

Peak District Local Access Forum

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Item: 10a

Title: Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Derbyshire
Interim Progress Report for 2009/10

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Purpose of Report

To present Forum members with an update on progress towards delivery of Derbyshire's RoWIP in 2009/10.

Progress September to December 2009

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

Aim 1 - Existing Network:

- The agency agreement with South Derbyshire District Council has returned to the County Council, along with an officer Dave Adkins, who has joined the other Inspectors in the Rights of Way team.
- PRow Inspectors concentrated their efforts on the backlog of reported problems involving stiles and gates in disrepair during September and October. This initiative worked well and the results are set out at the end of this report.
- Funding – although budgets have yet to be finalised we have received advice to the effect that the revenue budget for next year is likely to remain the same with a slight adjustment to reflect cost of living rises. Next year's LTP capital settlement for access schemes is looking like it could be slightly higher than that for 2009/10. The main budget problems are likely to arise from 2011 onwards when all public sector budgets are facing considerable cut backs.

Aim 2 - Definitive Map and Statement:

- Following approval to create a Senior Legal Orders post within the Mapping Team, interviews have taken place and an offer of employment has been made.
- Other vacancies in the Mapping team relating to a digitiser and two technician posts have now also been filled.

- There is a new on line register providing information about temporary closures affecting public rights of way in the county.
- 227km of paths have been digitised - these include all paths in Amber Valley and Chesterfield without legal orders, along with a small number in Derbyshire Dales.

Aim 3 - Connected, safe and accessible network

- Aims 3a) & 3b): work is progressing to complete the legal paperwork required to deliver the Hopwell to Dale section of the Midshires Way.
- Aim 3e): A section of the Bluebank Loop adjacent to the Chesterfield Canal has been re-surfaced to bring it up to multi-user standard.
- Aim 3e): There have been official opening ceremonies for the Peak Forest Canal Towpath, in conjunction with British Waterways and the Breadsall Section of the Great Northern Greenway in conjunction with Derby City Council and Breadsall Parish Council.
- Aim 3f): Management Plans have been produced for eight of the high priority red routes in the Peak District National Park identified under the project looking at the Sustainable Management of Vehicles in the Countryside.

Aim 4 - Promotion and Publicity

- We have completed the latest highlights report “Keeping on the Right Track”, which summarises the main achievements described in the 2008/09 end of year monitoring report submitted to the June meeting of the LAF. This has been circulated to Forum members who we hope will pass it on to any wider contacts.
- Aim 4c): The Amber Valley and Erewash Walking Festival “Autumn Footprints” was a great success with 835 people taking part in the 29 walks on offer.
- Aim 4c): We have met with a campaign group called Choose Cycling about promoting cycling, initially in the districts of Amber Valley and Erewash.
- Aim 4c): We had a good response from the LAFs about offering help to look at the Codes of Conduct action in the RoWIP and are in the process of setting up a sub group with members of both Forums.
- We have commented on an extremely large number of strategies and plans being produced by the National Park Authority, district councils and other prospective partners in order to ensure that issues relating to public rights of way, Greenways and access in general are adequately covered.

Stiles and Gates Campaign Report

During September and October 2009, the Rights of Way Inspectors embarked on an exercise to reduce the number of reported problems associated with gates and stiles in disrepair. At the start of the project our records indicated that there were 379 reported problems.

The brief to the Inspectors was straight forward:

- Survey the path.
- Locate the reported problem.
 - Aim to encourage the Landowner¹ to remove the structure and leave a gap in its place.
 - Aim to replace stiles with gates.
 - Ensure that all new structures are duly authorised.
- Identify any additional problems on the path.
- Try to resolve all the problems if the landowner can be located.
- Log other problems not associated with the landowner responsible for the reported problem if they cannot be resolved.

The Inspectors surveyed a total of 393 paths and the results have been very interesting. The headlines are as follows:

- 428 improvements have been carried out on 393 paths, including improvements to 359 structures.
- The backlog of reported gate and stile issues has been reduced from 379 to 188.
- A total of 69 gaps have been created by removing obstructions, gates and stiles.
- 193 new gates and 58 stile kits were issued.
- 39 gates and 69 stiles have been repaired.
- The data indicates that more issues have been discovered on the routes than first reported.
- Some Landowners have shown resistance to replacing stiles with gates on the grounds that they do not wish to increase the chances of stock escaping.

¹ For simplicity references to the Landowner refer to the person responsible.