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Local Highway Authority Chief Executives
(via Natural England)

30 June

From Dan Rogerson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management

The Government made a commitment in the January 2013 Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement to provide guidance to assist local highway authorities in reviewing Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs).

Officials in my Department have consulted rights of way officers across the country and the response has shown little appetite for new guidance. The existing guidance, *Rights of Way Improvement Plans Statutory Guidance to Local Highway Authorities in England*, <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/countryside/prow/rowip.pdf> published in November 2002, explains the statutory requirement to assess and review rights of way improvement plans not more than 10 years after publication and at intervals of not less than 10 years thereafter. This is still the case, and as this existing guidance is consistent with current access objectives I see no need to update it at this stage.

However, I am particularly keen that as you review your ROWIP you specifically consider access to woodland, as well as other land types, and consider how to improve provision for cyclists, equestrian and disabled users. I am aware that the existing public rights of way network does not always serve cyclists and horse-riders particularly well, particularly as rural traffic is increasing.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement last Autumn the Department for Transport will soon publish a cycling and walking delivery plan, which calls for local highway authorities to have a "commitment to creating a sense of place through cycling and walking, with coherent, connected and attractive networks". I encourage you to look to this plan while considering how to include cyclist needs in your ROWIP.



Additionally, there is a duty to consider the needs of disabled users and improve disabled access on Rights of Way. I encourage you therefore to continue to consider the needs of these users when preparing your ROWIPs. I also encourage you to work with your local access forum (LAF), as required by the legislation, when reviewing your ROWIPs.

I wrote to all LAFs earlier in the year encouraging them to continue their work in offering advice to local highway authorities as you review your ROWIPs.

Your faithfully

DAN ROGERSON MP