

Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020 - 2030

YEAR-1 REVIEW

Introduction

This report aims to demonstrate progress to deliver the outcomes of the Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020 – 2030 in Year 1, between 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. There are six ROWIP themes reflected in this report, with respective sections headed by the stated aims in the ROWIP and Delivery Plan report. To begin, a retrospective interpretation of the estimated cost symbols in the Action Plan are provided.

Estimated costs

The Local Access Forum requested provision of a key of the ‘crystal ball’ and ‘walker’ symbols (financial estimates) in the Action Plan to aid public interpretation. How much money does one walker symbol represent? An estimation is provided below.

 < £8, 000

 £8,000 to £30,000

  *Unknown cost or needing additional staff time above existing staff resources.*

This information now needs updating on the document itself.

Theme 1 Mapping the network

The ROWIP states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions
MN1	To uphold our duties to provide an up-to-date Definitive Map and Statement.	MN1.1	Consolidate the Definitive Map and Statement by 2025.
		MN1.2	Reduce the number of map anomalies.
		MN1.3	Improve our online, publicly viewable, registers for DMMOs, PPOs and Landowner Deposits.
		MN1.4	Consider all applications for Public Path Orders, Definitive Map Modification Orders and Cycle Track Orders and determine these in line with any statutory timescales.
MN2	Keep an up-to-date register for Common Land and Town and Village Greens.	MN2.1	Consider all applications for Common Land and Village Green registrations in line with any statutory timescales.

The Year 1 Action Plan states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
MN1	To uphold our duties to provide an up-to-date Definitive Map and Statement.	MN1.3	Improve our online, publicly viewable mapping, registers for DMMOs, PPOs, TTROs, HS2 and EW Rail updates and Landowner Deposits.	Build upon Unitary “frontline” service provision and review public information provision. More time investment on making better use of CAMS web for Definitive Map matters.		Existing budgets	DM	Parish Councils LAF
		MN1.4	Consider all applications for Public Path Orders, Definitive Map Modification Orders and Cycle Track Orders and determine these in line with any statutory timescales.	Time track and programme process work. Keep under regular review and set targets. Upskill both junior Definitive Map Officers to increase capability.		Existing budgets	DM	Parish Councils Archives Ramblers BHS Chiltern Society

MN 1.1

The stated aim is to consolidate the definitive map by 2025 following the previous update in 2006. With staff resource returning to relative normal levels in 2022 this target should still be realistic.

MN 1.2

The aim is to reduce the number of map anomalies. A map anomaly is an incorrect recording on the definitive map based on historical evidence and/or information on the ground. The normal procedure is to undertake a quick, initial investigation of the anomalies as they arise. If it is clear the map is correct these are not logged. If any initial evidence suggests further work is required, for example, in the record centre/archives, the case is logged on a spreadsheet. None of these cases were resolved in Year-1, so this will need to be reviewed in Years 2-5 (2022-2025).

MN 1.3

CAMS (Countryside Access Management System) is the Geographical Information System [GIS] mapping and database software used daily by rights of way officers to receive and manage reports and raise job sheets. The system translates information almost immediately [within 20 minutes] to the council’s website from which the public gain access to information on their reports or the spatial extent of structures.

The CAMS database is updated daily. The system was brought on-stream in March 2019 prior to publication of the ROWIP. Reference MN 1.3 aims to build on the existing information available to the public with the additional tools provided by the software, but which are not currently in use on the website. Staff resource needed is to input, ‘cleanse’ and check the data is correct before appearing on the public-facing area of the website.

There was no staff time to invest in CAMS in Year-1, mainly as time was lost through staff redeployment on Covid-19-related work and managing existing PPO workloads. With an easing of staff pressures in 2022 this aim is predicted to be addressed in years 2-5.

Website information on: 1. landowner deposits; 2. modification orders; 3. public path orders (diversions); 4. temporary traffic regulation orders; and 5. traffic

prohibition orders; are updated on a weekly basis, with accompanying maps and provided via this web link:
<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/environment/public-rights-of-way/changes-to-public-rights-of-way/>

Extra data additional to 1-5 above could include access to historical PPO's and historical landowner deposits. The ambition for years 2-5 is to make these publicly available with maps.

Existing legislative obligations require the council to provide 1-5 above and it is considered this is being provided successfully. However, East West Rail (EWR) and High Speed 2 (HS2) will have widespread and significant negative impact on the ROW users in Years 1-6 of the ROWIP with long-term closures. Therefore, we've allocated an area of the website providing information on EWR and HS2 temporary closures as these are not always easily available on either EWR or HS2 websites in a clear and concise manner. Two additional items are therefore listed: 6. East West Rail closures; and 7. HS2 closures.

Existing landowner statements deposited under s31(6) are provided and updated on the website.

MN 1.4

Public Path Orders (PPO's) were delayed with staff re-deployed on Covid-19-related work, but the backlog is now up to date, meaning any application received is considered without undue delay. During the first Covid-19 lockdown, between 24th March and 31st July 2020, all PPOs were put on hold. There are currently 53 PPO's being progressed.

There is currently a backlog of Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO's). On 31st March 2021 there were 6 ongoing determined cases with 34 to be investigated. Work is taking place to reduce delay between receiving the application and either rejecting or determining applications. Covid-19 reduced access to the Records Office and restricted opportunities for wider public consultation on applications.

It's difficult to predict how many DMMOs can be determined per year as they vary significantly in complexity, but if fully staffed in 2022, it is hoped to increase the rate at which applications are brought forward for determination to perhaps around 8-10 per year.

With the above in mind, staff training has been targeted to considering and researching DMMO's. In Year-1 the LAF requested more condensed DMMO information to be presented at their meetings, providing more useful information to judge progress on dealing with DMMOs. This will be provided on 14th July 2021.

MN.2 Common land and Village Greens

MN 2.1

This area of work has low caseload numbers, but applications are complex, costly and time consuming. With all existing cases having undergone some investigation work in Year-1, there is no backlog between receiving the application and starting investigations. In March 2021 there were 4 live cases with one having been rejected in Year-1.

THEME 2 – Looking after the network - maintenance & enforcement

The ROWIP states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions
LN1	To protect the network and maintain it in the best condition possible, prioritising safety and areas of greatest need and seeking improvements where possible.	LN1.1	Review the management matrix so that it aligns more closely with Buckinghamshire's priorities, helps target resources more effectively and provides the public with realistic timescales to resolve issues.
		LN1.2	Adhere to and monitor performance against the timescales set out in the management matrix, reviewing outstanding issues on an annual basis. Periodically publish performance figures to the Local Access Forum.
		LN1.3	Publish the council Enforcement Policy, take enforcement action against illegal actions, work with enforcement partners and recover costs.
		LN1.4	Ensure effective and efficient working through delegating powers to officers to deliver functions, including serving enforcement notices.
		LN1.5	Support landowners through providing advice and information, waymarking materials and assistance for materials for removing structures.
		LN1.6	Work with National Trail Partnerships to ensure high quality maintenance.
		LN1.7	Ensure high standards of environmental protection in carrying out maintenance work.
LN2	To improve understanding of the network, its assets and its condition.	LN2.1	Carry out an annual survey of the condition of 5% the public rights of way network.
		LN2.2	Improve understanding of the condition and value of the assets on the network, update the record of assets in the CAMS database and work towards implementing an asset management system to forward plan budget requirements.
		LN2.3	Work with partners and volunteers to survey the condition of promoted routes.

The Year-1 Action Plan states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2021 – 2024	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
LN1	To protect the network and maintain it in the best condition possible, prioritising safety and areas of greatest need and seeking improvements where possible.	LN1.1	Consult LAF, ROW Liaison Group BHS and Management team annually to take advice on the effectiveness of the management matrix and annual capital programme so that it aligns more closely with Buckinghamshire's priorities, helps target resources more effectively and provides the public with realistic timescales to resolve issues.	Review effectiveness of current management matrix. (Project move to orange next phase)		Existing budgets	ROW OPS	Parish Councils Ramblers Chiltern Society BHS LAF TRF
LN2	To improve understanding of the network, its assets and its condition.	LN2.2	Improve understanding of the condition and value of the assets on the network, update the record of assets in the CAMS database and work towards implementing an asset management system to forward plan budget requirements.	Continue to carry out 6 year programme of inspections on known bridge structures and update details on CAMS. Move forward inspection programme and design new report outputs which reflect what is needed for any ROW Asset Management Plans (inc costs, replacement, life span/cycle etc)		Existing budgets	ROW OPS DM	Parish Councils Ramblers Chiltern Society BHS LAF TRF NFU CLBA

LN 1.1

This aim seeks to consult widely with partners on the effectiveness of the Management Matrix. <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/environment/public-rights-of-way/maintaining-public-rights-of-way/>

The Matrix table allows officers to prioritise reported issues between routes with high, medium or low use, against promoted route and the type of issues reported: from missing signposts in remote locations (low priority), to enforcement issues or problems that are risks to the public near urban populations (high priority). These set timescales which the team are expected to meet, and the matrix therefore allows performance to be measured. For example, '75% of Priority 1 issues were met in the required timescale' and so on. The matrix originated in the 2008 ROWIP and was reviewed by the Local Access Forum in 2016. At the time. LAF members requested that nothing was changed to ensure consistency of long-term performance trends, particularly, for example, not wishing to reduce target times so the performance remained consistent if resources happened to reduce.

A review of the Matrix's effectiveness and opportunities for improvement were due for review in Year-1, but this wasn't achieved, in part because the LAF didn't meet in July 2020 and the Rights of Way Liaison Group hasn't met since January 2020. Also, the greatest need in 2020 was to maintain and keep the network open, with an increased number of enforcement issues, when use of the network was unusually high, so other consultation work had to be pushed back. However, a review is proposed to be undertaken in the latter part of 2021 for consultation with the Local Access Forum and Rights of Way Liaison Group in 2022.

The annual capital programme is added to every liaison group and LAF agendas, outlining intended expenditure, accompanied by a summary of works completed. This was presented at September 2020 and March 2021 LAF meetings, but both ROWLG meetings were cancelled in Year-1.

LN 1.2.

The figures will be available to be presented to the LAF for Year-1 on 3rd November 2021. Performance for enforcement and maintenance are based around the Matrix, with two elements normally reported to LAF and ROWLG: Category C (maintenance) and how the council is meeting enforcement targets across categories A, B and C. This provides a snapshot to reflect the general picture. The Year-1 figures will be available at the 3rd November 2021 LAF.

It is likely that the figures would have been poor in Year-1 compared to previous years, as the works team were stood down in April/May 2020, then on returning, were restricted to reduced hours for some weeks. Officer site inspections were suspended, and team members were redeployed to the Covid-19 response. Volunteer teams also stood down based on their own decisions. Anecdotally, response rates to reported issues were much slower than in previous years.

LN.1.3

A new enforcement policy has been completed, to be available shortly on the website, and presented to the Local Access Forum on 14th July 2021.

The majority of enforcement in 2020/21 revolved around unlawful obstructions in the first Covid-19 lockdown. The government decided all rights of way should remain open, but some landowners chose to lock gates or erect barriers. For example, a request to close a footpath in Chalfont St Peter through the grounds of a care home for reasons relating to Covid-19 was refused.

Five enforcement notices were served in Year-1, including one case requiring Police attendance. Examples include two panels of Heras fencing removed in Hazlemere; boards removed against a kissing gate in Great Missenden; removal of several "Covid-19 KEEP OUT" signs, taking issue with landowners threatening people; and removing wooden pallets blocking two stiles in Stoke Mandeville on a railway crossing. Most obstructions are removed pre-enforcement through negotiation.

Officers worked with Chiltern Area planning enforcement partners in Year-1, for example, a bridleway along Dibden Hill, Chalfont St Giles needed reinstating after construction traffic damage. A 'construction traffic management plan' ensured the condition was returned to the original, pre-construction state, and the planning condition secured traffic routes to avoid vulnerable sections of bridleway.

LN1.4

Following the council becoming unitary on 1st April 2020, delegated powers were granted to senior officers to serve notice on owners that obstruct rights of way. The updated Rights of Way Enforcement policy explains the delegated powers, which includes a typical work-flow process. The policy was presented to the LAF in July 2021 and will be available on the website in Year-2.

LN 1.5

Advice to landowners from Area Officers continues daily through phone conversations, meetings and letters. The main route for distributing waymark discs is through volunteers, such as the Chiltern Society Area Secretaries and Path Checkers, but the council continues to support landowners with other signs to help manage access, for example, waymark discs, 'no cycling' signs and 'no dog mess' signs. An area of the website is devoted to advise for landowners.

The council continues to provide gates to the Ramblers volunteers to install at the rate of 1 per week; mainly in Aylesbury Vale, to replace stiles. In the south the council supports the Donate-a-Gate scheme and (also in the north) offers gates free to landowners willing to use their own labour to install. While the RIIPPLE team normally installs around 52 gates per year, this was reduced in Year-1 to 32 due to Covid-19 working restrictions.

LN 1.6

The team maintain good relations with and support from the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails teams and are guided by published national trail standards. In Year-1 no staff attended the Ridgeway Board or any Thames Path meetings. However, the Ridgeway officer benefited from attendance by the south Area Officer and LAF member for the British Driving Society at Delivery Group meetings. The council and LAF commented on the Wendover cycling audit, related to the Ridgeway Riding Route.

Larger works by the Ridgeway team in Year-1 have generally been in the planning stages, including surfacing at Bacombe Hill and Coombe Hill SSSI's. New pedestrian gates were completed by the council to support the Ridgeway team at Chequers (Ellesborough), Lodge Hill (Bledlow) and Whiteleaf (Princes Risborough). The Ridgeway and Thames Path volunteers undertake annual summer strimming and mowing to keep paths clear.

On the Thames Path one bridge structure was re-decked along Marlow Footpath 1 (MAW/1/1) compliant with disabled and Environment Agency standards. An additional surface repair in Little Marlow will be joint funded by Thames Path and council in Year-2.

LN 1.7

Ensuring high standards of environmental protection remains integral to daily work. Officers benefit from electronic mapping (GIS) layers to indicate sensitive wildlife and archaeology sites. Permission was obtained from Natural England in Year-1 to work on two Ridgeway sites: at Bacombe Hill (Wendover) and Lodge Hill (Bledlow). Two officers received training on ROW works requiring Environment Agency consent, which is sought for bridges across main rivers.

LN 2.1

In a normal year and with the help of volunteers from the Chiltern Society, the team would survey 5% of the network twice a year in May and November. Covid-19

restricted the May 2020 survey, but the November 2020 was completed and the results reported to the March 2021 LAF meeting.

LN 2.2

This aims to gather information onto a database of structures for which the council are responsible, which is called an asset management system. Armed with this information, and the predicted lifespan of each structure, the team can forward-plan costs more accurately to future demands, then bid for funding.

Bridge inspections were undertaken in Year-1, recording the type of bridge and condition. This bridge inspection system has continued for a number of years, similar to inspecting vehicular highway structures for insurance purposes and started early within the Ringway Jacobs maintenance contract.

To survey the whole network of bridge structures takes around 7 years. We don't currently have the technical engineering expertise to assess and price it up larger bridge structures but can estimate.

The council's online mapping software (CAMS) provides a full inventory of every bridge structure and intelligence is gathered and edited daily by officers. To this extent, the team are meeting the LN 2.2 Action Plan target.

The council should be able to price each bridge, signpost and waymark according to the CAMS inventory, together with contractor costs for replacement. Surfaces could also be included to evaluate depreciation, but much private work happens on the network to which the council is unaware. Stiles and gates should be included as the council sometimes repairs these structures on a *de facto* basis and funds replacement of stiles with gates to improve access.

At present there is no staff resource to compile an asset management system or make active decisions on prices.

Maintaining up-to-date information on CAMS that accurately reflects the situation on the ground is an issue. Surveys indicate out-of-date content including furniture, path issues and signage. While there will inevitably be changes on the ground to which the council are not always made aware, advice will be sought from the LAF in Year-2 seeking solutions to remedy the problem.

LN.2.3

The LAF member for the Chiltern Society has offered to start surveying 'The Chiltern Link' promoted route in Year-2. The ROWIP suggests reviewing which routes should continue to be formally promoted and this will inform future survey programmes.

THEME 3 – Theme 3 - An Evolving Network

The ROWIP states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions
EN1	To ensure that access improvements are strategically planned to meet Buckinghamshire's needs.	EN1.1	Work with partners to ensure that local and neighbourhood plans and green infrastructure strategies include a comprehensive assessment of access needs and contain robust policies to improve access for all users, ensuring that development has no detrimental impact and that access provision is improved.
		EN1.2	Progress strategic projects with partners where these address Buckinghamshire's needs.
EN2	To ensure that housing growth brings access improvements to communities.	EN2.1	Work with partners to ensure that high-quality, multi-user access improvements are sought and included in new development proposals.
		EN2.2	Develop and adopt access standards and specifications for routes in and arising from new developments through pre-application comments, requesting amended drawings, planning conditions and developer contributions through s.106. Officers will work alongside highways colleagues to secure on and off site works through s.38 and s278 Highways Act 1980.
EN3	To ensure that the network evolves to meet current and future needs and that connectivity is improved.	EN3.1	Develop projects with partners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve links from urban areas to the countryside; • Provide new and improved routes from urban areas to the countryside; • Connect missing links in the public rights of way network, reduce fragmentation and address areas where there is low provision and high need; • Create the highest status routes possible to provide resources for the widest range of users.
			EN3.2
		EN3.3	Improve and increase the network available to equestrians, carriage-drivers and motorised vehicle users, addressing fragmentation and improving safety.
		EN3.4	Support projects to increase walking and cycling for short journeys to reduce congestion, support health and wellbeing, reduce air pollution and support economic growth.
EN4	To ensure that negative impacts from major infrastructure are fully mitigated.	EN4.1	Work with partners and delivery agencies to ensure the effects of major infrastructure are fully mitigated, disruption to access is minimised and improvements secured.

The Year-1 Action Plan states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
EN1	To ensure that access improvements are strategically planned to meet Buckinghamshire's needs.	EN1.1	Work with partners and continue to build relationships with new Unitary Council staff to ensure that Local Plans neighbourhood plans and Green infrastructure strategies include a comprehensive assessment of access needs and contain robust policies to improve access for all users, ensuring that development has no detrimental impact and that access provision is improved.	Raise profile of Public Rights of Way and Definitive Map Teams with new colleagues.		Existing budgets, Developers, Partnerships	DM Area Planning Teams Highways DM Team	Community Boards Parish Councils Neighbouring Authorities LEP NEP Developers Chiltern Society
				Keep under review and cross reference existing and emerging plans and strategies to ensure the "ROW/Access thread" is always incorporated.				
		EN1.2	Progress strategic projects with partners where these address Buckinghamshire's needs.	Provide occasional training sessions for colleagues and other organisations so they understand PROW and Countryside Access.	 	Existing budgets, Developers, Partnerships	ROW OPS DM	Planning Teams National Trails EW Rail HS2 Oxford-Cambridge Development-
				Year 1-3 monitor emerging Local Plans in each of the old district authority areas and contribute to an emerging Buckinghamshire 'county-wide' Local Plan				
				"ROW/Access" check for opportunities in any strategic project.				
				Network with and establish working partnerships with delivery organisation.				
				Year 1-3 – maintain communication with Highways Projects Delivery Team to seek sustainable transport improvements on the rights of way network				Arc Highways England Neighbouring Authorities LEP NEP Developers

EN 1.1.

This item seeks to ensure access improvements are strategically planned, so development has no detrimental impact and access is improved. The 'Actions' mention local, neighbourhood and green infrastructure plans, but on reflection, should also have included the local transport plan and minerals & waste plan. The rights of way team, through the council's wider policy teams, could also influence central government policy, such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Each will be addressed in turn.

The start date for the ROWIP [1/4/20] and this Action Plan coincided with the council becoming a unitary authority, whereby all the text for respective local plans was already largely set within three local plans: 1) Aylesbury Vale, 2) Chiltern & South Bucks; and 3) Wycombe.

The 'Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VALP 2013-2033)' was eventually adopted on 15th September 2021, but even before this Action Plan came into force, rights of way had influenced the plan within Policy C4 which seeks enhancement and protection of public rights of way within new developments. This is considered a strong policy for rights of way, within which public transport, recreation, green infrastructure and links with the existing wider networks are mentioned.

In early 2021 consultation commenced on Aylesbury Garden Town's allocated housing areas AGT1 and AFT2. Right of way were closely involved in shaping both these housing designs. AGT-1 refers to 'South Aylesbury' on land either side of the Princes Risborough Railway line; while AGT2 refers to South-West Aylesbury, on land

between Ellen Road and HS2. Rights of Way were also closely engaged with sustainable transport elements of the South-East Aylesbury Link Road which runs north of AGT1, resulting in a new cycleway on both sides of the road, when initially only on side was proposed.

The draft Chiltern & South Bucks Local Plan was abandoned in favour of being replaced by an emerging county wide Buckinghamshire plan. The ROWIP Action Plan period 2021/22 will be a good time within which to start engaging with the council's strategic planning team to seek consultation on emerging plan policy, to improve upon existing Chiltern & South Bucks Policy...

Rights of way planning responses for Chiltern refer to Policy CS20, aiming to "*achieve developments well-connected to walking facilities, with good access to community recreational space and easily accessible for all*"; which is less specific to rights of way and could be improved upon.

Rights of way planning responses for South Bucks refer to Policy CP7, aiming to "*ensure the development complies with South Bucks District Council Policy, seeking to favour more sustainable modes of transport; and encouraging safe and attractive improvements to pedestrian and cycling routes and facilities*"; which is less specific to rights of way and could be improved upon.

Requests for specific inclusion within the general Wycombe Local Plan policy were not included, which was disappointing, so rights of way responses have to refer to Policy DM33 - managing climate change [sustainable modes of transport] - and Policy DM34 Delivering Green Infrastructure (GI), though the thrust this policy is biodiversity, rather than the access element of GI networks. Nevertheless, useful rights of way and access policy was included into site-specific statements, such as the housing development at Hollands Farm, Bourne End, seeking wider connections to the existing network, and surface and status upgrades to on-site rights of way.

While the rights of way team were not consulted during the 2019 Minerals & Waste Local Plan 2016-2036 [adopted July 2019] review, the policy includes a strong protection for rights of way in Policy 24 – Environmental Enhancement. This may, in part, have been carried forward from the previous strategy. The 2016-2036 plan extends to 2036, so it's unlikely any further opportunities [or need] will arise to shape policy in this area during the lifetime of this ROWIP [2020 – 2030].

National Policy NPPF 2021 provides a reasonable hook at paragraph 100: *Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks; and highways policy is also helpful in NPPF for enhancing walking and cycling.*

During Year-1 the NPPF was not updated, though rights of way team were not invited to comment prior to the February 2019 or July 2021 updates, both outside the Year-1 period. As a result of this review the Strategic Planning Team to ensure

rights of way are consulted to ensure rights of way are consulted with any future NRRF or any other strategy review by Buckinghamshire council or central government.

There is a county-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy (2009) and Aylesbury Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy 2011 – 2026. There were no opportunities to engage in shaping policy in this area in Year-1.

Many neighbourhood plans emerged in Year-1. However, there was limited resource to engage specifically on every plan, so only 5 specific responses were provided. However, generic advice was provided for the strategic planning team to include in some form into every neighbourhood plan. Rights of way occur in every neighbourhood and every community would wish to protect and improve upon the resource.

No training sessions were provided to colleagues in Year-1, but the rights of way team maintain good contacts and 'visibility' across the council to ensure the team are consulted on all planning applications and strategy reviews and updates.

Good relations have been established with Highways Development Management Delivery. This team oversees developer works secured through s.38 and s278 Highways Act 1980 Agreements for new developments. These include new surfaced footpaths and new highway junctions, for example. The rights of way team are made aware of and can influence these works to ensure good outcomes for walkers and cyclists in particular.

Overall, there were no opportunities in the Year-1 period to shape general local plan policy, but site-specific consultations were influenced, such as Aylesbury Garden Town housing sites and a number of neighbourhood plans. Opportunities now lie with the evolving county-wide Buckinghamshire Local Plan and with the larger housing developments in Years 2-5.

The ROWIP states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions
KG1	Support the objectives of the National Trails Partnerships	KG1.2	Continue to support the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails partnership boards and working groups. Provide pro-rata financial support alongside other neighbouring authorities towards the Trails' core funding and promotion. Work in partnership with the Trails teams to meet national guidance objectives on Trail standards.
KG2	To provide promotional material that is easy to access.	KG2.1	Identify those existing promoted routes which meet the priorities identified and update the promotional material.
		KG2.2	Improve how the public can access promotional material – improve the online platform for downloadable information and work with partners to improve the reach and co-ordination of promotion.
KG3	To provide new promotional resources which support the identified needs for the county.	KG3.1	Work with partners and representative organisations to understand more fully the needs of those with mobility and visual impairments and develop promotional material which gives enough information for these users to explore public rights of way, including different formats such as audio resources.
		KG3.2	Develop new promotional material close to urban areas which links the town with the countryside, including areas of housing growth, working with partners and seeking funding as necessary.
		KG3.3	Provide information and promotional material to support equestrians, cyclists and motor vehicle users.
		KG3.4	Work with partners and representative organisations to understand more fully the needs of minority ethnic communities and develop promotional material to support greater use of the countryside.
KG4	To support the visitor economy through promotion.	KG4.1	Work with partners and support measures which limit or mitigate negative impacts from visitors on sensitive sites.
		KG4.2	Work with partners to fully capitalise on Buckinghamshire's public rights of way asset to support the visitor economy – targeting new markets, attracting spend to rural business, increasing lengths of stay and strengthening Buckinghamshire's brand.

The Year-1 Action Plan states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
KG1	Support the objectives of the National Trails Partnerships	KG1.2	Continue to support the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails partnership boards and working groups. Provide pro-rata financial support alongside other neighbouring authorities towards the Trails' core funding and promotion. Work in partnership with the Trails teams to meet national guidance objectives on Trail standards.	<p>Maintain financial support for joint project work and annual management costs which provides access benefits and generation of tourist income in Buckinghamshire.</p> <p>Maintain close links at officer level on maintenance matters. Consider input to promotional work and audience development.</p> <p>Have close links; attend management meetings and regular contact with all Local Authorities and Partners along these National Trails.</p> <p>Year 1-3 work alongside Chilterns Conservation Board and Ridgeway Officer to deliver additional mitigation spending from HS2 in the Chilterns</p>		Existing budgets, Grants, Partnerships, Volunteers	ROW OPS DM	National Trails Chiltern Society Chilterns Conservation Board Parish Councils LAF

KG1.2

The Ridgeway and Thames Path national Trail Teams are financially supported *pro rata* by length from authorities along the route. Buckinghamshire maintained its financial support to both national trails teams in 2020/21.

Officers from the council attended meetings of the Ridgeway Board and Working Group but were not able to similarly support Thames Path due to limited staff capacity. Conversely, officers organised for the Ridgeway Officer to seek Local Access Forum advice on: 1) their emerging Ridgeway bridleway; 2) the strategic links project from towns to the trail; and 3) the circular walks policy.

Priority for maintenance issues on the national trails remains in the 'Priority 1'.

In terms of improvements, the council supported the Ridgeway Officer by funding six disabled access gates on the national trail; and contributed towards their HS2 additional mitigation bid for works at Coombe Hill.

THEME 5 – Access for Everyone

The ROWIP states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions
AE1	To support more people with disabilities in using the public rights of way network.	AE1.1	Seek to create routes with high levels of accessibility, working with partners to deliver and seek funding, and provide promotional material.
		AE1.2	Adhere where possible to BS5709: 2018 standards for new infrastructure and develop path maintenance schedules through the management matrix (see Theme 2) to ensure least restrictive access. Apply BS5709: 2018 to new or diverted routes.
		AE1.3	Continue to remove stiles and replace with gaps, gates or kissing gates and support communities and user groups to achieve this aim. Explore ways to seek removal of structures where livestock is no longer present. Actions AE2.1 and AE2.2 also help to deliver the objective AE1.
AE2	To support improved health and wellbeing.	AE2.1	Work with the council's Public Health Team to support Simply Walk, providing easily accessible routes and prioritising maintenance requests relating to health walk routes.
		AE2.2	Remove barriers and restrictive infrastructure, including retro-fitting existing structures to ensure maximum accessibility, for example widening bridges to 1.2m and ramping steps. Prioritise these improvements along busy routes and those close to urban areas. Actions AE1.1 to AE1.3 also help to deliver the objective AE2.
AE3	To support more people from under-represented groups to use public rights of way and visit the countryside.	AE3.1	Support partners working with minority ethnic groups to understand barriers to accessing public rights of way and develop projects to increase use. All other actions in this section will also help to deliver objective AE3.

The Year-1 Action Plan states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
AE1	To support more people with disabilities in using the public rights of way network.	AE1.2	Adhere where possible to BS5709: 2018 standards for new infrastructure and develop path maintenance schedules through the management matrix (see Theme 2) to ensure least restrictive access. Apply BS5709: 2018 to new or diverted routes.	Review and update structures processes and work practices to include latest BS5709:2018 standards. Always apply least restrictive access standards to PROW decision making, applications and maintenance matters. Advice and guidance on website for landowners/farmers and applicants		Existing budgets, Development, Donations	ROW OPS DM	Disabled Access Groups LAF Chiltern Society Simply Walks Parish Councils Town Councils Ramblers BHS TRF
		AE1.3	Continue to remove stiles and replace with gaps, gates or kissing gates and support communities and user groups to achieve this aim. Explore ways to seek removal of structures where livestock is no longer present.	Review of PROW infrastructure assets. Map and identify those accessibility structures and those no longer required or could be improved.	  	Existing budgets, Development, , Volunteers IT improvement /modernisation budgets	ROW OPS	Disabled Access Groups LAF Simply Walks Parish Councils Town Councils Ramblers Chiltern Society BHS TRF IT Exegesis (CAMS) Other authorities best

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
								practice
			Actions AE2.1 and AE2.2 also help to deliver the objective AE1.					
			Actions AE1.1 to AE1.3 also help to deliver the objective AE2.					
AE3	To support more people from under-represented groups to use public rights of way and visit the countryside.	AE3.1	Support partners working with minority ethnic groups to understand barriers to accessing public rights of way and develop projects to increase use.	Look to user needs analysis produced for this RoWIP. Identify knowledge gaps and under representation. Involve LAF and Simply Walks Team in outreach programme for hard to reach groups to understand their access needs. Implement pilot projects to produce new promotional materials and actively get people on the PROW network		Existing budgets, Partnerships	ROW OPS DM	Inclusion and equalities team Community Forum LAF Parish Councils Town Councils
			All other actions in this section will also help to deliver objective AE3.					

AE 1.2

BS 5708 2018 has been included in all public path diversions and permissions for new gates under s147 Highways Act 1980. Guidance for both applications has been updated and is available on the website. The council applies the least restrictive hierarchy to new structures, for example, no permission is granted for gates on arable fields or on land where stock control is not required. The council does allow non-standard kissing gates [for example, the 'Woodstock pedestrian gate' from the Centrewire range] where the structure being replaced is a stile as access has been improved. The council requires landowners to repair damaged stiles and gates, though some repairs to gates as part of the Chilterns and North Bucks Donate-a-gate schemes have been repaired by the council.

While the ROWIP does set a specific target in this chapter, 123 stiles were removed April 2020 to March 2021 to facilitate easy access: replaced with gaps [22], kissing gates [39] and pedestrian gates [62]. There were 118 stiles replaced in 2018/19, so the achievement is consistent, and officers will continue to reduce the number of structures, whether gates or stiles.

AE 1.3

A review of infrastructure assets was not undertaken in this year. This could be a reasonably simple process by 'running a report' in the CAMS spreadsheet to identify the numbers of each infrastructure assets. As this chapter covers accessibility, the likely structures to review are pedestrian gates, kissing gates, stiles and bridges [width and steps or ramps].

CAMS provides the public and council with an ability to identify precise locations of structures on the network via the interactive map, namely gaps, gates, kissing gates and stiles. However, it's not possible for disabled users to identify between a BS 5709 2018 compliant kissing gate and a non-compliant kissing gate, for example, between a RADAR operated Large Mobility Woodstock and a Woodstock Kissing gate. This may be possible to pick up in Years 1-3 depending on CAMS being adapted

or addressed in other ways, such as expanding Google Streeview. A much larger piece of work is to identify those structures no longer required or could be removed and this would seem unachievable in one year. It seems likely this will need to be a program through the 10-year lifetime of the plan.

AE 3.1

Recruitment of under-represented groups onto the Local Access Forum has been an ambition for many years. Some attempts were made this year, though young people remain hard to reach. This will need to be carried-over into future programmes in partnership with the Simply Walks team, Chilterns Conservation Board and National Trails.

THEME 6 – Effective Delivery

The ROWIP states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions
KG1	Support the objectives of the National Trails Partnerships	KG1.2	Continue to support the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails partnership boards and working groups. Provide pro-rata financial support alongside other neighbouring authorities towards the Trails' core funding and promotion. Work in partnership with the Trails teams to meet national guidance objectives on Trail standards.
KG2	To provide promotional material that is easy to access.	KG2.1	Identify those existing promoted routes which meet the priorities identified and update the promotional material.
		KG2.2	Improve how the public can access promotional material – improve the online platform for downloadable information and work with partners to improve the reach and co-ordination of promotion.
KG3	To provide new promotional resources which support the identified needs for the county.	KG3.1	Work with partners and representative organisations to understand more fully the needs of those with mobility and visual impairments and develop promotional material which gives enough information for these users to explore public rights of way, including different formats such as audio resources.
		KG3.2	Develop new promotional material close to urban areas which links the town with the countryside, including areas of housing growth, working with partners and seeking funding as necessary.
		KG3.3	Provide information and promotional material to support equestrians, cyclists and motor vehicle users.
		KG3.4	Work with partners and representative organisations to understand more fully the needs of minority ethnic communities and develop promotional material to support greater use of the countryside.
KG4	To support the visitor economy through promotion.	KG4.1	Work with partners and support measures which limit or mitigate negative impacts from visitors on sensitive sites.
		KG4.2	Work with partners to fully capitalise on Buckinghamshire's public rights of way asset to support the visitor economy – targeting new markets, attracting spend to rural business, increasing lengths of stay and strengthening Buckinghamshire's brand.

The Year-1 Action Plan states...

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
ED1	Develop better partnerships with new and existing partners to improve service delivery.	ED1.1	Work with new partners to deliver shared priorities in green infrastructure, health and wellbeing, the economy and visitor economy and active travel.	<p>Seek out new and existing Partners and take advantage of new opportunities as they arise of new links and dynamics arising from the new Unitary Authority (Political and Operational) and the Devolution Project.</p> <p>Carry out a stakeholder analysis of who the players/officers are for each theme and forge relationships.</p>		Existing budgets, Parish and Town Council, Local businesses, Development, Partnerships, Volunteers	DM	Planning Highways Transport Walking and Cycling LAF Public Health Simply Walks Local Business National Infrastructure Developers Colne Valley Regional Park Developers Community Forum National Trails Chilterns Society

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
		ED1.5	Work with Parish and Town Councils to understand their concerns and support those with devolved responsibilities as necessary.	<p>Review and keep accurate records on Parishes with devolved responsibilities.</p> <p>Have clear memoranda of understanding on devolved responsibilities in respect of ROW with any devolved parishes.</p>		Existing budgets, Parish and Town Councils	ROW OPS	Parish Councils Town Council Community Forum LAF
		ED1.7	Support the Local Access Forum and ensure membership continues to be from a wide range of organisations.	<p>Provide secretariat and facilitate the Local Access Forum.</p> <p>Ensure recruitment to LAF maintains a balance of interests and involves new or under represented user.</p> <p>Maintain relevance of the Local Access Forum as a consultee and group monitoring the ROWIP, ensuring 3 meetings per year. Produce an annual report for Natural England each year of the ROWIP.</p>		Existing budgets, Partnerships	DM & ROW OPS	LAF Community Form Disabled Access Forum NFU CLBA Ramblers BHS TRF Chiltern Society
ED2	Maximise the efficiency of the service.	ED2.1	Work with partners to secure grant funding for projects which improve access.	Network with Transport Strategy Team and other partners to have regular		Existing budgets, Partnerships,	DM	Strategic partners Community

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
				<p>horizon scanning for funds to improve access particularly from Government funded Transport projects such as Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans..</p> <p>Look to new partners who might arise through Strategic Programmes or Economic Partnerships.</p>		Grants		Forum LAF Natural England National Lottery Parish Councils Town Councils LEP
		ED2.2	Work with developers and local planning authorities to seek contributions to deliver the access needs arising from new development (see also Theme 3: An Evolving Network, objective EN2)	<p>Maintain an Access opportunities funding list using intelligence gained from working with partners and developers.</p> <p>Raise awareness of PROW and Access with developers and planning colleagues.</p>		Existing budgets, Development	DM	Strategic partners Community Forum LAF Natural England National Lottery Parish Councils Town Councils LEP Developers Local business
		ED2.3	Annual review of schedule of fees and charges and publicise on the council's website.	<p>Annual review of fees and charges.</p> <p>Update website as required.</p> <p>Monitor impact of Unitary</p>		Existing budgets	DM	Internal Partners Community Forum Local business LAF

Ref	Objectives	Ref	Actions	Actions 2020 – 2021	Estimated Cost	Funded	PROW Team	Partner Organisations
				changes				
ED3	Deliver a customer focused service.	ED3.1	Provide an online and accessible rights of way reporting system, ensuring the customer receives feedback and monitoring our responses.	<p>Make full use of CAMS web and develop more customised reports to present data.</p> <p>Share reports on a regular basis with LAF and Council.</p>		Existing budgets	ROW OPS & DM	Internal Partners Community Forum Local business LAF

ED 1.1

Working with new partners to deliver shared priorities has been a main focus in Year 1. Some of the key successes in this regard have been as follows:

[a] Meeting with the developer at Oakley Airfield for an autonomous car test track resulted in proposals which improve the bridleway network for Worminghall residents by creating a new link.

[b] Liaising with Projects Team colleagues to shape the planning application diversions and access improvements around the South-East Aylesbury Link Roads. Following rights of way input, the scheme was improved to include segregated cycleways on both carriageways; short-cut, stepped access for the able bodied including wheeling ramps for bikes; and disabled access ramps from the adjoining AGT-1 developments.

[c] Co-ordination of diversion applications with Greenways and Cycleways Ltd to align rights of way with the Waddesdon Greenway, in consultation with Ramblers and Open Spaces Society.

[d] Meeting and advising the Little Marlow Gravel Pits volunteers to create a new permissive path.

[e] Taking a robust stance on applications that threaten negative impacts on the rights of way network, but always suggesting to workable alternatives to developers. These include the allocated housing site at Marlow (alternative diversion), the model aircraft strip at Lane End (removing flying areas above the footpath), and storage unit complex at High Heavens, Great Marlow (widening the footpath width from 2m to 6m).

ED1.5

We regularly field enquiries and concerns from Parish Council representatives and work to resolve local disputes relating to public rights of way. One of example of this is through co-ordination with Colne Valley Regional Park and Iver Parish Council where we have gained support for improved access around Pinewood, seeking the best outcome for residents.

ED 1.7

Due to the disruption to public meetings caused by COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, the Local Access Forum was only able to meet on two occasions in this first year of

the ROWIP. These meetings took place on 23rd September 2020 and 3rd March 2021, utilising Microsoft Teams to allow participants to meet virtually. As an independent body the LAF was unchanged the new unitary authority of Buckinghamshire Council coming into being on 1st April 2020.

The LAF was consulted on The Aylesbury Garden Town Project, with the headline project being the Gardenway, Greenways, and the Buckinghamshire Gemstone Cycling Routes. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030 was presented to the LAF in September 2020 and warmly received, followed by the Action Plan in the March 2021 meeting. High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) and East-West Rail (EWR) have commenced construction and the LAF will be an important forum through which to discuss access issues. The LAF heard how COVID-19 had affected the ability of volunteers and work crews to maintain the public rights of way network in Buckinghamshire and shared useful advice and learning from member organisations on how they have managed the restrictions.

The LAF challenged the council on the progress tackling the backlog of Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs). Additional staff have been recruited. However, the high number of applications caused by the Ramblers' *'Don't Lose Your Way'* Campaign and similar initiatives by the British Horse Society has caused the backlog to increase.

The LAF membership numbers remain stable, and we were happy to welcome two additional members this year [Cllr N Naylor and Cllr A Turner]. We continue to benefit from a broad range of expertise and organisations represented through our membership. We will endeavour to recruit members from more diverse backgrounds and perspectives as candidates become available. With the significantly increased usage and interest in the countryside a silver lining to the global pandemic, we hope that more people will be inspired to join the LAF.

ED 2.1

We continue to encourage internal consultation on strategic development planning and collaborate and share opportunities to secure funding for projects to improve access. Examples of this in the first year of the ROWIP are as follows.

[a] Attending Aylesbury Garden Town Masterplan workshops in order to raise the profile of rights of way and access projects; contributed to shaping the evolving Garden Way project;

[b] Advising on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Aylesbury.

ED 2.2

Section 106 funding has been secured for key developments that will improve access to the countryside across Buckinghamshire. This remains a key focus of the Strategic Access Officer when responding to planning applications. These range from relatively small improvements to ensure the public right of way remains convenient to large

residential developments that dramatically alter the PROW network. A selection is included below:

[a] 2km of new public bridleway secured in perpetuity by negotiation in the s.106 Agreement as part of the M25 Service Station, Chalfont St Peter, initially proposed as permissive;

[b] Inclusion of a Buckingham Park to Berryfields Cycleway as part of Section 106 contributions.

[c] £421,000 of on-site and off-site surfacing works to footpaths and bridleways around the Ashwells development, Chepping Wycombe;

[d] £398,000 worth of Breedon gravel bridleway surfacing and cycleway rubber crumb surfacing works secured as part of the M25 Service Station, Chalfont St Peter

[e] £12,750 of tarmac footpath at the 12-dwelling site, Clifton Road Worminghall

f] £16,500 of tarmac footpath at the 8-dwelling site, Duke's Close, Shabbington

[h] £294,500 of footpath and bridleway improvements on Land at Ashwell Field, Cock Lane, Tyler's Green

UD 2.3

We have published the updated fees and charges for 2021/2022 on our website on our homepage <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/environment/countryside-and-public-rights-of-way/public-rights-of-way/changes-to-the-rights-of-way-network/>

ED 3.1

We continue to maintain CAMS Web and the public are able to access this free of charge at <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/environment/countryside-and-public-rights-of-way/public-rights-of-way/view-the-online-rights-of-way-map/>

There is a reporting function on CAMS Web which alerts us to various issues that need addressing on the public rights of way network, most commonly issues with overgrowth and broken gates and stiles, but often other enforcement issues such as encroachment or obstruction. This allows us to categorise and prioritise our resources effectively and reduces the necessity for inspections in some cases.