

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

October 2007



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About this document

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council as a Highway Authority has a duty under the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to produce a full Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) by November 2007.

The production of this plan is to be in two stages:

1. **Stage 1** - An assessment of the needs and demands of current users; the Definitive Map and Statement and the condition of the network.
2. **Stage 2** - A Statement of Action, based on the assessment, setting out a 10-year vision for the improvement of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network.

The Government, in its guidance, expects that both stages of the process will make up the ROWIP and should be the subject of widespread consultation.

Stage 1 of the process formed the basis for consultation. The results of this exercise have been used to develop a Statement of Action.

This document sets the context, outlines the methodology, describes the assessment of the network and reflects the comments gathered from specific user groups and the general public.

Stage 2 outlines the identified needs and aspirations of the ROWIP, and details the actions to be carried out in order to address them.

STAGE 1

Objectives

	Objective for RoW improvements	Examples of practical implication for assessment and work programmes
1	Prioritise upgrading of existing RoW where these meet a locally identified travel need (for example in conjunction with a school or workplace travel plan)	To maintain, improve and make best use of existing RoW, and ensure all schemes offer long-term value for money
2	To improve accessibility by ensuring the RoW network meets the needs of all sections of the community, promotes social inclusion and widens choice	Making routes safe accessible for disabled people and vulnerable users
3	To improve the accessibility, environment, attractiveness and safety of the regional centre, town and district centres and employment areas	Creation and upgrading of pedestrian and cycle routes between town and district centres and local residential areas
4	To improve road and community safety	Lighting improvements along routes well used at night-time Design of routes to minimise crime Alley gating where this does not sever strategic routes
5	To minimise environmental damage caused by transport, thereby improving the quality of life and health of the population	Use of high quality, sympathetic and recycled materials where possible. Maximise proportion of trips by 'active' modes (see also 6)
6	To increase the proportion of trips by non-car modes	Creation of pedestrian and cycle routes, particularly where there is a demand which results in short trips (for example to schools), or to public transport stops. Ensuring new development does not sever important routes and can be served by them
7	To improve links with the South Pennines, Greater Manchester, inter regional networks and long distance National Trails	Ensuring RoW supports the National Cycle Network and other long distance paths, and develops links to them where this meets an identified travel need.

8	To assist in improving health , the local economy and recreational opportunities	Links from residential areas to the countryside

Context

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough is one of ten districts in Greater Manchester and is the second largest covering an area of 159** square kilometres. Two thirds of the Borough, over 100** square kilometres, is classed as countryside, most of which is Green Belt. However, with 205,357* people it has the second smallest population.

The Borough shares a boundary with three of the other Greater Manchester districts, Oldham to the south, Manchester to the south-west and Bury to the west.

To the north and east the Borough is enclosed by the Pennine Hills. From the hills the landscape is characterised by the valleys of the Rivers Roch, Spodden and Beal which eventually flow into the Rivers Irk and Irwell then ultimately, the Mersey.

The river valleys typically define the traditional settlement patterns and lines of communication.

The Borough has a wide range of age groups with different service needs, with the 0 - 15 years being the highest percentage of residents (22.8%)*, and 30 - 44 years being the next highest at 22.1%*. The town has a diverse ethnic mix with 11.4%* of the population being non white ethnic groups.

Compared to the UK, the local economy has an over representation of manufacturing with an under representation of financial and business services. Unemployment is 3.9%, slightly higher than the national average of 3.4%.

The Borough is served by the M62 and the M60 motorways, which give access and connections to the rest of the country, and by the international airport at Manchester.

There are also good rail links to the rest of the country via the Manchester - Leeds main line and the future offers the possible link between Manchester and outlying districts and towns via the Metrolink service.

*(*These figures are based on the 2001 census, as in Rochdale Borough profile).*

*(** These figures are based on the Unitary Development Plan 2001 – 2016).*

The Townships

Rochdale Township is the largest town in the Borough with nearly half of the total population (99,100), and is the main centre for shopping, services and employment. At present the largest concentration of employment outside the town centre is to the west of the town near Castleton. With the development of Kingsway Business Park it is estimated that eventually a further 7000 places of employment will be created.

Middleton Township is approximately half the size of Rochdale with 47,500 residents and is closely associated to Manchester. Employment is concentrated around the town centre and at the Stake Hill Industrial Estate. The town contains a large social housing estate at Langley which suffers from a poor residential environment. A new major Community Park has been created to the west of the town, adjoining Langley at Bowlee

Heywood Township has a population of 30,000 and is located between Rochdale and Bury sharing both towns for employment, shopping and leisure opportunities. New regeneration strategies are currently being prepared for Heywood and its town centre. Heywood is the only town to be completely surrounded by Green Belt ranging from flat farmland to the south through wooded river valleys to high wild moorland in the north.

The Pennine Townships are in the east of the Borough and include the smaller town of Littleborough (11,800) and the villages of Milnrow and Newhey (11,700) which form the main employment areas. Also included are Smithy Bridge and Wardle (8,900), as well as smaller hamlets such as Rakewood and Ogden. The Townships contain extensive areas of countryside to the north and east, which include hills, moorland reservoirs, wooded valleys and important natural habitats. Hollingworth Lake near Littleborough is a major visitor attraction for informal leisure and water sports. Watergrove reservoir near Wardle is also a visitor attraction for nature conservation and informal recreation. All of these areas offer easy access, not only to the South Pennine Moors and the large tracts of the newly formed Open Country but also to two National Trails, the Pennine Way and the Pennine Bridleway.

What is a Rights of Way Improvement Plan?

Each local Highway Authority is required under the CRow Act 2000 to develop and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). In drawing up the plan, the Highway Authority is required to assess:

- The extent to which local Rights of Way meet the present and likely future needs of the public;
- The opportunities provided by local Rights of Way (and in particular by footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways) for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of their area. Also the opportunities for local people to use the network as a means to access workplaces, schools, the amenities and other local facilities.
- The accessibility of local Rights of Way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.

The RoWIP includes a Statement of Action that will be used to inform the future management of the PRow network by the local Highway Authority and will take account of the matters arising from the assessment stage.

The RoWIP builds upon the Council's existing duties to maintain and keep the Definitive Map and Statement of PRow up to date and to ensure that routes are adequately signposted, maintained and free from obstruction.

Government funding has been provided to enable Highway Authorities to prepare the RoWIP, but there are no additional resources available for implementing the Statement of Action. The RoWIP will need to make links to a wide range of strategies in order to realise any future opportunities for funding. Highway Authorities are responsible for the maintenance of PRow at the same time as meeting the spectrum of current and future needs and expectations of local people.

Scope of the RoWIP.

The RoWIP must assess the opportunities provided by the local PRow network. Also best practice suggests the need to look more widely at the range of access opportunities, both statutory and non-statutory, which are available to the public.

Rochdale's Approach to the Assessment of the Network.

The approach adopted developing this report has included:

1. Research into the issues facing PRow at national, regional and local levels
2. A series of focused consultation exercises using questionnaire surveys and focus groups were used to establish the different levels of demand and the range of issues facing the PRow network in Rochdale.
3. A detailed analysis of the current condition of the network and the Definitive Map and Statement. The analysis of this information will form the basis of the "Assessment of Current Provision" and this in turn will be the subject of further consultation.

Legal Definitions of the PRow Network

‘Public Rights of Way’ (PRow) are highways that allow the public a right of passage. Common Law states that you can pass and re-pass unhindered along highways at all times. Footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways, BOATs and byways are all highways. They only differ from other forms of highways, such as roads, by the type of traffic entitled to use them and the range of different surface types. Once a PRow has been established it will remain so until there is a legal order to either close, divert or extinguish it. Lack of use has no effect on the legal existence of a Right of Way.

PRows provide a convenient means of travelling, mainly for short journeys. They can be used on a daily basis for walking, cycling and riding, for recreation and health improvement, as well as for visiting local shops and facilities. These may be anywhere from the centre of Towns and Townships, through the urban fringes of Towns and Townships, to remote countryside; they can be narrow trails, or wide tracks.

‘**Local Rights of Way**’ are defined by section 60(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as:

- The footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways within the Authority’s area, and;
- The ways within the Authority’s area which are shown in a Definitive Map and Statement as Restricted Byways or as Byways Open to All Traffic.
- **Public Footpaths** provide the right to walk with any ‘normal accompaniment’, however, they do not provide rights to ride or wheel a bike, to ride or lead a horse, or to drive a horse drawn carriage along these paths.
- **Bridleways** carry the right to walk and to cycle, ride or lead a horse, and possibly to drive animals. There is no right to take a horse drawn vehicle along a bridleway.
- **Restricted Byways** carry the rights of footpaths, bridleways and the rights for non-motorised vehicles. However, they may have rights for motorised vehicles, if these can be proven.
 - ***Restricted Byway*** is a new category of Right of Way introduced by the CRow Act 2000 (s) 47 which states that all Roads Used As Public Paths (RUPPs) will be re-designated as Restricted Byways and are to be marked accordingly. Restricted Byways have rights for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and horse drawn vehicles but not motor vehicles. Restricted Byways will replace RUPPs on the Definitive Map and Statement.
- **BOATs (Byways Open to all Traffic)** provide rights to walk, ride or lead a horse or drive animals, cycle and to drive a vehicle (motorised or horse drawn).

Other Routes with Public Access.

There are a number of routes that have public access as a right but are not illustrated on the Definitive Map and Statement:

- **Cycle Tracks** are routes specifically designated for cyclists. Walking is normally permitted along cycle tracks except when the tracks are in or by the side of a made-up carriageway.

- **Permissive Routes** are routes accessible by permission of the owner (a permission that has no legal status and the landowner may revoke the agreement, subject to conditions, at any time) and do not establish permanent rights. Public access is usually for a limited period of time e.g. 10 years, and it is the responsibility of the landowner to maintain the route. The Countryside Stewardship Scheme is an example of a permissive path scheme. It is administered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and offers financial incentives to landowners to set aside land for environmental improvement and public access on a permissive basis. The agreements are normally for a ten-year period.

Canal towpaths are available to walkers on a permissive basis, although some are coincident with Public Rights of Way. Some are available to cyclists on the same basis subject to obtaining a permit from British Waterways

- **Green Lane** is a term with no legal meaning. It is a physical description of a usually unsurfaced track, normally hedged, and often, but not always, of some antiquity. It may be a footpath, bridleway or carriageway or may carry no PRow at all.

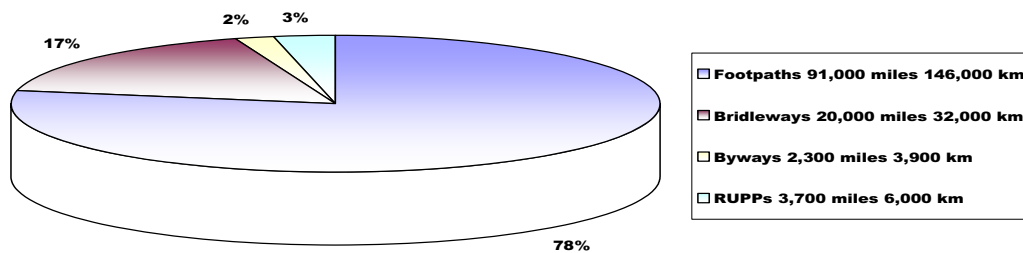
- **Unadopted Public Highways and Ancient Highways** Rochdale does not hold full records of Permissive Paths, unadopted highways or Ancient Highways.

- **The Unsurveyed Urban Area of Rochdale** Fully developed urban areas were exempted from the requirement to be surveyed for PRow to be included on the Definitive Map. Many routes in the central area of Rochdale are therefore not recorded.

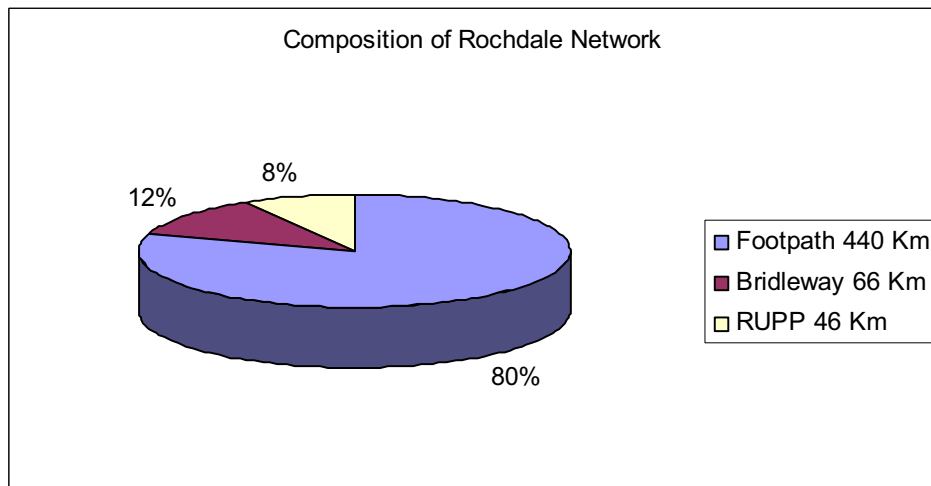
Network Comparisons

There are over 169,000 km of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in England. Walkers can use 100%, cyclists and horse riders 22% and motor vehicles up to 5% of the national network.

Composition of National Network



Composition of Rochdale Network



Rochdale, with a total of 1782 paths, has the largest Rights of Way network in Greater Manchester covering a total distance of 552 km. It also has the greatest length of moorland paths. There are a total of 1476 Footpaths, 179 Bridleways and 127 Restricted Byways (formerly Roads Used as Public Paths). The Borough currently has no BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic) shown on the Definitive Map and Statement.

In addition there is also 1 Cycle Track covering a distance of 3 km that forms a vital strategic link from Rochdale to Rossendale.

National Trails

There are two National Trails passing through the Borough; the Pennine Way and the Pennine Bridleway (which includes the Mary Townley Loop).

The Pennine Way enters at the south east corner of the Borough near the M62 motorway at Junction 22 and travels in a northerly direction for approximately 7.5 km before leaving the north east of Borough at a point beside Warland reservoir. This 430 km long high level ridge route not only offers walkers panoramic views of the adjacent moorland and the levels of Lancashire and Cheshire but also affords excellent walking opportunities to visit the Peak District, Yorkshire Dales, Lake District and Scotland.

The Pennine Bridleway weaves its way through the Pennine Hills from Derbyshire to, eventually, Northumberland using a mixture of ancient packhorse tracks, drove roads and newly created bridleways. The 560 km trail offers walkers, cyclists and horse-riders an excellent route to enjoy the stunning landscapes of the high Pennines and the hidden valleys and hamlets of the lower slopes of the Pennine Hills.

Having entered at the south east corner of the Borough just off the A672 near the Ram's Head public house the Pennine Bridleway skirts Hollingworth Lake and continues to Calderbrook and the north via Reddyshore Scout.

The Mary Towneley Loop, part of the Pennine Bridleway, begins at Calderbrook. This circular route of 68 km sits between Rochdale and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It is an ideal route for weekend breaks, providing a great adventure in its own right. It also offers a route across the north of Rochdale, from Calderbrook to Rooley Moor before climbing Rooley Moor and entering Lancashire.

Network Comparison with Neighbouring Authorities

	Manchester	Rochdale	Oldham	Bury	Tameside	Salford
Total Length	78 km	552 km	415 km	309 km	261 km	122 km
Footpaths	73 km	440 km	375 km	280 km	237 km	119 km
	93%	80%	90%	91%	91%	98%
Bridlepaths	5 km	66 km	35 km	18 km	15 km	3 km
	7%	12%	9%	6%	6%	2%

BOATs	0	0	5 km 1%	7 km 2%	0	0
Restricted Byways	0	46 km 8%	0	4 km 1%	9 km 3%	0
Cyclepaths	39 km	3 km	9 km	0	0	4 km

Management of PRow in Rochdale

Environmental Management

- ♦ Maintenance of Definitive Map and Statement
- ♦ Inspections
- ♦ Works Programmes and Records
- ♦ Customer Service
- ♦ Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders on RoW.
- ♦ Contracting Services - main works contractor
- ♦ Rights of Way Forum
- ♦ Best Value Performance Indicators *
- ♦ Local Access Forum *
- ♦ Access Land *
- ♦ Rights of Way Improvement Plan *
- ♦ Reclassification of Roads used as Public Paths *
- ♦ Crime Prevention on Rights Of Way *

* Indicates CRoW Act 2000 Items

Legal & Democratic Services

- ♦ Legal Advice, Preparation of Orders, Prosecutions

Linking the RoWIP to Other Strategies

It is important to recognise the contribution that improvements to local Rights of Way can make in supporting wider priorities and objectives. These include:

1.0 Sustainable and Integrated Transport – Strategies include:

Policies to promote walking and cycling, to increase use of RoW, and to improve access to sport and leisure facilities can also help increase levels of physical activity, thereby improving public health. Through the joint DfT/DfES initiative on school travel, local authorities are being provided with direct funding to ensure that every school in England has a travel plan in place by 2010, and this will need to be reflected in Local Transport Plans (LTPs). In June 2004, DfT published 'Walking and Cycling: An Action Plan', which sets out 42 practical actions aimed at increasing walking and cycling. The promotion of physical activity is also a key aim of the Government's current wide ranging consultation on public health 'Choosing Health'. Many Local Strategic Partnerships identify public health outcomes as key local priorities and LTPs should contain evidence that authorities are reflecting such 'cross-cutting' priorities in their local plans.

1.1 A Pedestrian Strategy for Rochdale

This states that the Council are committed to reducing the impact of motorised traffic and making the walking environment as pleasant, safe and convenient as possible. The Council aims to encourage more people to walk for shorter journeys and to use a combination of walking and public transport for longer ones. It states that making it easier, safer and more convenient for people to walk or use a wheel chair, is fundamental to improving access to jobs, schools, health care and other services, with the economic and social benefits that this brings to individuals and the community as a whole.

1.2 Greater Manchester Walking Strategy 2002

This document highlighted the numerous benefits of walking and the need to promote this, encouraging it into part of every one's life.

There are a number of local and national initiatives aimed at encouraging people to make sustainable transport decisions such as "Don't Choke Britain" campaign, "Walk to School Week" and the "Step Outside".

Future commitments and actions are outlined and include improving footpaths to reduce crime and disorder problems, increase attractiveness and safety and encourage use.

1.3 Rochdale's Cycling Strategy

The aim of the Strategy is to increase cycle use within Rochdale by ensuring that cycling is promoted as a cost effective, healthy, sustainable transport choice within the Council's strategies, schemes and programmes.

The National Cycle Network (NCN) uses some Rights of Way but they total less than 2% of the NCN. Growth in the NCN is more than 10% annually for the traffic free sections. The whole network carried 77 million trips by cyclists (and 49 million by walkers) in 2003.

There are proposals to extend NCN Route 66, along the Rochdale Canal Towpath through Rochdale to Oldham and Manchester. (See the Sustrans report on Rochdale Canal Towpath).

NCN Route 92, which the Healey Dell Cycleway is part of, is subject to funding bids to the Sustrans Links to Schools fund. If successful, this bid will extend Route 92 from the Rossendale border to the Rochdale Canal.

The long standing proposal for the Roch Valley Way could form part of the future NCN Route 80 from Littleborough, using the Three Bridges Cycleway, to Bury and Bolton.

1.4 Walking and Cycling: An Action Plan – Department of Transport (National Document)

This is the government's action plan to increase the levels of walking and cycling in England. Walking and cycling have the potential to make a positive contribution to many key public policy priorities, including health, liveability and urban congestion.

1.5 Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan (LTP) LTP 1, 2000 to 2005: LTP2 2006 to 2011

All ten districts and the Passenger Transport Association adopted Greater Manchester LTP1 in July 2000. It describes Greater Manchester's proposals to be a centre of excellence in transport, outlining plans and programmes over the period April 2001 to March 2006. As part of the LTP process a Greater Manchester Cycling Officers group was established to develop an agreed countywide strategy. Over the course of the second LTP period, RoW improvement planning will be progressively incorporated into local transport planning. This provides authorities with a new opportunity to ensure local transport planning is making most effective use of the RoW network, in both urban and rural areas - particularly for walkers and cyclists. Authorities will consider how their LTPs, through Rights of Way improvement, would demonstrably help the delivery of wider quality of life objectives (healthy communities, quality of public space, community safety). The Government would welcome any attempts by local authorities to achieve a full integration of Rights of Way Improvement Planning into July 2005 LTPs; as a minimum requirement, the Department requires, as part of the LTP, a short report on progress in planning improved RoW.

1.6 The Local Strategic Partnership and Pride of Place - the Community Strategy 2002 - 2012

One of Rochdale's main themes in the Community Strategy is "Creating a modern transport infrastructure" which includes "a quality pedestrian and cycling environment." The Local Strategic Partnership comprises ten thematic partnerships, one of which,

the Transport Group, is responsible for ensuring the delivery of these commitments such as;

- Promote sustainable travel to schools through Travel Plans and Safe Routes to School.
- Triple the number of cycle journeys between 2000 and 2010.
- Increase waking levels and promote the health benefits of walking and cycling.

1.7 Strategic Access Study for the Pennine Edge Forest

The Pennine Edge Forest has published a Business Action Plan that identifies the recreational and green commuting opportunities in the main river valleys and canal corridors of eastern Greater Manchester i.e. Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport and Tameside. Linking local neighbourhoods to the countryside around towns is also the key objective and on that is strongly advocated by urban and rural regeneration programmes underway in urban areas such as the Housing Market Renewal Fund and New Deal for Communities. The Forest has identified a series of key countryside gateways and river valley corridors and is working with the neighbouring Red Rose Forest and other partners to examine the potential for strategic access routes. The Forest is also working with the Forestry Commission and other partners to regenerate derelict land, creating new green spaces and improved access routes for multi-user provision through the Newlands reclamation programme.

2.0 Regeneration – Strategies include:

2.1 Rochdale Borough Renaissance Masterplan

The Masterplan establishes a new course for the physical development of Rochdale Borough. It is a visionary document that sets out the key directions and priorities which are essential in order to make a dramatic change in the Borough's economy, image and reputation, physical environment, and residents quality of life,. The Masterplan sets out the strategy that will direct these essential changes.

Within the Masterplan the need to 'Capitalise on our Environmental Assets' is a strong theme. The key challenge is to increase accessibility to the countryside through our river valleys and green corridors, proposing a new structure of green spaces which link urban and rural areas. Through a forthcoming Open Space Strategy, the need to incorporate our formal and informal RoW network as a key asset will be explored.

2.2 Partners In Action – Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder

Rochdale MBC, in partnership with Oldham MBC, is one of the Pathfinder Housing Market Renewal areas. Within Rochdale Borough this is focused upon stimulating the housing market in inner Rochdale and areas of Middleton. This large scale regeneration programme has the potential for significant change in the urban fabric of the Borough and presents both challenges and opportunities for our formal and informal RoW network.

The Rochdale Housing Market Renewal (HMR) team appointed the consultants URBED in September 2004 to undertake the development of a Physical Regeneration Framework (PRF) for the Inner Rochdale HMR area comprising the neighbourhoods of Newbold, Deeplish & Milkstone, Spotland & Falinge, Sparth and Kirkholt

Consultation carried out through the HMR programme, especially the 2nd wave consultation carried out by URBED, has highlighted accessibility and permeability of the urban fabric for all transport types as a key issue to be tackled in the Masterplanning process. In particular the need to connect communities and to provide access to leisure and recreational opportunities. This will provide opportunities for development and improvement to our RoW, walking and cycling networks.

In particular, within the masterplans for the 1st wave neighbourhoods – East Central Rochdale (ECR) and Langley – opportunities have been exploited to improve the green network through these areas (Langley Walkway, National Cycle Network Route 92 in ECR) and provide improved gateway access to planned and existing RoW and green infrastructure, such as Gower Street Bridge in ECR. Detailed masterplans for the 2nd wave of HMR neighbourhoods, in inner Rochdale, were implemented starting in April 2006.

The Pennine Edge Forest has piloted a 'Natural Signposting' programme in ECR identifying key 'green routes' for pedestrians from the neighbourhood to the adjacent Roch Valley and Newlands proposals. It is hoped to roll out good practice from this pilot to other neighbourhoods.

2.3 Kingsway Business Park

Kingsway Business Park is one of the key regeneration sites for the North West of England. The site, a 170-hectare mixed-use business park, will ultimately generate over 7,000 new jobs. Work is now underway on the main infrastructure works at Kingsway Business Park in Rochdale, including the remodelling of Junction 21 on the M62.

An integral part of the scheme is the creation of an extensive new network of greenways, bridleways, cycleways and footpaths through the site and these are detailed on the masterplan for the development. These routes will link people to the surrounding Rights of Way network and provide pleasant routes within a parkland setting through the site. More importantly they will give people in the locality a quality alternative to the car to reach their place of work be it by walking or cycling. Equally the new Stanney Brook Park will provide an important north-south link between the Rochdale Canal and the rural areas to the south of the M62.

Work is also being undertaken off the site using various funding sources to improve many of the Rights of Way that provide key links to the site for local people.

Initial infrastructure work is now scheduled for completion in Autumn 2007, with the first business premises available for occupation in late 2007. As part of the initial infrastructure main backbones of the new Rights of Way network are being created as a priority: the north-south link through the new Stanney Brook Park and east-west link along Lower Lane, which has had traffic removed for much of its length.

2.4 Rochdale Canal Corridor Regeneration Strategy

Rochdale MBC, in partnership with Oldham MBC, and British Waterways commissioned this Strategy to capitalise on the investment made into the Rochdale Canal, to make it navigable, through a National Lottery Grant. The Strategy sets out our vision to develop the Canal Corridor as one of the key drivers for economic and environmental regeneration in the Borough. Within this vision the need to 'create and improve safe, sustainable movement and linkages to, along and across the Canal Corridor, for a hierarchy of users' is a key objective. This is particularly important as the Canal links three centres of population (Littleborough, Rochdale and Middleton), and is well placed to provide a high quality greenway to both operate as a functioning open space in it's own right, and also to provide strategic access to the Pennine fringe and our RoW network across the Borough.

To help meet this aim, Sustrans has been commissioned to produce a study on the feasibility of upgrading the Canal Corridor for multi-user access to the standard of the National Cycle Network. This would provide access for walkers, cyclists and the disabled along all or part of the corridor. This study was produced in late 2004 and is currently going through consultation with Canal user groups.

2.5 Pennine Prospects

Pennine Prospects, formerly the Standing Conference of South Pennine Authorities (SCOSPA), has recently reconstituted itself as a Rural Regeneration Company seeking to strengthen the identity of the South Pennines and to attract investment in the environmental and cultural economy of the area. The Heritage Strategy for the Southern Pennines identifies the strategic value of the South Pennines landscape which includes a high level of cultural and environmental value and major accessibility through urban common, access land and a series of local, regional and national trails. Pennine Prospects is developing a regional gateway network concept through the Heritage, Education and Access Network (HEAN) and is also helping to co-ordinate a South Pennines approach to promoting and managing access to the countryside, including that available through the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.

The main aims of this strategy included:

- Establish a strategic approach to management of the South Pennines
- Develop links to ensure increased usage
- Fully involve the community
- Improve physical condition and sustainability
- Increase awareness, use and enjoyment

- Ensure a positive contribution to the South Pennines
- Allow for links with local businesses

3.0 Health Improvement – Strategies include:

3.1 Pride of Place 2002-2012

The strategy highlights the need to improve the quality of Rochdale's environment. It is recognised that such improvements will have a positive impact on local neighbourhoods by making them more attractive places in which to live, work and invest.

One of the key issues when considering the necessity to improve health standards within the borough is the need to increase levels of physical activity across all age groups.

Priorities for action include the implementation of a recently completed walking and cycling strategy

3.2 Rochdale's Strategic Health Plan

The Strategic Health Plan for Rochdale recognises the importance physical activity has in preventing health problems. The Plan refers to the Cycling and Walking Strategies, as well as the Healthy Schools plans. Transport Officers are working with the Joint Health Unit, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), Sports Development Officers and others to develop a co-ordinated strategy for the promotion of physical activity.

Rochdale's Strategic Health Plan will emphasize the need for tackling these issues. The most obvious and direct link between the environment and health is between air pollution (mainly from transport) and respiratory diseases, which are a significant cause of death in Rochdale. Encouraging people to walk and use public transport will help to reduce air pollution.

Physical activity is essential in maintaining good health, and can prevent many illnesses including heart disease, stroke, obesity and diabetes. Rochdale, Heywood and Middleton PCT's, in partnership with Rochdale MBC and other local organisations, are currently developing a Physical Activity Strategy for the Borough of Rochdale. This will address a wide range of issues, including the provision of leisure services, adapting the built environment and encouraging walking and cycling as easy and effective forms of exercise that can be incorporated into everyday life. The Strategy will also link in with the work being undertaken to promote physical activity within the Borough's schools, workplaces and the numerous voluntary groups and clubs

A number of healthy walking schemes are operating across the Borough through the national '*Walking the Way to Health*' initiative championed by the British Heart Foundation. Under this scheme, the PCT's employ a Health Walks Co-ordinator who organises and trains local walk volunteers and encourages walking amongst people

who do little or no exercise. The PCT's also manage the Exercise Referral Scheme, which provides 'exercise on prescription' to people with a range of medical conditions, to help them on their way to better health.

4.0 Planning

It is likely that accessibility assessments will be used to influence the location and density of new development and also as a basis for identifying priorities for infrastructure improvements. Planning authorities are being asked by the government to undertake assessments of user needs and demands for open space and recreational facilities through Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG 17). The large degree of overlap between this and the requirement to prepare an assessment as part of the RoWIP has been recognised.

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) sets out policies to reduce air pollution, by promoting public transport, cycling and walking. A key role of the UDP is to guide and promote land-uses and densities in such a way as to reduce the need to travel by car. The plan also promotes public transport and identifies interchange facilities. Relevant specific policy approaches are described below.

The Replacement UDP's Accessibility Policy A/2 introduces an accessibility hierarchy which places the needs of pedestrians and cyclists before other traffic. All development proposals will be required to facilitate safe and convenient access for pedestrians, disabled people and other people with restricted mobility. Policy A/3 seeks to ensure that walking routes are safe, convenient and environmentally pleasant, that pedestrian access into development sites follows convenient routes to facilities and destinations, that existing RoW are maintained or improved, and that walking routes are capable of being shared by cyclists where appropriate. The Policy also states the Council's intention to seek developer contributions towards accessibility infrastructure improvements. Policy A/12 requires the provision, implementation and monitoring of Travel Plans for applications for any development likely to have significant transport implications. Policy A/13 protects PRoW and other pedestrian routes that are identified in the Council's 'Local Walking Route Network'. Policy RE/6 'Recreational Rights of Way' sets out the Council's intention to develop a system of strategic recreational RoW linking urban areas and areas of managed and accessible countryside and links with routes in the wider region. Schemes that encourage the greater use of routes by cyclists, horse riders and those people with impaired mobility are supported. Where opportunities permit the Council will support and seek to secure through development proposals enhancements such as waymarking, picnic areas, interpretation and other facilities. The key routes defined are:

- a) The Rochdale stretch of the Pennine Way;
- b) The Rochdale stretch of Pennine Bridleway;
- c) The Rochdale Way;
- d) The Rochdale Canal;
- e) Routes forming part of an emergent Southern Pennines recreational network;

- f) Other primary countryside routes linking urban areas and local route networks with strategic routes and trails in adjoining districts such as the Oldham Way, Calderdale Way and Rossendale Way.

There will need to be a clear focus on routes in or linking with Recreational Management Areas (identified under Policy RE/7) and Greenspace Corridors (identified under Policy UG/8). The protection and enhancement of these multi-functional corridors (which follow the canal corridor, river corridors and linear greenspaces) provide opportunities to establish safe, segregated routes for pedestrians in pleasant surroundings. These can function not only as recreational routes, but routes to work and school and links between communities. Policy LT/7 protects and promotes the Rochdale Canal in general but specifically seeks to maintain public access and improvements to the towpath and adjacent public areas. It seeks to increase opportunities for walking and angling, including measures to reduce conflicts between users, through enhancement schemes and as a requirement of new developments along the Canal Corridor.

All the above policies will be taken fully into account in the masterplanning and consideration of regeneration schemes and projects (including HMR).

5.0 The Heritage Education Access Network Project (HEAN)

HEAN is a project co-ordinated by Pennine Prospects seeking to create a network of sustainable 'gateways' between urban areas and the South Pennine Moors. In Rochdale the Heritage Lottery supported 3 year pilot project to promote the objectives of HEAN and to assess the use, potential and suitability of Rochdale MBC heritage (countryside, buildings etc) for access and education. It is targeted at traditionally underrepresented or socially excluded sectors of the community including disabled people, low income families, school children and ethnic minorities helping to create awareness and support use and enjoyment of the South Pennines. HEAN activities include:

- Collate information on all relevant sites
- Create a database / information package
- Determine requirements for developing / tailoring activities
- Promote awareness of currently under used sites by means of gateway centres such as Hollingworth Lake / Touchstones
- Establishing the suitability of countryside sites for walking, orienteering and other outdoor activities
- Recording , grading and publicising opportunities for the above activities
- Identifying further opportunities for improving sites and making them more accessible

Assessment of Current Provision Alongside Indicated Demand

Definitive Map and Statement

The Definitive Map shows the position and status of PRow whilst the Definitive Statement lists all PRow shown on the Map, with a description for each entry. The recording of a route on the Definitive Map and Statement is conclusive evidence, in law, of the status, position and existence of PRow without prejudice to the existence of other rights and together they form a legal document that is maintained by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council as the Surveying Authority.

The original Definitive Map and Statements were drawn up in the early fifties by the then Middleton Borough, the Urban Districts of Heywood, Wardle, Littleborough, Milnrow and Rochdale County Borough. Following the various boundary and constituency changes carried out over the last thirty to forty years all of the above were amalgamated into the Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

In 1976 the current Definitive Map was drawn up and comprises 15 sheets, at a scale of 1:10,000. The map continues to use the areas and numbering systems established by the former Councils.

The number of Public Rights of Way currently shown on the Definitive Map in each of the Borough areas is:

Middleton 123	Heywood 152	Littleborough 659
Wardle 232	Milnrow 390	Rochdale 226

A total of 1782 paths covering a distance of 552 kilometres.

The Definitive Statements describing these PRow are derived from the original ones carried forward from the Urban District and Borough Councils. Although some areas, such as Littleborough and Rochdale, provided detailed information including width, boundary types, surface, gates and stiles etc., other districts are virtually A to B in their description with little informative detail.

In the 1970s a full survey was carried out, by the then GMC, however, it was later realised that the survey and accompanying statements were of little value and therefore not used.

Another full survey of the network was carried out in 1994. Major work programmes were undertaken using the information gathered to replace path furniture, clear blockages and carry out surface repairs etc. However, insufficient resources and funding prevented the much needed Map and Statement update.

In 2004 work began on surveying the whole network again, this time in GIS format and, although some anomalies have resulted, it is hoped that this survey will form the basis for a new Definitive Map and Statement.

Irregularities Associated with the Definitive Map and Statement

There are several irregularities / anomalies on and between the Definitive Map and its accompanying Statement. These have not been formally itemised but are usually relatively insignificant matters probably caused by drafting or translation errors.

Even more anomalies occur between what is recorded on these documents and what is to be found to exist on the ground. Resources have not been available to investigate individual cases but the likely causes for these seem to be:

- **Developments that have taken place resulting in the apparently unlawful loss of a Right of Way.**
There may be cases that fall into this category affecting the recorded network. These may have occurred because of a failure to identify the existence of the RoW or failure to pursue planning conditions or legal processes facilitating diversions.
- **Private works that have obstructed or effectively altered the course of the way.**
There may be cases that fall into this category affecting the recorded network. These, be they wilful or in ignorance, may have become established by a past lack of sufficient resources and enforcement.
- **Legal Orders and dedications made that have not been recorded on the Map and Statement.**
There may be cases that fall into this category affecting the recorded network. These may have arisen due to the loss of Legal Event Order paperwork, but may have been due to a lack of staff and resources being made available for this function within the organisation.

Changing the Definitive Map and Statement.

The Definitive Map and Statement can be modified where there is sufficient evidence to show it to be incorrect. Anyone can apply for a Modification Order through the Borough Council. If an order is made and confirmed the Definitive Map and Statement will be changed, when it is next updated, to show the rights that exist. There is currently no specific planned date to update the map, but this document highlights the urgent need for this, as well as the need to use a GIS format so that amendments can

be easily carried out. The map could then be made readily available electronically and to the public on the Council's website.

Applications can also be made to change the route of a RoW, by applying for a Public Path Order, (which are mainly landowner applications for diversions). Again, if an order is made and confirmed then the route on the ground can be altered and reflected on the Definitive Map and Statement when next updated.

In addition to the above, the paths within the urban area of Rochdale, approximately 1600 hectares, have never been recorded on the Definitive map and Statement. There is an urgent need for this area to be surveyed in order to make full use of the RoWIP.

The Council as Surveying Authority for Rights of Way is consulted by the Ordnance Survey when their maps are being revised. The anomalies between the definitive map and the actual situation on the ground make the provision of realistic information difficult.

Ease of Use – Condition of the Network

This section assesses the extent to which the existing network meets the needs and demands of users by looking at the physical condition of the network and how it affects ease of use.

Nature and Condition:

Rochdale's network is very varied in nature. At one end of the scale there are paths that are entirely metalled, running between properties and provided with drainage and street lighting. At the other end of the scale are entirely natural routes, sometimes difficult to define, across open moorland.

Distribution:

In total the Borough of Rochdale has 1782 Rights of Way, the majority of which are in the North and East in the Townships of Wardle (232), Littleborough (659) and Milnrow (390).

The Central, Western and Southern areas are less well served by the PRow network, with Rochdale (226), Heywood (152) and Middleton (123) routes.

Continuity:

There are 123 RoW that lead to the Borough boundary and into adjoining authorities. However, there are some anomalies in that a small number of paths end at the Boundary or they meet with a different class of highway.

Obstructions:

There are many different types of obstructions that can affect the PRow network and present an inconvenience for users. An obstruction is classified as anything that impedes the existing legal access. It is an offence to obstruct a PRow and offenders can be prosecuted under the Highways Act 1980. The Act also gives the Highway Authority powers to stop or remove obstructions on public highways.

The Audit Commission's Best Value Performance Indicator 178 (BVPI 178) is calculated annually from an inspection of a random 5% of the entire network and provides fairly reliable information on the ease of use of the Borough's Rights of Way. BVPI 178 measures the percentage of total length of footpaths and other rights of way (as shown on the definitive map) which fulfil all the following criteria:

- A. Signposted or waymarked in accordance with the Countryside Act 1968 and to the extent necessary to allow users to follow the path.
- B. Free from unlawful obstructions and other interference to the public's right of passage.
- C. Having a surface and any lawful barriers (stiles and gates etc) in good repair and not causing undue inconvenience.

The authority uses this inspection information to correct minor faults and establish longer term programmes of improvement. The condition of the network is consistently improving as detailed in the table below.

Financial Year	Pass rate
2001/02	5%
2002/03	12%
2003/04	30%
2004/05	42%
2005/06	53%
2006/07	56%

Structures:

This phrase encompasses not only "legitimate obstructions" such as gates and stiles but also engineering structures such as footbridges and subways. There are examples of a wide range within the Borough.

Surfaces:

A right of way is actually a legal entity rather than an engineering structure and there exist no mandatory standards as to what type or quality of surface should exist. In virtually all cases the highway authority (or, in a few cases, the Council as local authority and landowner) are responsible for the upkeep of the surface of Rights of

Way. An acceptable standard of surface has been proven by case law to be based on considerations of the type of uses / users the path serves and what is reasonable in the circumstances.

In urban areas where use is fairly heavy and for essentially utilitarian purposes then it is likely that a fully metalled surface will have been provided. Where use is lighter and for more recreational purposes the path may be no more than a worn line on the ground.

There are some anomalies to this pattern. Because the intensity and nature of use has changed over time, a more systematic evaluation of requirements is desirable. This must take into account the need to preserve the character of certain paths and also to accommodate the sometimes conflicting requirements of different users - for example those of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians on bridleways.

Signing and Waymarking:

The requirements regarding the provision of signs and waymarkers are set out in Section 27 of the Countryside Act 1968. The minimum requirement is for a sign, showing the existence of the path and its status, to be present wherever a path leaves a metalled road. If convenient or appropriate the direction, distance and destination may be shown. There is also a duty to place waymarkers where necessary to assist users to keep to the path.

Rochdale uses finger post 'sign 2610' in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 showing the existence, status and direction of unsurfaced paths where they leave a metalled roads. They have not generally been provided where paths leave unmetalled ways nor where metalled paths leave metalled roads in built up areas unless provision can be fully justified as necessary.

Waymarkers along routes are used to indicate the direction of paths on open land, path junctions and strategic points.

Standard Signs used by the Countryside Agency:



Public footpaths (Yellow Arrow)

For walkers only. Users are allowed to take 'normal accompaniments' such as a pram, pushchair or wheelchair along any public footpath – but should be aware that many paths, particularly in the countryside, may not be physically suitable for them.

Public footpaths are often waymarked with yellow arrows.



Bridleways (Blue Arrow)

For walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Cyclists must give way to walkers and horse riders.

Bridleways are often waymarked with blue arrows.



Restricted Byways (Maroon Arrow)

These are available for walkers, horse riders, cyclists and horse-drawn vehicles only.



Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) (Red Arrow)

As the name suggests, these routes - often simply called byways - are for walkers, horse riders, cyclists and vehicles - including horse-drawn carriages, motorcycles and other motor vehicles.

BOATs are sometimes waymarked with red arrows.



Access Land (Brown Symbol)

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough has a total of 34 plots of designated Open Country covering an area of 771 hectares which spread across the Northern and Eastern edges of the Borough.

Environmental Issues:

Environmental issues arise from both the legitimate use and the misuse of Rights of Way: the negative effects are felt by users and adjacent residents or landowners.

The majority of Rochdale's Rights of Way are routes that have been used for generations, and some may date from medieval times. In the main these are footpaths once used to gain access between farms and hamlets etc.

With the increase in population and associated housing over the last 100 years many paths have become urbanised. Occasionally it is claimed that they get very little legitimate use and generate reports of drug taking, under-age drinking, vandalism and littering.

Opportunities for fly tipping can be restricted by the provision of barriers. However there is virtually no provision of receptacles along urban Rights of Way for depositing litter or dog fouling. It has to be borne in mind that there may not be a legal power to place litter bins, dog waste bins and other furniture along many routes as these lie on privately owned land for which the permission of the owner may need to be sought.

Additionally little used paths only justify minimal expenditure and require only reactive maintenance action.

Conflict with other Users:

Conflict between different uses / users of rights of way would appear to be a major issue in Rochdale possibly because of the size of the network and the number of paths that have legitimate multiple uses.

However, the nationwide problem of misuse of paths by powered two wheelers, quads and occasional joyriding of cars is a common source of complaint and one that is particularly challenging to solve without restricting use by those who are less-able, in wheelchairs or wheeling prams/ pushchairs.

The Demands of the User:

As part of the RoWIP, the needs and demands of the residents and of visitors to the area need to be established. This section examines the national demands of each type of user, which can then be compared to Rochdale as part of Stage 2 of the RoWIP, once consultation and market research is completed.

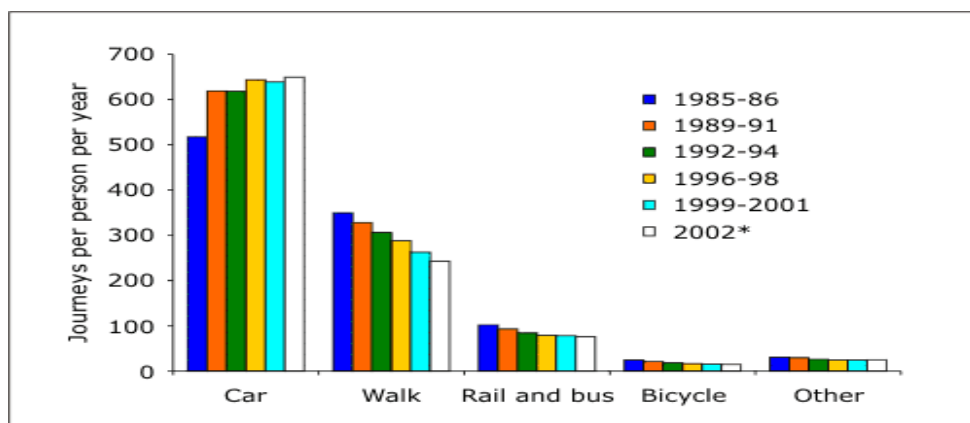
1. Walkers

1.1 Walking is one of the most popular activities in the country and what is most commonly associated with Rights of Way. Although 10% -15% of the population never walk any distance (half a mile or more), around 80% do so at least once a month. Walking to work or to the shops accounted for around a quarter of all walking trips recorded by the National Travel Survey (NTS), and around half of all school children walk to school.

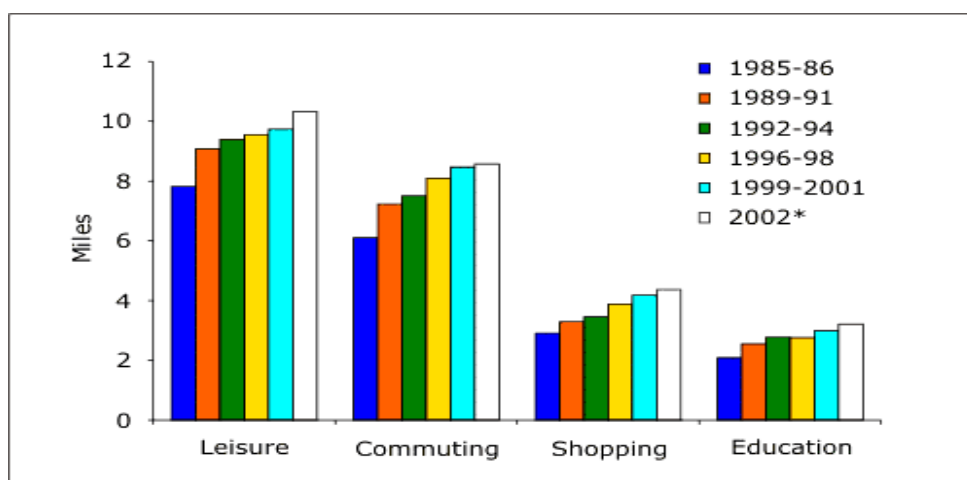
Table 4.1: Use of Different Access Resources (% of users)

Type of Route used	Walking or rambling	Running or jogging
Footpaths	64	46
Country parks/public gardens/National Trust properties etc.	53	25
Other open areas of land	50	32
Other paths or tracks	38	21
Bridleways	33	19
Pavements alongside main roads	30	40
Canal towpaths	30	17
Permissive paths or areas	25	11
Cycle tracks	18	14
Green lanes	16	11
Main roads	15	23
BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic)	2	<1
RUPP (Roads Used as Public Paths)	1	-
Don't know	<1	3
None of these	<1	2
Number of households where 1 or more undertake the activity	724	151

Source: Entec (2001)



- Between 1985-6 and 2002, the number of trips that were mainly on foot fell by 31 per cent and the number of bicycle trips fell by 40 per cent.
- The number of trips per person per year by car increased by 20 per cent in the second half of the 1980s, but by only a further 5 per cent in the last decade.
- The percentage of journeys per person per year by car increased from 61 per cent in 1996-8 to 64 per cent in 2002



- Between 1985-6 and 2002, the average distances travelled by people for commuting, education and shopping all increased by between a third and a half.
- Between 1996-8 and 2002, the average journey lengths for leisure, commuting, shopping and education increased by 8 per cent, 6 per cent, 12 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.

Table 12: Cars taking children to school: 1992/1994 to 2003

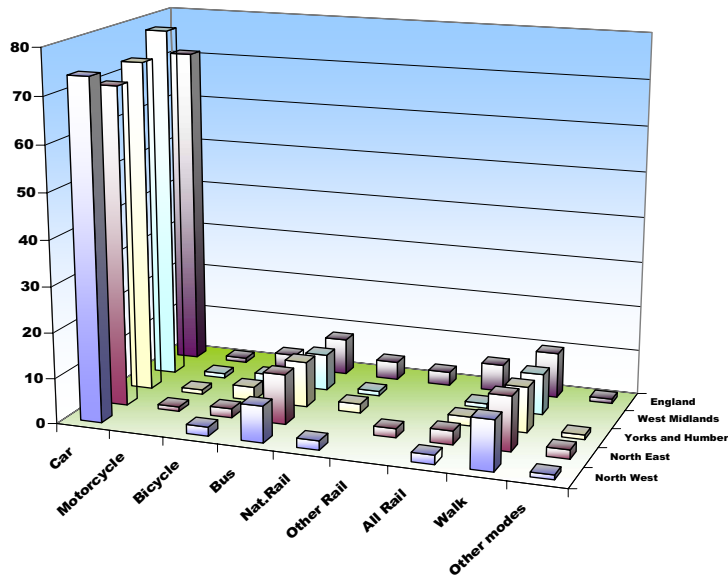
	Percentage of car trips/number				
	1992/ 1994	1995/ 1997	1998/ 2000	2002	2003
0800 to 0859 hours in urban areas ¹ during term-time	8	10	10	12	12
Peak traffic time (0835) in urban areas ¹ during term-time	10	14	14	16	16
Peak percentage (0850) in urban areas ¹ during term-time	15	20	16	18	18
Sample size of trips at:					
0800-0859	12,309	13,346	12,565	10,406	10,920
0835	3,742	4,112	4,037	3,281	3,609
0850	3,679	3,978	3,633	3,065	3,185

¹ Data relate to car trips by people living in urban areas

Source: National Travel Survey

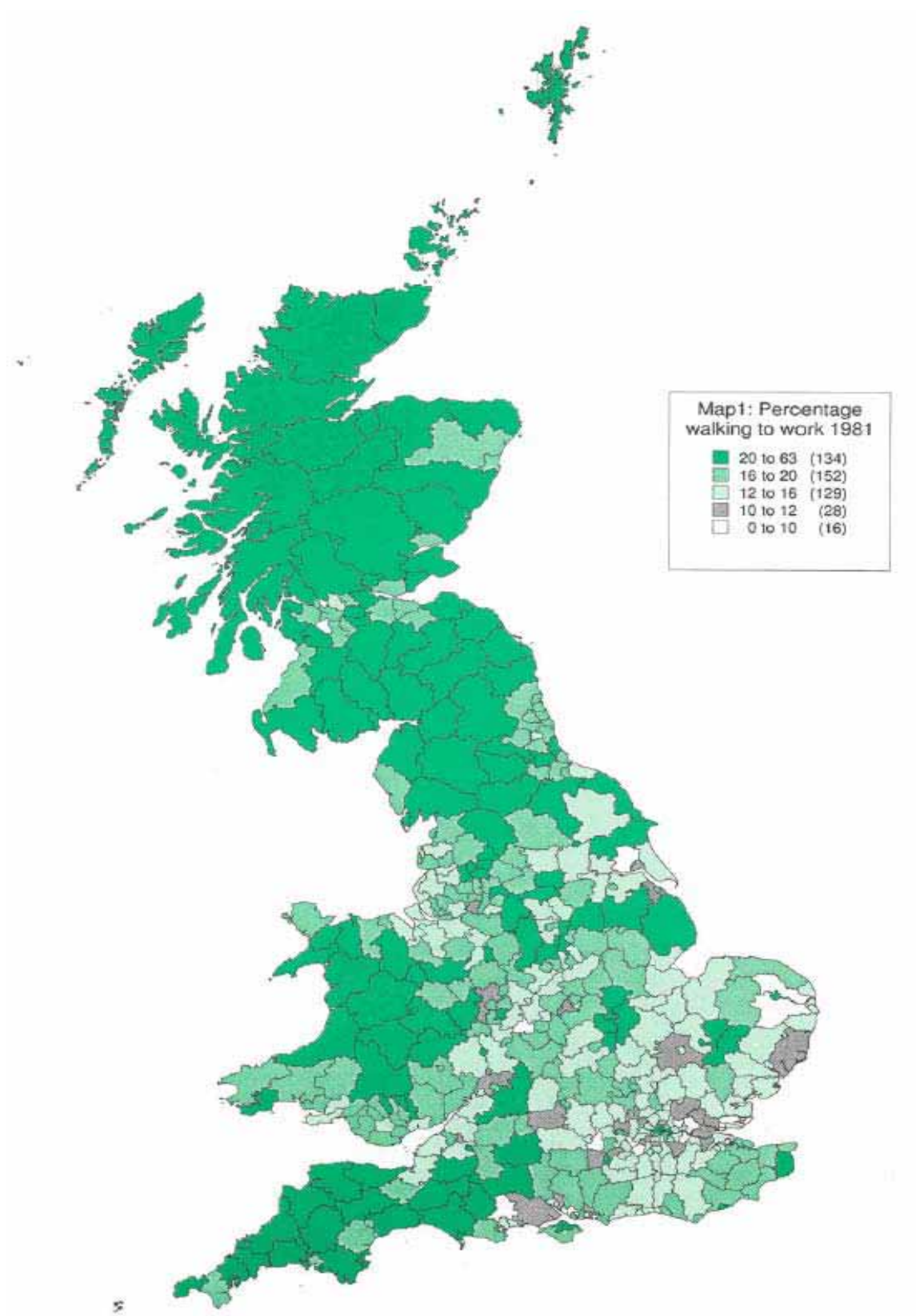
Usual Methods of Travel to Work in England and Selected Regions

Source Entec 2001



1.2 Most people walk on footpaths and pavements, but make use of multi use resources such as bridleways, towpaths and cycletracks, although usage of these is considerably less. Compared with other physically intensive sports, walking is relatively ageless. People from higher socio economic groups are more likely to take part in walking than people from lower socio economic groups and adults from an ethnic minority groups have lower participation rates in walking than the population as a whole.

Source: Department of Transport Web site



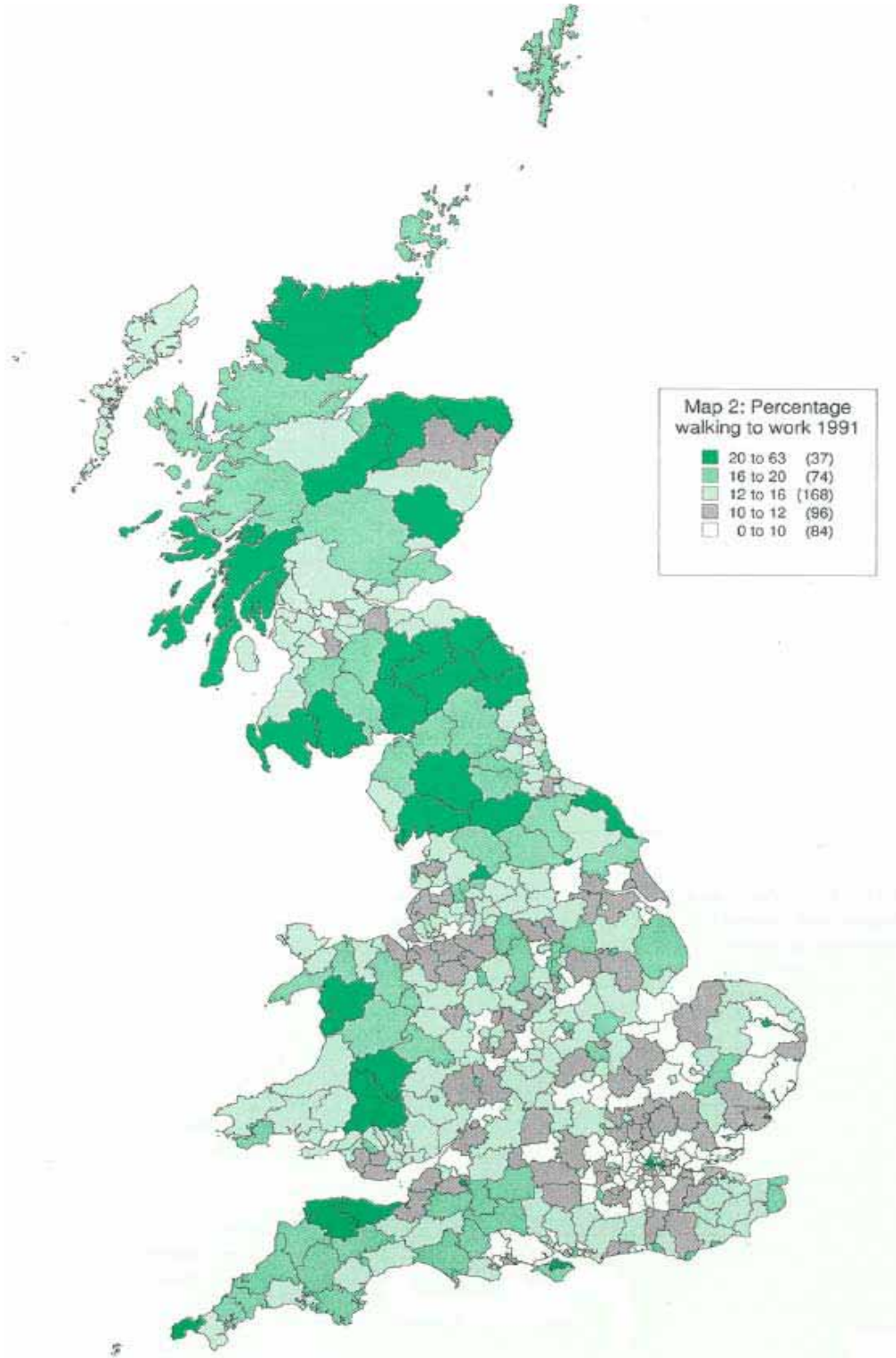
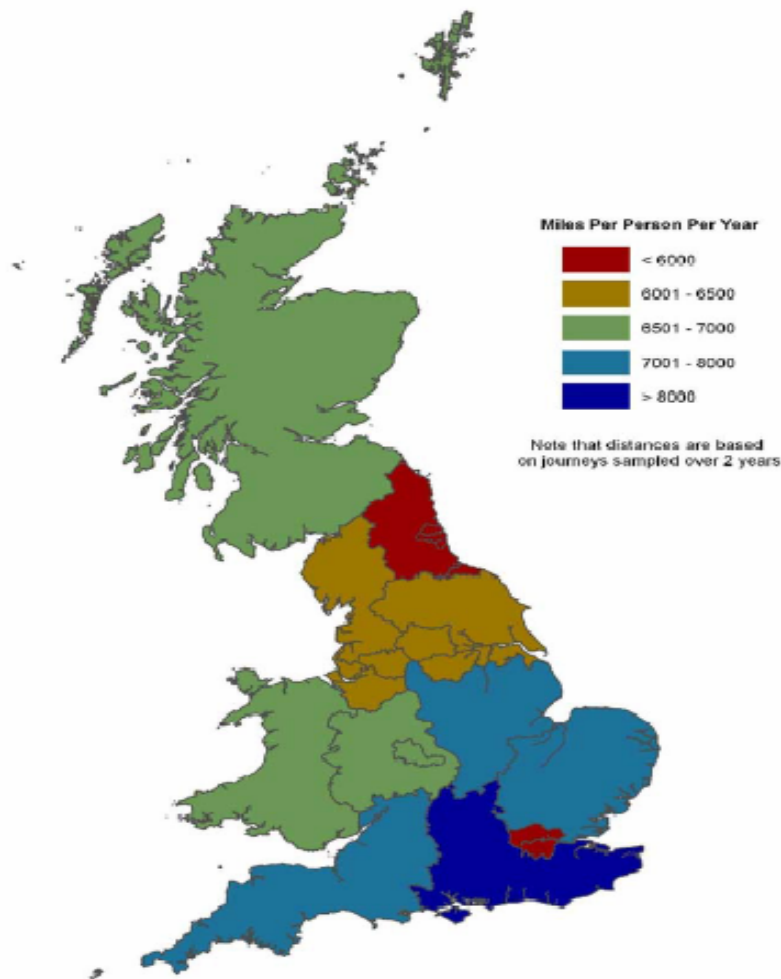


Figure 2 Average Distance Travelled by Region/Area of Residence - 2002/03



Source: National Travel Survey (0207 944 3097)

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2. Cycling

2.1 Cycling is the fifth most popular adult sport in the UK behind walking, swimming, keep fit/yoga and snooker/billiards/pool. This is due to the increasing interest in health and fitness, the environment and sustainable transport. Around 70% of the population never cycle and around 10% do cycle at least once a week. About

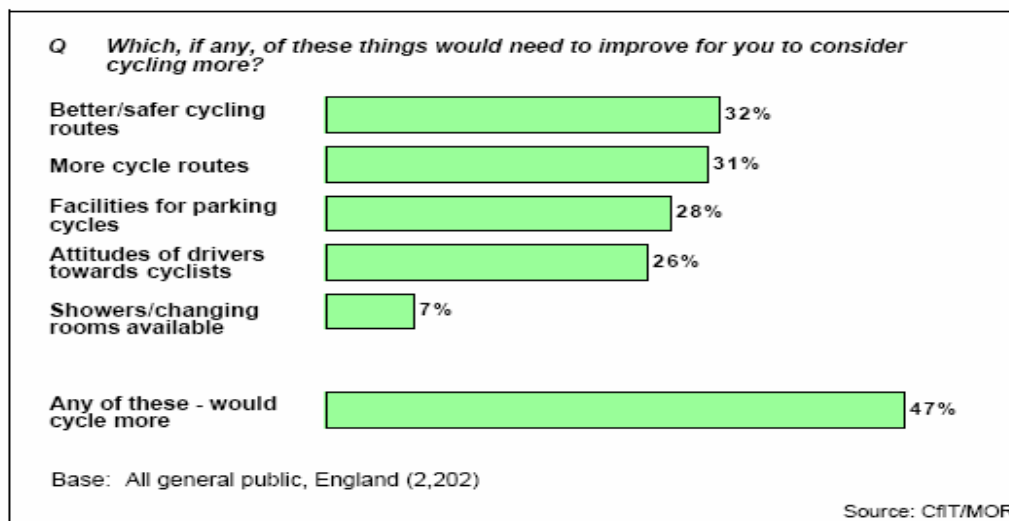
4% of the population cycle to work and a smaller proportion cycle to school and the shops. Cycling was the main activity on 2% of all day visits.

Promotion and education initiatives in Rochdale include:

- National Bike Week and In Town Without My Car Day events
- school travel plan programme
- school cycle training programme
- promotion of travel plans to employers and within the Borough Council
- developing a series of leaflets to publicise networks, routes and parking.
- signing of cycle routes

Table 8: Bicycle travel in Great Britain and England: 1975/1976 to 2003

												Miles/trips/stages	
	1975/ 1976	1985/ 1986	1992/ 1994	1998/ 2000	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001		2002	2003
Distance travelled per person per year:													
Great Britain	51	44	38	39	38	41	36	42	37	37		33	34
England	56	47	41	41	41	43	37	45	41	38		36	35
Bicycle trips per person per year:													
Great Britain	30	25	18	16	16	18	15	17	16	14		15	14
England	33	27	20	17	18	19	15	18	17	15		16	15
Bicycle stages per person per year:													
Great Britain	31	25	19 ^R	16 ^R	17	18	15	17	17	14		15	15
England	34	27	20	17	19	19	16	18	18	15		17	16
Sample size (GB):													
trips	14,372	12,210	8,703	6,696	2,412	2,555	1,949	2,232	2,515	2,138		4,812	5,386
stages	14,654	12,504	8,872	6,829	2,451	2,605	1,992	2,266	2,571	2,193		4,976	5,551



2.2 Where do people cycle and who are they?

Nationally, cycling is the fourth most popular physical activity for adults and the second most popular for children aged 6 to 16. Whilst there are figures to say that 70% of the population never cycle, this would appear to reflect national inactivity more than the unpopularity of cycling.

Figures indicate that participation in cycling is on the increase. In 1999 8.5% of adults had cycled in the previous 4 weeks, compared with 3% in 1986 and 2% in 1980.

2.3 Off Road Cycling

The picture for cycling on Rights of Way and other traffic free routes is different to on-road cycling. A statistically robust survey for Tyne and Wear found that 26% of households had a least one family member who cycled on Rights of Way. This compares with walking at 58% and horse riding 2%.

There are no figures available for Rochdale.

When the Pennine Bridleway first opened it attracted about 50% cyclists with walking and horse-riding at about 25% each. Subsequent observations would suggest more walkers and less horse riders which tends toward the Tyne and Wear results.

Nationally, most people (56%) cycle on main roads and secondly on cycle tracks and bridleways. There are a lower number of cycle tracks available which suggests that this may affect this figure. Cycling appears to be relatively popular across all socio economic groups, but with a noticeable decline from professionals/managerial classes

to semi skilled/unskilled manual workers. Adults classed as students have the highest participation rate of 25% which is more than twice the national average

RMBC has produced leaflets covering and promoting a number of cycle routes along Rights of Way within the Borough. These are available from libraries and Council Offices in the Borough.

3. Equestrian

3.1 Horse Riders

Research was undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University (2004), for Hampshire County Council's RoWIP, which analysed horse riding data and surveyed equestrians revealed that:

- It is an ageless and classless activity.
- It is undertaken predominantly by females.
- It has fairly uniform participation rates across the country.
- It is done mainly by people who do not own a horse.

It found that equestrians favour safe and off road routes. The improvements to the network requested are to create links, safe road crossings, parking and access to more existing rights of way. A study carried out in Shropshire (Rural Resources 2004) supported these findings along with the desire to have gates that can be opened without dismounting, and bridleways having a suitable surface for horses. There are an estimated 47 million horse riding days per year.

Statistics revealed by the British Horse Society (BHS) in 2001 revealed that:

- 2.4 million people ride nearly 1 million horses each year (4.5% of the population).
- Horse owners and riders spend around £2.5 billion each year on horses and riding.
- Around 500,000 hectares of land is used to keep horses.
- 50,000 people are directly employed by equine industries and 200,000 indirectly.

Rochdale has a total of 66 km of bridleways, including a section of the Pennine Bridleway and the Mary Towneley Loop. This figure represents 12% of the network which is significantly higher than that of neighbouring Authorities

3.2 Carriage Drivers

This activity is not widely practiced and less research been carried out. Carriage drivers have the right to use Restricted Byways as well as Byways and all other routes with vehicular rights. The research undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University in Hampshire revealed that:

- Carriage drivers tend to come from older age groups than horse riders and are much more likely to own a horse.
- About half preferred circular routes and the other half were happy to use both linear and circular routes.
- 66% said they would do more driving if they could.
- 43% of Hampshire's British Driving Society members admit to exceeding their rights on PRow.
- 70% use permissive routes and 52% have negotiated private arrangements with landowners.
- 30% pay for access (usually entry to country parks or to use toll rides).
- Route variety is desirable but difficult to achieve because of limited rights, there is therefore a high tendency for drivers to use the same routes repeatedly.

Research in Shropshire highlighted the need for gates that are wide enough for carriages and for suitable parking for horse boxes.

Rochdale has a large PRow network compared to neighbouring authorities and also a higher number of bridleways and RUPPs.

The nearest carriage club to the Borough is the Red Rose Carriage Club based in Bolton.

4. Motorised Vehicles

There are approximately 15,000 active off road drivers active in England and Wales. Two thirds of these are thought to be motorcyclists

Off road motoring is limited and legally almost non existent in Rochdale. Whilst at present there are numerous Restricted Byways within the Borough the usual presumption is that public vehicle rights do not exist on them unless these can be proven.

5. Access for All

'Access for All' and 'Easy Access' have become common terms which describe the provision of access for disabled people and people with reduced mobility through old age and lack of fitness, or because they are accompanied by small children. It also includes socio economic factors such as lack of transport, and cultural factors. This can therefore apply to a large proportion of the population.

With large tracts of the countryside becoming available to the public as a consequence of the CRow Act, this is a great opportunity to enhance the PRow network in order to allow potential users the freedom to utilise their newfound rights. This can be achieved by improvements to the existing network, and by creating new routes linking urban areas to access land.

However, large areas of the network traverse rough moorland, and not all routes are suitable for users with impaired mobility.

A Case Study – Hollingworth Lake

Hollingworth Lake has for many years attracted large numbers of visitors. Since being designated a Country Park in 1977, visitors and residents have been encouraged to explore the local countryside on foot. Three circular routes, originally devised by the Littleborough Civic Trust have been improved, waymarked and publicised. These are in addition to the path around the lake which provides a level and on the whole a well surfaced route, accessible for all.

The Lake is strategically placed, between the urban conurbation of Rochdale, Greater Manchester and the South Pennine Moorland. It is on or close to two major National Trails, the Pennine Way and the Pennine Bridleway, and in addition the lake is also visited by the Rochdale Way and the Station to Station Walk as well as shorter routes such as the Weighvers Way.

As part of the promotion of the area as a Gateway to the South Pennines, it is planned to improve access through the Ealees Valley, linking the lake to Littleborough and public transport. In addition, to recognise the 200th anniversary of Hollingworth Lake and the Rochdale Canal, it is the intention to develop an additional waymarked trail linking the two areas. Development of the trail is expected to be completed by September 2007.

The Countryside Service organises and runs a comprehensive programme of walks and events across the Borough. These are aimed at all ages and abilities and range from gentle strolls, accessible to all, to all day strenuous walks into the surrounding moorland. In addition there are guided cycle rides and other events which raise the awareness of opportunities for exploring the wider environment.

Improvements to the visitor centre have facilitated better information, interpretation and accessibility for users and have strengthened its role as a key gateway site for the Southern Pennines.

Summary of Stage 1 of the RoWIP

Rochdale's network is significant compared to other Metropolitan Authorities. The PRoW network totals 552 km and is a predominantly walking network, with 440 km (80%) of footpaths, 66 km (12%) of bridleway and the remaining 46 km (8%) of the network being Restricted Byways. There are an additional 3 km of cycle track in the borough which are not on the Definitive Map although they may be included at a later date.

Given the requirements of the RoWIP the network of bridleways could quite easily be extended by upgrading some footpaths to bridleway status. These would offer not only greater access to the countryside and National Trails but also through routes from Township to Township. This idea would be slightly more difficult to implement in the Central, Western and Southern areas of the Borough.

The 34 areas of newly created access land as well as the vast tracts of Common land that exist within Rochdale are well served by the RoW network and only minor links need to be provided.

The Definitive Map is in need of being updated. It also needs to be drafted into GIS format to enable it to be easily updated, reproduced and accessible to the general public.

Key routes such as the two National Trails and the NCN routes need to be highlighted. Concessionary and permissive paths, which are not currently recorded, need to be taken into account.

In order to take advantage of any LTP funding the urban area of Rochdale needs to be surveyed in the near future. User groups have already indicated various routes that they would wish to be included.

The key improvements identified include:

- Better maintenance of the network.
- More information about the location of paths to encourage greater use by residents and visitors. These would be in form of finger posts on metalled roads and waymarkers en route.

- Improve links to neighbouring Authorities RoW and National routes such as the Pennine Way, the Pennine Bridleway, Sustrans routes and the National Cycle Network. Also, improve links to Public Open Spaces, Parks and Access Land as well as tourist attractions such as Hollingworth Lake, Watergrove, Greenbooth and the Rochdale Canal. Achieved by upgrading existing RoW.
- Guidance on appropriate behaviour by users and landowners, as contained in the new Country Code
- A safer and better connected network which would particularly help vulnerable road users such as walkers, riders and cyclists
- Surveying the urban area of Rochdale
- Development of circular routes;
- Better access for older people and people with disabilities
- Improved partnership working with other departments and organisations to ensure people gain the maximum benefit from all available opportunities
- Better safety provision where RoW cross roads
- Collation of data to discover the most popular routes in order to prioritise access improvements.
- Add Access Land
- Ensuring, where possible, that people can access places of employment and amenities such as schools, as well as the countryside, by walking and cycling. Improving routes and facilities, maintaining them in a more usable condition, improving RoW in both urban and rural areas, and making routes safer, more secure, and more attractive.

Consultation Process

The Greater Manchester Pennine Fringe Local Access Forum, Rochdale Rights of Way Forum, Rochdale's Disabled People's Access Group, other Strategic Policy Officers and all user groups currently consulted as part of Rochdale MBC working procedures; were consulted as part of RoWIP Stage 1.

STAGE 2

Statement of Action

Following consultations, a number of areas were recognised as being the basis of a framework to improve and enhance PRow in the Borough. These are

- Accessibility
- Condition of the existing network
- Extent of the network within the Borough
- Links to other Authorities and National Trails
- RMBC strategic plans

Accessibility

This can be considered as several factors, these include

Access to the PRow network from areas that are not linked to it
 Access to countryside and green spaces
 Sustainable and safe travel
 Physical difficulties of access for disabled users
 Access to information

Factor	Outcome	Actions
Areas not linked to RoW network	Enable greater use of RoW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better signage to direct people to RoW • Integrate public transport to serve access points • Increase car parking facilities • Create links where possible • Make provision of links a condition for planning permission on large new developments
Access to countryside and green spaces	Increased use for leisure and recreation. Improvements in health, local economy and recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links between green spaces, parks and open land. • Provide links from residential areas to the countryside • Ensure landowners keep routes open and maintain gates/stiles • Open up long obstructed routes • Create additional access to CROW land • Improve connectivity of the network by changes to path status (e.g. where historical evidence can lead to the upgrading of a footpath to bridleway status) • Develop "promoted routes" • Develop links to National Trails and develop associated infrastructure (B & B etc) • Work with the Discovering Lost Ways project team to increase the network • Liaise with Tourism Officer and Strategic Planning Team • Coordinate links between Definitive and Permissive paths

		<p>in the borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with neighbouring Authorities about cross border paths
Sustainable and safe travel	Increased proportion of trips by non-car mode. Encourage healthy lifestyle. Impact on congestion and air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise upgrading of RoW where these meet an identified travel need • Engage with schools and workplaces • Create and upgrade pedestrian and cycle routes between town / district centres and residential areas • Create pedestrian and cycle routes particularly where there is a demand that results in short trips, for example to schools, shops or public transport stops • Ensure RoW supports the National Cycle Network • Lighting improvements along routes well used at night • Links to avoid roads by creation of "quiet lanes" • Provide more safe crossings at major roads for RoW users particularly equestrians.
Access for all	Greater access for users with disabilities, and those with prams, and wheelchairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with landowners to gain least restrictive access • Where possible upgrade physical conditions of routes • Create circular accessible routes • Provide at least one high quality medium distance route suitable for wheelchair use. • Additional provision for those with visual/audio impairment
Access to information	Expand awareness of RoW network, leading to greater usage by the public, especially minority groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of Definitive Map on RMBC website • Provision of information boards at strategic locations • Signpost and waymark all routes • Signpost directions to RoW in urban/urban fringe areas • Publicise promoted routes • Large print, Braille and audio formats to be available • Leaflets in other languages and work with community groups to inform people with no ethos of Public Rights of Way about their rights to use them

Condition of the Network

Factors pertaining to the condition of the network include

Surface conditions
 Vegetation
 Path furniture
 Signage
 Wilful obstruction

Factor	Outcome	Actions
Surface conditions	Enable use of RoW at all times of year. Encourage less determined users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor network • Respond quickly to complaints • Improve surface where appropriate • Install/repair drainage • Liaise with landowners where farming practices (livestock) are responsible for poor surface condition
Vegetation	Enable use of RoW at all times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor network • Respond quickly to complaints

	of year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take action to rectify when Council responsibility (upgrowth) Enforce landowner action Make comprehensive works schedule (known problem routes)
Path furniture	Provide safe and accessible routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out regular inspections Ensure landowners are aware of their responsibility to maintain stiles and gates Least restrictive access
Signage	Provide a well signposted network enabling easy use, especially by less confident users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with statutory duty to signpost and waymark paths Employ anti-vandal measures when erecting/repairing signposts Liaise with user groups about critical points to waymark Ensure new or diverted routes are signed
Wilful obstruction	Allow users to be confident of their ability to use RoW without inconvenience or harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond quickly to complaints Have robust enforcement procedures in place Liaise with other sections of the Authority (e.g. Planning, dog warden, fly tipping enforcement etc) Encourage users to report incidents of obstruction
By carrying out the actions stated, it is planned to reach a BVPI 178 standard of 70% by 2009/10		

Extent of the PRow Network

Factor	Outcome	Actions
Paths not linked to others of same status	Allow multi user access to larger areas of the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the actions necessary to create routes highlighted by user groups. Upgrade status of paths needed to create links Modify status of routes wrongly mapped Study definitive map to further identify gaps Liaise with neighbouring authorities
Gaps in RoW network	Greater access to green spaces and countryside. Use for trips to work/school/shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate mapping of permissive and definitive routes Liaise with landowners (especially United Utilities) about route creation Action claims arising from Discovering Lost Ways project Create quiet lanes to link the off road network

Links to Other Authorities and National Trails

Factor	Outcome	Actions
Trails when within Borough	Enhance use of local network by means of linkage to long and medium distance trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify need for infrastructure and existing facilities relating to long distance routes (e.g. B&B, hostels, stabling). Establish easy access to them. Links from trails to local areas of interest Links within Borough to provide access from local network to trails, especially equestrian and cycle
Trails and neighbouring Authorities	As above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with neighbouring Authorities to integrate RMBC objectives with their plans for the routes Joint promotions and leafleting campaigns Form new promoted cross boundary trails between Boroughs to supplement existing routes (e.g. Station to Station walk). This will include creating a regional trail

		based on the "Limersgate" Packhorse route
Cross boundary RoW	Extend network by ensuring ease of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with neighbouring Authorities to standardise signage • Publicise routes in other Authorities area (e.g. the Oldham Way) • Conform status when rights change at boundary, preferably change status to the higher one

RMBC Strategic Plans

Plan	Objective
LTP 2	Integrated approach to encourage a larger number of shorter trips to be undertaken on bike or foot
UDP	Reduce reliance on cars for journeys to work and bring benefits to people without the use of a car
Health Strategy	Encourage more people to make changes and lead healthier lifestyles by providing safe places to walk, cycling routes and improved access to recreation and leisure facilities
Cycling Strategy	Creation of a coherent and practical cycle network
Renaissance Masterplan	Promote the countryside as a major asset and connect it to neighbourhoods and the urban core by river valleys and environmental corridors
Aiming High	Create the best possible quality of life for all local people

Specific Actions and Projects

The Council has a statutory duty to maintain Public Rights of Way, and several of the actions in the table above will be undertaken, on a continuing basis, as part of this duty. These include signage, vegetation clearance and maintenance of the path surface. This work will be carried out taking into account the priorities outlined in the RoWIP.

Additionally the Council must ensure that routes are not obstructed, and again although keeping routes open is a statutory duty, priority will be given to those routes which are integral to the aims of the RoWIP.

However, following the consultation process, a number of specific actions have been identified as key to the implementation of the RoWIP. These are

- Definitive Map review
- Survey of routes in urban centre of Rochdale
- Links from urban fringe to countryside
- Creation of circular bridleway routes
- Upgrade of routes to create a cycle network
- Least restrictive option to be implemented throughout network
- Limersgate Regional Trail

Definitive Map Review

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 places the duty of keeping the Definitive Map under continuous review on every surveying authority. As already noted the Definitive Map, which the Council holds and uses as the legal standard document for proof of the existence and status of routes, was compiled in 1976 and has not been modified to take account of changes to the network.

The task of updating the Map will be carried out in conjunction with its conversion to a digital format. This will enable a copy of the map to be made available on the Council's website.

Survey of Routes in Urban Rochdale

When the requirement to survey PRow and produce a Definitive Map was introduced under the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Councils were able to omit built-up areas from their surveys. In Rochdale a large section of the urban centre was excluded from the survey. There are many routes which, although clearly would have been mapped as PRow, are not registered. With the cut off date of 2026, when existing routes not shown on the Definitive Map will have their rights extinguished, the area needs to be comprehensively surveyed. Routes identified will be added to the Definitive Map as part of the continuous review.

Links from Urban Fringe to Countryside

Five urban fringe areas have been identified where poor access to the countryside coincides with social deprivation. The poor access is partly caused by the existing state of the PRow in these areas which have a BVPI 178 rating of 34%, approximately half that of the average for the Borough. It is proposed to bring the condition of routes in these areas up to a standard where a BVPI score of 90% is achieved.

With additional signage within the built up parts of the areas to direct people to PRow, and a leaflet campaign detailing the opportunities for accessing the countryside now available, it is hoped that residents will begin to make extensive use of what will be to most of them a new feature of their local area.

The five areas identified are, Langley, Smallbridge, Kirkholt, Broadfield and central Rochdale. Of these, work has been completed on Langley and Smallbridge, with the remaining areas to be complete by March 2008. This work is being funded by grants totalling £80,000 from the Stronger Safer Communities Fund and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

A further development is the creation of a "South Rochdale Forest Trail" which will link Kirkholt with Tandle Hill Country Park

Creation of Circular Bridleway Routes

Following the RoWIP Stage 1 consultations and examination of the existing network, a number of opportunities to increase the length of circular bridleway routes were identified by user groups, who presented a list of their aspirations for consideration. By means of upgrading the legal status of certain footpaths to bridleway a significant increase of useable circular routes and further links within the bridleway network will be created. The enhanced routes will also mean that use of roads to access separate bridleways will no longer be a necessity in large parts of the Borough.

Efforts are currently ongoing to ascertain ownership of the land affected by the proposed changes. It is hoped that much of the upgrade in status can be achieved by permissive use, leaving relatively few paths to be legally altered.

Further extension of the bridleway network will be achieved by correcting the under recording of many bridleways as footpaths during the production of the Definitive Map. This is particularly evident in the Wardle area. Liaison with the Discovering Lost Ways project during 2007/08 will bring further opportunities to upgrade this type of route.

Upgrade of Routes to Create a Cycle Network

A series of 10 maps of the Greater Manchester Cycle Network has been produced of which Rochdale is Map 4. Scrutiny of this map has identified gaps in the network, many of which could be eliminated by upgrading footpaths to allow use by cyclists.

The aim of the Rochdale Green Network is to provide multi user access to a network of routes in the Borough constructed to National Cycle Network (NCN) standard. The network will be located to be within 800 metres of 95% of all households, and within 800 metres of 100% of households in areas of deprivation.

Limersgate Regional Trail

The existence of the Packhorse route known as Limersgate has long been known in the Borough. This route linked Rochdale with Clitheroe and was used to bring not only lime, but also woollen cloth and coal over the Pennines into Rochdale.

Currently the route consists of a mix of footpaths and bridleways, and within the Rochdale Borough boundaries it is not publicised or promoted. It is intended to create a new regional trail by upgrading the status of the length of the route to bridleway, and to continue this for its full length in cooperation with the Authorities through which it runs. The new trail will also form an important link to the Mary Towneley loop of the Pennine Bridleway.

Least Restrictive Access

As part of the continuing drive to increase access to the PRow network all gates, stiles and other access controls on the network will be surveyed and reviewed. Landowners, tenants and other responsible parties will be expected to conform to DDA guidelines and to the principle of least restrictive access. The financial incentive will be RMBC's commitment to replace stiles etc at no cost to the landowner.

IMPLEMENTATION

As already noted, several aspects of the RoWIP are covered by the Council's statutory duties. Securing appropriate levels of funding will enable the specific projects detailed above to be implemented within the 10 year lifetime of the RoWIP. Progress and milestones for achieving this will be through the performance management framework of annual service plans.

It is worth noting that the percentage of Rights of Way easy to use by the public is an integral part of the Local Area Agreement for increased access to, and enjoyment of, green spaces



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