

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Leisure and Open Spaces

Date of Meeting: 4 April 2016
Report of: Public Rights of Way Manager
Subject/Title: Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2026:
Implementation Plan 2015-2019
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sam Gardner

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the Implementation Plan for the Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) to cover the period 2015-2019.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 **That** the Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2011-2026) Implementation Plan for 2015-2019 be approved.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 A Rights of Way Improvement Plan has been compiled for the period 2015-2019 on that basis of the prioritisation methodology approved by the Public Rights of Way Committee on 13th December 2010. This is the second Implementation Plan in the period 2011-2026 and is now put forward for approval.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Wards affected.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All Local Ward Members.

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 The development of the ROWIP is aligned with the economic prosperity, quality of place, transport and health and wellbeing objectives and priorities of the Council:

- [Cheshire East Council 3 year plan 2013-2016:](#)
 - Outcome 2 Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy
 - Outcome 4 Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place to live
 - Outcome 5 People live well and for longer;
- [Cheshire East Sustainable Community Strategy](#) priority actions:
 - Ensure a sustainable future
 - Drive out the causes of poor health;
- [Cheshire East Local Plan](#) strategy submission version includes a number of Policies (PG5, EG4, SC1, SC2, SE4, SE6, SE7, and CO1) which relate to active travel, health and wellbeing and countryside access;
- [Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategic Framework](#);
- [Cheshire East Local Transport Plan](#); and,
- Emerging [Cycling Strategy](#) core responsibilities.

6.2 The role of accessible Green Infrastructure is one of increasing importance within the growth plans for Crewe, the Science Corridor and the Northern Gateway. Accessible greenspace contributes to the quality or 'distinctiveness' of a place. That in turn contributes to the economic wellbeing of an area, offering characteristics that can hold it apart from its neighbours and competitors. In delivering growth in the borough's economy, it will be important that accessible greenspace, together with the other components of quality places, keep pace with this ambition, retaining the characteristics that support existing success and building on those that will help attract future prosperity.

6.3 In addition, the ROWIP is an integrated part of the Local Transport Plan.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Potential funding sources, which will include external grants, are identified in the Implementation Plan, but are not committed as the funding is unknown and the actual projects developed may vary from those presented in the Plan.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

8.1 It is a statutory duty under section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for every local highway authority to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. A ROWIP should contain a statement of the action which the authority proposes to take.

- 8.2 Non compliance with the requirement for the full integration of the ROWIP with the Local Transport Plan could result in criticism from statutory monitoring bodies, agencies and local user groups.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 No matters arising.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, every highway authority in England is required to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) for its area. The plan must then be assessed and reviewed within ten years and at similar intervals thereafter. ROWIPs were created to publish the authority's assessment of:
- the extent to which the local Public Rights of Way network meets the present and future needs of the public;
 - the opportunities provided by local Public Rights of Way for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the local authority's area; and,
 - the accessibility of local Public Rights of Way for blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.
- 10.2 The ROWIP strategy for Cheshire East was developed through consultation with residents and the wider public, Ward Members, local user groups and parish and town councils. The strategy covers the period 2011-2026.
- 10.3 The ROWIP strategy is integrated into the Local Transport Plan in recognition of walking and cycling as means of travel. The strategy is also embedded into the Council's agendas of economic prosperity through visitor economy and high quality of place, and that of health and wellbeing.
- 10.4 On 17^h January 2011 the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing approved the Cheshire East [Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2026](#) which sets out the strategy for this period.
- 10.5 ROWIPs are also required to contain a statement of the action which the authority proposes to take for the management of local Public Rights of Way, and for securing an improved network of those routes. Therefore, under the ROWIP strategy there are rolling 4-year implementation plans detailing projects through which the policies and initiatives stated in the ROWIP will be delivered.

- 10.6 The first [ROWIP Implementation Plan 2011-2015](#) has expired, and the next Implementation Plan has been prepared.
- 10.7 Suggestions for improvement projects are submitted by residents, Ward Members, local user groups, community groups, parish and town councils and officers. These suggestions are prioritised using the methodology selected and amended by the Cheshire Local Access Forum and which was presented to the Public Rights of Way Committee on 13th December 2010. This methodology takes into account the benefits of the scheme, including those of health and wellbeing, quality of place and visitor economy, in the context of local need, under the policies and objectives of the ROWIP.
- 10.8 The highest priority suggestions have been selected for each category of suggestion: walking, cycling, horse riding, transport-related and cross-cutting projects. It is intended that these suggestions be investigated and developed first, with the acknowledgement that some may not be feasible and other opportunities may arise through partnerships, funding opportunities and development sites that result in alternative projects being taken forward.
- 10.9 On 13th December 2010, the Public Rights of Way Committee gave the Green Spaces Manager the delegated powers to, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, compile the Implementation Plan based on the prioritisation methodology. The Implementation Plan was then approved by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing on 14th March 2011.
- 10.10 A new Implementation Plan has been drawn up, assessing the delivery of the preceding Plan, and setting out the intentions of the Council in relation to the period 2015-2019.
- 10.11 Monitoring and reporting shall be undertaken through annual progress reporting to the Public Rights of Way Committee.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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