

# COMMITTED TO QUALITY – THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE APPROACH TO BEST VALUE

## Service Plans 2001 – 2002

Name of Service Plan Area Countryside Services Service Plan Ref: ES1

### Part 1 Description of Service

#### **Purpose of service**

- 1 To be the driving force and implementers of Rural/Countryside Strategies that protect, conserve and enhance the environment of Buckinghamshire, particularly its rural landscape and natural heritage.
- 2 To manage Country Parks, Countryside Access Areas, Nature Reserves and Woodlands.
- 3 To manage and promote the Rights of Way network with particular reference to recreation and tourism.
- 4 To manage and promote the Agricultural Estate.
- 5 To advise the Council on all such matters.

#### **What are the statutory parameters that regulate how the service operates?**

- 1 Duty to hold and keep under continuous review a Definitive Map and Statement of all known public rights of way (including the investigation of claims for amendments to the Map or Statement) as laid down by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- 2 As a regulatory authority, a duty to assert and protect the rights of the public to their use and enjoyment of the highway, in accordance with the Highways Act 1980
- 3 Duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain surfaces and bridges and clear undergrowth, and provide paths that are safe for the public to use
- 4 Duty under the Countryside Act 1968 to erect and maintain signposts to indicate public rights of way.
- 5 Duty under the Highways Act 1980 to keep the highway clear of obstructions and nuisances. By their very nature these highways require far more 'enforcement' than any others
- 6 Duty to enforce the provisions of the Rights of Way Act 1990 in respect of path disturbance and crop growth
- 7 Under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act power to provide or secure the provision of local nature reserves.
- 8 Under the 1968 Countryside Act the power to establish and manage Country Parks and picnic sites.
- 9 Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 power to enter into management agreements with private landowners for the purposes of conserving or enhancing the natural beauty or amenity of land in the countryside.
- 10 Duties under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to
  - Take reasonable steps to further the conservation and enhancement of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
  - Have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the (Chilterns) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
  - Participate in the preparation and publication of a management plan for the AONB.
  - Set up and manage a Local Access Forum.

NOTE: There will be additional rights of way responsibilities impacting from April 2002.

**Chairman of Policy & Resources 2001/02 Policy Steer(s) relevant to the service**

Overall steers: Council must live within its means, all managers must deliver 2% efficiencies.  
No specific steers for this service.

<b>Resource Summary</b>	<b>2001-02</b>
Budget £m	£408,133

**Volume of service (2001/02)**

Number of customers/users	Residents of and visitors to Buckinghamshire, organisations including District & Parish councils, registered charities, private industry, private landowners, Social Services (special needs groups), government agencies, community groups, conservation organisations, educational establishments and Probation Services. 3/4 million visitors per annum to Country Parks.
Number of location of sites	3000kms of public rights of way 4 Country Parks 400 ha Woodlands 36 Countryside Access Sites
Number of staff (FTE)	24 + 1 FTE Joint Project

**Special Factors**

- Sales of property will reduce rent income – assume cash limit adjusted for this.
- Rights of Way – Countryside & ROW Act 2000. £47k year 1 (2001/2002); £55k year 2; £107k year 3, £143k year 4 (2001 prices)
- Country Parks not included in budget figures due to self-financing status.
- Stockgrove Country Park – Agreement with Bedfordshire County Council.
- ROW backlogs to be identified/quantified.
- Foot and Mouth Disease impacting on the work of the group
- CROW Act 2000 additional work will impact on the group.
- Rural White Paper will require the group to respond to new initiatives.

## Part 2 Performance of Service

### Current performance (in relation to 2000-01 Service Plan outcomes and targets)

THREE YEAR OUTCOME	MEASURE OR INDICATOR	PERFORMANCE 2000/1	TARGET 2001/2	TARGET 2003/4
1. Bucks rural environment and heritage has been protected, enhanced and key elements of it have been conserved, whilst greater access to the Countryside has been secured and greater understanding of it has been promoted. <b>3(b), 7(c)</b>	Number of trees planted as a direct result of County Council schemes	37417	15,000	20,000
	Number of countryside conservation/enhancement initiatives supported/assisted	26	30	35
	Number of strategic countryside projects, utilising external funding schemes, initiated or advanced	4	5	7
	The Landscape Plan for Bucks is completed	Part 1 document agreed and going to print April 2001	Part 2 document agreed and published.	
	% of BCC Countryside Services actions in the Landscape Plan Part 2 completed	N/A	Action plan established	20% Delivered
	% of Countryside Services actions in the 3 Year Tourism Action Plan completed	27%	66%	100%
	The number of bids made to grant aiding bodies for countryside conservation/enhancement projects.	8	10	12

THREE YEAR OUTCOME	MEASURE OR INDICATOR	PERFORMANCE 2000/1	TARGET 2001/2	TARGET 2003/4
	Number of Public conveniences sites provided by the authority normally throughout the year AC – E3	1	1	1
To ensure that 90% of the Rights of Way are open promoted and accessible to the public at all times <b>7(c)</b>	<p>The % of links of Footpaths and other ROW which are sign posted where they leave the road (AC – F2A)</p> <p>The % of the total lengths of Footpaths and other ROW which are easy to use by members of the public (AC – F2B)</p> <p>The number of Recreational Routes reviewed and improved</p>	<p>99.4</p> <p>88.16</p> <p>-</p>	<p>Maintain at 2000/01 levels</p> <p>&gt;2%</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Maintain at 2000/01 levels</p> <p>&gt;2%</p> <p>5</p>
Reduce the backlog of claims against the Definitive Map <b>7(c)</b>	The backlog in claims against the Definitive Map is reduced.	20% Reduction in backlog	>10%	Maintain at 2001/02 level
Deliver the new duties/responsibilities contained within the CROW Act 2000 <b>7(c)</b>	Initial Meeting of Local Access Forum		January 2002	
The assets of the County Council are managed to best advantage <b>3(b), 7(c)</b>	To make Country Parks self financing, whilst protecting and enhancing these important resources.	Self Financing Achieved	No cost to the County Council	No cost to the County Council

<b>Portfolio Flagship Projects:</b>		
<b>Project Outcome</b>	<b>Key Stages</b>	<b>By When</b>
<p>Leading:</p> <p><b>Community 6</b> The restoration of Langley Historic Parkland is furthered through joint work with South Bucks District Council and the acquisition of external funding. <b>7(c)</b></p> <p><b>Community 7</b> Access to the countryside is promoted through local access forums.</p> <p><b>Community 8</b> The restoration of the Ancient Royal Hunting Forest of Bernwood is supported through a community based project. <b>7(c)</b></p> <p>Contributing to:</p> <p><b>Strategic 6</b> Rural communities have improved access to services provided by the County Council. <b>3(c), 4(a)</b></p> <p><b>Strategic 10</b> 10. The social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the County will be furthered by an improvement in the County Council's performance on sustainability. <b>3(a) – (b)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission of plan and Stage 1 application.</li>   <li>• Funding in place.</li> <li>• Appointment of Access Officer.</li> <li>• Initial Meeting of LAF.</li>   <li>• Area Committee.</li> <li>• Open Day.</li> <li>• Develop Project Group.</li> <li>• Develop of Interpretation Strategy.</li> <li>• Develop Consultation Programme.</li> <li>• Stage 1 Landscape Survey.</li>   <li>• Examine implications of Rural White Paper of Bucks Rural Strategy and develop an Action Plan for the County Council.</li> <li>• Identify 'quick wins' for service improvement (including external funding) e.g. rural transport, rural policing.</li>   <li>• Formally adopt LA21 Strategy and use as a basis for the preparation of the Council's Community Plan.</li> <li>• Promote key achievements in improving the Council's performance on sustainable development through County newspaper.</li> <li>• Promote greater business awareness of environmental performance through the Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership and appointment of Business Travel Plan Officer.</li> </ul>	<p>November</p> <p>April 2001 September 2001 January 2002</p> <p>April 2001 June 2001 July 2001 August 2001 September 2001 September 2001</p> <p>May 2001</p> <p>June 2001</p>

<b>Portfolio Flagship Projects:</b>		
<b>Project Outcome</b>	<b>Key Stages</b>	<b>By When</b>
<p><b>Planning &amp; Transportation 7</b> The development of the Buckinghamshire environment is managed through the County Structure and Local Plan processes. <b>10(f), 3(a)-(d), 2(a)-(d), 5(a)-(e)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review current Structure Plan Policies in the light of the Urban and Rural White Papers.</li> <li>• Review policies in light of Government publication of new Regional Planning Guidance.</li> <li>• Review of the strategic highway network.</li> <li>• Joint County Structure Review Panel. Discuss development principles for the new Structure Plan.</li> <li>• Hold public consultation on strategic development options.</li> </ul>	<p>Cabinet March 2001 April 2001 February 2002</p>
<p><b>Planning &amp; Transportation 9</b> Rural communities enjoy a more effective delivery of services as a result of the Council's approach to implementation of the Rural White Paper. <b>10(c), 2(a) (c) (d), 3(a)-(d), 5(e)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review services to rural areas in the light of the Rural White Paper.</li> <li>• Relaunch of the Rural Strategy through joint working with the Buckinghamshire Community Action.</li> <li>• Publish updated strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>May 2001 June 2001 September 2001</p>

### **Part 3 For more information**

<b>Associated County Council Business Plans, and links with other Service Plans or Statutory Plans</b>	
<p>Council Plan, Strategic Aims 4 and 7</p> <p><b>Links to Other Service Plans</b></p> <p>Area Highways Management Minerals and Development Control Strategic Planning, Environment and Economic Development Group Transport Strategy Group Development Control Group Performance and Initiative Group (European Team &amp; External Funding Officer) Buckinghamshire Environmental Records Centre Contracts Management Gypsy Services Property Services Libraries, Museums and Arts</p> <p><b>BCC Strategies/Plans</b></p> <p>Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan (BNCF Partnership document) Buckinghamshire Tree &amp; Woodland Strategy (BWF Partnership document) The Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire (Part 1) Buckinghamshire Archaeological Management Plan Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan Buckinghamshire Tourism Action Plan</p>	

**Associated County Council Business Plans, and links with other Service Plans or Statutory Plans**

Buckinghamshire Local Transport Plan  
Buckinghamshire LA21 Strategy

**Internal Strategies in preparation**

The Landscape Plan for Buckinghamshire (Part 2)  
Buckinghamshire County Council Community Strategy  
Buckinghamshire County Council Cultural Strategy

**External Strategies in preparation/review – Local**

Buckinghamshire Rural Strategy  
Chilterns AONB Management Plan

**External Strategies/Plans – Local**

Colne Valley Management Plan

**External Strategies and Plans – Regional/National**

UK Biodiversity Action Plan  
South East England Regional Biodiversity Framework  
England Forestry Strategy  
Towards Tomorrow's Countryside: A Strategy for the Countryside Agency  
England Rural Development Programme  
Our Countryside; the future (the Rural White Paper 2001)  
A better quality of life: A strategy for sustainable development for the United Kingdom

**When is the service due for a Best Value Root and Branch Review?**

Not known at this time.

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