

Peak District Local Access Forum

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Item: 7

Title: Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan – Update

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Purpose of Report

To present Forum members with an update on progress towards delivery of Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) in 2015/16.

Progress since December 2015

Below is a summary of some of the main work in progress in relation to each of the five RoWIP aims:-

Aim 1: Existing Public Rights of Way network

- The Cabinet report regarding the outcome of the consultation for the proposed review of the **Rights of Way Charter** has already been circulated to Forum members. It sets out the County Council's comments on the responses that were received, including those from both Local Access Forums. The report can be viewed here under item 20 and highlights the economic and health benefits of the rights of way network, as well as continued partnership working and the role of volunteers:
http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/council/meetings_decisions/meetings/cabinet/2612016_cabinet.asp
Cabinet has approved the new targets to be incorporated into the revised Rights of Way Charter, taking on board the views expressed in the consultation wherever possible. The document will be published as soon as practicable to guide the work of the Rights of Way Service going forward. The budget savings which have to be made will inevitably lead to a reduction in staff numbers and Cabinet also approved the implementation of a revised staffing structure. This is currently out for formal consultation with employees and Trade Unions and will reduce the number of staff in the Rights of Way team from 18.1 to 12
- Path condition surveys to assess the **ease of use** of the network continued in 2015. November's survey was delayed into December/ early January and returned a 56.7% pass rate. Combined with May's result of 76.7%, this produced an overall pass rate of 68.1% for the year, falling short of the 72.5% target. The main contributory factor appears to have been the effect of a relatively small number of paths over 1km in length (15 out of the 217 surveyed) failing some aspect of the assessment. If

these had all passed, the result for December would have increased to 77.3%. When comparing the overall results with those for 2014, there is a decline in performance for signposting, waymarking and stiles and gates, but all other areas show an improvement

- **Funding bids** have been submitted for prioritised Rights of Way improvements and maintenance, Green Lanes and multi-user Greenway and cycle connectivity schemes from within the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital Programme for 2016/17. The outcome will be reported to the LAF meeting in June

Aim 2: Definitive Map and Statement

- In terms of dealing with the **backlog of legal orders**, since the end of November 2015, 11 cases have been reported to committee, 4 have progressed to order making stage and 1 order has been confirmed and brought into effect. Decisions have been issued by the Planning Inspectorate for a further 3 cases, including Bamford Clough which has been confirmed as a Byway Open to All Traffic

Aim 3: An improved network

- Work is nearing completion on a 1.6km section of the **Pennine Bridleway National Trail** off Monks Road, near Charlesworth funded by Natural England and also through the County Council's Local Transport Plan. A bid for further work to extend the route towards High Lane in 2016/17 is being submitted to Natural England. It should be noted that it will not be possible to open this section of the trail until there is a safe crossing of High Lane in place and the route has been constructed through to Green Lane, Simmondley
- As far as **Pedal Peak II** is concerned, since the last newsletter was published in January
 - Claire O'Reilly's secondment has been extended for a further 6 months until the end of September 2016
 - White Peak Loop East - Matlock to Rowsley: Work has started on the ground and all four phases of this section of the route between Matlock and Old Station Close at Rowsley should be complete by the end of Summer 2016
 - White Peak Loop East - Rowsley to Bakewell: Additional bat hibernation survey work has been carried out and discussions are taking place with Natural England and the Peak District National Park Authority. A bid has been submitted for Local Transport Plan funding in 2016/17 for additional design time so we can continue to work up the scheme
 - White Peak Loop West - Harpur/Staker Hill: Some repairs have been necessary due to water damage on a section down from Staker Hill and a contract has been let to sign the on-road route from the top of the High Peak Trail, through Earl Sterndale to link up to the new off road section on the Dale Head road

- White Peak Loop West - Buxton: The County Council has supported a High Peak Borough Council application for a European Regional Development Fund grant for studies to develop a section of the White Peak Loop through Buxton from Harpur Hill to link up with the Monsal Trail
- Open Access – following on from the recent review of the long term direction at **Turncliff Common** near Buxton, an initial meeting has been held with the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) to discuss the provision of better signage and information at the main access points, including reviewing the red flag system

Aim 4: Promotion, understanding and use of the network

- The **Derbyshire Cycling Plan 2016 – 2030** was launched at an event held in Derby Arena on 19 January. The plan can be viewed here along with feedback and analysis of the consultation responses: www.derbyshiresport.co.uk/derbyshirecyclingplan
Its four strategic aims will be delivered through the actions of a number of partners, with the County Council playing a central role. Two actions which the Authority is pursuing relate to the first strategic aim of Infrastructure and Connectivity. Cabinet has recently agreed, in principle, to:
 - the development of a Key Cycle Network across the county
 - the adoption of a Cycle Infrastructure Delivery Plan
 These should both help to strengthen the ability to secure any resources associated with the Government's national Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy due to be published in Summer 2016
- Our annual **Countryside Events programme** has been produced for 2016, which marks 50 years of the Countryside Service in Derbyshire. The brochure contains a range of events to encourage more people to visit our sites and enjoy the countryside. There is also information about responsible use, volunteering opportunities, public transport and to encourage people of all abilities to explore the network of Public Rights of Way and Greenways across the county

Aim 5: Greater community involvement

- Work is continuing on the new **Policy for Working with Community Groups** which was discussed with both Local Access Forums at their December meetings. There will be an opportunity for Forum members to comment further when the draft document is produced later in the year
- The responses to the consultation on a revised Rights of Way **Minor Maintenance Scheme** with Town and Parish Councils are being considered and a report will be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure in the near future

Ten Year Review of Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Derby and Derbyshire Local Access Forum (DADLAF) is organising an event to explore some of the issues surrounding the accessibility of the rights of way and countryside access network, highlighting the benefits it can bring for

people's health and wellbeing. The vision is for a rights of way and countryside access network which is easy to reach, use, enjoy and understand by people of all ages and abilities.

During 2015, the DADLAF produced a "Way Forward" document in which Forum members chose to focus their efforts on a number of suggestions that they hoped would make a real difference, including improvements for less able users. A starting point was to establish links with disability groups to determine people's needs and aspirations in terms of an improved network of routes, associated facilities and the way information is provided, including the possibility of setting a standard for accessible routes.

This also coincides nicely with the ten year review of Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan which I mentioned in my report to December's Peak District LAF meeting. As part of the review process, we are required to make a new assessment of the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public, including those with a disability or limited mobility. Several members of the Peak District LAF have been invited to attend the accessibility event on Friday 18th March in Derby.

Before the next LAF meeting in June, I shall be arranging a meeting with the joint LAF RoWIP Sub group to look at the needs of other users (walkers, equestrians, cyclists and motorised users, local residents and visitors to the area) to see if these have changed since the original RoWIP was produced

Recommendation

That Forum Members note this interim progress report for delivering Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan in 2015/16.