

**HALTON BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**DRAFT RIGHTS OF WAY
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

SUMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are a fundamental element of an integrated transport system. Halton's current Local Transport Plan covering the period 2006/07 to 2010/11 acknowledges that PRoW help to address all four shared transport priorities and all seven of the Quality of Life issues. These are summarised as follows:

- Tackling Congestion – by providing routes remote from motorised traffic that cater for sustainable transport modes;
- Delivering Accessibility – by providing and maintaining routes that give access to local facilities and employment;
- Safer Roads – by providing routes for otherwise vulnerable road users that are remote from motorised traffic;
- Better Air Quality – by encouraging less polluting modes of transport;
- Sustainable and Prosperous Communities – by providing opportunities for walking and cycling, the plan offers affordable travel to those who do not have access to a car;
- Enhancing 'People Friendly' Places – by creating a network of routes that are safe and which increase accessibility to the countryside;
- Protection and Enhancement of Landscapes and Biodiversity – by ensuring that routes are maintained in ways that protect the needs of plants and animals;
- Enhanced Personal Security – by designing walking and cycling routes to maximise personal security;
- Healthier Communities – by providing and promoting a comprehensive network of attractive routes, where people can exercise through walking and cycling, which in turn can assist in promoting general well being along with reducing obesity and diseases such as coronary heart disease, strokes and diabetes;
- Fewer Transport Related Noise Problems – by providing convenient alternatives to car based travel for short journeys; and
- Progress Towards Climate Change Objectives – by providing walking and cycling facilities that reduce dependence on motorised traffic and thereby carbon emissions.

1.2 Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a requirement that all highway authorities in England and Wales prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

1.3 Rights of Way Improvement Plans are not about rights of way in isolation, they are intended to deliver an integrated network of routes in and between town and country. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan must assess:

- The extent to which the 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 outdoor recreation and enjoyment of the authority's area; and
- The accessibility of local rights of way to blind and partially sighted people and others with mobility problems.

- 1.4 The plan must contain a Statement of Actions that the highway authority intends to carry out in order to improve its network with particular regard to issues identified within the assessment. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has issued guidance to local authorities on how it should approach the preparation of its Plan and we have followed this guidance in the preparation of our Plan.
- 1.5 The Rights of Way network is undoubtedly a major element of facilitating access to the countryside and to services, but this on its own does not show the full picture, as they are also a major recreational and transport resource. In addition, there are many other routes and sites that are used by the general public for informal countryside access and every day journeys that are not legally recorded as definitive public rights of way.
- 1.6 With this in mind the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Halton considers the whole network of other access routes¹, public open spaces and sites, including the potential of 'Open Country', as well as definitive rights of way and highways. It also looks at the whole spectrum of users and journey purposes, from disabled access needs to routes to open access land.
- 1.7 Once the ROWIP is published the Council is required to make a new assessment and review it within 10 years. Thereafter, it is required to review the plan at not more than ten-year intervals. This is Halton's first full 10 year Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

The ROWIP is a strategic document and will eventually form a distinct strand of Halton's Local Transport Plan (LTP). It is also supportive of the Council's Mersey Gateway Sustainability Strategy.

2.0 Geographical Context

- 2.1 The Rights of Way Improvement covers the whole of the borough of Halton.
- 2.2 Halton is a largely urban area with a current population of 119,500 people. Its two biggest settlements, Widnes and Runcorn, face each other across the Mersey, ten miles upstream from Liverpool and are linked by the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB). It shares boundaries with Liverpool, Knowsley, Warrington, St Helens and Vale Royal. The Borough is made up of the towns of Widnes and Runcorn together with the villages of Hale, Moore, Daresbury and Preston Brook, which are set in attractive countryside.

3.0 Vision Statement and Strategic Aims

- 3.1 The Vision Statement for Halton's PROW is as follows:

Halton Borough Council aims to develop, promote and protect a local rights of way network that meets the needs and likely future needs of the public for outdoor recreation, exercise and access to services. Through the preparation and implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) the Council will evaluate and improve access to local rights of way and other access routes, the countryside, and services within and around Halton for residents and visitors.

¹ Other Access Routes – Routes for non-motorised traffic that are not definitive public rights of way e.g. Cycleways, amenity/leisure paths, independent footpaths etc

3.2 In order to achieve this vision ten Strategic Aims have been derived following a network assessment and consultation with the public and members of user groups and assessment of the network. These form the foundation of the RoWIP and are as follows:

1. Improve standards of maintenance across the network;
2. Maintain an accurate and up to date Definitive Map and Statement;
3. Promote the health benefits of the network and make it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily lives and lead healthier lifestyles;
4. Improve accessibility by improving and developing routes that cater for the needs of people with disabilities;
5. Increase the use of the network for sustainable transport and utility trips;
6. Improve the safety and attractiveness of routes affected by other parts of the transport network;
7. Support the rural economy, local businesses countryside and tourist sites through the promotion of Halton's PROW network and other access routes, to residents and visitors;
8. Seek opportunities to enhance the network through the planning process, plans and strategies;
9. Improve connectivity of the network and create opportunities for walkers, cyclists and equestrians; and
10. Seek opportunities to enhance and extend the PROW network through cross boundary working.

These ten strategic aims are derived in Chapter 8 of the RoWIP.

4.0 The Process

4.1 The process of developing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan has been influenced by a number of factors, including the statutory ROWIP guidance, Halton's statutory Highway duties and powers, the Countryside Agency's advice (now Natural England) and wide ranging stakeholder consultations with the Merseyside Local Access Forum, Cheshire and Warrington Local Access Forum, statutory agencies, path user groups, landowners and parish councils.

4.2 In order to develop a sound basis for its ROWIP, Halton identified and evaluated the needs of various users and assessed the current levels of public rights of way and other access provision. Some of the key issues identified in the assessment were:

- There is no effective bridleway network as such available to horse riders and there is currently no provision to cross the River Mersey on horse back ;
- The footpath and cycle track networks are both rather fragmented in parts;
- There is the opportunity to extend the network across the boundary into a wider network for all users through cross boundary working;
- With proper provision the SJB has the potential to provide the only suitable sustainable river crossing and to be the gateway for all north/south long distance routes;
- There are very few circular routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders;
- Some routes are severed by busy roads and railway lines; and

- More links are required to create greater connectivity of the public rights of way network and other access routes and to connect with strategic routes and initiatives.

4.3 In addition to this work, users were asked to identify those improvements they would like to see happen. The views expressed included:

- Create more off road routes for all users;
- Improved/better maintenance of routes;
- Provide more information about access i.e suitability for prams/push chairs/wheelchairs/visually impaired etc;
- Improve signing and way marking (including distance and destinations);
- Create additional linkages and circular routes to provide a connected network;
- Provide improved/safer road crossings;
- Provide better lighting of routes;
- Increase/Improve publicity and access to it;
- Remove physical obstructions/obstacles from paths;
- Improve access for all;
- Upgrade paths to provide more multi-user routes;
- Remove stiles and replace with kissing gates;
- More surfaced routes;
- Improve paths surfaces;
- Educate motorists with regards to other users in particular cyclists and horse riders; and
- Provide an updated record of PROW's and other access routes.

4.4 The information gained from both the network and user needs assessments have been carefully considered and distilled into the 10 Strategic Aims, identified in section 1 above, which provide guidance and a focus for all improvement measures contained within the Plan.

4.5 The core of the Plan is a 'Statement of Action, which outlines the work the authority proposes to undertake to secure an improved network of local rights and access opportunities. Halton's 'Action Plan' has been developed to address the issues identified in the:

- Assessment of needs and demands; and
- Opportunities provided by the network;

It also assesses the links to the wider public benefits and local key strategies. It then addresses the issues through the development of a broad range of measures and initiatives, which are focused on achieving the 10 Strategic Aims of the Plan.

5.0 The Action Plan

5.1 This section describes the proposals contained within the Action Plan, which are shown in Table 1. The following provides a key explaining the table headings and symbols used within the Action Plan.

Ref: A unique reference number that identifies the proposed Action

Action: What we are proposing to do in order to achieve the Strategic Aim

Resources: Whether the proposed Action can be carried out by existing staff and budget or whether additional resources will be required.

The following symbols are used to denote the resources required:

Staff Time

- ☺ Existing HBC Staff
- ☺☺ Partnership with others
- ♀ Additional Staff resource required

Funding

- £ Within existing budgets
- ££ Small increase in funding required
- £££ Moderate increase in funding required
- ££££ Major funding required

Timescales: The timescale within which we are proposing to complete the action. Timescales will need to be flexible in order to make use of opportunities as they arise to maximise public benefit.

Partners: A list of key partners and stakeholders

Links: Links to other actions within the Action Plan

Links to Local Transport Plan: This denotes those actions that support the Council's Primary Transport Strategies (PTS)

- PTS 3 – Cycling
- PTS 7 – Highway Maintenance
- PTS 10 – Provision for people with disabilities
- PTS 11 – Public Rights of Way and Greenways
- PTS 12 – Quality Transport Corridors
- PTS 17 – Travel Plans
- PTS 18 – Walking

Benefits: The groups identified as benefiting from the proposed actions.

Table 1: Proposed Action Plan

Strategic Aim 1: Improve Standards of Maintenance Across the Network										
Evidence of Need:										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Users would like to see better maintenance of routes; ➤ Poor path condition and infrastructure deters users; ➤ Poor condition of routes e.g dog fouling and litter are a deterrent to users; ➤ Current users stated that they wanted better maintenance of routes, more/better signing/way marking, better lighting and more physical improvements such as more/better surfaced routes; and ➤ Well way marked routes increases confidence of users and assists land managers. 										
Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
M1	Continue to conduct an annual condition survey of the whole public rights of way network	☺	££	Ongoing			All Users, Landowners	HBC, Groundwork Merseyside	M2	PTS 7, 10, 11, 18
M2	Continue to maintain a fully signed and way marked network through the annual works programme using data obtained from the annual survey and user reports	☺	££	Ongoing			All Users, Landowners	HBC	M1, H5	PTS 7, 10, 11, 18
M3	Where appropriate increase seasonal vegetation clearance and maintenance levels on rights of way and other access routes e.g. The Mersey Way increased to 3 cuts per year and 12 safety inspections (1 per month)	☺	££	√			All Users, Landowners	HBC	M8,H5	PTS 7, 11, 18
M4	Conduct a Bi-annual condition survey of all cycle tracks	☺	£	√			All Users	HBC	M5, M6	PTS 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
M5	Using the information gathered in the survey to review the inspection and maintenance programme - develop a vegetation management plan and cleansing regime	☺	££	√			All Users	HBC	M4	PTS 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
M6	Identify signing and stencilling requirements and draw up an implementation programme	☺	£	√			All Users	HBC, Users	M4	PTS 3, 7, 18
M7	Continue to upgrade and improve path surfaces to ensure that they are in keeping with their environment and suitable for their expected use	☺	£			√	All Users	HBC, Other Organisations, Developers	M2, M5	PTS 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
M8	Develop a management strategy for the control of ragwort on the rights of way network, other access routes and road side verges. Publicise the procedure for reporting ragwort 'hot spots'	☺	££		√		Environment, All Users, Landowners	HBC	M3, M5	PTS 7

Strategic Aim 2: To Maintain an accurate and up-to-date Definitive Map and Statement

Evidence of Need:

- There is a statutory duty to update and maintain the Definitive Maps and Statements;
- There is a need for a more accurate and up to date Definitive Map and Statement that, is more accessible. This will remove uncertainty over the correct alignment and status of paths, and increase general awareness of the access network. In some cases this can have the same effect as creating new paths, as people are made aware of paths that they never knew existed;
- There is potential for the Lost Ways Project to add/upgrade certain identified routes to improve the connectivity of the network;
- To discover the true extent of public access there is a need to map existing routes with no legal status that link the Public Rights of Way and other access route networks and seek to formalise and add them to the definitive map and statement where possible;
- Users are keen to protect routes without legal status;
- In the past claims for potential Public Rights of Way have not been pursued to completion due to the current process being difficult for members of the public; and.
- The network assessment has identified gaps in the access network.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
L1	Continue to review the Definitive Map and Statement and publish a new up-to-date Map and Statement that covers the area managed by Halton, by 2010	☺	££	√		√	All Users, Landowners	HBC, Users, Landowners, LAF, Parish Councils	L2, L3, L5, L6, L8	PTS 11, 18
L2	Distribute copies of the new Definitive Map to all Council Direct Links, Local Libraries and Parish Councils	☺	£	√			All Users, Landowners	HBC	L1	PTS 10, 11, 17,18
L3	Make a digital version of the new Definitive Map available on the Council's website	☺	£	√			All Users, Landowners, Developers	HBC	L1,T10	PTS 10, 11, 17, 18
L4	Develop a recording system (similar to that used for Public Rights of Way) for cycle tracks, permissive routes and other access routes using CAM's and make the information available to the public	☺	£				All Users	HBC	L5	PTS 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
L5	Seek to formalise and record all those routes identified as having no legal status or status unknown during the desk top assessment	☺	££	√			Walkers, Cyclists and Equestrians	HBC, Landowners, Users, Parish Councils, LAF	L1, L4	PTS 7, 10, 11, 17, 18
L6	Identify all cross boundary routes and work to ensure consistency of status and alignment.	☺ ☺	££		√		Landowners, All Users	HBC, Neighbouring Authorities	L1,L8	PTS 3, 7, 10, 11, 17, 18
L7	Develop and maintain such digital registers as are required by legislation, incorporating such additional information as may be deemed appropriate.	☺	£		√			HBC		PTS 7, 11
L8	Continue to catalogue existing Definitive Map anomalies, determine preferred actions and seek implementation.	☺	£££		√		Landowners, All Users	HBC, Users, Landowners	L1, L6	PTS 11, 18

Strategic Aim 3: To Promote the Health benefits of the network and make it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily lives and lead healthier lifestyles

Evidence of Need:

- There are clear health benefits associated with outdoor activity;
- There is a lack of awareness of the potential health benefits of using the public rights of way and other access routes
- The Public Rights of Way and other access routes can assist partners trying to improve the health of Halton residents by providing opportunities for exercise and recreation; and
- The number of people in Halton with long term illness is higher than the national average.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
H1	Establish links with other Council officers, plans and strategies involving health issues.	☺	£		√			HBC		PTS 3, 10, 11, 17, 18
H2	Establish links with the Primary Care Trust and other Health Organisations.	☺ ☺	£		√			HBC, PCT, Disabled User Groups,	H3, H4, H6	PTS 3, 10, 11, 17, 18
H3	Work in partnership to promote the health and well being associated with using the PROW network and other access routes.	☺ ☺	££		Ongoing		All Users	HBC, PCT	H2,H7,H8	PTS 3, 10, 11, 17, 18
H4	Use the PROW network and other access routes to support existing health initiatives such as 'Walking the Way to Health'.	☺ ☺	££		Ongoing		Walkers	HBC, PCT	H2	PTS 3, 10, 11, 17, 18
H5	Establish a 'Green Gym' programme to assist with the maintenance and improvements of the rights of way network and other access routes.	☺ ☺	££		√		All Users	BTCV, Groundwork Merseyside, HBC	M2,M3	PTS 3, 7, 18
H6	Seek to establish links with Doctors Surgeries, Dentists, Health Centres etc to distribute information on the access network.	☺	£	√			All Users	HBC, Others	H2	PTS 3, 10, 11
H7	Identify and develop circular and linear routes that can be used to encourage walking and cycling for health.	☺	£		√		Walkers, Cyclists	HBC, Groundwork Merseyside, Users, Disabled Groups	H3	PTS 3, 11, 18
H8	Promote these routes accordingly e.g short starter routes.	☺	££	Ongoing			Walkers, Cyclists	HBC, PCT	H3	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18

Strategic Aim 4: To Improve Accessibility by improving and developing routes that cater for the needs of people with disabilities.

Evidence of Need:

- Too many physical barriers on the access network, deters use;
- There is a need to make the access network more accessible by removing unnecessary barriers and improving key routes;
- Fewer barriers on routes will increase use;
- People with limited mobility require a range of routes of varying length and terrain;
- There is a lack of promotion material specifically catering for mobility impaired users and equestrians; and
- Need to publicise barrier free routes.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
A1	Undertake an accessibility audit of the whole PROW network and other access routes.	☺	£££	√			All Users	HBC, Disabled Access Groups, Groundwork Merseyside	A2	PTS 10
A2	Using the information provided by the accessibility audit identify where new routes can be developed or improvements can be made to make the network more accessible to people with restricted mobility and develop an appropriate programme of works/projects.	☺	££££			√		HBC	A1	PTS 7, 10, 11
A3	Establish links with Disabled Access Groups and other groups/organisations that represent people with disabilities.	☺	£	√				HBC, Disabled Access Groups, Groundwork Merseyside	A1, A4, A5	PTS 10
A4	Work in partnership with mobility impaired people to assist in developing a more accessible network.	☺ ☺	£		√			HBC, Disabled Access Groups, Groundwork Merseyside	A1, A3, A5,A7	PTS 10
A5	Work in partnership with visually impaired people to develop improvements to the network that will make it more accessible to them. Seek to provide opportunities for users to enjoy sensory experiences where possible.	☺ ☺	Not Known		√			HBC, Disabled User Groups	A1, A3, A4, A7	PTS 10
A6	Ensure that all new and improved routes comply with the DDA and the British Telecom 'Countryside for all' Design Standards where reasonable and practical to do so.	☺	£	Ongoing				HBC, Developers	A7	PTS 3, 7, 10, 12, 18
A7	Promote new and existing routes that are barrier free.	☺	££		√		All Users	HBC	A4, A5, A6, A8, A9	PTS 10
A8	Continue to implement the principles of the least restrictive option when authorising new structures.	☺	£	Ongoing			All Users	HBC, Landowners,	A2, A7,	PTS 10
A9	Continue to encourage landowners to allow the Council to install gates in place of existing stiles that require repair or replacement.	☺ ☺	£	Ongoing			Walkers, Disabled Users	HBC, Landowners	A7, A8	PTS 10

Strategic Aim 5: To Increase the use of the Network for Sustainable Transport and Utility Trips

Evidence of Need:

- Public Rights of Way and other access routes can make a positive contribution to addressing accessibility to jobs, education, health, shopping and other quality of life issues for socially excluded people in Halton;
- The Transport and Access networks could be better integrated;
- Improving infrastructure in urban areas is likely to increase levels of walking and cycling;
- Whilst promotional materials are well received, non-users are unaware of the existence and potential benefits that the local access network can have for the community;
- Potential users lack confidence using rights of way and other access routes;
- Subtle messaging, language and pictures are key to empowering people to have confidence in using the network. Information needs to be appropriate and inclusive to people's needs to allow them to make their own decisions about their ability to use a route;
- Marketing and promotion needs to be improved; and
- Publicise barrier free routes.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
ST1	Continue to identify and improve off-road routes linking communities with schools, employment centres and local services.	☺	£			√	Walkers, Cyclists	HBC, User Groups, Schools, Colleges, Employers	ST3, ST12, SA1	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
ST2	Improve enforcement and management of the urban public footpaths and other access routes to combat litter, fly-tipping and dog fouling.	☺	££		√		All Users	HBC, User Groups		PTS 7
ST3	Continue to seek improvements for non-motorised travel in proposals for new developments. Seek to secure funding from developer contributions.	☺ ☺	£			√	All Users	HBC, User Groups, Developers	ST1	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
ST4	Develop walking and cycling from public transport interchanges.	☺ ☺	£		√		Walkers, Cyclists	HBC, Transport Providers	ST5, ST7, ST10, ST11, T11	PTS 3, 12, 18
ST5	Promote the use of public transport on leaflets and website.	☺	££			√	All Users	HBC	ST5, ST9	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
ST6	Publish rights of way guidance for developers.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC		PTS 7, 10, 11
ST7	Identify existing links between the rights of way network, other access routes and local bus and rail services.	☺	££		√		Walkers, Cyclists	HBC User Groups	ST4, ST8	PTS 3, 11, 12, 17, 18
ST8	Ensure that rights of way, cycleway and other access route connections are considered when planning new bus routes and stops.	☺	£			√	Walkers, Cyclists	HBC, Developers, User Groups	ST7, ST9	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17,

										18
ST9	Promote selected routes through time tables, bus route information maps, bus interchanges and train stations.	☺ ☺	£		√		All Users	HBC, Bus and Train Operators	ST5, ST7, ST8	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
ST10	Ensure that, wherever possible promoted routes can be accessed using public transport.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC	ST4	PTS 12
ST11	Provide relevant public transport information on promotion leaflets for walking and cycling.	☺	£		√		Walkers, Cyclists	HBC	ST4	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 18
ST12	Where appropriate work to integrate the PROW and other access routes with work and school travel plans.	☺ ☺	£			√	Walkers, Cyclists	HBC, Schools, Colleges and Businesses	ST1	PTS 17
ST13	Continue to seek to upgrade footpaths where appropriate to provide greater opportunities.	☺	£££		Ongoing		All Users	HBC, User Groups, Neighbouring Authorities, Landowners	ST14, SA1, CO1, CO2, CO3, CO4	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
ST14	Seek to develop a multi-user route across the River Mersey.	☺ ☺	£££			√	Walkers, Cyclists, Horse Riders	HBC, User Groups, Sustrans, BHS	ST13, T7, T8, T9	PTS 3, 10, 11, 17, 18

Strategic Aim 6: Improve the Safety and Attractiveness of routes affected by the Transport Network

Evidence of Need:

- Path users find crossing busy roads difficult which deters use;
- Driver attitude and awareness of equestrians and cyclists could be improved; and
- The illegal use of motor vehicles on the access network causes safety issues for users and concern to landowners. Attempts to restrict access to resolve problems can impact on other users and quite often, the problem simply moves elsewhere.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
SA1	Undertake a safety audit to identify points where the PROW network and other access routes are crossed by the road network and seek opportunities to make and fund improvements.	☺	££		√		All Users	HBC	SA2, SA3, ST1, ST13	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
SA2	Identify where 'missing links' in the network, which require users to travel along busy roads and develop solutions including verge improvements, creation agreements/orders.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC	SA1, SA3, CO6, CO7	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
SA3	Identify locations where the network is crossed by the rail network and, working with the appropriate authorities, develop measures to improve safety as required.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC Network Rail Train Operating Companies	SA1, SA2, SA4, SA5	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
SA4	Identify roadside verges that are suitable for use by non-motorised traffic and footway improvements that can provide safe links between routes. Compile a register of identified verges.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC	SA1, SA2, SA3, SA5	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 18
SA5	Create 'Behind the Hedge' routes to provide missing links where appropriate, and safe to do so.	☺ ☺	£££			√	All Users	HBC, Users, Landowners	SA1, SA2, SA3, SA4	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 18
SA6	Improve driver awareness of equestrians and cyclists.	☺ ☺	££	Ongoing			Equestrians, Cyclists	HBC, Road Safety Partnership		PTS 3, 11
SA7	Work in partnership to promote road safety for equestrians.	☺ ☺	££	Ongoing			Equestrians	HBC, BHS, Road Safety Partnership	T14	PTS 11, 12
SA8	Continue to provide education and training that promotes cycle safety and seek to extend this to include equestrians.	☺ ☺	££	Ongoing			Cyclists, Equestrians	HBC, Sustrans, BHS, Users, Road Safety Partnership		PTS 3, 11

Strategic Aim 7: To Support the Rural Economy, Local Businesses, Countryside and Tourist sites through the Promotion of Halton's PROW network and other access routes to residents and visitors.

Evidence of Need:

- A good accessible network will benefit tourism, local businesses and the rural economy;
- Improvements to Public Rights of Way and other access routes that link to tourist attractions will greatly enhance the visitor experience;
- Development and improvement to the bridleway network, together with suitable network promotion and increased information can boost Equine tourism , which can make a considerable contribution to the local economy;
- Coastal tourism will benefit from a better connected access network;
- Marketing and promotion needs to be improved;
- There is a lack of promotion material specifically catering for mobility impaired users and equestrians; and
- In the past promoted events have been popular but limited to walking and cycling groups this should be extended.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
T1	Identify and list sites requiring improved links to the surrounding network of PROW and other access routes. Investigate, prioritise and implement options for securing improved access to poorly served sites.	☺	£			√	Site Managers, Landowners, All Users	HBC, Users, Site Managers	T2,T3,T4	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 18
T2	Identify and develop circular and linear recreational routes to and from Countryside and Tourist Sites.	☺	£			√	All Users, Providers	HBC, Users, Site Managers	T1,T4	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
T3	Identify and develop access opportunities to Open Access and Registered Common Land.	☺	££		√		Walkers	HBC, Users, Landowners	T1	PTS 10, 18
T4	Seek to develop links with tourism and accommodation providers to distribute information on the access network and promoted routes.	☺	£		√		All Users, Providers	HBC, Providers	T1,T2	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
T5	Provide information on the accessibility of routes as determined by accessibility audits using suitable formats and medias.	☺	££			√	Users	HBC		PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
T6	Identify, develop and promote links from the Trans Pennine Trail into the surrounding urban centres and tourist destinations.	☺	££			√	Users	HBC, Sustrans, Users		PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
T7	Develop strategic routes for all users including horse riders where possible, to support the development of long distance routes such as the North West Coastal Trail and to facilitate connections between other initiatives such as the Weaver Valley Park, The Mersey Waterfront, Upper Mersey Forest park.	☺ ☺	££££			√	All Users	HBC, MLAF, Neighbouring Authorities, Users, 4NW, Other Organisations	ST14, T9, P6	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18

T8	Seek to provide a multi-user River Crossing, including provision for equestrians, to facilitate proposed regional and national trails.	☺ ☺	££	√			All Users	HBC, MLAF, BHS, Sustrans, Users	ST14	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
T9	Continue to support partners in the development of new routes and trails.	☺ ☺	£			√	All Users	HBC, Other Authorities, Other Organisations	ST14, T7	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
T10	Continue to develop the PROW website and seek to include interactive web routes for all users with links to local services and tourist attractions.	☺	£	√			All Users	HBC	L3	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
T11	Provide public transport information at key sites and along promoted routes.	☺	£		√		Users	HBC, Transport Providers	ST4	PTS 3, 11, 12, 18
T12	Establish links and work with Parish Councils to erect map display boards at suitable locations throughout the Borough.	☺	££		√		Users	HBC, Parish Councils		PTS 11
T13	Seek to continue to develop the series of 'Halton Village Walks' leaflets.	☺	££			√	Walkers	HBC, Groundwork Merseyside		PTS 10, 11, 18
T14	Research and develop other promotional leaflets for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.	☺	££	√			All Users	HBC, Grounwwork Merseyside, Users	SA7	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
T15	Seek to Identify and develop routes to link tourist accommodation e.g. hotels, B+B's to the network and other attractions.	☺	£		√		Providers, Visitors, Users	HBC, Providers		PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
T16	Produce a leaflet distribution strategy	☺	£	√			All Users	HBC		PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18

Strategic Aim 8: To Seek Opportunities to enhance the network through the Planning Process, Plans and Strategies.

Evidence of Need:

- In the past a number of developments have had a detrimental effect on the access network;
- Many developments have the potential to contribute to the access network through dedication, permissive and concessionary means;
- The development of access opportunities through consultation on newly proposed tourist attractions will provide further opportunity for users and potentially secure new routes, ensuring that public rights of way and other access routes can further contribute to the local economy;
- Plans for all developments i.e housing, industrial, new tourist attractions/accommodation etc should include provisions for walking, cycling and horse riding where appropriate;
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans have the potential to link with a number of plans and strategies through shared aims and objectives; and
- There are opportunities to promote the network with partners who have similar aims and objectives to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
P1	Seek to prevent developments that have a detrimental impact on the existing network.	☺	£	Ongoing			All Users	HBC	P3, P5	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
P2	Continue to ensure that all new developments link to the network by appropriate dedicated footpaths, bridleways and cycleways.	☺	£	Ongoing			All Users	HBC, Developers, Users		PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 18
P3	Seek to improve the recognition & protection of public rights of way and other access routes in the planning process and the use of planning gain to enhance facilities.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC, Developers	P1	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
P4	Establish firm linkages with existing plans and strategies to integrate public rights of way, other access routes and the ROWIP to enable shared aims and objectives to be delivered.	☺	£	√			All Users	HBC		PTS 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18
P5	Produce a Guide to Development and Public Rights of Way for the Planners and Developers.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC	P1	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
P6	Improve current links with partners and seek to establish new relationships to facilitate the identification and development of cross boundary routes and national and regional trails.	☺ ☺	£		√		All Users	HBC, Neighbouring Authorities, LAF's	T7	PTS 3, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18

Strategic Aim 9: To Improve Connectivity of the Network and Create Opportunities for walkers, cyclists and equestrians.

Evidence of Need:

- The access network is fragmented particularly for equestrians and cyclists;
- There is a lack of provision for equestrians which means that many have to travel along the highway for recreation or to access a limited number of routes;
- Improvements are needed to improve connectivity of routes;
- Horse riders and cyclists want a range of circular routes of varying lengths;
- Horse riders would like longer cross boundary routes and links to National Trails;
- All users want more off-road routes;
- There is a need to establish clearer relationships with cycling and equestrian groups to assist in route provision and development; and
- There is a need to map definitive routes, cycle routes, permissive agreements and other access opportunities to identify wider connectivity and areas lacking access.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
CO1	Upgrade footpaths to bridleways, where appropriate, to assist in the development of a more cohesive network of routes available to equestrians and cyclists.	☺	£££		√		All Users	HBC, Users, BHS, Neighbouring Authorities	ST13	PTS 3, 10, 11
CO2	Upgrade cycle tracks to bridleways, where appropriate, to assist develop a connected network of routes available to equestrians.	☺	£££		√		All Users	HBC, Users, Landowners, Neighbouring Authorities	ST13	PTS 10, 11
CO3	Upgrade footpaths to shared use cycle tracks, where appropriate, to develop a connected network of routes for cyclists.	☺	£££		√		Cyclists	HBC, Users, Sustrans	ST13	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CO4	Seek Creation Agreements/Orders to make missing links, where sufficient need has been established.	☺ ☺	££			√	All Users	HBC, Users, Landowners	ST13	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CO5	Ensure that all gates fitted on routes with equestrian rights have latches that can be operated from horse back.	☺	£	√			Equestrians	HBC, Landowners		PTS 10, 11
CO6	Continue to identify and develop off road walking, cycling and horse riding routes.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC, Users,	SA2	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CO7	Seek to identify and develop linkages to improve connectivity of the existing network and new routes.	☺	£		√		All Users	HBC, Users	SA2	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CO8	Seek to identify, develop and promote the use of 'Quiet Lanes' to benefit all non-motorised users.	☺	£			√	All Users	HBC		PTS 3, 10, 11, 17, 18

Strategic Aim 10: To Seek Opportunities to enhance and extend the Public Rights of Way network and other access routes through cross boundary working

Evidence of Need:

- Horse Riders want to be able to access the Salt Marshes at Frodsham, the Aston Ring and other neighbouring bridleway routes/networks;
- Horse riders requested the creation and development of routes in the north of the Borough;
- There are opportunities to extend and improve the network available to Halton residents for walkers, horse riders and cyclists; and
- There is the opportunity to facilitate the development of national and regional trails through the Borough.

Ref	Action	Resources		Targets & Timescales			Benefits	Partners	Links to other ROWIP actions	Links to LTP Policies
		Staff	Funding	Yr 1 & 2	Yr 3 & 4	Yr 5+				
CB1	Re-establish links with St Helens Bridleway Group and St Helens Council to facilitate the development of the Old Mineral Line, as a multi-user route for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.	☺	££	√			All Users	St. Helens BC, Groundwork Merseyside, Users, Landowners	CB2, CB4, CB5, CB6	PTS 3, 10, 11, 17, 18
CB2	Research the status of the route along the north side of the Manchester Ship canal with a view to upgrading to a bridleway to improve access for walkers, horse riders and cyclists, through the Upper Mersey Valley Regional Park	☺ ☺	££	√			All Users	Warrington BC, HBC, Groundwork Merseyside,	CB5	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CB3	Seek to move the Mersey Way at Hale further away from the shore to ensure longevity of the route and upgrade sections of bridleway to provide a multi-user route for all users that connects to the Mersey Waterfront Park.	☺ ☺	££££	√			All Users	HBC, Landowners, Users	CB5	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CB4	Establish links with the new Chester and Cheshire West Unitary Council with a view to replacing the old bridge across the Weaver Navigation to provide a multi-user connection into the Weaver Valley Regional Park and the Weaver Way for horse riders, walkers and cyclists.	☺	££££		√		All Users	HBC, Chester and Cheshire West BC, Users, Landowners	CB5	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CB5	Identify, create and develop cross boundary links into neighbouring networks.	☺ ☺	£££			√	All Users	Neighbouring Authorities	CB1, CB2, CB3, CB4, CB6, CB7	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CB6	Establish links with partners to enable the development of the North West Coastal Trail in Halton.	☺ ☺	££££	√			All Users	Neighbouring Authorities, 4NW	CB5	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18
CB7	Seek to develop, with partners, a multi-user crossing over the River Mersey.	☺ ☺	££££			√	All Users	HBC, Neighbouring Authorities, MLAF, Users, Sustrans, BHS,	CB5	PTS 3, 10, 11, 18

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

6.1 Implementation

Whilst there is a statutory requirement to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, there is no requirement on Local Authorities to implement the plan. Specific funding has not been allocated to deliver improvements, so Local Authorities have to bid for funding to deliver the proposed improvements.

Rights of Way Improvement Plans are meant to be aspirational and ambitious in identifying potential improvement to the network. Therefore we have cast our net wide when considering ways to improve the network whilst recognising that it would not be possible to implement them all immediately.

The Council will need to work in partnership with a range of organisations in order to deliver many of the proposed actions. Additional funding will be required and will be sought from both internal and external sources.

6.2 Monitoring

It is intended that the Council's existing Public Rights of Way Milestone Statement will be the delivery mechanism for the ROWIP improvements. Details of proposed site specific schemes will be included within the Milestone Statement Progress Report, which outlines a programme of works.

6.3 Identifying 'Quick Wins'

It is clear that many of the Actions identified will require much time and the allocation of substantial resources to deliver. There are however, some actions that can be delivered within a shorter timescale, and within current resources. These actions are likely to be delivered within a shorter period of time as their implementation does not rely on identifying additional external funding. In broad terms, the improvements, which Halton Borough Council and their partners can best make progress on delivering, are those within the control of the Council.

The Council will therefore endeavour to identify 'Quick Wins' to ensure the improvement and development of the network progresses whilst more detailed/complex schemes are developed.

7.0 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP) POLICIES

7.1 In preparing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, it became clear that in order to provide direction on many of the issues identified, it was necessary to develop a wide range of policies, which are summarised below.

Policy R1

Halton Borough Council will seek to support the aspirations and work of partner authorities and organisations in identifying opportunities and securing improvements and additions to the rights of way network and other access routes through their own policies and the planning system. The authority will look to partners for support in pursuing the

aims and objectives of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, through cross boundary working.

Policy R2 (U1) Walking

Halton Borough Council will protect and seek to enhance the network available to walkers and cater for their needs. Priority will be given to making the existing network more accessible to those with limited mobility, where appropriate.

Policy R3 (U2) Cycling

Halton Borough Council will protect and seek to enhance the network available to cyclists. Opportunities to expand the available traffic-free and 'on-road' networks will be pursued, where appropriate.

Policy R4 (U3) Horse Riders and Carriage Drivers

Halton Borough Council will protect and seek to enhance the network available to horse riders and carriage drivers. Opportunities to expand and improve the available traffic free and 'on road' networks will be given a priority. Opportunities to expand the network will be pursued, where appropriate.

Policy R5 (U4) Motor Vehicles

In pursuing the aims of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Halton Borough Council will have due regard to the rights of motorised vehicular users, where appropriate.

Policy R6 (U5) Access for All

In developing and improving the local rights of way network and other access routes, Halton Borough Council will have due regard to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Council will seek to make the local rights of way network and other access routes as accessible as possible to people through the provision of clear information and by adopting an approach of the least restrictive option in route management, as outlined in Policy R15 (M2) Authorising new Bridges and Associated Structures on Local Rights of Way.

Policy R7 (U6) Encouraging Greater Use of the Network

Halton Borough Council will seek to raise awareness of the availability and benefits of use of the network. The Authority will support the aims of other bodies promoting greater use of the network and encourage partner authorities to be pro-active in their efforts to meet the needs of existing and potential users.

Policy R8 (U7) Minimising Conflict

In pursuing the aims of its Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Halton Borough Council will seek to ensure that the rights of farmers/landowners are respected and encourage responsible use of the network. Where appropriate, the Authority will initiate measures to minimise conflict between users.

Policy R9 (Imp1) Improving Network Connections

Halton Borough Council recognises that one of the biggest problems faced by users is the lack of connectivity of the networks, especially bridleways. Where problems are identified, opportunities will be sought to improve connectivity where appropriate, with priority given to multi-user connections.

Policy R10 (Imp2) Improving Network Safety

Halton Borough Council will seek improvements to the safety of vulnerable users where they have cause to cross a highway in order to access the local rights of way network and other access. Where safety is identified as being a concern, the Authority will consider a wide range of options such as revised verge management, improved visibility, signing etc. Priority will be given to improving those routes which cater for a combination of horse riders, cyclists and walkers.

Policy R11 (L1) Dealing with Public Path Orders

Public Path Order (PPO) applications will normally be supported by the authority where there is seen to be benefits to both landowner and user. PPO's will normally be processed in the order in which they are received, except in the following circumstances where orders may be considered sooner:

- Where processing of an order would allow the Council to pursue a significant access opportunity such as identified through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan;
- Where an order has been made by the Council in the capacity as Planning Authority to facilitate approved development; and
- Where the processing of an order could save "significant" costs incurred in other Rights of Way functions.

PPO's will be prioritised as above to enable orders to be made that have a significant impact on the path network.

Policy R12 (L2) Dedications and Creation Agreements

Halton Borough Council has powers to accept the dedication of a new right of way under Section 25 of the Highways Act 1980. Agreements will be considered:

- Where a dedication is offered in lieu of a Modification Order and satisfies the evidence for that order, enabling the early addition of the route on the Definitive Map; and
- Where the requirement to make a dedication forms part of an obligation under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 106.

Maintenance liability will normally only be accepted where;

- The addition of a path is of strategic public benefit;
- No initial additional expenditure by the authority is necessary to bring a path into a fit state of use; and
- Limitations on use of the route are not onerous to the public.

The Council will also consider dedication or creation agreements that secures a line/corridor through which it intends to develop a future route, previously identified through the Greenways Study, Bridleways Studies, ROWIP etc. When pursuing such agreements physical works may or may not be required by the landowner and any ensuing maintenance liabilities will be accepted by the Council.

Policy R13 (L3) Width of New Routes

Halton Borough Council has a duty to assert the rights of the public (Highways Act 1980, Section 130) when making orders or consulting on new routes. As a result, the authority requires a minimum width of 2m. for footpaths and 4m. for bridleways, which are created by PPO or dedication, except where a path has been previously fenced on both sides, when there is presumption that the full available width should be recorded as the width. Where possible a 'gold standard' width of 5m for bridleways will be sought.

For Greenway routes intended for all users and those routes that are considered to be of strategic importance, the Council will seek a width of 10m to cater for the different classes of user and to allow for the provision of trees, hedges and benches to enable walkers to rest.

However, the Council recognises that sometimes it will be necessary to accept a lesser width or localised narrowing in order to create a route. It will therefore, endeavour to achieve the best and most appropriate width that fits the routes proposed purpose and its surroundings.

Policy R14 (M1) – Maintenance of the Network

Halton Council has a duty to assert and protect the rights of the public to enjoy the path network (Highways Act 1980 S130). The authority will normally prioritise its actions as follows:-

- Where public safety can be substantially improved;
- According to the level of public use;

- Where the Council feels there would be a significant benefit to those with limited mobility;
- Where the Council's actions could result in a significant positive impact on the local rights of way network;
- Where actions by landowners and managers are in direct conflict with the Highways Act 1980;
- Where the Council is bringing a path into a 'fit' condition with the intention of adding it to the Definitive Map; and
- Where there is evidence that either the Definitive Map or Statement is incorrect.

Policy R15 (M2) Authorisation and Management of Structures on Local Rights of Way

Halton Borough Council will seek to keep the number of newly authorised structures erected on the local Rights of Way network to a minimum, to minimise the impact on legitimate users. In order to achieve this only gates will normally be authorised to avoid unnecessary problems caused by stiles.

In most cases the least restrictive option available will be favoured, although careful consideration will be given to the needs of the farmers and horse owners for structures to be stock proof.

It should be noted that where a structure is no longer needed for stock control purposes and does not meet the criteria for authorisation, the authority will request the removal of that structure, leaving a clearly 'way marked' gap.

Policy R16 (M3) Authorising new Bridges and Associated Structures on Local Rights of Way

Where a landowner creates a new ditch, pond or channel that crosses an existing right of way, a suitable bridge or structure must be provided, which can accommodate all legitimate users safely and without restriction.

Policy R17 (M4) Enforcing the Removal of Agricultural Obstructions

The Council will endeavour to resolve any agricultural obstructions by negotiation with the Landowner/farmer. However, where this fails, the Council will take action to address the identified problem using its powers under Sections 134 and 137A. of the Highways Act 1980.