makes access difficult, and stiles and steps pose a problem for those with arthritis or mobility problems. A lack of seating was identified as an issue that prevents the use of some footpaths, as people with mobility problems need the opportunity to rest and take a break. Similarly a lack of car parking and direct links to public transport also hinder access.</p> <p>A lack of confidence in what would be encountered on paths was also identified as an obstacle. Poor signing in terms of destination and distance, and uncertainty over whether surfaces would be slippery or uneven also prevented use.</p> <p>The best provision for people with mobility is with the urban parks at Moss Bank Park, Queens Park and Farnworth Park where flat well surface routes can be found, see below.</p>

	<p>Summary – People clearly do want to use routes for access but don't necessarily know where the most suitable ones are. The routes currently used tend to be close to their homes and do not meet the criteria of the Equality Act 2010 for a disabled friendly path.</p>
People using motorised vehicles	<p>There is virtually no legal provision for this type of use within Bolton due to the lack of Byways Open to All Traffic. There is however a problem throughout the area with the illegal use of land by motorised vehicles, in particular by motorbikes.</p>
	<p>Summary - There is no current demand for the provision of off-road vehicular routes on existing public rights of way.</p>
URBAN WALKING LOCATIONS	
Urban Areas	<p>Overview - Paths in the urban area are largely standalone paths that locally perform a functional purpose, such as access to schools, shops and services, rather than purely for recreation.</p> <p>Generally the standard of surface of urban paths is better than rural paths as the demand is for a surface that can be used with normal footwear rather than hiking boots.</p> <p>Additionally we would expect more urban paths to be accessible by wheelchair users and people pushing double buggies.</p> <p>The vast majority of Public Rights of Way (predominantly footpaths) in the urban areas have either a tarmac or concrete surface.</p> <p>Urban footpaths are generally less appealing in character when compared to rural routes. Our surveys have shown that the presence of litter, dog fouling, mud, poor lighting and the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour are the barriers to people using paths.</p>
	<p>Summary – The majority of urban Public Rights of Way are used for access to services rather than for recreation and leisure. Routes are generally in good condition, but future improvements are needed in terms of width, surfacing, gradient and lighting to make them compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. Additional anti-social problems such as illegal motorbike use, dog fouling and littering also need to be addressed.</p>
Urban Parks	<p>The best routes which cater for the needs of disabled users are to be found in the Urban Parks. There are many small parks but our three largest parks at Farnworth Park, Moss Bank Park and Queens Park offer lots of relatively flat routes which are safe, wide and obstruction free. Within urban parks gates and stiles are largely unnecessary and most routes tend to be free of obstructions. Because parking is readily available at these locations they are relatively accessible for most people across the Borough.</p>
Country Parks	<p>Overview - Bolton has two Country Parks, these are areas of parkland characterised by woodland and less formal grassland. Moses Gate and Smithills Country Parks offer recreational facilities for walking and cycling. The Country Parks provide a well surfaced network of concessionary footpaths and bridleways which interconnect with the</p>

	existing Definitive Public Footpath and Restricted Byway network. Although within the urban area, the character of the routes tends to be more rural in nature.
	Summary - There are excellent routes for walkers available in the country parks. Smithills Hall has a network of extensive paths, tracks, cycling and horse riding routes. Moses Gate tends to have predominantly flat parkland paths. Stiles, gates, surfaces, signposting and information boards are generally of a high standard at both locations. Good car parking facilities are also available.
RURAL WALKING AREAS	
Rural Areas	Most recreational walkers want to use quiet off road routes where they can escape from the presence of traffic and sources of noise. The rural parts of the Borough present the best opportunities for long uninterrupted walks, but require people to be adequately dressed for the countryside. We have identified four areas in the borough which are used predominant for walking.
The Four Rural Areas	
South Turton	Overview - To the north east of the Borough are the urban fringe areas of Harwood and Egerton which contain wide networks of footpaths and connect to the neighbouring Boroughs of Bury and Blackburn. All the routes in the area are footpaths. Because pedestrians are the only class of user allowed on these routes, this helps to ensure that quiet walks away from other types of use are possible. Footpaths in these areas are typically unsurfaced grassed paths, leading across agricultural pasture land. The presence of grazing animals leads in turn to the need for stiles and gates, which when coupled with the steepness of many of these paths, makes them difficult to use or inaccessible to many people with mobility problems. For able bodied walkers, the main problems encountered are usually pooling water and mud, the churning effects of hooves and more deliberate obstructions such as locked gates and poor signposting.
	Summary - There are plenty of routes for walkers within this area. Improved signposting and liaison with landowners should provide for easier use. Stiles and gates in South Turton are often in poor condition. The surface condition of footpaths is often in conflict with land usage in the area for livestock.
Smithills, Smithills Moor and Winter Hill Open Access Land	Overview - To the north and north west of the main built up area of Bolton steep pasture land merges with a vast expanse of moorland. This area is located partly within the Smithills Estate and connects to the West Pennine Moors Access Land. Routes within the Smithills area are quite diverse. Here footpaths mingle with Restricted Byways, providing a mix of both surfaced and unsurfaced paths and wider more formal looking tracks. Restricted Byways in particular tend to be well surfaced and free from obstructions.

	<p>Many of our moorland Rights of Way are located within the Smithills Estate or on Open Access Land. Generally the footpaths in these areas are to a good standard.</p>						
	<p>Summary - Most routes within this area are well signposted and obvious on the ground. The provision of information boards also assists those planning long or circular walks on Access Land. Stiles are gradually being replaced with kissing gates across the Smithills area, whilst on the wider Access Land there are virtually no obstructions. Footpath surfaces are generally good, but occasionally localised flooding and the build-up of mud occurs around working farms.</p>						
<p>Agricultural farmland surrounding Blackrod and Westhoughton</p>	<p>Overview - The west of the Borough has a significant area of farmland that borders with Wigan. This land is largely flat in character and extends from Blackrod and Horwich in a south-easterly direction, to Westhoughton and Hindley.</p> <p>There is a well-established network of footpaths that envelop these towns, which predominantly have grass surfaces. Some formal surfaces are located within Borsdane Wood (Westhoughton) and Arley Woods (Blackrod). Apart from these sites long walks tend to be interrupted by stiles and gates, many of which in the Blackrod area especially tend to be in poor condition. In addition, there are seasonal problems caused by agriculture, mud or standing water on cross field paths.</p>						
	<p>Summary - Around the satellite towns to the west of the Borough (Blackrod, Horwich and Westhoughton) access provision tends to be both plentiful and relatively close. The furthest that any built up parts of these towns are from the countryside are:</p> <table> <tr> <td>Blackrod</td> <td>250 metres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Horwich</td> <td>600 metres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Westhoughton</td> <td>700 metres</td> </tr> </table> <p>Footpath signage and waymarking, the condition of existing stiles and the regular ploughing of footpaths are the main issues within this area.</p>	Blackrod	250 metres	Horwich	600 metres	Westhoughton	700 metres
Blackrod	250 metres						
Horwich	600 metres						
Westhoughton	700 metres						
<p>The Middlebrook Valley</p>	<p>Overview - The Middlebrook Valley runs between Bolton town centre and Middlebrook retail park at Horwich. From the town centre to Lostock Junction there is a purpose built footpath and cycleway, this section is a linear route alongside the Middlebrook watercourse and a railway line. From Lostock access to Horwich is possible via the Restricted Byways that cross Regent Park Golf Course.</p>						
	<p>Summary - Long flat walks, without encountering obstructions are possible within this area. Some surface improvements are needed on link footpaths to Wingates Lane, Chew Moor and Deane.</p>						

Appendix B: First Rights Of Way Improvement Plan Actions Summary

Of the actions set out in the 2007 to 2017 plan; 44 were completed or partially completed, 16 not achieved and three actions became superseded by other events. Details of the actions are below.

Improvement	Achieved (Y/N)	Comment
(H) Encourage greater use leading to better health and enjoyment		
Promote health walk groups through Bolton Council website.	Yes	Information provided via PROW web pages to help and support health walking groups.
Provide information on the health and social benefits of walking, cycling and riding.	Yes	Information provided via PROW web pages to help and support health walking groups.
Undertake the improvements identified by the active health team on the 'move it' guided walk routes.	Yes	Improvements identified through the active health team (safer routes to schools) have been completed. Since this specific funding ceased no further improvements have been identified by the active health team.
Continue to consult with the PCT to identify the wards with most inactivity.	No	Superseded by demise of PCT.
Support the active health projects such as 'green exercise'.	No	
(A) Improve accessibility to the Network		
Create one circular walk for disabled or visibility impaired people per year.	Partly	Three routes created between 2007/8 and 2010/11.
Assist landowners to provide or replace stiles with gates (as appropriate) to assist access for more users.	Yes	16 routes improved between 2007/8 and 2010.
Increase use of cost effective maintenance resources such as the probation service to clear more paths.	Yes	Implemented for a three year period. Working with the Probation Service and the successive partnership company has now ceased due to cost.

Improvement	Achieved (Y/N)	Comment
Create a database of pictures on 'images system to assist in enforcement matters.	Yes	On-going.
Create a circular walk with access improvements to connect Hall Lee Bank Park with the Washacre Estate in Westhoughton.	Yes	Completed between 2009/10 and 2010/11.
Ensure all gate latches on Public Bridleways can be used by disabled riders.	Partly	
Encourage landowners to remove all redundant or unnecessary barbed wire.	Partly	On-going task.
Identify the most used paths for inclusion in a bi- annual clearance programme.	Yes	On-going task.
Review the Public Rights of Way enforcement policy.	Yes	Departmental policy reviewed in 2015.
(L) Improve communications with Landowners		
Advertise the country code on line and make it an integral part of leaflets.	Yes	On-going task.
Encourage greater responsibility in the countryside by dog owners, via website, signs on site, leaflets, and dog wardens.	Yes	On-going task.
Advertise the common problems that landowners face in connection with footpaths via a Right of Way web page.	Yes	FAQ document available on website.
Ensure that landowners are consulted with prior to any maintenance of clearance work.	Yes	On-going task.
Increase the provision of advisory signs regarding nuisance to farm animals.	Yes	On-going task.
Claims for new Rights of Way. Advise landowners of the facility to protect their land from claims by making a S31(6) declaration.	Yes	Guidance available on website.

Improvement	Achieved (Y/N)	Comment
Review the customer care policy.	Yes	
We will support the principle of diverting footpaths out of farmyards where this is clearly in the interest of farming practice and an alternative route of equal or greater public benefit will be offered.	Yes	Diversion at Pennington Fold Farm in 2017
We will provide site specific waymarking to assist users unfamiliar with the area.	Yes	Waymarking being undertaken in Bolton in partnership with the Peak and Northern Footpath Society
(P) Improve Publicity, Public Awareness And Signage		
Maintain the number of correctly signed Rights of way at 100%.	Yes	Investment in signage has been sustained over the period to limit the rate of annual damage and deterioration.
Create a specific Rights of Way website page with links to access land, local access forum, fault reporting and rights and responsibilities.	Yes	http://www.bolton.gov.uk/website/pages/Publicrightsofway.aspx
Produce a leaflet for landowners explaining our duties, how we would like to improve the network, the service they can expect from us and the mutual benefits of working together.	Yes	FAQ document available on website
Assist archive research unit (ARU) in implementing discovering lost ways project.	Action Superseded	Unit disbanded 2008
Prioritise definitive map anomalies and inconsistencies to remove cul-de-sac routes/rights.	Yes	On-going
Resolve 10% of anomalies per year.	No	
Promote the wider Greater Manchester Fringe Local Access Forum area through appropriate media.	Action Superseded	No LAF created
Produce strategically important signposts with destination and distances on them.	Partly	On-going
Provision of Signs to assist the Police in Tracking Illegal Motor Cycle Use	Partly	Some signage erected

Improvement	Achieved (Y/N)	Comment
(N) Create a safe and joined up network of Off Road Routes		
(N1) Implementation of the West Pennine Moors Bridleway Strategy.	Yes	
(N2) Cutacre Coal Site. [<i>Now Logistics North</i>] Implement the agreement to turn all public footpaths into Public Bridleways as part of the restoration scheme.	Yes	Final implementation of the agreed network within the development site programmed for 2018. Only some routes were appropriate to be upgraded to bridleway.
(N3) Disused Railway lines. Secure agreements to create an extended bridleway facility linking Westhoughton, Blackrod and Horwich.	No	We are continuing to examine the remaining sections of dis-used railway leading from Bolton Town Centre for the potential for multi-user routes.
Develop links with and implement neighbouring authorities to maximise use of routes in improvements N1,N2,N3 (above)	Yes	Neighbouring Authorities involved in N1 and N2.
Improve footpaths linking Arley Woods with Leeds – Liverpool Canal.	No	
Improvement of Restricted Byway at Deane Church Clough leading onto Middlebrook route for cyclists and walkers.	Partly	Kissing Gates installed.
Moss Hall Farm. Creation of Public Bridleway to remove cul-de-sac Rights and create a wider strategic Bridleway network.	Yes	Created 2009 as concessionary route.
Wilson Fold to Matchmoor Lane. Surface improvements to concessionary Bridleway.	Partly	Created 2009 as concessionary route. Landowner closed 2010.
Use of Highway verges off Walker Fold Road to provide safe Bridleway access to the Smithills Country Park Bridleway network.	Yes	Achieved 2010 as part of road improvements.
Produce a programme of overhead vegetation clearance for strategic Bridleways that will link to our existing maintenance list.	Yes	Included in routine maintenance programme.
Upgrade Footpaths to Bridleways within Central Bolton area where Restricted Byways form Cul-De-Sac Bridleway Rights where appropriate.	Partly	Footpaths upgraded to bridleways within the Cutacre [<i>Now Logistics North</i>] development site.

Improvement	Achieved (Y/N)	Comment
Install Kent carriage gap designed barriers in place of gates where suitable.	Partly	Installed on BOL154 2009/10.
The Rotary Way. Develop new links and improve existing paths linking in with the Rotary Way.	Yes	Seven paths improved between 2008 and 2010.
The creation of Community Links between urban communities.	Yes	Creation of the Bolton-Bury cycleway.
Create a circular route in the Eagley Valley, linking the Hall l'th Wood estate.	No	Due to costs and engineering issues on bridges this was not progressed.
Create a circular route linking Great Lever to the Highfield Estate.	No	
Maze Street – Darcy Lever. Secure dedication of footpaths linking into Moses Gate Country Park.	No	Owner failed to agree to the creation of the footpath. To pursue in future.
Printers Lane. Secure re-opening of important link between Bradshaw Hall and Turton Road	No	Not pursued due to costs of £80,000 to reopen bridge.
Footpath 5 - Little Lever. Upgrade to Public Bridleway to take Horses off Radcliffe Road	No	Landowner would not agree to upgrading the footpath to a bridleway
Create a formal route from Lucas road along the former mineral Railway line in Farnworth, linking in to routes on Farnworth and Great Lever Golf Course.	Partly	Cycleway completed between Lucas Road and Anchor Lane
(S) Improve accessibility to services and destinations		
Safe routes to school. We will continue to provide access improvements for parents and pupils on the basis of the greatest risk being identified. We will also prioritise those schools that have produced a school travel plan.	Yes	Routes at eight schools improved in 2008/9, three in 2015, and two in 2016.
Development. We will produce new guidance notes to assist planning control when setting out consultation and advertising.	Yes	Guidance on website

Improvement	Achieved (Y/N)	Comment
Development. We will produce new guidance notes for planning control that will encourage developers to integrate safe well-lit pedestrian access facilities to services, recreational and transport facilities.	Action Superseded	Superseded by Secured by Design Guidance
Transport Infrastructure Fund. Continue to identify new schemes that improve pedestrian links to public transport facilities.	Yes	Transport Infrastructure Fund has now ceased.
Westhoughton railway station. Widen and re-surface footpath 104 linking to Manchester road (A6).	No	Lighting installed on route in 2017
Rivington and Blackrod High School. Re-surfacing of footpath 167 Horwich to coincide with connecting routes in Chorley.	No	
Bolton Economic Development Zone (EDZ) Walking and Cycling Strategy. Re-visit promoting the recommendations made in this 2003 report that were not fulfilled.	No	
Promoting recreational routes from major links with the Public Transport network.	No	
Create a link path from Chapel Street, Egerton to Druids Close.	Yes	Created July 2013
Create a link footpath from Grange road to bridge south of the Jumbles reservoir	No	
Footpath 2 - Turton Eagley. Create safe stepped access leading to network of paths behind the last Drop Village.	No	

Bolton Council
Directorate of Place
Highways and Engineering
Public Rights of Way
3rd Floor, Paderborn House
Howell Croft North
Bolton
BL1 1UA

Telephone: 01204 333333

email: prow@bolton.gov.uk