

## **THEME 1 – MAPPING THE NETWORK**

### Objectives 1 – 1.3

To ensure that the new ROWIP made provision for an annual review of the plan. This was done in Year 1 for the current ROWIP, but not subsequently. The LAF members did acknowledge that this would possibly require some additional staff resource.

All of the objectives should carry the caveat “Depending upon available resources” as these will change over the life time of the ROWIP.

We should monitor and prioritise compliance with statutory timescales and prioritise resources accordingly to avoid a likely increased in future legal challenges, especially so in light of the impending implementation of the Deregulation Act.

The consolidation of the Definitive Map and Statement should be treated as a top priority, given how far we have come from the stated objective of delivering a consolidated DMS to partners once every 5 years.

Greater access and use should be made available to the public via the BCC website of GIS – explore new applications and funding requirements.

## **THEME 2 - LOOKING AFTER THE NETWORK**

- First Group Responses
- Second Group Responses

### **General Comments about ROWIP**

- Across 3 counties – member thinks that Bucks last plan was quite good – but missed out some types of users – i.e. Carriage Drivers
- No joined up linkage of routes – particularly using sec 106 money – multi user routes in new estates required.
- Links across boundaries – parishes and county boundaries – join up with other authority areas
- Is the ROW Committee also doing this exercise – perhaps they should be?
- Not improving cycling routes – more needed
- Member would like a legal person to provide the LAF with a presentation of user rights on the various RoW, including the ‘new’ cycleways and multiple user paths.

### **2.1 Provide and protect a well maintained rights of way network**

- Fail on aims for clearing vegetation in 6 weeks – in last plan
- Failing on resources – maintenance and staff no sufficient
- Parish Councils – have no money for maintenance (not given enough money for devolvment)
- More cross parish co-operation on projects and maintenance (lack of communication between parishes)
- Lack of prosecutions – due to resources (but farmers are now more accepting of paths on their land)
- Verges that link routes (or where join roadside) are not being maintained
- Not Clearing routes in the 6 weeks – fail

- Generally maintenance is reasonable taking into account the lack of resources
- Should BCC prosecute/serve more enforcement notices – to send out a message to landowners

## **2.2 Improve the Council's knowledge and asset management of the rights of way network**

- Database of assets not corporate – they are predominantly held by TfB
- A bridge maintenance plan was put in place but not by 2011
- No IT system – NOT DONE
  - BCC recognised that Bridge Asset was a greater risk and met the objective for inspections
  - Do we need to know about the condition of surfaces (would there be any chance of money to do works anyway)
  - Feel that externalising ROW Operations team to Ringway Jacobs had a detrimental effect

## **2.3 Provide an efficient, value for money service supported by high customer satisfaction**

- Consider that it was good performance on this
  - Members keen that BCC keep the matrix objectives constant – so can be used to benchmark on performance
  - Use National Highways & Transport Survey (NHT) for results on satisfaction
  - Keep on reporting on customers satisfaction and volunteer involvement

## **2.4 Support safe, strong and cohesive communities**

- Consider that it was 'reasonable' performance - but some parishes not involved
- Sometimes things do happen that Parish Councils are not aware of – external contractors doing work
- Collaborative working – BCC need to do more – push for more parish involvement (not just devolution) – Involve BALC on forums i.e. ROWLG and LAF meetings
- Difficult to embed guidance on strong and prosperous communities – question necessity?
  - Members do not feel that there is any collaborative working with Parish Councils
  - Have to facilitate better working with communities to tap into possible funding sources
  - Perhaps produce a RoW Newsletter – giving good examples of collaborative working – on line perhaps
  - Involve BALC

## **2.5 Protect and assert the County's National Trails and Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

- National Trust feedback on usage from monitoring surveys (to LAF)
- Don't promote our ROW 'Assets' like other AONB's – i.e. Cotswolds
- Report works on NT to LAF is good – BCC provide feedback on NT projects
  - Monitoring should be done by National Trails

## **2.6 Improve the use and enjoyment of the rights of way network**

- Cyclists given too much opportunity – shouldn't use FP's – enforcement perhaps – but what are chances of enforcement

- More information generally on Does/Don'ts using RoW Network – need an Education 'programme' – particularly important because of use of runner/jogger/cycling tracker apps on smart phones
- BCC do not report on route usage to LAFs – but members do not feel that this is needed.
  - BCC not doing this
  - Question from member 'What information would we get if we surveyed usage better'
  - Don't get a true picture from BCC website of what paths/promoted, other websites are available i.e. Tourist Info Centres
  - More important things to do other than surveying promoted routes.

### **THEME 3 – CREATING NEW LINKS**

**3.1 & 3.2** - The only additional bridleway provision has been through DMMO's. A reasonable number of upgrades have been achieved with developers to convert footpaths to bridleways or dedicate new bridleways or cycle tracks and some on publically owned land. One s.26 Highways Act 1980 creation was unsuccessful. The LAF was not aware of any new links in the Chilterns, but that is likely to be because there is little development in this area and therefore few opportunities arise through the planning process. In north Bucks a great emphasis could have been made to targetting DMMOs that are existing Green Lanes in order to achieve more bridleways. More generally they thought there could have been better priority for bridleway DMMOs as these are the only reliable mechanism for create new bridleways.

The Ridgeway Partnership have been upgrading and sign posting some links to towns and villages from the National Trail, which adds weight to creating new links, but this has not created any new rights.

There has in fact been some further severance 'creep' for bridleways with busier roads where riders are more intimidated making road connections and at road crossings, e.g. where the Ridgeway crosses the A4010 south of Princes Risborough.

Developments have provided new footways and 'open space' around major development areas that can be used for walking.

The Restoring the Record Project (RTR or Discovering Lost Ways) is seen as very important, though this is not county led. However, greater importance could have been given to investigating definitive map anomalies which could have clarified higher rights and a better mapped network. Many of the RTR volunteers were not able to grasp the complexities of making DMMO applications, limiting the success of the project. There was only one or two training days, which was not enough.

It was thought Hertfordshire have a good system which compiles a wish list of footpath to bridleway upgrades and new routes. It was thought we need to work better with neighbouring authorities on county boundaries. It was also thought there could be a better log of permissive routes, such as the Environment Agency's Jubilee River Network around Taplow and Dorney.

There have been some complimentary new routes along the highway verges, such as the route alongside the B489 Pitstone to Marseworth and A413 Aylesbury to Weedon, but vegetation maintenance of the latter has been limited.

**3.3** - Open access is marked on OS maps, but almost nothing has happened since the early days of the plan. Some site notices were posted in waterproof frames to advertise the extent and expected public behaviour, but little has happened after that time.

#### **THEME 4 – KNOWING WHERE TO GO**

We should seek greater community engagement, including Parish Councils, in the promotion of the use of PROW and Open Access Land in their locality.

Seek to add relevant and appropriate PROW promotional material from user groups and other organisations to the promotional downloads on the BCC website. It was recognised that this would require additional resources, possibly part of a Def Map Team Project Officer's role?

BCC to seek greater volunteer engagement to undertake surveys and practical works on the ground, but acknowledged volunteer time does not come free and that there would be staff and possibly financial resource implications (as per the previously successful Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme.

It was essential that the public could access information on line with regard to types of structures on any given PROW together with up to date details of any outstanding issues or problems that could affect the use of that route.

#### **General**

The LAF members acknowledged that all of the above and the successful delivery of the new ROWIP, especially objectives outside of the statutory requirements improvements/increased access to online information would be largely dependent upon securing the required staff resource and sufficient funding to achieve them.

#### **THEME 5 - LOOKING AFTER YOU AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

To be completed 7<sup>th</sup> NOV 2018

#### **THEME 6 – RIGHTS OF WAY FOR EVERYONE**

**6.1** - Seen as good work in this area, with impressive numbers of stiles removed, though some work has been ad hoc and not targeted strategically for route wide improvements. Not all gates have been suitable for the disabled. Acknowledged restrictions with site specific and types of gates preferred by landowners. Bucks doesn't benefit from the funding scheme run in Oxfordshire called the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment which targets routes and areas more strategically.

Communication, support and partnership working with the Chilterns Conservation Board and Chiltern Society has been good.

**6.2** - Nothing done for the visually impaired. The Chiltern Society run walks for people with Parkinson's Disease and for partially sighted, but BCC not aware. Partially sighted groups have not approached BCC with their needs or demands and nor has there been communication the other way. There was mention that some horse yards work with autistic people with great success, but they need bridleways to walk on.

The Chilterns Conservation Board were supported with their stile-free route initiative, but more recently whole areas have been made stile free, especially in

area so fteh Chilterns. Less so in the north, but the Rambers are making great progress in the last 2 years replacing stiles at a rate of one per week.

The Simply Walks Groups have been a great success, tackling loneliness, inactivity, and poor phsical and mental health.

**6.3** - No access for all route guides were produced, but some disabled access routes have been phsically made avaibale, such as at Ashridge, Ivinghoe Beacon, Rowsham and Coombe Hill. A suggestion was to classify the accessibility of routes for disabled access. There is no system yet avaibale to identify the lcoation of accessible gates on the network.

## **THEME 7 - DELIVERING THE CORPORATE AGENDA**

To be completed 7<sup>th</sup> NOV 2018

## **THEME 8 – WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

8.1 – Two AONB Management Plans have spanned the plan period 2008-2018, with a new AONB plan currently being consulted upon. BCC had particularly good involvement in the second of these two plans and embedded good planning advice in order to protect and enhance rights of way in light of the growing pressures on the AONB.

There has been good partnership working over the plan period to enhance accessibility.

8.2 – The Chiltern Society representative suggested there was an excellent network of volunteers doing great work, but this is not always well recorded in the LAF meeting updates (the Maintenance update sheet which records volunteer hours) or cover the work actually being undertaken, e.g. the Chiltern Society has a network of ‘footpath checkers’ whose work goes unrecorded.

It was thought that parishes might stimulate some volunteer effort through devolvment, but this hasn’t happened. The devolvment work being undertaken by parishes is patchy, e.g. they are being paid for work not being done.

Volunteers generally:

- volunteering from some specific interest groups is limited, e.g. cycling is not represented on the Local Access Forum and we’re not aware they do anything on the ground.
- It was thought there is a missed opportunity to use Chiltern Society volunteers processing work sheets or undertaking CAMS database work at county hall, pertinent to the Maintenance Team.
- Disabled routes could be better publicised, many are not even aware it exists in the countryside.
- We are not aware of the needs of the partially sighted – we need education on these matters to understand their needs.
- The National Trust undertakes mowing on rights of way on their land, using both paid staff and volunteers. This is not recorded.