



## JLAF05: Agenda item 6: The Joint Local Transport Plan

### LATE PAPER:

### DRAFT Strategic Framework for developing the Public Rights of Way and Wider Access Network Extract from draft guidance.

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### Introduction

Across the four Local Authorities of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire is a network of approximately 3000km(?) of Public Rights of Way, classified as minor highways. In recent years there has also been a significant expansion in the provision of (often permissive) multi user routes as part of the National Cycle Network. These provide extensive opportunities for walkers, riders and cyclists for both utilitarian and recreational travel.

### PROW & the Key Themes of LTP2

Frequently overlooked in conventional transport planning terms, it is vital to recognise the important role that an extensive and well-maintained PROW network can play in meeting the strategic aims of LTP2:

- **Congestion.** By ensuring the availability of suitable alternatives to private car travel, for instance the development of a well maintained network of urban paths, people will be encouraged to leave their car at home for many shorter journeys and walk or cycle instead. Current research indicates that people will consider walking journeys of up to 1 / 2 / 3 miles or cycling up to 5 / 8 miles. If development of the PROW network could enable only a small proportion of such car journeys to be replaced by walking / cycling trips then that would represent a significant number of cars removed from the carriageway network.
- **Air Quality.** Although motorised vehicles can legitimately be used on a small part of the PROW network (Byways Open to All Traffic and some Roads Used as Public Paths), the main forms of transport used – walking and cycling – have no detrimental impact on air quality, hence a shift to those modes from private car use will result in a direct improvement in air quality. It is not a straightforward issue however, in that poor air quality can itself be a deterrent to a choice of walking or cycling.
- **Road Safety.** Users of the PROW network are often perceived as “vulnerable”. Accident statistics seem to indicate that young pedestrians and cyclists are particularly vulnerable. Encouraging greater use of the PROW network may have a positive impact on accident figures by shifting vulnerable users away from carriageways. Again, it is a complex issue; unless journeys can be made largely or entirely separate from carriageways then poor road safety can be a deterrent to usage of the PROW network.
- **Accessibility.** Accessibility planning is a process that aims to promote social inclusion by helping people from disadvantaged groups or areas access jobs, education and other services. The PROW network can be a valuable factor in combating the problems faced by people in such groups. It is comparatively cheap to use. There are barriers to use however; these might be physical ones such as stiles / gates, poor surfaces and lighting, gradients, poor health and so on or others such as a lack of information, fear of crime and lack of confidence. Many of these issues are ones that can be addressed with appropriate investment.

Whilst Congestion and Air Quality can be seen as largely urban issues, Road Safety and Accessibility affect people in rural and urban areas alike.

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## Further Benefits of the PROW Network

- **Health** Encouraging greater use of the PROW network will contribute to wider government and social objectives to improve the health of people. Regular, sustained exercise such as can be obtained from walking and cycling is recognised as an important part of the solution to illnesses such as obesity, cardio vascular disease and other related problems.
- **Economic Development** The PROW network is a key factor in the well-being of the rural economy as evidenced by the impact of the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak and the subsequent closure of large parts of the PROW network. Substantial quantities of money are brought in to rural economies by people using the PROW network on day trips, by tourists – particularly those following promoted routes such as National Trails and by regular local users and ancillary activities, e.g. stabling and livery of horses.
- **Recreation / Quality of Life** The PROW network is viewed as the single most important means by which people access the countryside for open air recreation and enjoyment (source Countryside Agency). Peace, tranquillity, appreciation of landscape and environment, contact with the natural world and escape from the “rat-race” are all qualities that people associate with use of rural PROW. In urban areas, the provision of PROW along riversides, old railway lines and through parks and open-spaces can serve similar functions without requiring travel to the “country”.

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