



JLAF12: Background Papers

Agenda item 7: Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and the draft JLAF response

Letter to the ROWIP Consultation Team:

ROWIP Consultation,
Public Rights of Way,
Riverside,
Temple Street,
Keynsham,
Bristol BS31 1LA.

Date.....

Dear Sir or Madam,

Joint Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Consultation draft 2007.

The JLAF is pleased to have been able to contribute to the production of the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). We note that our work has been recognised and that the Plan foresees an ongoing role for the JLAF.

9 of the 17 non-Councillor members of the JLAF (53%) gave written comments on the ROWIP and we have divided our comments into two sections:

- a number of detailed comments which are designed to add to the practicality of the ROWIP
- eight broad points covering money, demand, tourism, land managers, car ownership, voluntary changes, public land and auditing existing facilities.

The "detailed comments" are designed to help the writers of the ROWIP and we suggest that they are not published.

On the other hand, the "broad points" have been designed to be published as an appendix to the final version of the ROWIP.

The Officers of the JLAF would be happy to provide further clarification of any of the points made.

Yours faithfully

RN, RW & RP

Detailed Comments on the Draft ROWIP:

14 June 07

Executive Summary.

p 3 at top, "Joint Local Access Forum consultation events were held in these locations....". Were they JLAF events?

P 3 at top, "We propose a total of 19 separate actions...." We believe there are 22!

1. Introduction.

1.3, 1.4, 1.5 1.6 are important and are well written.

1.8 mention should be made of co-ordination across regions and boundaries.

1.14 "Vision". Repeats 1.3. Visions are for the angels and do not normally lead to practical events! The ROWIP should lead to actions.

2.1 User Needs.

2.2 the "visitors and tourist" mentioned should be expanded to include mention of the Sustrans routes.

2.3 We suggest that "Maintenance" and "Signage" are statutory duties and should not be classified as "improvements". Any deficiencies in maintenance and signage are an indication of past failures and must be corrected urgently.

2.8 There has been an increase in the number of cycle tourists, particularly those using the Sustrans routes.

Disability access for cycling should also be included and this should include access for tricycles, tandems for the blind and other devices used by disability groups.

2.9 Should include a section about the need for joined up network of routes. The present routes are disconnected.

The "Bridleway and Byway Network" map on page 14 shows that most of these routes look like spaghetti hanging from a tree: there is an urgent need to join up the network with circular routes. We wonder whether "set aside" land could be used to join up routes where appropriate and by agreement with the land manager.

2.13 "Best practice" should be spelled out.

We suggest that a ROW version of the saying "steam gives way to sail" should be developed.

2.14 "Rights" are emphasised – should there be a section on "Responsibilities" and the use of the Countryside Code?

3. Rights of Way in Our Area.

3.4 Insert a sentence saying that both Bristol and Bath must urgently up-date their Definitive Maps.

3.5 All bridleways are fragmented and should be linked wherever possible.

Box 3A DMMOs "... make them lengthy procedures." Insert a sentence saying that every effort should be made to secure local agreements to avoid lengthy legal procedures.

The final cut-off date for "Lost Ways" should be mentioned.

3.8 & Box 3B Public Path Orders are well explained.

3.11 Action needs to be taken to ensure that all Access Land is accessible to the public.

3.14 The last 3 years BVPI for each Authority should be inserted. It would help if each set of figures were expressed the same way.

3.15 It is important to stress the importance of Parish Councils.

3.17 Enforcement action is seen to be a major problem by some user groups and the Single Farm Payment Scheme could be used.

3.18 Mentioning 680 obstructions is a hostage to fortune! Some user groups maintain that there are many, many more obstructions.

4. Review of Other Documents and Information.

4.11 the Monarch's Way and the Avon Valley Walkway should be included.

5. Involving the Public.

5.15 Theme 1 "Keeping paths open and useable. Add an "e".

6. Results of Assessment.

6.1 "Equestrian users.... need **linked** routes for recreation". Add "linked".

Chapter 5 "Continuity of routes is important, including the use of roads where necessary". The use of roads is a very serious safety hazard in most areas. All routes should be properly signposted and marked.

"Quietways", like they have in the SE Peak District, could give non-motorists a sporting chance of avoiding death and injury.

7. Statement of Action.

Table 5. This is an important table and we have attempted to cost it. See the separate sheet.

7.3 The use of the word "aspirational" like "vision" is anathema to all of us who wish to see actions follow the warm words. We suggest that it is changed to at least imply that action may follow the words.

7.4 The methodology used must be robust. We like the idea of classifying routes and suggest that you start with routes that will enable a disabled person in a wheel chair to know that they will be able to use it.

7.6 This section is woolly.

7.7 We would like to see the section on "annual business plans" expanded. What is needed is a clear statement of the staff, revenue and capital costs for each project in figures and not in words.

7.8 Close monitoring is vital and we suggest that JLAF has a part to play in this monitoring.

8. Conclusion

ROWIP, "STATEMENT OF ACTION"

Analysis of draft Table 5.

Prepared by RN 30/05/2007

		<u>COSTS,</u> <u>£'000</u>					Suggested
		<u>Total</u>	<u>Easy</u> <u>wins</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>JLAF</u> <u>involved</u>
1	Maintenance	5	1	400	103	503	4
2	Signing	3	2	160	59	219	2
3	Information	7	3	360	144	504	3
4	Local travel	7	1	520	158	678	1
	TOTAL	22	7	1,440	464	1,904	10

"Staff" costs

is measured by assuming that the average cost of a member of staff will be c.£40,000 that "x1 = £4k, x2 = £15k & x3 = £40k in Table 5

Other costs

are non-staff costs, mainly capital costs. They are measured by estimating

Total costs are estimated at c. £2m.

Broad Comments on the Draft ROWIP:

17 June 2007

Introduction.

The JLAF is pleased to see the production of the draft ROWIP, which will give direction to the future development of the Rights of Way system in this area.

However, there are eight separate subjects which we would particularly like to emphasise.

1. Money and political will.

Many of the recommendations in the ROWIP will cost money and will be extra tasks for the ROW Officers. The ROW Departments do not have spare capacity, so the implementation of the ROWIP will, inevitable, incur increased costs. Central government is urging the Local Authorities to meet the public's needs for exercise, open-air recreation and enjoyment for both the mobile and the less mobile. This is a reasonable request and we expect the three Local Authorities to have the political will to find the money to finance the ROWIP.

We find the vague reference to how the ROWIP improvements will be financed and organised, disconcerting. In our view, a full-time Rights of Way Improvement Officer should be appointed and be financed by all three Councils. The job specification for this post would include finding internal and external capital and revenue funds to implement the changes in the ROWIP and to offer practical help to the three ROW departments to implement the improvements. In addition, each local authority should appoint a ROWIP Officer to be responsible for the improvements.

2. Demand and supply for Rights of Way.

Much of the emphasis in the past has been on the supply of the ROW network whereas we believe that the real need in the early 21st century is to stimulate demand.

The government has launched a series of initiatives regarding exercise and health, both for those with a whole range of disabilities and for those communities that have not historically used the countryside. We feel that the public should be encouraged to make use of publicly available routes in our area to meet these concerns. Much better publicity is needed, particularly for people with disabilities.

3. Tourism.

We believe that the draft ROWIP has not placed enough emphasis on tourism.

Despite having some exceptional areas such as the Cotswolds, Bath and Bristol, the ROWIP area is comparatively under-developed for tourism and we suggest that the area could benefit financially if tourism was better developed. In particular, visitors from further a field should be made aware of the ROW system in the local area through tourist publications and websites.

Walkers spend over £6 billion a year in the English countryside and about 200,000 full-time rural jobs are supported by walking. (See "The Economic and Social Value of Walking" by Christie & Mathews in 2003. and see "Leisure Day Visits: a report of the 1998 Day Visits Survey" by the Countryside Agency in 1998)

Research conducted in 2004 by the Henley Centre for Defra and the British Horse Industry Confederation indicate that 2.4 million people ride in the UK. The same report indicates that around £2.5 billion per annum is spent on horses and riding.

4. Land managers.

This heading includes the Government, Local Authorities, the National Trust, landowners, farmers, land agents and also managers of Common Land.

A significant number of land managers are resistant to change if only because of their partial understanding of the way ROW teams may be able to secure changes.

In our view, the ROW teams have often gained the respect of many land managers but we believe that, at present, they can not devote enough time to this vital task.

We believe that many land managers play a very important part in securing better access to the countryside and the ROW teams should be able to spend more time with them. The carrot and stick should be used judiciously.

5. 25% of the population do not own a car.

Access to the countryside must not be restricted to car owners. It is extremely important that the rural path network is accessible from railway stations and bus stops as well as from car parks.

There is a fine balance between too many car parks and too few car parks - which leads to anti-social parking. Pamphlets should direct drivers to car parks that give access to the publicly available routes network without inconveniencing local residents. Particular attention must be given to the needs of those disabled people whose disability allows them to drive.

6. Voluntary changes to the ROW network.

It seems to us that a whole industry has grown up based on the premise that ROW in the countryside should be decided by legal means. This approach often leads to conflict.

Looking at the network of ROW, in B&NES and South Gloucestershire in particular, great benefits could be gained by all users, all landowners and all tax payers if the ROW could be assessed and changed by voluntary agreement. We believe that it is best to reach a consensus between land managers and users before changes to the Rights of Way network are legally formalised under the Highways Act or the Town and Country Planning Act procedures. We strongly recommend that widespread informal consultations are initiated before the legal process takes place.

7. Public land.

Many routes used by the public, particularly in urban areas, are across public land and many of these routes have not formally been designated as ROW. When these routes are not designated as ROW they are open for property developers, rubbish dumpers, squatters and the like to annex the land for their own selfish purposes.

We suggest that all routes across public land which are available for use by the public need long term legal protection.

8. Audit of all access facilities and initiatives

Because the responsibilities for access are spread across several Council Departments in the three Local Authorities, we would like to have an audit of ALL the facilities available. This desk research is vital and would include parks, commons, permissive access, the Forest of Avon, Rights of Way, cycle paths, equestrian toll rides, long distance footpaths, access to water etc. etc.

There are many excellent publications but they need to be brought together in one website which would give easy access to information for anyone wanting to get out of doors for whatever purpose.

Conclusion.

We ask that the ROW teams should be more proactive and spend more time in extending the ROW network. We would like to see three major changes made to the network in the next three years and would suggest:

- B&NES: seek to extend the Chew Valley Lake route around the lake
- Bristol: legal protection of The Monarch's Way in Bristol
- South Gloucestershire: create the Town Trust Path alongside the Wickwar Road in Sodbury.

We ask that all departments in the three Authorities with any responsibility for access to the outdoors must actively co-operate to increase the provision of access for all residents and visitors.

As a statutory adviser, the JLAF will seek to ensure that systems to monitor and audit the ROWIP are in place.

Agenda item 11: JLAF Future Plans, 2008 to 2010

17 June 2007

2007 will be largely taken up by discussion of, and initial implementation, of the ROWIP.

1. Hands on tasks

- a. Bristol liaison, RP
- b. B&NES liaison, RW
- c. Sth. Glos. Liaison, Chairman, RN
- d. Managing the ROWIP, set up sub-groups?
- e. Disabled groups, in conjunction with the Councils
- f. ROWIP quick wins' sub-groups: Diverted paths/ signage guidelines/ path, metalled road junctions/ support to landowners

2. Negotiation with advice to landowners

- a. Chelscombe Farm, Lansdown, RN, RW & RP
- b. Chew Valley Lake, RW
- c. Bristol City departments, RP
- d. RW helping in Sth. Glos. RW

3. Promotional work

- a. Encourage Health Walks in all three Authorities
- b. Get amongst all 3 Councils, both Councillors and Officers
- c. Get to know the Head of ROW's boss
- d. Revise JLAF website 4 times a year and measure its effectiveness, CJH
- e. Possible presentations to Councils on ROWIPs

4. Lobbying and engagement

- a. Bristol Councillor on the JLAF
- b. B&NES Councillor on the JLAF
- c. Sth. Glos. Councillor on the JLAF
- d. Regional LAF / Natural England / Defra + reactive to other organisations
- e. Parishes, through ROW Officers
- f. Disabled groups, in conjunction with Councils
- g. "Coast" sub-group, Ron, Bob Hall, Robert Killen, Bill Dawson & RN
- h. "Right to Apply" sub-group, Robin, John Gunnery, Ann Fay, Peter Gould, Nichola Chidley & RN

5. Advice

- a. Bristol, to ROW team, work, schools & shops.
- b. B&NES, to ROW team, Chew Valley Lake
- c. Sth.Glos., to ROW team
- d. JLAF, recruitment, non-attendance, Quorums, record our workload

6. Management Controls

- a. Finance, Revenue, Capital, past 3 years and budgets
- b. PROW, paths, bridleways etc.
- c. Staff, numbers, skills etc.
- d. Comparable Authorities,

During our discussions we mentioned that we can only offer **advice**, our best way to get things done is through the **ROW teams**, we must always be (and be seen to be) **useful** and we must keep within our **cash and time budgets**.

We need a **ROWIP Officer** to cover the three Authorities.

Agenda item 12: The next meeting JLAF13 (in Bath & North East Somerset on the 2nd November 2007) Proposed Agenda Items Subsequent Meeting Dates

The following are dates for full meetings of the JLAF, following a pattern of once every 4 months, on the first Friday of the month:

Meeting Date	Location	Agenda items submitted by	Pre-meeting, week of (suggested)	Papers available
02 NOV 2007	Fry Club, Somerdale, Keynsham	05 NOV 2007	08 NOV 2007	19 NOV 2007
07 MAR 2008	Fry Club, Somerdale, Keynsham	08 FEB 2008	11 FEB 2008	22 FEB 2008
04 JUL 2008	Fry Club, Somerdale, Keynsham	06 JUN 2008	09 JUN 2008	20 JUN 2008
07 NOV 2008	Fry Club, Somerdale, Keynsham	10 OCT 2008	13 OCT 2008	24 OCT 2008
06 MAR 2009	Fry Club, Somerdale, Keynsham	06 FEB 2009	09 FEB 2009	20 FEB 2009
03 JUL 2009	Fry Club, Somerdale, Keynsham	05 JUN 2009	08 JUN 2009	19 JUN 2009
06 NOV 2009	Fry Club, Somerdale, Keynsham	09 OCT 2009	12 OCT 2009	23 OCT 2009