

# Greenway Strategy for West Derbyshire and the High Peak

## SECTION 1: Background

### 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This strategy describes a study carried out by Derbyshire County Council to outline proposals to develop a strategic network of multi-user routes, or Greenways, for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and those with limited mobility, across the Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Districts.

1.1.2 Natural England has defined the term Greenways as “largely car-free off-road routes connecting people to facilities and open spaces in and around towns, cities and to the countryside; for shared use by people of all abilities on foot, bike or horseback, for car-free commuting, play or leisure.”

1.1.3 This report extends the area of research covered by the East Derbyshire Greenway Strategy and the South Derbyshire Greenway Strategy, giving a complete coverage of Derbyshire. The East Derbyshire Greenway Strategy originally identified that the multi-user network should consist of the following criteria:

- Provide a safe environment for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. An adequate network should be provided for all users.
- The provision of utility and recreational routes; used by locals for journeys to work, shops and schools and casual leisure use.
- Provide routes which link urban areas, within and surrounding the defined area with the rural environment and countryside attractions.
- Provide routes well served by the public transport system.
- Connect with routes in surrounding areas.
- Be developed with high priority for “Access for All”.

These criteria remained the focus for the South Derbyshire Greenway Strategy and shall continue to do so for the West Derbyshire and High Peak Greenway Strategy.

1.1.4 Greenways contribute towards a wider access network within the County comprising footpaths, bridleways, byways and restricted byways, trails, permissive paths and off road cycle tracks. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the County Council has a duty to prepare a strategic

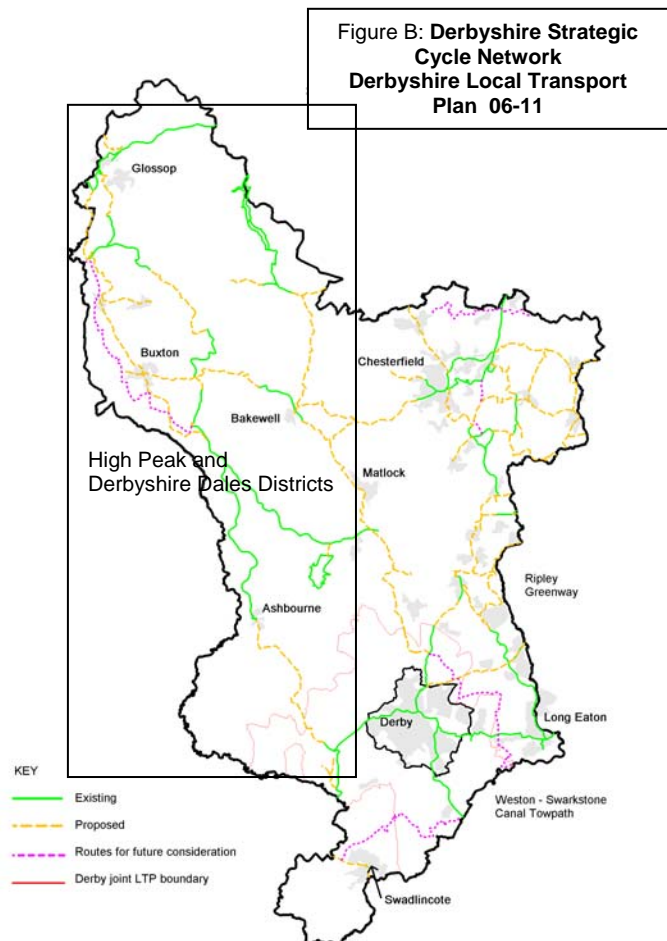
plan entitled the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) (2007-11). This Plan will assess the whole of the current access provision and demand within the county and provide a statement of how the authority intends to manage and secure improvements to this wider network in the future. This Greenway Strategy will form a strand of the ROWIP for Derbyshire when it is produced in 2007.

## 1.2 Purpose of the strategy

1.2.1 This strategy aims to provide the basis for a strategic and co-ordinated plan for the development of a network of Greenways throughout the High Peak and Derbyshire Dales. It provides a proposals map, which suggest a series of recommended Greenway routes for further investigation, as a result of information gathered and initial consultations. The recommended routes are indicative only and demonstrate desirable positions on the most appropriate alignments found at the time of the research. Negotiations with specific land owners and access providers, as well as new opportunities through land use change and re-development may suggest alternative or more favourable connections. Further to the scope of this report, it is intended that the recommended routes are further examined on a project by project basis to formulate a provisional programme of delivery. No priority order for delivery has been set as it is recognised that flexibility is essential to maximise opportunities to respond to funding streams and other factors beyond the control of the Local Authority.

1.2.2 It is intended that the proposed routes identified in this plan shall be included on the county-wide Strategic Cycle Network in both the Derbyshire Local Transport Plan (LTP2) 2006-2011 and the Derby Joint Area Local Transport Plan 2006-2011. This shall update the proposals map shown in the current LTP2 2006-2011, shown in Figure 2 opposite.

1.2.4 This strategy may be used to inform planning decisions to maximise community access benefits through development schemes and post industrial site restoration proposals, to incorporate sections of Greenway identified in the strategy where appropriate opportunities arise. It may also lend argument to



safeguard routes in other Local Plans and strategies as well as support section 106 agreements, planning conditions and legal agreements through the planning process.

1.2.5 It is intended that this strategy meets the needs of the local area. The proposals are drawn from relevant studies already carried out in the area, including existing policy and planning guidance. It is anticipated that it will help to meet the targets of the Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Community Strategy 2006-2009, 'Our Community...Working Together' and the Local Strategic Partnership. It also considers the existing and proposed routes already identified within and neighbouring the study area. It draws on discussions with key stakeholder organisations and access providers, to create a valuable tourism asset that will encourage new investment, jobs and tourism related economic benefits to the High Peak, Derbyshire Dales and Peak District National Park.

1.2.6 The aims of this strategy are outlined in Box 1 below;

**Box 1: Aims of the Strategy**

1. To form the basis of a strategic and co-ordinated plan to assist the development of a Greenway network across Derbyshire Dales and the High Peak.
2. To extend the area of study of the East & South Derbyshire Greenway strategies.
3. To inform the Local Transport Plan county-wide Cycle Network for LTP2.
4. To form a strand of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
5. To guide forward planning and local planning decision to deliver Greenways.
6. To encourage Partnership working.
7. To support funding bids to develop the Greenway Network.
8. To promote economic regeneration through provision of tourism infrastructure.

### **1.3 Background to the research**

1.3.1 Derbyshire County Council has been instrumental in developing some of the earliest multi-user traffic free trails in the country and over the last thirty years has continued to provide new Greenway routes as opportunities have arisen that provide safe and enjoyable access to the countryside. Many of these routes follow former transport corridors left as a legacy of previous industrial activity. They also follow improved existing public rights of way and new access provision through the reclamation of mineral and waste sites, housing and employment development sites and through private landowner agreements. Greenways have also been developed by district and borough Local Authorities, the Peak District National Park Authority and corporate landowners, such as the Water Companies and British Waterways.

- 1.3.2 There are now a significant number of available Greenways across the county, totalling a distance of over 290km of traffic-free routes. In the past, these were created as fragmented lengths as opportunity arose, and often did not connect directly to communities and are isolated from each other. In order to increase the value of these and improve their accessibility as a highway and tourism asset, the County Council is dedicated to the continued expansion of the existing routes to form a cohesive network. Fundamental to this is ensuring the routes link directly into settlements and to public transport interchanges, continue through communities to join other routes, and by seeking opportunities to create new routes to strengthen the integrity and viability of the network.
- 1.3.3 Further opportunities and desirable links have already been identified to create an inter-connected network across the county. As mentioned earlier an in-depth study in the east of the county was commissioned in 1998 to explore the possibilities for a Greenway network across the East Derbyshire coalfield area. The second phase of research explored similar opportunities in the District of South Derbyshire. This third phase complete the coverage of the County by closely looking at the High Peak and Derbyshire Dales.
- 1.3.4 Natural England promotes the use and creation of Greenways through their Wider Welcome initiative to improve access to the countryside.
- 1.3.5 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 stage three came into force in October 2004 and in April 2005 a new Disability Discrimination Act was passed by Parliament, which amends or extends existing provisions in the DDA 1995 to ensure that all reasonable adjustments are made to allow disabled access. Greenways link people to places by providing easy access routes for all abilities and particularly promote safe and continuous access for those using wheelchairs, motorised scooters and other mobility aids.
- 1.3.6 There also exists a national drive to promote healthier life styles through encouraging physical activity in leisure time and by building in activity to daily routines. This aims to improve general health and well being of all communities and also tackle the increasing national problems of obesity.
- 1.3.7 A further cultural philosophy aims to encourage and develop safer communities. Safe approaches to access design can attempt to reduce both personal crime and accidental injury. National schemes such as the Safe Routes to School campaign further supports the creation of Greenways.
- 1.3.8 The Department for Transport (DfT) has launched a national body called Cycling England, this was done as a function of the review of the National Cycling Strategy. This body plans and co-ordinate's the development of cycling across the country and has a budget of at least £5million/yr for three years to support investment in cycling. It is seen as a measure to contribute to a wide range of government objectives such as accessibility, sustainability, public health and reducing transport congestion.

1.3.9 The government recognises that much of today's traffic congestion and environmental concerns stem from modern transport choices and there is a climate to encourage a modal shift in local transport to non-car journeys, especially for short trips. Local Transport Planning also recognises the need to address accessibility to facilities and services. Many of the government's goals aim to encourage walking and cycling as alternatives to using the car.

1.3.10 It is increasingly recognised that Greenway provision can create a high quality, attractive and safe leisure facility right from the community doorstep, whilst also providing a linear transport route from settlements into the wider countryside or to demand destinations. By linking visitor attractions and tourism facilities, Greenways can provide valuable infrastructure that promotes new growth in the tourism based businesses, bringing economic benefits to existing enterprises and generating demand for new business opportunities and new jobs across the specialist and general tourism industry. Well designed, located and marketed routes can help create a clear tourism product to encourage an increase in overnight stays and associated income generation from both the UK and overseas markets. The advantages of increasing tourism can trigger rural renaissance and sustainability.

1.3.11 The benefits of Greenway developments cut across many disciplines, and are generally accepted to include the functions shown in Box 2.

**Box 2: Benefits of Greenways**

1. To create new leisure facilities and links to visitor attractions or local amenities, for recreational enjoyment of the countryside.
2. To promote new and improved community access to schools, places of work, shops, town centre facilities & public transport interchanges.
3. To reduce community severance through improved accessibility.
4. To enhance and protect the natural environment, landscape and cultural heritage of the area.
5. To reduce traffic congestion and associated pollution by encouraging car-free and sustainable travel options.
6. To encourage healthier lifestyles through regular exercise, and interaction with nature and landscape.
7. To promote social inclusion through provision of alternative transport choices for low income families.
8. To provide Access for All opportunities to promote independence and improved quality of life.
9. To attract tourism to encourage neighbourhood renewal, economic regeneration and green infrastructure development.

## **1.4 Description of the Study Area**

1.4.1 The High Peak and Derbyshire Dales covers 280 square miles in the west of the county extending south to the South Derbyshire District and containing 80% of the Peak District National Park. This area encompasses Matlock, Ashbourne, Buxton, Bakewell and Glossop.

1.4.2 The districts of High Peak and Derbyshire Dales span five Joint Landscape Character Areas as defined by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England). The Landscape Character of Derbyshire (2003) further subdivides

these broad character areas into 21 Landscape Character Types and these are identified on Figure C below. Furthermore a significant proportion of both districts lie within the Peak District National Park; a landscape designation afforded the highest level of protection through National, Regional and Local planning policies.

1.4.3 Future Greenway development needs to consider the character of the landscape and follow the relevant guidance to ensure that works are both appropriate and add value to the landscapes through which they pass. Benefits can be gained by ensuring that routes are well sited with respect to the local topography, respect local characteristics and provide opportunities for landscape and ecological enhancement.

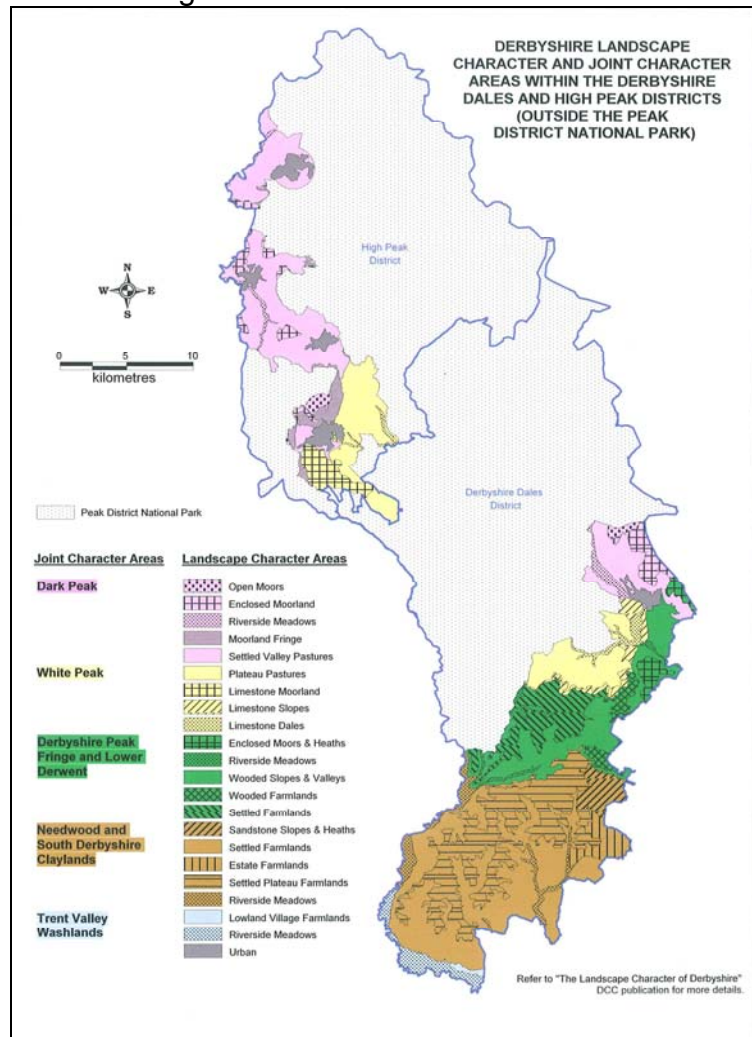


Figure C: Landscape Character in High Peak and Derbyshire Dales Districts

i) Dark Peak

This is 'an upland landscape of high moors and settled valleys' extending from Glossop and Buxton in the High Peak through the north and eastern parts of the National Park to Matlock in the Derbyshire Dales. The landscape is characterised by extensive areas of semi-natural wilderness comprising heather moorland with pastoral landscapes in the settled valleys. Many parts of this landscape are remote and typically inaccessible.

ii) White Peak

This is an upland limestone landscape extending from Buxton in the High Peak through the west and southern parts of the National Park to Matlock and Wirksworth in the Derbyshire Dales. The landscape comprises '*an extensive gently rolling plateau punctuated by steep sided dales, scattered villages and isolated farmsteads within a pastoral setting*'. Within the villages lanes are characteristically narrow and winding with straighter, more direct routes connecting the settlements.

iii) Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent

This is a character area exclusive to Derbyshire and forming a significant proportion of the Derbyshire Dales extending eastwards from Matlock and Wirksworth and as far south as Ashbourne. It is typically '*an undulating well-wooded, pastoral landscape on rising ground between the Derbyshire Coalfield and the Peak District*'. There is a dense network of winding lanes and footpaths connecting the densely scattered farmsteads and occasional hamlets and villages.

iv) Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands

This joint character area forms a significant proportion of the Derbyshire Dales extending from Ashbourne in the north to Sudbury in the south. It is '*a settled, pastoral landscape on gently rolling lowlands that is essentially rural and cut by numerous streams*'. The area is characterised by winding lanes, many footpaths and green lanes bound by ecologically rich, mixed species hedgerows, and connecting scattered villages and farmsteads.

v) Trent Valley Washlands

Associated with the lower Dove Valley, the Trent Valley Washlands form the southern limit of the Derbyshire Dales district. It is characterised as '*an agricultural landscape set within broad, open river valleys with many urban features*'. The land use is typically mixed farming but the area suffers from the impacts of the A50 road. By virtue of the generally uninhabited nature of the floodplains there are few lanes and footpaths in this landscape, and those that do occur tend to cross the river valleys or run parallel to the floodplain on slightly higher ground.

## **1.5 Layout of this report**

### 1.5.1 The report is presented in seven main sections to discuss;

Section 1: the background information to identify what the report is about

Section 2: the policy context to provide valid argument

Section 3: the market to demonstrate a demand and a need for the plan

Section 4: the methodology to show how the information was achieved

Section 5: the analysis and conclusions of the findings

Section 6: the strategic network mapping to illustrate the final proposals

Section 7: the resources to suggest how the proposals might be achieved

1.5.2 Finally, the appendices contain additional and supportive information.