

Foreword

Our vision for Derbyshire

Derbyshire County Council is about people. It's about what we can do to make local life better. We look after more than 3,000 miles of public rights of way across the whole of Derbyshire – including the Peak District National Park – along with many more miles of other paths, trails and greenways. So we want to make sure that these routes meet the needs of local people and visitors now and in the future. That's why we have produced this document, our first Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Derbyshire.

Our vision for improving access to the countryside and built environment in Derbyshire is:

“To have an integrated, well managed and inclusive rights of way and access network which:

- Encourages responsible enjoyment by residents and visitors alike
- Is a sustainable and safe network in keeping with the county's heritage, landscape and wildlife interests
- Promotes healthier lifestyles
- Helps support tourism and the local economy”

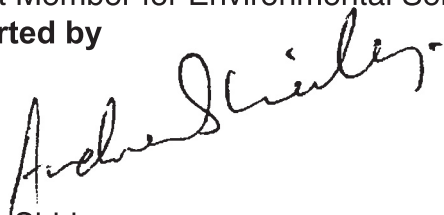
We want to make sure our network of paths and trails allow people to get out and about in Derbyshire's countryside to exercise and enjoy local attractions. It also means making sure they meet the needs of people using them to get to work, school and other local facilities as a healthier, more environmentally-friendly alternative to using the car. And it's about making sure no-one is excluded from using them by making the network accessible to everybody, including disabled people and those with young children.

We have already asked you how we could achieve all of this and listened to your comments. You told us what the most important issues are and how we should prioritise the Statement of Action within the Plan, during the extensive consultations that have accompanied the production of this document. We will now start the job of delivering the many actions that you have requested and that we have identified need to be done to achieve our vision for the county's access network.



Councillor Brian Lucas,
Derbyshire County Council's
Cabinet Member for Environmental Services

Supported by



Andrew Shirley,
Chair of the Derby and Derbyshire
Local Access Forum



Andrew McCloy,
Chair of the Peak District
Local Access Forum

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Executive summary

■ Vision Statement

Our vision for improving access to the countryside and built environment in Derbyshire is:

“To have an integrated, well managed and inclusive rights of way and access network which:

- Encourages responsible enjoyment by residents and visitors alike
- Is a sustainable and safe network in keeping with the county’s heritage, landscape and wildlife interests
- Promotes healthier lifestyles
- Helps support tourism and the local economy”

■ Background

Under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), the County Council has a new duty to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Derbyshire.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan will consider:-

- The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.
- The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the authority’s area together with the use of the network by local people as a means to access workplaces, schools and other local facilities.
- The accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted people and those with limited mobility or other impairments.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan will build on the day to day work already being carried out by Derbyshire County Council as it discharges its statutory duties. Without losing sight of the statutory work, this new duty provides a unique opportunity for the County Council to move forward and plan strategically for how it will improve the management, provision and promotion of a wider rights of way and access network based on what the public have asked for. It will cover the whole of the county including the Peak District National Park.

■ Development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Extensive public consultation took place between March 2004 and June 2005 in order to carry out the assessments required under the legislation. This comprised:-

- A series of questions submitted to the Citizens Panel.
- A user survey aimed at the wider public and visitors.
- A key issues questionnaire sent out to countywide access stakeholders and to local councils.

- A series of focus groups to look at issues relating to nature conservation, the local economy and tourism, along with issues affecting landowners and the needs of disabled people.
- A review examining the use of motorised vehicles in the countryside.

■ Content of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The subsequent analysis of the consultation and an assessment of the current access network resulted in the identification of a series of themes and aims which have formed the basis for the production of a Statement of Action. This forms the main focus of the Improvement Plan.

The three key themes are:-

- **Theme A - Seek to preserve Derbyshire's heritage, landscape and wildlife.**
- **Theme B - Promote the sustainable use of the present and future network, encouraging healthier and more sustainable travel choices.**
- **Theme C - Encourage and create routes that support the local economy and boost tourism.**

The Statement of Action is organised around five aims as follows:-

- **Aim 1: Ensure that the existing and future public rights of way network is open and available for use.**
- **Aim 2: Provide an up to date and widely available Definitive Map and Statement.**
- **Aim 3: Provide a more connected, safe and accessible network suitable for all users.**
- **Aim 4: Improve the promotion, understanding and use of the network.**
- **Aim 5: Encourage greater community involvement in managing local rights of way.**

Within each of the aims are a series of proposed actions that have been identified to deliver the aims and secure improvements to the network. A summary of the aims and identified needs can be found in Figure 1. The Statement of Action also provides an indication of the level of resources required, whether the actions are achievable within existing budgets, key partners involved and an estimated timescale to deliver the actions.

■ Consultation on the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan was produced in December 2006 and was subject to an extensive consultation exercise over a 3 month period until March 2007. The main focus of the consultation was to help set priorities for actions identified in the Plan.

Figure 1 Summary of aims and identified needs in Derbyshire's Statement of Action

Aim 1: Ensure that the existing and future public rights of way network is open and available for use

- 1a) Improve the overall BVPI 178 pass rate.
- 1b) Improve the surface condition and drainage of routes.
- 1c) Strengthen enforcement procedures to deal with ploughing and cropping and the removal of obstructions.
- 1d) Review the annual surface vegetation clearance programme.
- 1e) Improve the investment in public rights of way.

Aim 2: Provide an up-to-date and widely available Definitive Map and Statement

- 2a) Produce and maintain an up-to-date digital Definitive Map and Statement.
- 2b) Improve the availability of information relating to the Definitive Map and Statement.
- 2c) Speed up the process for clarifying the legal status of routes.

Aim 3: Provide a more connected, safe and accessible network suitable for all users

- 3a) Improve the provision of routes for bridleway users.
- 3b) Improve the provision of circular or connected routes.
- 3c) Provide more easy access routes.
- 3d) Provide a safer network for all users.
- 3e) Continue with the development of the greenway programme.
- 3f) Improve the management of recreational motorised vehicles in the countryside.

Aim 4: Improve the promotion, understanding and use of the network

- 4a) Ensure that path/route signage is consistent across the county.
- 4b) Promote routes identified as 'easy access' paths.
- 4c) Improve the level and quality of information about the access network.
- 4d) Maximise existing promoted routes and trails.
- 4e) Encourage the production of new promoted routes that complement the themes and identified needs.

Aim 5: Encourage greater community involvement in managing local rights of way

- 5a) Increase involvement of local councils in managing local rights of way.
- 5b) Increase involvement of user groups and other local community/volunteer groups in managing local rights of way.