

## ANNEX 9:

# Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Statement of Action

## Background to the Statement of Action

Improving access to quality countryside provides a wide range of benefits to the community such as increased levels of health, a better understanding of where you live, greater social integration, increased economic well-being and a higher quality of life. The process of adapting existing Public Rights of Way and creating new routes, in order to achieve improved access, has been given increased impetus by the Countryside and Public Rights of Way Act 2000 (CPROW). What follows is a statement of action as to how Darlington is preparing to carry out this new set of duties and how it is moving towards the production of a full Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan scheduled for publication in the Summer of 2007

## Description of the Darlington area

The Borough of Darlington is located in the west of the Tees Valley bordering the River Tees and North Yorkshire to the south; the rolling hills of Teesdale to the west; and the coalfields of County Durham to the north. The Tees Valley generally is a highly urbanised and industrial area. Darlington shares some of these characteristics but is distinguished in the sub region by having a relatively extensive, (4/5 of the borough area) rural element, particularly in the north and the west.

## The Existing Network of Darlington's Public Rights of Way

### Quantity

Darlington Borough has just over 300km of Public Rights of Way (PROW) of which approximately 30km are located within the town of Darlington itself. Many of the surrounding villages have a good network of Public Rights of Way both around the villages themselves and linking them with neighbouring settlements and the main urban area of Darlington.

The north and north east of the Borough are particularly well served with Public Bridleways in addition to a good public footpath network and a number of cycle and horse riding routes. The remainder of the Borough is less well served with bridleways but still offers a good and comprehensive public footpath network.

### Quality

Inevitably the quality of the network varies considerably across the Borough. Generally the condition of the network is moderately high with 83% of all paths open and available for use and well waymarked (BVPI 178). However, this masks the degree to which much of the network is unappealing, failing to produce any real 'value for money' benefits to the local population.

For example, many urban fringe paths pass through low quality landscapes with high levels of litter, areas of bad drainage,

inadequate field margins and poor way marking. In other areas the reverse is true where there are high quality and easy to follow paths through rich, biodiverse and attractive landscapes close to where people live.

In the case of the high quality paths, they are largely there because of popular pressure, receiving resources because of the high level of use and corresponding demand for action from the PROW team. On the other hand, poor quality parts of the network receive less attention, partly because of what it would cost to make them attractive and desirable and partly because of the lack of interest the public have in them. In some cases however this means there is nowhere for people in these areas to access quality countryside and the population choose to drive to other venues or seek other activities entirely. What is being characterised here is an approach to managing the network, which is largely reactive while a move to a strategic approach would begin to bring many benefits. It is the main aim of the PROWIP to see this more strategic approach undertaken as a way of matching the joint causes of quality and need.

**In its present form, Darlington's network offers Public Rights of Way facilities to a selection of markets. These can be split up in the following way-**

### Local Use

Firstly, it is predominantly a system of routes for local recreational pursuits. These can be described as those in fairly scenic parts of the town, especially in the south and west towards the River Tees and to the north towards the villages of Brafferton and Barmpton. In addition the villages of Heighington, Middleton St George and Hurworth all have networks that are used to a moderate level by local people, predominantly for recreational purposes. This aspect of the network, i.e. a provision aimed at local use with frequent repeats, can be successfully added to by raising the landscape quality of the network in other carefully targeted areas. In particular, Darlington's community forestry process is helping greatly with this aspect of the provision. At present much of the south and east of the town is made inaccessible by the presence of the A66, a very busy trunk road. On the other hand, the A1, a fully-fledged Motorway is not such a barrier to the network with many bridges and underpasses bisecting this major trunk road.

### Transport

Darlington's urban network of Public Rights of Way links well with other non definitive routes allowing for a significant contribution to walking and cycling levels around the town for transport purposes. Twenty five percent of all trips undertaken

by Darlington residents (living in the urban area) are on foot and a further 1% are by bike and, whilst only a small amount of these are on Public Rights of Way, maintaining and improving the Public Rights of Way network will help this figure grow.

### Tourism

In its present form, the Darlington network also provides some degree of infrastructure, that serves as a venue for tourism, both for day visits and for longer stays. This is predominantly in the villages, away from the main Darlington area and is limited in scope, unable to compete with the far more impressive countryside within easy reach of the Borough. In terms of opportunities for change, the Council is looking at improvements to some of these Darlington paths, which are close to other rural diversification projects such as farm tourism initiatives, existing small-scale attractions and improved routes close to the main urban area.

### Long Distance Touring

The current network also provides for a small amount of long distance walking, cycling and horse riding. The most obvious of these is the Teesdale Way while other routes include the four promoted off road circular mountain bike rides and a number of circular walks promoted by the Ramblers Association. In the case of the latter however, these suffer from a profound lack of maintenance on some of the most attractive footpath and bridleways which if improved could make the walks and rides much more popular. Concentrating on improving the wider network on these targeted routes would be the most effective use of resources although there is a danger of allowing the rest of the network to fall by the wayside.

**While providing the only means very often for people to explore the countryside it has to be accepted that much of the network is seldom used. Identifying which paths these are and why they are unpopular is an important part of compiling a PROWIP. Some of these reasons can be described thus:-**

- **Low levels of walking, cycling, riding within the rural communities.** Some of the outlying small villages exhibit signs of a very low level of use of the PROW network. People who choose to live in these locations also appear to avoid using the network. In the larger villages this is less of a factor, with signs that, like the urban area, a small number of paths are used a great deal whilst the majority are lightly or seldom used.
- **Poorly maintained network with resources concentrating on the more frequently used paths.** This to some extent is inevitable but with New Cross Compliance legislation landowners should in future be better custodians of the network, without so much need for costly and time consuming enforcement from the local authority. Also, with a more strategic approach to managing the network and with new resources through the Second Local Transport

Plan the best opportunities for improving the network can be exploited.

- **Low level of landscape interest.** Much of Darlington is surrounded by intensively farmed land, which is often of little interest to the walking public. This is where a more joined up approach to land management could be beneficial. The use of agri-environment schemes aimed at improving both quality and accessibility of the countryside could deliver very positive results in this respect. This combined with other biodiversity schemes could be very effective in providing improved quality access.
- **Dangerous road crossings on the urban fringe.** (See above under local use.)

### Matching reality with vision

With the data from the extensive surveys carried out as a part of the improvement plan process, the plan will attempt to identify possibilities to update the network into a facility better adapted for today's demands. In particular, efforts will be made to-

- Identify short circular paths through quality countryside,
- Provide improved access to larger areas of countryside close to people's homes
- Identify opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside more conveniently by bicycle or on horseback as well as by walking

### The Public Rights of Way Service in Darlington, now and in the future.

The Public Rights of Way service in Darlington aims to provide a high quality service in the maintenance of existing Public Rights of Way as well as develop the network in order to provide for the needs of the future. As mentioned above, the network is generally in a good condition with a BVPI 178 score consistently in the region of 80%, putting it in the top quartile of comparable authorities. It is considered however that the service is nearing its peak in terms of this indicator and that further improvements will only come about through adopting a more strategic approach, which in turn will not substantially affect the BVPI figure.

### Staffing

With two full time Public Rights of Way Officers for 320 kilometres of path, Darlington sets out to maintain, and promote its network for the benefits of all Darlington people across the Borough. The delivery of the attached programme will inevitably require additional staff resources and although some of this will come through working in partnership with other organisations it is anticipated that one additional full time member of staff will be needed to make progress with the attached programme.

## In providing the Public Rights of Way service the Council works in partnerships with a variety of organisations.

These are:-

### ■ Healthy Walking groups

Encouraging people to become more active in their everyday lives is becoming increasingly important. This is particularly underlined by the fact that Government funded schemes have been established over recent years, showing the commitment being made to improving people's health and the link that can be made between health and their surrounding environment. Studies across the country have shown that taking exercise in the outdoors not only has many physical benefits but also contributes to a healthier mental state. This evidence in turn shows Public Rights of Way in a new light and consequently, they are increasingly being seen as a potentially low cost means of providing opportunities for exercise for all members of the public.

The Countryside Team (including the PROW Officers) works with Darlington Primary Care Trust to deliver the Walking for Health Initiative, in particular lunchtime walks in the urban area.

This provides Local Authorities with an excellent opportunity to promote the network to the general public and encourage users to go out and enjoy their local Public Rights of Way. In turn, it is essential that the Local Authority is able to maintain and constantly improve the Public Rights of Way network so users will enjoy their time and return to the facility in the future. Locating funding sources is essential in enabling this process to take place.

### ■ The Primary Care Trust

In accordance with these trends Darlington's PROW service in partnership with the Primary Care Trust, local walking groups and disabled groups and many other partners, has already set up programmes and produced promotional material to address many of these issues. This includes a programme to develop short circular routes as well as routes within Local Nature Reserves situated on the urban fringe. This is aimed at restricted mobility groups, at people with no access to a car, at young people and at people without previous countryside experience.

### ■ VIP

An example of good practise has been the Countryside Teams partnership with Darlington's Visually Impaired Walking Group where in two years the group has made 18 excursions with a total of 150 people visits, taking people out into the countryside away from the noise and distractions of the town environment.

### ■ Planning

In addition Darlington's PROW service is working closely with the Planning section to ensure new developments are planned around the existing Public Rights of Way network and, where possible, new and improved access is made

available and existing paths made more commodious for use by a wider section of the public.

### ■ Transport

Close working relationships are also formed with the Transport Policy section helping to deliver improved links through the town, helping improve the green infrastructure of the urban area and encouraging people to use more sustainable modes of transport. The Public Rights of Way team alongside the countryside team are working very closely with the 'Town on the Move' team do explore where such developments can be made and how to carryout out these improvements in a strategic fashion.

The service has also established a programme aimed at promoting these developments as and when they occur. This includes guided walks, self guided trails, leaflets and publications and a variety of countryside events aimed at introducing people to a healthier lifestyle.

### ■ Business.

Opportunities to improve the network are sort in partnership with the private sector, with landowners as previously mentioned where improvements in access provision are being delivered through a variety of means and with developers where urban fringe land is allocated for urban to countryside links.

### ■ Education

Working on school travel plans with the Council's 'Town on the Move' school travel plan officer looks at a number of Public Rights of Way in the town as options for safe routes to school. The PROW team has also worked on a number of initiatives around the concept of School Adopt a Walk with Darlington's local schools. This is a project to which we intend to increase our input with substantial benefits on offer in terms of local knowledge and identity and young people's health. It is an area that can be linked closely to Darlington's Local Area Agreement and the Child Obesity Strategy.

### ■ The Local Community.

The PROW team are engaged in building contacts with local community partnerships, local 'friends of' groups such as Friends of West Park, and various fora and interest groups around the borough. The aim is to work with these groups to produce community walks within or near communities. It is envisaged that the team will partner at least one new community group each year and produce one new community walks leaflet each year.

In the same vane it is intended to improve the provision of community based countryside access information maps. There are currently two in the borough at present but a target of one a year for the next five years is thought realistic.

### ■ User groups

Working with user groups is underdeveloped in Darlington although we have a good Cycle Forum in the Borough and a good working relationship with the Ramblers Association, Sustrans, the British Horse Society and others. We currently have a Countryside Access Liaison Group that meets once or twice a year and includes representatives of landowners groups, user groups and voluntary organisations. During Spring 2006 we will begin a project looking at the urban walking agenda in close partnership with the Ramblers Association.

### ■ Community Forestry

The Council is also a member of the Tees Forest and the North East Community Forests whose remit is to extend the community woodland principle to areas of urban fringe. To this effect, over 150 hectares of new open access community woodland has been made available in Darlington borough in the last 5 years and Tees Forest remains a key partner in identifying new opportunities for continuing this important process. These forests contain many kilometres of new public access paths. They also substantially increase the demand for green routes from the urban fringe to these new woodlands, further improving access.

The Tees Forest was also the principal partner in activating the Tees Valley Equestrian Strategy, which looks at the increasingly unequal relationship between bridleway provision and local need. It has as its central tenet that riding on quiet roads is becoming increasingly unsafe with higher car usage and higher speeds. It is the contention that any strategy concerned with improving public access for equestrian users should look in the long term at making equestrian road use no longer necessary. The process would be to look at substituting road use with quality alternative off road equestrian provision throughout the countryside. Darlington's PROWIP will adopt this principle and begin the process of identifying a way forward for achieving this long-term undertaking.

## Local Strategies

Darlington's Community Strategy identifies the **protection of the natural environment** as a key theme. Combining good access opportunities and attractive countryside is a way of achieving one element of the key theme in the strategy. By encouraging people to directly experience quality countryside on their doorsteps they better understand the importance of the green environment and the opportunities it offers.

Many of the Council's other strategies complement this process including the draft Open Spaces Strategy, the draft Countryside Strategy, the options paper on the Local Development Framework, the Tees Forest Sport and Recreation Strategy and the Tees Valley Equestrian Strategy.

## Developing a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan

### Introduction

Darlington sees the Public Rights of Way network as a facility that can address a whole cross section of issues including those connected with quality of life, the health of people in the Borough and the economic well being of Darlington and the Tees Valley. With this in mind, we are working towards producing a Joint Tees Valley PROWIP with Stockton Borough Council (SBC), Middlesbrough Borough Council (MBC) and Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) with the aim of improving countryside access across the sub region. These four authorities also cooperate on providing a joint Local Access Forum (LAF) for the sub region, with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council for the present choosing to go it alone. Working closely with our neighbouring authorities on these issues enables Darlington to minimise the duplication of work that would follow from having single LAFs from each authority. It also enables the many cross border issues that arise to be dealt with strategically. In this way the efficient use of resources is maximised.

### CPROW

The Countryside and Public Rights of Way Act 2000 (section 60) stipulates that all Highway Authorities should research and publish a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (PROWIP) by November 2007. Under section 60, the PROWIP is required to address the following issues:

- The extent to which local Public Rights of Way meet the present and future needs of the public.
- The opportunities provided by local Public Rights of Way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and the enjoyment of the area.
- The accessibility of local Public Rights of Way to blind or partially sighted people and people with mobility problems.

The research undertaken has identified localised access issues and allows the Highway Authority to adopt a strategic approach in managing its Public Rights of Way network.

Contained in this document is the Statement of Action, which details how the authority intends to deliver its PROWIP. It identifies matters arising from the assessments made during the condition survey, the consultation process and the definitive map work, all of which has or is being carried out as a part of the research phase of the PROWIP. These proposals will in turn be used to secure funding from a variety of sources, necessary for the implementation of these Public Rights of Way improvements.

## The Process to Date

Darlington Borough Council has progressed well with the process of gathering information for its PROWIP. There are three main phases involved:

- Condition survey – **‘Where are we now’** we are well on the way to carrying out a full conditions survey on all the Public Rights of Way in the borough and aim to have this completed by the end of July 2006. We have surveyed approximately 50% of the network to date. The condition survey looks at the use value of the existing network recording its accessibility, its convenience, its suitability for different user groups and how easy it is to follow. Also as a part of the conditions survey, an assessment of the important nature conservation and landscape interest will be made and how these can be enhanced through the improvement process. In particular the survey will record the importance of field boundaries, river corridors, woodland and scrubland as well as wetland and other features that lie across or adjacent to Public Rights of Way. The survey will pay particular attention to identifying easily accessible walking, cycling and equestrian routes for everyday use by the general public.
- In addition we are identifying possible circular routes, as well as noting where possible improvements to the network maybe achieved through such activities as, the integration with other access agreements such as, agri-environment schemes, creations/diversions/extinguishments or the use of specific permissive agreements.
- As a part of the conditions survey it is also intended to carry out a recreation audit. This will look at how the existing network links to and with different sites of interest. For example it will show links to historical and archaeological sites as well as parks, Local Nature Sites, countryside parks etc. From this, the Council can start to determine any deficiencies that exist and put into place projects that help to reduce or remove these deficiencies.
- Consultation process - **‘What People Think’** – we have so far consulted the general public and have the initial results from a process that used the Darlington Council’s Citizens Panel. Other questionnaires targeted the opinions of landowners as well as a whole range of stakeholders with an interest in the Public Rights of Way network. These have revealed a raft of interesting results, which will help us tackle the task ahead of providing a PROW network suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are still waiting for additional analysis of the questionnaire returns but an initial overview suggests that landowners are interested in improvements in PROW if it helps their business in some way. However, our rare experience of trying to create new definitive paths suggests this process can be very costly, with landowners looking for large amounts of compensation. As for the responses from user groups, one conclusion so far is a

clear concern with the need to provide more routes to provide access for all. Making sure that Darlington caters for all abilities is a strong element of the programme for the next 5 years. (See disabled section in action plan)

- Definitive Map study – Generally Darlington’s definitive map has been kept up to date with only 11 diversions and one definitive map modification order currently outstanding. We are currently working on routine Public Path Orders as well as locating and dealing with anomalies on the Definitive Map.

## Results to Date from the Conditions Survey

From the condition survey, we can say that the network is in a reasonable to good state of repair with the majority of Public Rights of Way being open and obstruction free. Best Value Performance Indicator surveys carried out in May and November 2004 showed in both instances that over 80% of the Public Rights of Way inspected had no identifiable problems.

**A number of issues were raised through this condition survey of which a sample are identified below.**

- **Obstructions**  
Firstly, it highlighted where there is potential to either reduce the amount of countryside furniture or improve it so as to better address issues raised by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. For example, the removal of obstructions and barriers along Public Rights of Way where possible opens up the network for a more comprehensive set of users. These include countryside furniture such as stiles that are too high and difficult to open gates. These can in some situations be seen as obstructions, especially for the ambulant disabled, the elderly, wheelchair users, and could include families with pushchairs or young children. Solutions can include replacing stiles with kissing gates or where possible simply leaving a gap. Landowners are also encouraged to incorporate suitable user-friendly furniture wherever new works are undertaken.
- **Surface Quality**  
The survey revealed the need to address certain surface issues, especially on the very popular paths where high use has led to serious erosion and frequent complaints. Also in this category are drainage issues, which can present serious problems to the network user if left unattended. Darlington has predominantly clay soils and this leads to frequent problems associated with poor drainage.

- **The Need for Quality Countryside.**

This issue, although infrequently mentioned when asked directly, is born out by the condition survey with areas of quality countryside near habitation being by far the most popular areas used by the public. Not surprisingly people will go to places that are easy to find, easy to follow, feel safe etc but most of all they are attracted to places that make them feel good. These tend to be areas that have good scenic quality, are litter free, have high levels of biodiversity with woodland and water being the most popular and provide a sense of freedom.

- **The Need for a Good Annual Maintenance Strategy**

Currently resources are carefully targeted at the more popular routes with a single annual grass cut in May – June. This allows for relatively unhindered passage for most of the year for the majority of the Public Rights of Way users. Unfortunately, this leaves a percentage of paths (some 30%) difficult to use due to over growth and their infrequent use serves to compound the problem particularly later in the year.

- **The Importance of Enforcement of Landowners Responsibilities.**

The condition survey revealed the continuing importance of the need for enforcement as despite nearly a decade of increased resources spent on instructing farmers and landowners on their duties to public access, there continues to be serious failure on the part of a few, to carry out the necessary works. Every year a number of paths are either not reinstated or the work carried out is inadequate requiring enforcement action from the PROW officers.

- **Links to other transport networks**

Another important issue raised by the surveys was the need for important links to other transport providers. Having good signage from the road network and from the urban area, insuring the provision of good green links from the urban area, providing good public transport links to clearly defined start points, having good information on how to use the links are all important parts of making the PROW network easy and available for use.

- **The Accuracy of the Definitive Map**

The condition survey also raised the issue of anomalies on the Definitive Map. (i.e. situations where the Definitive Map did not correspond with what is found on the ground.) Updating the Definitive Map is an important aspect of the PROWIP and is also a requirement for every Highway Authority. All anomalies need to be addressed and acted upon in order to keep an accurate record of all Public Rights of Way in the Borough. Public Path Orders also need to be recorded in order to update the Definitive Map.

- **Requirement for more equestrian provision.**

In places where there is a high use of bridleways by horse riders, the bridleways are often unusable by any other user. This needs addressing within the confines of a well worked out Equestrian Strategy for Darlington.

**The Citizens Panel questionnaire also raised many important issues and indicated where improvements should be targeted.**

**For example:**

- First and most importantly, nearly two thirds of Darlington people consider that they have used the Public Rights of Way network in the previous year. This is an impressive figure and reflects the amount of useful links existing within and on the edge of the main urban area. However this may reflect the fact that Darlington has quite a good urban network so many people may be only using these easily accessed paths.
- 17% use the network daily and an additional 17% on a weekly basis. An additional 20% or 54% in total use Public Rights of Way monthly. Only 20% never use the network.
- However, only 23.7% of respondents were confident they knew where their local Public Rights of Way are, suggesting the need for increased publicity and marketing.
- There is a general lack of knowledge regarding who can use which Public Rights of Way. i.e. whether a cyclist can use bridleways or not. Better signage and improved information will help this.
- The main activity carried out by Public Rights of Way users is walking (98% of users), followed by cycling (17%) and finally horse riding (0.9%). This is in spite of a huge increase in equestrian activity suggesting that the road network is still the preferred public facility for exercising horses. It also suggests an increase in cycling provision is necessary, particularly with the big increase in the popularity of off road bikes.
- There is a strong desire for routes of less than 3 miles, taking under 2 hours to complete. People were particularly keen on circular routes. Darlington's programme on community based short circular walks is aimed at precisely this group.
- Not surprisingly, there is a high demand for routes through areas of a high quality landscape, especially along waterways and through woodlands.
- Despite there being a relatively high awareness of locally promoted routes, there is only a limited uptake suggesting that these are in the wrong place or difficult to get to. This suggests the need for new more accessible promoted routes.
- Good signage and well maintained obstruction free routes were seen as probably the most important feature to encourage use.

The proposals made in the accompanying Statement of Action have been put together with reference to the results from the three surveys so far undertaken. It is important to state at this point that this is not the full extent of our investigation phase and we will be continuing with our consultation process with proactive site visits being made to various points of the Public Rights of Way network in order to maintain an up to date picture of where improvements can be made to Darlington's PROW. We are also, in line with guidance, proposing to work with our local steering group to ensure all the Darlington public are given the opportunity to have their say

## The Statement of Action

The Statement of Action tabled below, has been developed in response to the results of the consultation process, associated with the production of the PROWIP. The actions will be revised once again as this consultation process is finalised. This programme, largely but not entirely dependent on future additional funding will go a long way to addressing the problem of lack of access to quality countryside in Darlington Borough.

## Proposals resulting from investigations into the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the Local Transport Plan March 2006

### 1. Public Path Orders

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
1.1 There are a number of outstanding Public Path Orders.	Process all current and outstanding Public Path Orders.	a) Pursue all outstanding Public Path Orders of which there are currently 11 diversions + 2 modifications as well as pursue new orders as and when they occur. b) Establish realistic timescales for the completion of each diversion. c) Work through each systematically.	£20,000	2007	DBC (Countryside, Legal) Landowners Utilities Disability groups Walking groups, Cycling groups Horse riders Other user groups	DBC	This will improve the ROW network thus improve access ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) in the Borough, encourage people to be active ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), take horses off the roads ( <b>Road safety</b> ).
1.2 Public Path Order requests come in at regular intervals.	Process Public Path Orders as and when they are requested.	a) Establish a process to ensure Public Path Orders are processed within a set timescale.	£3000 per annum	On going	DBC (Countryside, Legal) Landowners Utilities User groups	DBC	

### 2. Promotion of the Rights of Way Network

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
2.1 There is a general lack of knowledge as to who can use the various rights of way.	Produce a ROW information leaflet explaining users rights and ensure the distribution of this and existing publications aimed at the same purpose.	a) Consult with Transport Section regarding content. b) Gain quotes from printers. c) Print and distribute d) Work with partners such as the CLBA and the Ramblers. e) Distribute literature	£2000	2007	DBC (Countryside, Transport, Leisure Services) Tourism CLBA Landowners Ramblers	Tourism PCT Leisure	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
2.2 There is a strong feeling people would use the ROW network if there were more info about them and their location. ROW Publicity Leaflets -	"Independent Walking Pack" Other leaflets e.g. "Bridleways and Back Lanes in Darlington" (Offroad cycling)	a) Sustain existing info completed in partnership with other organisations.  Reprint existing leaflets & Development of new literature	£1500 per annum  £5000 per annum	2006-2011 (On going)	DBC (Countryside) Darlington PCT  User groups	Darlington PCT Cycling England	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
2.3 There is a good knowledge of but limited uptake of promoted routes.	RoW Publicity Events - "Annual Walking Festival"	a) Organise walks with user groups. b) Organise extra activities and requirements e.g. marquees, stalls. c) Publicity.	£2000 per annum £5000 per annum	2006-2011 (Annual event)	DBC (Countryside, Transport, Leisure Services) Tourism User groups Darlington PCT Darlington walking groups cycling groups equine groups	DBC (Countryside)  Darlington PCT	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
	RoW Publicity Events - Programme of guided walks and events	a) Establish walks and leaders. b) Publicity.	£1500 per annum  £500 per annum	2006-2011 (On going)	DBC (Countryside, Leisure Services)  Tourism		This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
2.4 There is a demand for short circular walks in the Borough concentrating on the urban fringe.	Community circular walks	a) Establish new walks at suitable villages and urban fringe. b) eg Middleton St George Neasham Hurworth Heighington Various Darlington wards c) Produce leaflet and publicity.	£3500 per annum to produce one community walks leaflet with promotional and a further £2500 per annum to improve the paths affected.	2006-2011 (one community per annum)  Possible focus would be Darlington's industrial past.	DBC (Countryside, Transport, Leisure Services)  Tourism  Landowners User groups  Parish Councils	Town On The Move Landowner Parish Councils Darlington PCT North East Community Woodland	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
	Renewing and installation of village info maps located on site	d) Identify villages with maps in need of renewal and those with no maps at present. e) Identify local info needing to be displayed. f) Consult with local groups. g) Publicise.	£1000 per annum	2011 (On going)	DBC (Countryside)  Parish Councils  User groups  Local residents  Landowners  Tourism	LTP DBC Countryside Parish Councils Landowners	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
2.5 A number of successful leaflets are now out of print	Reprint and update "out of stock leaflets"	"Brafferton Village Walks" "Piercebridge to Hurworth Place - Teesdale Way" "Hurworth to Low Middleton Teesdale Way"	£4000 per annum	2006-2011 (On going with increase no. of leaflets being produced to keep stocked.)	DBC (Countryside)  User groups  Previous funders	Previous funders	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
2.6 Rights of Way users enjoy quality landscape walks through woodlands.	Geneva Wood Drinkfield Marsh The Whinnies	a) Identify possible links within the site and install network. b) Carry out creation order. c) Maintenance of paths	£3000  £4,500 (path orders)  £1,500 per annum	2007	DBC (Countryside, Estates, Planning)  Local Nature Reserves Officer  Landowners  North East Community Forest	LTP (Walking) Land fill tax	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
	Low Dinsdale Wood	This wood has many wet sections that are easily eroded. Work is needed to add in duckboarding, drainage etc.  (Project document available on request)	£5000  £500 per annum maintenance	2007	DBC (Countryside)  North East Community Wood  Landowner		This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
	South Burdon Woodland	a) New trails created particularly family cycle trails. b) Leaflet produced. c) Information board provided d) Annual maintenance	£150,000   £5,000	2010	DBC, Forestry Commission, The Tees Forest	Forestry Commission, DBC, Nat Lot LTP/Cycling England	
	Skerningham Wood	e) Diversion is required. f) Require provision of car park, signage, interpretation maps, leaflets, guided walks programme, new links, bridge. g) Annual maintenance	£1375 £50 000  £5,000		DBC (Countryside) Landowners North East Community Forest	LTP/Cycling England North East Community Forest	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
2.7 Rights of Way users enjoy quality landscape walks along waterways	Access along the River Tees	h) Identify points where there is no/limited access along the River Tees. i) Negotiate with landowners for diversions/creations for Sockburn Loop Rockcliffe Loop Caravan park-Newbus Grange Loop. j) Annual maintenance	£2000 per annum  £150 000  £5,000	2006-2011 (On going)	DBC (Countryside, Legal, Planning) Landowners User groups DEFRA	LTP	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
	Access along the Teesdale Way (an E2 route)	A number of sections follow roadsides with no pedestrian provision a) Identify "at risk" sites - Stressholme to Hurworth Place section. b) Plan suitable crossings/walkways.	£10 000	2006-2011 (On going)	DBC (Countryside, Planning, Highways, Legal, Transport) Landowners User groups	LTP (Road Safety)	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )
	Access along the Skerne	a) Identify points where there is no/limited access along the River Skerne. b) Plan suitable routes and enter into negotiations with landowners. Creation up to Barmpton Hall.	£2000 per annum +5% pa inflationary rise  £10 000	2006-2011 (On going)	DBC (Countryside, Planning, Estates, Legal) Landowners User groups DEFRA	DEFRA	This will improve people's awareness ( <b>Accessibility</b> ) of ROWs thus encourage more people to take up activities ( <b>Quality of life</b> ), reduce no. of cars on road ( <b>Road safety, Congestion, Air pollution</b> )

### 3. Safety on Rights of Way

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
3.1 The A66, A67 and A68 run through Darlington Borough and sever several ROWs making crossing dangerous.	Safe crossing points where ROWs have been severed by major roads.	a) Identify "at risk" sites and prioritise regarding promoted routes. b) Plan suitable crossings/walkways.	2 bridges over A66@ £1 million 10 Traffic Islands@ £100 000	2006-2011 (On going)	DBC (Countryside, Highways, Transport, Legal, Planning)	LTP/Cycling England DETC Highways Agency DEFRA	ROW users are placed in dangerous situations at certain points on the ROW network. Improving safety ( <b>Road safety</b> ) would improve access ( <b>Accessibility</b> ), make more people confident to use the network ( <b>Quality of life</b> ) and reduce the nos. of car trips ( <b>Congestion, Air quality</b> ).

3.2 Giant Hogweed is a health and safety risk along riverside rights of way.	Giant Hogweed removal along ROWs	<p>a) Identify sites where there is giant hogweed.</p> <p>b) Organise for annual spraying and removal.</p> <p>c) Publicity re dangers of contact with plant and precautions.</p> <p>d) Organise a steering group with other neighbouring Authorities the EA and NW</p>	<p>£4000 per annum</p> <p>£2000 (publicity)</p> <p>£500 per annum</p>	2006-2011 (Annual event)	<p>DBC (Countryside, Community Services)</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>Environment Agency</p> <p>Northumbria Water</p>	DBC	ROW users are placed in dangerous situations at certain points on the ROW network. Improving safety ( <b>Road safety</b> ) would improve access ( <b>Accessibility</b> ), make more people confident to use the network ( <b>Quality of life</b> ) and reduce the nos. of car trips ( <b>Congestion, Air quality</b> ).
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#### 4. Maintenance of Rights of Way

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
4.1) It is important to users that ROWs are well maintained and obstruction free.	Vegetation strimming	<p>a) Identify ROWs at risk from vegetation overgrowth.</p> <p>b) Plan a bi-annual strim of the most used ROWs and annual strim of remainder.</p>	£15 000 per annum	2006-2011 (Annual event)	<p>DBC (Countryside, Community Services)</p> <p>Contractors - Landowners</p>	DBC	ROW users want unobstructed paths. Maintenance will improve access ( <b>Accessibility</b> ), increase no. of people out enjoying them ( <b>Quality of life</b> ) and encourage people to make fewer car trips ( <b>Congestion, Air quality</b> ).
	Improvement to countryside furniture	<p>c) Identify sites in need of improved furniture</p> <p>d) Offer landowner incentives to upgrade existing furniture</p> <p>e) Installation of new furniture</p>	£5000	2006-2011 (On going)	<p>DBC (Countryside)</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>North East Community Forest</p>	LTP DBC	
	Improvement to ROW security features	Identify sites that would benefit from additional security measures e.g. barriers	£3000 per annum	2006-2011 (On going)	<p>DBC (Countryside)</p> <p>Police</p> <p>Landowners Wardens</p>	LTP DBC	
4.2 Way marking and signage is considered important by ROW users.	Road side ROW flag maintenance survey and repair work	<p>a) Conduct a road side flag survey to establish repair requirements</p> <p>b) Issue works for repair/replacement of flags</p> <p>c) Annual maintenance of road side flags</p>	<p>£10,000</p> <p>£2,500 per annum</p>	<p>2007</p> <p>On going</p>	<p>DBC (Countryside)</p> <p>DBC (Highways dept)</p>	DBC	Increased information will encourage more people to use the ROW network ( <b>Accessibility</b> ), thus increase no. of people out enjoying them ( <b>Quality of life</b> ) and encourage people to make fewer car trips ( <b>Congestion, Air quality</b> ).
	Destination signs on selected paths	<p>a) Identify ROWs leading to specific sites.</p> <p>b) Install signs naming destination eg town centre, facilities, village names</p>	£5000 per annum	2006-2011 (On going)	<p>DBC (Countryside)</p> <p>DBC (Transport)</p> <p>DBC (Highways)</p> <p>DBC (Leisure Services)</p>	LTP (Walking/Cycling) DBC	

4.3) Several rights of way are suffering from a poor surface thus reducing their possible use and enjoyment gain.	Surface of RoWs	a) Identify ROWs where surface conditions are seriously below standard and would make a valuable contribution to countryside amenities.	Catkill Lane £75,000	2006	DBC (Countryside) Landowners User groups	LTP DBC Parish Councils Landowners	
			Patches Lane £43,000	2008			
		- Catkill Lane - Patches Lane - Sunken Lane - High Use and - Urban paths - Annual maintenance	Sunken Lane £25,000 Salters Lane £43,000 High Use and Urban paths £20,000 Maintenance £20,000 per annum	2007			

### 5. Public Bridleway Provision

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
5.1 A large part of the Borough is poorly served by Public Bridleways	Public Bridleway provision	a) Locate where existing bridleways are located and identify potential links b) Negotiate with landowners possible diversions, creations, permissive routes and/or upgrades to create links offering payment for public path order - Brafferton - Hurworth Moor c) Promote these new routes to the wider public	£2000 per annum  £30,000 per annum  £1000 per annum	2006-2011 (On going)	DBC (Countryside) Landowners User groups North East Community Forest	DBC DEFRA Landfill Tax Lottery Countryside Agency	Horses are often forced to use roads. Improved bridleway provision would improve access for all esp. equestrians and cyclists <b>(Accessibility, Quality of life)</b> , remove horses and off-road cyclists from the roads <b>(Road safety)</b> , allow more trips to be made by other means other than cars <b>(Congestion, Air quality)</b>
	Assessing Public Bridleway provision	a) Conduct a survey looking at equine use and demand b) Use results to improve network.	Existing	2006	DBC (Countryside) Landowners North East Community Forest User groups		
	Provision of horse friendly gate catches	a) Identify gates on bridleways that are not horse friendly. b) Negotiate with landowners for horse friendly catches to be installed.	£1000 per annum  £1,500 per annum	2006-2011 (On going - 10 horse friendly catches per annum)	DBC (Countryside) Landowners North East Community Forest Equestrian groups	LTP DBC	

## 6. Public Footpath Provision

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
6.1 There are a number of missing links in the rights of way network	Public Footpath Provision	<p>a) Locate where existing footpaths are located and identify potential links</p> <p>b) Negotiate with landowners possible diversions, creations and/or upgrades to create links offering payment for public path order</p> <p>c) Promote these new routes to the wider public</p>	<p>£2000 per annum</p> <p>£15,00 per annum</p> <p>£1000 per annum</p>	2006-2011 (On going)	<p>DBC (Countryside)</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>User groups</p> <p>North East Community Forest</p> <p>PCT</p> <p>DEFRA</p>	LTP (Walking) DBC	Improved footpath provision would improve access for walkers <b>(Accessibility, Quality of life)</b> , remove pedestrians from the roads <b>(Road safety)</b> , allow more trips to be made by other means other than cars <b>(Congestion, Air quality)</b>

## 7. Disabled access

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
7.1 The Rights of Way Team is required to adhere to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in both the urban and countryside environment.	Disabled access - Stiles to kissing gates or gaps	<p>a) Identify with full consultation of partner groups, where kissing gates/gaps could replace stiles to open network up to more users</p> <p>b) Negotiate with landowners for subsidised work to be carried out and future maintenance</p> <p>c) 10+ Stiles to Kissing Gates per annum</p> <p>d) Surfacing works</p>	<p>£1000 per annum</p> <p>£3,500 per annum</p> <p>£3,000 per annum</p> <p>£5,000 per annum</p>	2006-2011 (10 kissing gates per annum)	<p>DBC (Countryside, Social Services)</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>DAD.</p> <p>Other disability groups</p> <p>Contractors</p> <p>North East Community Forest</p> <p>PCT</p>	LTP DBC	Improved disabled access provision would improve access for people with disabilities, families with pushchairs etc <b>(Accessibility, Quality of life)</b> , remove pedestrians and electric scooters from roads/pavements <b>(Road safety)</b> , allow more trips to be made by other means other than cars <b>(Congestion, Air quality)</b>

## 8. Major projects affecting the ROW network

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
8.1 Durham Teeside Airport originally severed sever ROWs and is now looking to expand.	Durham Teeside Airport expansion	<p>a) Identify new links to improve severed network</p> <p>b) Carry out improvements</p>	<p>£5000</p> <p>£5000</p>		<p>DBC (Countryside, Planning)</p> <p>Durham Teeside Airport Landowners&gt;User groups</p>	<p>Durham Teeside Airport</p> <p>Parish Council</p> <p>DBC</p>	
8.2 Community Woodlands are planned for the Borough	Cycle access to community woodlands		£2500		<p>DBC (Countryside)</p> <p>North East Community Forest</p>	LTP DBC	
8.3 Darlington is increasing its no. of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	Access to Local Nature Reserves	These are used by many groups and need sympathetic path surfaces	£29,368	£2006/2011	<p>DBC (Countryside)</p> <p>Local Nature Reserves Officer</p>	LTP (Cycling) DBC	

## 9. In depth consultation of ROW users and non users

Issue	Project	Key Action	Estimated costs	Completion date	Key partners /policy	Funding source	LTP
9.1 In order to target improvements that are desired and to encourage more people to use the ROW network, it is essential to gauge people's opinions and understand their reasons for/for not using the ROW network.	Consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Conduct in depth consultation to establish use and demand within different types of user groups e.g. walkers, cyclists, equestrians.</li> <li>b) Landowners</li> <li>c) Stables and liveries</li> <li>d) Non users</li> </ul>	£10 000	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DBC (Countryside)</li> <li>DBC (Transport)</li> <li>DBC (Policy)</li> <li>User groups</li> <li>Landowners</li> <li>Equestrians</li> <li>Non ROW users</li> <li>General public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Countryside</li> <li>Town on the Move</li> <li>DBC-Citizen Panel</li> </ul>	With this info, improvements could be targeted where they are desired thus encouraging more people to become active and use the ROW network.