

Norfolk's Rights of Way Improvement Plan Strategic Review

Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary: This report provides members with a summary of Norfolk County Council's strategic review of its Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) which covers the period 2007-2017. The report highlights that there are opportunities for the County Council to work with the Broads Authority on a range of access projects. The report also highlights that the County Council is seeking comments on its draft plan as it is keen to make sure that the new plan reflects its partners' public access-related goals and priorities accurately.

Recommendation: That members note the contents of the report and comment on the issues that have been identified in the report for inclusion in the County Council's new ROWIP Action Plan.

1 Background

- 1.1 It is a requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for access authorities to produce a rights of way improvement plan. Norfolk County Council's last plan covered the period 2007-2017 and is therefore due for review. The County Council has published a review document for the last plan and will be consulting on a new plan which will come into effect after 2017. The review document is available online <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/out-and-about-in-norfolk/public-rights-of-way/about-public-rights-of-way>
- 1.2 Having published the review document the County Council has written to the Broads Authority and BLAF to ask if we would be willing to consider and comment on the new developing plan. The County Council has indicated that it is keen to see that the new plan reflects our public access-related goals and priorities accurately. It has also stated that the plan will provide a framework for access which will be managed by the County Council with the intention of reviewing and updating the plan as appropriate. The County Council has also asked for the BLAF's thoughts on revising the structure to reflect the advice of the Local Access Forum.

2 The Review Document

- 2.1 The review document is divided into thematic chapters covering the following issues:
- Green Infrastructure and Planning

- Health and Wellbeing
- Access for All
- Community Engagement and Volunteering
- Children and Young People
- Economic Partnership and Business Engagement
- Historic Environment
- Environment, Biodiversity and Conservation
- Coastal and Open Access
- Cycling
- Horse riding and Carriage Driving
- Mechanically Propelled Vehicles

2.2 Each chapter then goes on to look at the current situation on the ground regarding the identified issues, opportunities for development (highlighting partnership working opportunities), recommendations for action and priority short and mid-term actions. The final aim of the review is to produce a local action plan which will be based on the outcome of the strategic consultation and the review of the existing plan's aims and objectives. In order to produce this plan the County Council proposes to involve a range of partner organisations and officers with the intention of ending up with a final plan which will inform the Norfolk Local Access Forum's (NLAF) forward work programme and be integrated with cross sector/ business strategic plans and objectives.

3 Links to the Broads Authority's Integrated Access Strategy

3.1 While the review does mention the Broads Authority as a stakeholder it does not highlight a number of the major opportunities that exist for partnership working with the Broads Authority that would help to achieve the aims of the NLAF and the BLAF. There are also several areas where the Broads Authority could be mentioned in the list of organisations that Norfolk County Council could work with to achieve the priority actions identified in the document and several specific projects that could be highlighted in both the potential future projects lists and the priority actions that would deliver mutual benefits for both authorities.

3.2 In particular the chapters on Environment, Biodiversity and Conservation, Historic Environment, Green Infrastructure, Access for All and Cycling make no mention of the Broads Authority as a prospective partner organisation with regard to project delivery or any specific projects at all.

3.3 There are a number of projects that could be highlighted as opportunities in these chapters. These include sections two and three of the Three Rivers Way which has already received joint funding from both the Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council and managed to draw down £800,000 of funding from the Department for Transport, the Broadland Way route and the Broads Authority's Water, Mills and Marshes HLF funded Landscape Partnership Scheme which has the potential to provide access to and interpretation of the historic environment.

3.4 In general there appears to be significant scope for referring to partnership working opportunities with the Broads Authority in the draft Action plan particularly with regard to cycling, access to the historic environment linked to promoted trails and access to the environment and biodiversity.

4 Conclusions

4.1 The fact that Norfolk County Council is reviewing its ROWIP and is seeking the views of the Broads Authority and the BLAF on the draft plan is to be welcomed. The consultation presents an opportunity to identify and take forward projects that will deliver mutual benefits for both authorities. Moreover, the opportunity to include projects identified in the Integrated Access Strategy Action Plan or linked to themes included in the Broads Plan with commitment to partnership working on the part of both authorities gives the potential to deliver improved access for the public to Norfolk and the Broads.

4.2 Members are invited to consider the document via the link in paragraph 1.1 of this report or the printed copy included in the BLAF papers and make comments on the ROWIP review and future action plan.

Background papers:	Nil
Author:	Adrian Clarke
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Broads Plan Objectives:	TR1, TR2, TR3
Appendices:	None