

Peak District Local Access Forum

Date: Thursday 5th December 2013

Item: 8

Title: Derbyshire County Council - Rights of Way and Access Update Report

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Purpose of Report

To present Forum members with an update on current issues facing or affecting the Rights of Way and Access Work of the County Council.

Budget situation

Derbyshire County Council, like all other local authorities, is facing significant budget cuts over the next 4-5 years. The current situation with respect to the Countryside Service in general and Rights of Way and Access in particular as far as we know at present is as follows:

- 2013/14 – The Rights of Way revenue budget for carrying out path maintenance work has been cut by 18% (£50,000) as already reported to the LAF.
- 2014/15 – The Rights of Way revenue budget may face further cuts, but there are no details available at this time.
- 2015/18 – Significant budget cuts are required across the Council over this 3 year period and the Countryside Service is unlikely to be immune from cuts. At this stage no further information is available. We will have to start planning for this eventuality and the LAFs will be kept informed and advised about any potential cuts affecting Rights of Way and Access work.

Staffing news

- Countryside Access Improvement Officer role: Claire O'Reilly has accepted a secondment opportunity to manage the Pedal Peak II Cycling Project on a full time basis until March 2016. Gill Millward will be working full time in the Countryside Access Improvement Officer role for the same period.
- Greenways Officer role: Jenny Southwell (previously Pennine Bridleway Development Officer) has been appointed to a part time Greenways Officer post to work alongside Anna Chapman to make a full time equivalent Greenways Officer post. They will be dividing the

county between them, with Anna responsible on a day to day basis for North East Derbyshire, Bolsover, Chesterfield, High Peak and the northern half of Derbyshire Dales. Jenny will be primarily looking after Greenway schemes in the southern Derbyshire Dales, Amber Valley, Erewash and South Derbyshire, with an overview for links into and through Derby City.

- Pennine Bridleway: Karen Turnbull has been appointed to the role of Pennine Bridleway Development Officer which she will combine with her existing role of Pennine Bridleway Maintenance Officer. These posts are subject to funding from Natural England which is currently only confirmed until 31 March 2014. Negotiations are underway to extend these contracts for at least a further 12 months.
- Rights of Way Inspectors: Duncan Lovatt, the Inspector for South Derbyshire, is moving on to work in Northumberland and his post will only be offered until March 2015. A revised list of inspector areas will be issued as soon as possible.

General Rights of Way

- We are pleased to report that in the 2013 National Highways and Transport Network survey, Derbyshire has been ranked top out of 25 participating County Councils in terms of public satisfaction with the local rights of way network, climbing from 7th place in 2012. This helps to demonstrate the positive contribution made by staff involved in this area of work, in conjunction with the increased investment provided through the Local Transport Plan process.

RoWIP

- The half yearly report on progress was presented to the September LAF. We are continuing with this work, including delivery of the capital projects on rights of way and Greenway development which were identified.

Recommendation

That Forum members note the contents of this report.