

CCU 7th Floor
Eastbury House
30-34 Albert Embankment
London
SE1 7TL



Email: ccu.correspondence@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

CCU Ref: DWO 111019

Mr Duncan Graham CBE
Chair, England Access Forum
John Dower House
Crescent Place
Cheltenham
GL50 3RA

5 December 2008

Dear Mr Graham

RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Thank you for your letter of 10 November to Geoff Hoon about Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs). Your letter was transferred to Defra, as the Department responsible for funding rights of way, and I have been asked to reply.

Local authorities receive most of their rights of way funding from central Government through the Revenue Support Grant, and local authorities are expected to fund improvements through existing resources, and where this is not possible, to look at external sources of funding. Additional funding is available through the integration of Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and RoWIPs, where rights of way improvements will help to deliver LTP priorities. Not all rights of way improvements will fall into this category and these will therefore need to be funded from elsewhere (this is why we still intend to have two separate but integrated plans). The Department for Transport will announce funding decisions for Local Transport Plans for local authorities in the annual local transport settlement.

Research by Natural England has identified a wide variety of potential funding sources in addition to local authority and LTP revenues. These include:

- Section 106 agreements (planning obligations);
- Aggregate Levy and landfill tax;
- AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) Sustainability Funds;
- Environmental Sensitive Area and Higher Level Stewardship scheme funding;
- funding from Primary Care Trusts, Rural Development Agencies, European Union funds, Sport England, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Tourism & Tourist Levy, and;
- a range of locally sourced funds.

Defra is keen to ensure that the valuable work done in preparing RoWIPs leads to real improvements on the ground. It recognises that putting together funding proposals and chasing potential sources of income can be time-consuming for local authorities, but there are many positive spin-offs in joining up with other sectors to improve the network. Many authorities have already risen to this challenge and have become skilled in accessing



funds from a variety of sources. Whilst, it is for local authorities to take the initiative, Defra and Natural England have sought to facilitate this by:

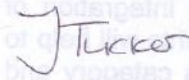
- helping to share knowledge and experience between authorities;
- developing a 'decision support tool' to help local authorities justify and prioritise expenditure on rights of way in tandem with social and economic goals; and
- extending the statutory remit of local access forums and issuing revised guidance.

Defra expects Natural England to continue to support local authorities in preparing and implementing their RoWIPs.

Local Access Forums have a pivotal role to play in driving forward implementation of RoWIPs. With members drawn from a wide range of interests, we hope that Forums will be able to provide useful advice to local authorities on implementation and monitoring of RoWIPs. Not all sources of funding will be suitable or appropriate in every area, but with their experience and knowledge we would expect Forums to be well placed to assist authorities in focusing on the potential funding sources and partnerships which are most relevant.

Individual Forum members can also help to promote RoWIPs amongst the stake-holder groups which they represent, to raise awareness and even to encourage organisations to support RoWIP objectives in appropriate ways for example by bidding for funding which is not available to a local authority.

Yours sincerely



Julie Tucker
Defra - Customer Contact Unit

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