

PART THREE – REVISED ASSESSMENT

Chapter 6. Strategic Objectives

6.0 The previous chapters have identified the benefits and problems on the existing PROW network, the needs of different users and the gaps between the existing service provision and the expected demands that residents and visitors will place on the network in future.

6.1 This chapter looks at the four strategic objectives as identified in the Draft ROWIP that should help to change the PROW network into **an integrated network of well maintained routes with sufficient route information for users to make a choice, and that fulfils the diverse needs of Barnsley residents and visitors alike.**

6.2 **What strategic objectives?**

The Countryside Team cannot meet all the needs and requests of users, fulfil the statutory duties and the demands from corporate and regional strategies within their available resources. Indeed these three pressures often conflict, where meeting an element of one may mean failure to meet another, and as already seen in Chapter 3, the needs of different users also often conflict with each other.

The top three strategic objectives on Rights of Way identified for the LTP2 in 2004 were: improved maintenance and statutory duties, greater access for mobility impaired users and an integrated network of multi user routes. The previous chapters have outlined reasons for the continued support of these objectives but we would now also add a fourth, greater information provision.

It is a proposal of this Draft ROWIP that these four strategic objectives remain the guide for the work of the Countryside Team and those who have a role in developing public access and the Rights of Way network.

6.2.1 **Improving maintenance of all routes and sites to BVPI standard**

Maintenance has to be a priority as it has a direct effect on day to day access for users, their perception of personal security and is a statutory requirement on the Local Authority. Poorly maintained routes raise the issue of insurance claims for personal injury and discourages use by residents and visitors alike. The many facets of PROW maintenance will need to be prioritised and tough decisions made about what not to do if resources are limited. Historically the highest priority has been given to health and safety works with accessibility coming a close second. The maintenance priority matrix will be subject to cabinet approval in 2008/9.

6.2.2 **Greater Access for mobility impaired users.**

As the population across the country ages and health levels in Barnsley remain poor, any means of allowing greater access to the PROW network and encouraging walking and cycling will be of benefit to all users. Any changes to routes or furniture on Rights of Way targeted at improving access for mobility and sensory impaired users such as replacing stiles with gates will also benefit all the other legitimate users.

Improving access in urban areas includes dealing with issues such as parking on pavements and too many signs/ bins etc that cause obstructions. It covers the needs of parents with pushchairs walking children to school, and wider routes to allow cycle and walking access to services and public transport stops. In rural areas it includes access across a range of terrains, not just flat tarmac paths, and making available information on what obstacles face users on routes.

6.2.3 An integrated network of multi-user routes

The research identified many areas where new footpath and bridleways could be created, either to fill gaps where there are few Rights of Way or to form a link between existing routes that would reduce the need to use a road and the subsequent safety issues. Again the priority will be developing those routes that will benefit the greatest number of users. Therefore making a better network of multi-user routes (rather than footpaths) will increase the options not only for walkers but those user groups with limited or no access, i.e. cyclists and horse-riders. Research and processing of modification applications to add or upgrade routes and positive action on unclassified county roads should help to provide for 4x4 vehicles and carriage drivers who have no current provision.

In urban areas the developing multi user network will allow greater provision for cyclists accessing schools, work places and other services, and will link with the on road cycle provision as they both develop through the cycle strategy

6.2.4 Improved information provision and promotion.

Information comes in many forms but can be broken down into two areas. Information for users (pre, during and post use) either formal such as publication of leaflets/ site maps or informal / available on request e.g. dimensions of gates / barriers on the TPT to enable users to make their own decisions. The second is making information on priority sites, future aims and requirements widely known within BMBC and by other organisations thereby enabling cross service and partnership working to achieve a range of objectives and access to different funding sources.

In the process of working to achieve these four strategic objectives, other issues and objectives are addressed. Especially issues of route development, health and transport agendas, rural regeneration through tourism and BMBC statutory duties of processing legal orders and enforcement.

- 6.3 The risks associated with not carrying out these strategic objectives were identified in the Draft ROWIP and can be seen in Appendix D.
- 6.4 Table 6.1 identifies what Key Elements of work would help to meet the four strategic objectives, what levels of public demand drive these choices and where potential funding could be found.

Table 6.1 Key Elements

Strategic Objective	Work Area	Public Demand	Funding Options	
			Increased revenue	Capital funding
1	Annual vegetation clearance (Cutting back of surface and overhanging vegetation not including the TPT. Medium – Low priority for existing rangers work)	Main cause of complaints especially during the growing season.	Seasonal problem and cheapest method of resolving is using internal resources e.g. rangers not outside contractors. Cutting each year is more cost effective than having to cut a seriously overgrown route every three or four years	May be possible with BMBC capital money for seriously overgrown routes or part of a route specific scheme, but problem returns the following year.
1	Repairs to Structures part of annual maintenance (including bridges, stiles, gates steps etc.)	Regular complaints about condition and accessibility. Health and safety top priority for works	Ranger teams currently focusing on health and safety elements of these. A swifter response would be possible with an additional ranger team paid by increasing revenue funding	These would be possible but annual inspections would be required of whole network each year to identify & prioritise. There is no capacity in the existing resources to carry out annual inspections so this would require an increase in annual revenue costs to achieve.
1	Surfacing and Drainage part of annual maintenance not including TPT (small scale projects – 1 day)	Increasing number of complaints		
1,2,3	Large Scale drainage and surfacing improvements Flights of steps or slopes, poor drainage, surfacing beyond pot hole repairs	Increasing number of requests as no repairs on small problems create larger scale problems	An increase in revenue will enable internal and external contractors and design fees to be paid. E.G. BTCV. However a full network assessment still required with likely requirement for inspections officer. (Appendix F -Action Plan 7.2 – Main 5/6)	Capital funding could be used. Some projects already identified but network assessment needed if works are carried out in priority order. Requiring revenue funding for inspections officer
1,4	Signing and Waymarking Large backlog but low priority within the rangers maintenance list	Regular complaints and main cause of BVPI failure	Likely to be significant role for any additional ranger team. £100k would provide for additional 2 rangers, vehicle etc for 1 year	One off capital funding would be suitable to blitz known outstanding routes.

Strategic Objective	Work Area	Public Demand	Funding Options	
			Increased revenue	Capital funding
1,2,3	<p>Trans Pennine Trail vegetation removal</p> <p>Many sections of the TPT are now narrow and have increasingly poor surface due to vegetation encroachment and self set tress, limited sunlight and leaf litter accumulated from 10 years of no maintenance</p>	Regular complaints from users, especially disabled access and horse riders given the increased height and width requirements	Could be an option for specific TPT ranger team to clear veg and small scale surfacing. This option would help to reduce the need for future large scale repair works.	Capital funding already required to bring failing sections up to original standard and more required to bring them to acceptable commuter and DDA accessibility standards. Any improvements will require revenue funding to maintain the new standards – sections failing annual inspections.
1,2,3	<p>Trans Pennine Trail surfacing & drainage.</p> <p>Some sections are unusable due to deteriorating surfacing and drainage. Surfaces need redressing or replacement, drains need checking and regular clearing/ re digging</p>	Regular complaints especially from families, commuters and mobility/sensory impaired users who are target groups.	Could be combined with TPT veg clearance and specific additional TPT ranger team however some sites will need external contractors to carry out works given the scale of problem	Even with increased revenue it will need capital expenditure. To improve sections of surfacing e.g. tarmacing for commuting routes and improving surfacing/ controls/links for DDA access. Or route development creating new links
2,4	<p>DDA improvements – small scale</p> <p>Remember our wider definition of mobility / sensory impaired users. Includes replacing stiles with gates, removing barriers, replacing steps with ramps, upgrading A frame to K frames, Improving information provision</p>	Urgently required as is all DDA accessibility improvement Priority routes to be selected in conjunction with Local Access Forum, user groups and communities.	An increase in revenue budget to include an additional general ranger team and funding for materials will enable much of this work to be carried out although on a priority route basis	Could be carried out with capital funding as enable key priority circular or linear routes to be made accessible. A holistic route approach rather than piece meal and based on furniture improvements. Proactive view.

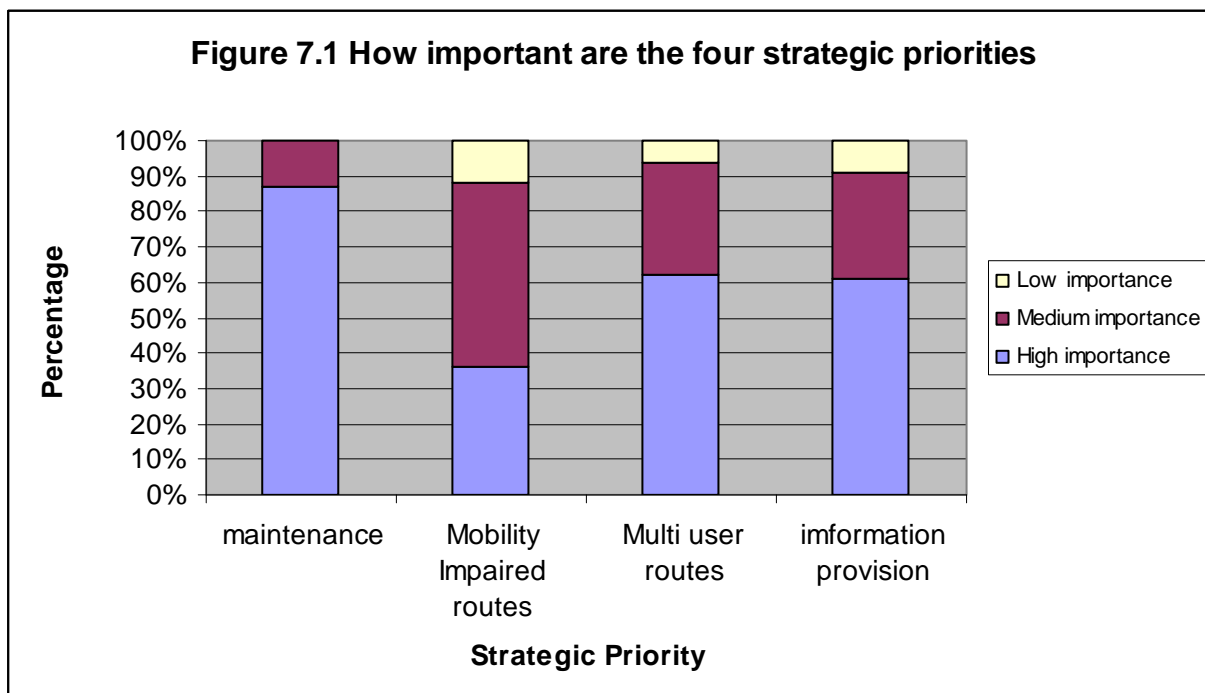
Strategic Objective	Work Area	Public Demand	Funding Options	
			Increased revenue	Capital funding
2,4	DDA improvements – large scale Major route development and improvements, circular routes / linear improvements	With more than 25% of British population falling into this category, there is significant potential for accessibility being a target tourist market	Revenue increase to pay for network assessment but projects likely to be capital based given costs and project management capacity required.	A proactive approach could be taken with capital funding but network assessment would still be required. Only a significant improvement would enable BMBC to meet its statutory obligations.
3,4	Legal Support Additional support for processing claim applications, enforcement issues etc.	With 44 full claims and 233 other routes to be processed there are potentially 270 communities or groups demanding action.	Currently share a legal officer with P&T with road schemes having priority & vacant diversions/ claims officer post yet not replaced within countryside team. An additional legal officer carrying out only rights of way work would make a reduction within the back log, especially when combined with filling the vacant post.	Certain elements could be contracted out at a greater cost than in house staffing. Or short term contract for in house officers Both options may offer limited advantage as moves the backlog further down the process chain within Legal Services
4,2,3	Promoted Route Improvement Information boards, specific signing for promoted routes in waymarking /signs		Practical work part of additional ranger team. Limited route information possible with full team	Could be carried out as capital project but needs revenue support to maintain
3,2,4	Route Development Upgrading of existing routes, creation of new links legal, DDA & works		Some elements can be carried out with increased revenue support	Best carried out as capital projects as often larger than development.

CHAPTER 7 – Public consultation on the Draft ROWIP

- 7.0 The Draft ROWIP was passed by Cabinet in May 2007 and was published for the 3 month public consultation 4 June - 3 September. The Draft ROWIP was published as both a full document and key issues booklet, with removable feedback forms and prepaid envelopes to return any comments. A list of formal consultees is identified in Appendix C.
- 7.1 Copies of the Draft ROWIP and Key Issues Booklet were available from the Countryside Team and connect action point offices. Reference copies of the full document were available in all Barnsley Libraries along with opportunities to collect a Key Issues Booklet.
- 7.2 General comments on the Draft ROWIP were welcome and these are shown in Appendix E, however there were specific issues we wanted comments on and these are shown below along with the responses.

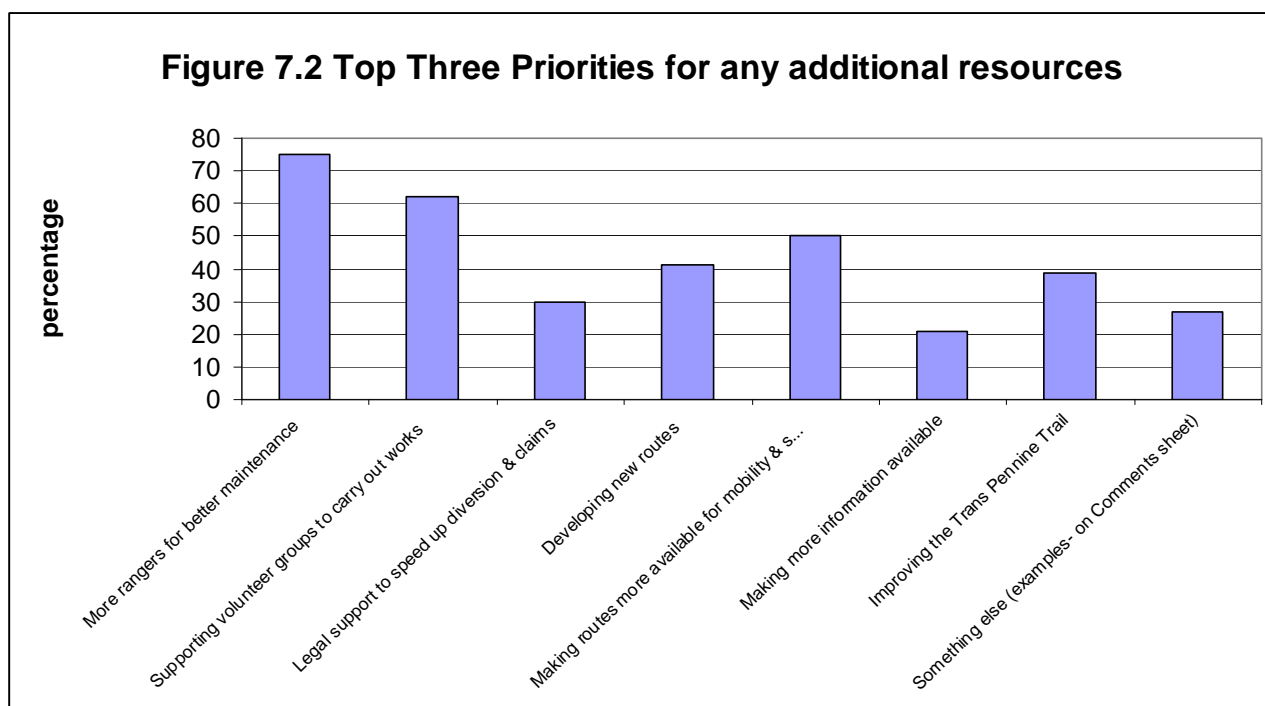
Individual organisations responded with additional information and whilst it was usually across the issues, there is a tendency to prioritise their own main area of concern

- 7.3 How Important are our four strategic objectives to you?
Figure 7.1 shows the level of importance that respondents placed on the four strategic objectives (detailed in Chapter 6). It is clear that the majority of respondents identify with the objectives, giving them either high or medium importance. This supports the assessment made within the Draft ROWIP following the original research and identifications of issues.



- 7.4 If we received additional resources, what would you like to see it spent on?
In the Draft ROWIP options for any additional resources were identified in the Ladder of Priorities. The feedback form asked respondents what three types of work they would prioritise, and these are shown in Figure 7.2. Whilst maintenance

comes out top and mobility impaired access third as reflected in their position as Strategic Objectives, unexpectedly supporting volunteers to carry out works comes out second. This indicates that users are both aware of the potential benefits to the network that are possible with a well supported volunteer set up, and the desire of people to volunteer for these types of task.



7.5 Improving access for mobility impaired users

The issue of providing access for mobility/sensory impaired users is often contentious as users recognise the need and legal requirement, however perceive an increase risk of illegal use by motorbike and 4x4 when access controls are changed or removed. There needs to be an approved cross service policy to enable the council to meet its responsibility under the Disability Discrimination Act and is consistent across the different services in its approach to requests for new or changes to access controls. Consideration of the motorbike issue, access, enforcement and provision must be taken as part of this policy development.

7.6 Do you think Barnsley MBC should provide a location or routes for motorbikes to use?

Nearly 62% of respondents said yes a site or routes should be provided. Further clarification was made in the form of written concerns about the motorbikes/ provision of mobility impaired access routes. They reflect concerns of users, support and opposition to the motorbike issues and in some cases the depth of feeling about perceived lack of action on the motorbike issue.

7.7 Comparison figures with other South Yorkshire Authorities

The majority of local authorities have published their Draft ROWIP's this year, which has enabled a comparison to be made on some of the key factors facing the Barnsley Countryside Team as part of the ROWIP and strategic development. Table 7.3 identify the combined impact of network size, backlogs for maintenance and DMMO claims as a serious issue that Barnsley is facing when compared to the other South Yorkshire Authorities. Restructuring proposals for the Team and

directorates should help to address some of these imbalances, but resources are an additional issue.

Table 7.3 Comparisons with South Yorkshire Authorities

Authority	Size of Network	Number of DMMO claims	2006 BVPI pass rate
Barnsley MBC	750km	202 +71 byways	34%
Sheffield City Council	745km	46	81%
Doncaster MBC	466km	193	65.8%
Rotherham MBC	387km	158	95%

Identifying resource comparisons is more difficult as each authority manages and finances maintenance and legal processing in different ways. It is hoped that these would be available for the annual performance management plan in November 2008 (details in chapters 9 and 10)

Chapter 8 – Major Influences in 2007

8.0 The major impacts of 2007 have been the flooding and as the final ROWIP is being written a significant restructure to Barnsley MBC is being proposed.

8.1 June Floods

No-one living in Barnsley can have missed the impact that the June flooding had on South Yorkshire's roads, schools, homes, businesses, and Rights of Way. To some extent we are still assessing the damage and trying to find a means of paying for repairs

8.1.1 Rights of Way across the authority were damaged, with the exception of the north east corner. In total 16 bridges were destroyed or experienced serious damage, 2 sets of stepping stones moved downstream, serious erosion of the dam wall at Dearne Valley Park, and approximately 55 km of TPT experienced surface damage along with several bridleways and footpaths as far apart as Gunthwaite & Ingbirchworth, Dodworth, Darton and Darfield.

8.1.2 The Countryside Team and rangers along with volunteers from Planning & Transportation did a fantastic job in surveying, dealing with complaints, emergency closures and immediate repairs. Many routes however remain closed as resources are sought to carry out repairs including:

- Edmund Road/Powder Mill Lane Bridge (Worsborough) linking to Rockingham restoration site
- Footbridge on Footpath 159 Barnsley, below the TPT Cudworth Spur viaduct



Footpath 159 Barnsley



Powder Mill Lane, Worsborough

- The Dam wall/vehicle access between the fishing and nature lakes at Dearne Valley Park



Dearne Valley Park as flood water rose



The resulting damage to the dam wall

- The vehicle bridge and permissive path route in the centre of Netherwood Country Park
- Bridleway at Folly Lane (Gunthwaite and Ingbirchworth) closed to horseriders
- Footpath 8 Lt Houghton Bridge and route along the flood defences are being repaired in Oct/November by the Environment Agency
- Bridge on Footpath 10 Stainborough over Rockley Dyke near the caravan park
- Permissive path beside the River Don from Soughley Lane to Wharnccliffe Woods
- Smaller bridges in Gunthwaite & Ingbirchworth, Penistone, Thurgoland, Hunshelf.
- TPT is passable with care but still has gullies in most of the unbound surface sections. The major erosion points were repaired within a few days.



Depth of potholes on the TPT at Elsecar



Bridge over (or not) Rons Cliff Dyke

- 8.1.3 The estimated cost of the damage including repair costs by contractors, staff costs for the damage assessments, weekly costs for temporary closures and staff time spent dealing with the flooding and its aftermath are estimated at £3.3m for rights of way in Barnsley.
- 8.1.4 It is hoped that some of the immediate flood damage assessment and repair works can be reclaimed under the Bellwin Scheme. However this is only applicable for works up to 6 months from the date of the flood, and repairs are carried out then an application made to reclaim costs – which may or may not be successful.
- 8.1.5 The requirement for resources to pay for repairs in advance is a serious consideration for Barnsley MBC, and whilst it is hoped that some of the priority repairs are carried out, there will not be sufficient time or available resources to carry out the remainder of the work. Resources have been identified within the revised Action Plan (Table 9.1) for further repairs to other sites. If this is not forthcoming and no more resources are made available from central government then other discussions need to take place regarding long term repairs.
- 8.1.6 There may be the possibility of European emergency funding to deal with the range of flood damage nationally however this is still in the discussion stages. The status of the Trans Pennine Trail as part of the E8 long distance route from Cork to Istanbul should add some weight to this funding application.

8.2 Restructure

As part of a refocus of the Planning and Transportation Service it was proposed that the Countryside Team transferred into Environmental Services, where the Countryside rangers who carry out maintenance work on PROW and sites would

join the Neighbourhood Services team, Countryside sites would join a new Greenspaces Team with Parks and landscape, and the Rights of Way elements would join the rest of the Highways Network Management.

- 8.2.1 This proposal would have significant benefits in both processes and practical works, potentially making more resources in both funding and staffing available to improve the condition on rights of way. When news of this restructure was put to the Local Access Forum members they were tentatively optimistic about the future.
- 8.2.2 However further changes at Assistant Director and Director level, coupled with the central government requirement for local authorities to operate a neighbourhood directorate, have resulted in wider scale proposed changes that are going through the corporate process in October/ November. The implications of this directorate restructure for rights of way are as yet unknown but the next six months will see a significant change in the processes and way service is delivered on rights of way.
- 8.2.3 Recognising and as part of the wider changes identified above, further changes within the Countryside Team are proposed. Replacing a vacant professional grade officer post with two technical staff supporting the legal function within the team will help to speed up processing of diversion orders and Definitive Map Modification Orders. This should result in improved timeframe and customer care targets in the next few years.