

## **Rights of Way Committee**

**3 November 2020**

### **Public Rights Of Way Annual Progress Report 2019**

**Report by Nicholas Scott (Principal Rights of Way Officer)**

**Electoral division/s: All**

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## **Summary**

This report contains an annual progress report for the Public Rights of Way team within Countryside Services setting

out our achievements on the network and customer service data during the 2019 calendar year.

## **Recommendation**

That this report be noted by the Committee.

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### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 With over 4,000km of Public Rights of Way (PROW) to maintain across West Sussex the PROW team provide an important service to the residents and visitors of West Sussex. Our responsibilities include maintaining the path surface, negotiating improvements with landowners and working closely with key stakeholders to help support key corporate objectives. The service is supported by considerable input from volunteers who both assist with path inspections and practical tasks across the network.

### **2. Customer Service**

- 2.1 A major element of our service is handling a high volume of enquiries from path users and other parties with 1,120 calls received through the contact centre in relation to PROW.
- 2.2 Between reports from the public and other stakeholders this has generated 4,375 issues that were logged onto our database in 2019 which is a similar number to the previous year. However, with 4,217 resolved in the same period this was an increase of just under 5%.

### **3. Routine Maintenance**

3.1 We continued to deliver our 15-month inspection and maintenance programme. In 2019 our contractor, County Tree Surgeons, amongst other works delivered:

- The replacement of 1,433 signs across the network;
- 174 new bridges;
- 12 new Boardwalks;
- 39 flights of steps; and
- Just under 41km of surface vegetation clearance.

3.2 We also undertook our annual summer clearance programme, separately from the routine maintenance programme, where 339km of surface vegetation was cleared.

### **4. Volunteers**

- Our inspections continue to be greatly assisted by volunteers, working with our local Access Rangers to ensure we keep to the 15-month programme and helping with issues arising. Volunteers also get their hands dirty with a variety of practical works to supplement our maintenance programme and add extra value across the county. On practical task days alone, of which there were 72 totalling 4216 hrs (4 SDNP days), they delivered (amongst other things):

- 12 new bridges;
- 46 new signs and 8 repairs;
- 10 gates to replace existing stiles;
- 211 new steps and 64 repairs and 86m of handrail installed;
- 10 new plank crossings and 2 repaired along with installation of 1 x 5m and 2 x 6m bridges;
- 43 Fallen trees cleared;
- 40m of revetment installed;
- 61 tonnes of surface material laid; and
- Over 8.8km of side and surface vegetation clearance.

4.1 We are again grateful for the continued support of many individuals who give their time free of charge to the PROW surface and the team who support the volunteers work, from office staff through to the Access Rangers and Volunteer Coordinator.

## **5. Gates for Stiles**

- 5.1 The PROW team are continuing our efforts at improving access across the rights of way network by offering free gates to replace existing stiles across the network, due to the restrictive nature of stiles for some users.
- 5.2 During 2019, we provided 48 gates to landowners with the agreement that they install the structure and maintain it in the future, as they would with any structure that exists on their land.

## **6. Capital Works Programme**

- 6.1 As part of the annual Capital programme during 2019 we replaced 6 bridges and any associated works including bank stabilisation and drainage improvements.
- 6.2 Further to this, a capital surface programme was undertaken totalling over 4.5km of improvements on the network with the stand-out improvements being one in West Chiltington, including surfacing and drainage works on Public Bridleways 2344 and 2410 along with G-Road 46. This has provided a key north-south off-road link between local communities and connecting to the surrounding Bridleway network. The second being on Public Bridleway 2758 in Upper Beeding that included heavy clearance and surface improvements. This route is now much easier and safer to use by the public and carries the long-distance path, The Monarchs Way, so very well used.

## **7. Complaints and Compliments**

- 7.1 The County Council's Customer Relations team did record three formal customer complaints in 2019 and 19 compliments. Of the complaints, two were partly upheld and the other not.
- 7.2 All other day to day compliments received by the PROW team are not specifically logged.

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 That this report be noted by the Committee.

## **9. Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)**

- 9.1 There are no other options considered because this is an update report, which is for information only.

## **10. Policy alignment and compliance**

### **Equality and Human Rights Assessment**

- 10.1 There are no equality and human rights implications because this is an update report, which is for information only. Although, it should be noted that improved public rights of way, such as replacement of stiles with gates, and clearance of vegetation, provide better access for those with disabilities.

## **Human Rights Act 1998 Implications**

- 10.2 There are no Equality and Human Rights implications because this is an update report, which is for information only.

## **Crime and Disorder**

- 10.3 There are no crime and disorder implications because this is an update report, which is for information only.

## **Climate Change**

- 10.4 There are no climate change implications because this is an update report, which is for information only. Although, it should be noted that improved public rights of way can help to promote walking and cycling which can aid in the Council's climate change objectives.

## **Public Health**

- 10.5 There are no climate change implications because this is an update report, which is for information only. Although, it should be noted that improved public rights of way can help to promote walking and cycling, which can have health and wellbeing benefits.

## **11. Finance**

- 11.1 There are no finance implications because this is an update report, which is for information only.

## **12. Risk implications and mitigations**

- 12.2 There are no risk implications because this is an update reports, which is for information only.

### **Matt Davey**

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Transport and Planning

### **Lee Harris**

Executive Director for Place Services

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## **Appendices**

None

## **Background Papers**

None