

## **WSLAF 19 April 2023– Agenda Item 4**

### **West Sussex County Council Public Rights of Way Service Annual Report 2022**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report contains the annual progress report for the Public Rights of Way team within Countryside Services setting out our achievements on the network and customer service data during the 2022 calendar year.
- 1.2 With over 4,000km of Public Rights of Way (PROW) to maintain across West Sussex the PROW team provide an important service to the residents and visitors of West Sussex. Our responsibilities include maintaining the path surface, negotiating improvements with landowners and working closely with key stakeholders to help support key corporate objectives. The service is supported by considerable input from volunteers who both assist with path inspections and practical tasks across the network.

#### **2. Customer Service**

- 2.1 A major element of our service is handling a high volume of enquiries from path users and other parties with 805 calls answered through the Customer Service Centre in relation to PROW. Significantly more reports are received directly either through email or via our on-line web form.
- 2.2 Between reports from the public and other stakeholders and inspections findings 3,570 issues were logged onto our database in 2022 (4,002 in 2021), while 3,724 issues were resolved in the same period (3,824 in 2021).

#### **3. Routine Maintenance**

- 3.1 We continued to deliver our 15-month inspection and maintenance programme During 2022 our routine maintenance contractor, County Tree Surgeons, amongst other works, delivered:
  - 1,154 signs;
  - 144 bridges;
  - 8 boardwalks;
  - 41 flights of steps; and
  - 48km of surface vegetation clearance.
- 3.2 2022 saw 105 other items of work ranging from handrails, small surfacing and culverts works along with some stile and gate works and tree clearance where we haven't been able to get hold of the landowner.
- 3.3 This is a good opportunity to thank our routine maintenance contractor, County Tree Surgeons, for the flexibility and quick response times to ad hoc work required to keep the network safe and accessible.
- 3.4 A new routine maintenance contract begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 and County Tree Surgeons were successful in retaining it and will continue to deliver this work.

3.5 We also undertook our annual summer clearance programme, separately from the routine maintenance programme, where 336km of surface vegetation was cleared.

#### **4. Volunteers**

4.1 Our inspections continue to be greatly assisted by Parish Path Inspector Volunteers working with our local Access Rangers to inspect every path every 15 months, on a parish-by-parish basis. Our Volunteer Rangers also get their hands dirty with a variety of practical works to supplement our maintenance programme and add extra value across the county. During 2022 our Volunteer Rangers delivered:

- 8,200m of vegetation clearance;
- 28 tonnes of Type 1 stone used to improve surfaces;
- 6 new plank crossings and four repaired;
- 10 bridges new 5m and over and 2 refurbished;
- 51m of boardwalk installed;
- 70 steps installed;
- 36 fallen trees cleared; and
- 24 fingerposts installed or repaired.

4.2 This totalled 3546 hours given by the volunteers over 60 task days.

4.3 In addition, we continue to rely on the active volunteer group in Horsted Keynes working in partnership with WSCC. They carry out much PROW maintenance and improvement work within the parish, including sign installation and repair, vegetation clearance and replacing stiles with kissing gates.

4.4 We are again grateful for the continued support of many individuals who give their time free of charge to the PROW surface and the team who support the volunteers work from office staff through to the Access Rangers and Volunteer Coordinator.

#### **5. Gates for Stiles**

5.1 The PROW team continue to improve access by offering gates to replace existing stiles across the network, due to the restrictive nature of stiles for some users.

5.2 During 2022 we provided 23 gates to landowners, with the agreement that they install the structure and maintain it in the future as they would with other structures on their land. This number is down 47% from last year, but we are reliant on landowner agreement to this change and we will continue to try to bring about access improvements by this means throughout 2023.

#### **6. Capital Works Programme**

6.1 As part of the annual Capital Works Programme during 2022 we replaced/repared 8 bridges and any associated works, including bank stabilisation and drainage improvements. This Programme also included

design of 5 further bridges scheduled for replacement during the 2023/24 Capital Programme.

- 6.2 Further to this a Capital Surface Programme was undertaken totalling over 3.41km of improvements on the network, including drainage and surface improvement works on the Downs Link in Itchingfield and surface improvements in Ashington, Bolney, Hassocks, Slinfold and Southwater.
- 6.3 Some works have been carried over to the 2023/24 Capital Programme due to them not being able to be completed for a number of reasons. These include bridge replacement works in Billingshurst and completion of repair works to Old Shoreham Toll Bridge in Shoreham.
- 6.4 We also undertook improvements to FP13c in Hassocks this year in partnership with the local Parish Council who assisted by contributing funds toward the project.
- 6.5 The Programme for 2022/23 is shown below:

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Path No.</b>	<b>Description / Location of Works</b> # some aspect slipped to 2023/24	<b>Budget /Funding Stream*</b>
Angmering	FP2160	Bridge replacement works. - Bridge is located on Public Footpath 2160 just north of the A259 & west of Rustington Golf Course.	£15,700 LHMB
Ashington	FP2611	Surface & drainage improvement works - Footpath runs between Church Close and Malthouse Lane.	£12,200 ITB
Billingshurst/ Wisborough Green	FP780/1	Bridge replacement works - Bridge is located on Public Footpath 780/1, west of Lee Place Farm. # Delivery slipped to 23/24	£400,000 LHMB
Balcombe	FP26Ba	Bridge/boardwalk design works - Footpath runs southwards from Boundary Road into Walk Wood. # Design slipped to 23/24	£17,000 LHMB
Bolney	FP37Bo	Surfacing & drainage improvement works - Footpath runs south off Cross Colwood Lane.	£5,500 LHMB
Colgate	FP1697/1	Bridge repair works - Bridge is located on Public Footpath 1697/1 south of Grouselands Farm.	£5,500 LHMB
Cowfold	BW1730	Bridge design works - Bridge is located on Public Bridleway 1730 south-west of Lower Barn Farm. # Design slipped to 23/24	£8,000 LHMB
Crawley	FP1541	Bridge replacement works - Bridge is located on Public Footpath 1541, west of Rusper Road, Ifield. # Delivery slipped to 23/24	£30,000 LHMB
Fernhurst	FP1096	Bridge repair works - Bridge is located on Public Footpath 1096 west of Hoewyck Farm.	£38,000 LHMB
Hassocks	FP13C	Surface & drainage improvement works - Footpath runs north of Coldharbour Farmhouse, New Way Lane, Hurstpierpoint.	£5,600 LHMB & PC

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Path No.</b>	<b>Description / Location of Works</b> # some aspect slipped to 2023/24	<b>Budget /Funding Stream*</b>
Hassocks	BW15C	Surface & drainage improvement works - Bridleway runs south from Underhill Lane, Clayton up onto the South Downs.	£5,500 LHMB
Henfield	FP2390	Bridge design works - Bridge is located on FP2390 North of Shiprods, Wheatsheaf Road, Henfield.	£10,000 LHMB
Horsham	FP1663	Bridge design & repair works - Bridge is located on Public Footpath 1663, west of Fordingbridge Close.	£6,500 LHMB
Itchingfield	BW3569	Surface & drainage improvement works - Downs Link -Bridleway runs between Baystone Bridge and the A264	£18,0000 LHMB
Kirdford	BW614	Surface & drainage improvement works - Path is located south-west of Wisborough Green, just north of the A272. # Remedial works slipped to 23/24	£19,225 LHMB
Rusper	FP1492	Drainage and path revetment design works - Area of revetment & drainage works on Public Footpath 1492 in Horsegills Wood, Rusper. # Design slipped to 23/24	£10,000 LHMB
Shoreham by Sea	BW2048/1	Bridge repairs - Old Shoreham Tollbridge. # Part delivery slipped to 23/24	£15,200 LHMB
Slinfold	FP1440/1	Surface & drainage improvement works - Footpath runs south-east of Rowfold Farm, Slinfold.	£11,000 LHMB
Southwater	BW1662	Surface & drainage improvement works - Bridleway runs between Worthing Road and Two Mile Ash Road.	£34,000 ITB
West Dean	BW455	Bridge Design Works - Bridleway runs eastwards from the A286. # Design slipped to 23/24	£8,000 LHMB

\* LHMB – Local Highways Maintenance Block; ITB – Integrated Transport Block; PC – Parish Council

## **7. England Coast Path**

7.1 Progress on the England Coast Path (ECP) is on-going. There is a small section of the ECP from the County's eastern border to the River Adur which has been open since 19/05/22. Works are largely complete on the next stretch of the ECP from Shoreham to West Wittering. All the signage and minor improvement works are done with one large surfacing project remaining to be complete in Sidlesham. Once this is complete, this stretch of the ECP can be opened by Defra (forecasted for end of summer 2023). The remaining ECP, from West Wittering to the Hampshire border, still resides with the Secretary of State for approval, however the WSCC ECP Project Officer is collaborating with the relevant stakeholders in this area to represent the interests of the ECP and coastal access whilst we await approval of the route.

7.2 The Project Officer is also undertaking planning and research work to prepare WSCC for the management of the ECP once it is all opened.

## **8. Planning**

8.1 During 2022 WSCC's PRow team received 350 requests for PRow comments (including any re-consultations) on planning applications. These range from small scale planning applications for items such as extensions or new garages where PRow are nearby to large scale developments involving multiple residential or commercial units immediately impacting the PRow network.

Nick Scott, WSCC Principal Rights of Way Officer