

**WSLAF 4 May 2022– Agenda Item 4**

**West Sussex County Council Public Rights of Way Service**

**Annual Report 2021**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report contains an 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 2021 calendar year. 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.
- 1.2 2021 has continued to be a challenging year for the service, both due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with staff continuing to work from home wherever possible, and staff changes. As things stand, we currently have 1.6 Access Rangers posts vacant, which has put pressure across the team, but are hoping to have these posts filled in the near future.

**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 1,301 calls received through the Customer Service Centre in relation to PROW. This is a decrease of approx. 24% from last year.
- 2.2 Along with other reports from the public and other stakeholders, as well as issues identified during routine inspections, this has generated 4,002 issues that were logged onto our database in 2021 (3,866 in 2020). 3,824 issues were resolved in the same period (3,176 in 2020).

**3. Routine Maintenance**

- 3.1 We continued to deliver our 15-month inspection and maintenance programme as much as possible, but inspections were paused for a month in February to allow our routine maintenance contractor to catch up following COVID related delays. During 2021 our routine maintenance contractor, County Tree Surgeons, amongst other works, delivered:
  - 1,356 signs
  - 139 bridges
  - 5 boardwalks
  - 51 flights of steps
  - Just under 28km of surface vegetation clearance.
- 2.3 2021 saw a significant increase in the amount of out of cycle maintenance works carried out by County Tree Surgeons. We are grateful to them for being flexible and accommodating to be able to respond swiftly, in particular

carrying out bridge repairs and tree safety works where the landowner could not be traced.

- 2.4 We also undertook our annual summer clearance programme, separately from the routine maintenance programme, where 339km 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 at least every 15 months, on a parish-by-parish basis.
- 4.2 Usually our volunteers also get their hands dirty with a variety of practical works to supplement our maintenance programme and add extra value across the county. Volunteer tasks days resumed in April 2021 and the volunteers delivered:
- 4,185m of vegetation clearance
  - 31 tonnes of Type 1 stone laid on surfaces of PROW
  - 10 x 5+6m bridges installed and 1 x plank crossing
  - 74m (over 5 sites) of boardwalk installed
  - 140m of revetments installed
  - 20 x fallen trees cleared
  - 13 new or repaired signs

This totalled 3,033 volunteer hours over 57 task days.

- 4.3 In addition, we have an 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 service.

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

- 5.1 The PROW team are continuing to improve access across the rights of way network by offering gates to replace existing stiles across the network, due to the restrictive nature of stiles for some users.
- 5.2 During 2021 we provided 48 gates to landowners, with the agreement that they install the structure and maintain it in the future as they would with other structures that exists on their land.

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

- 6.1 During 2021/22 a bridge and surface capital programme was delivered and the details are shown in the table below. Completion of this programme is credit to the efforts of the Officer leading on the programme and the support provided by both the PROW and Access Ranger teams.

<b>Path No.</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Funding</b>
Bridleway 2048/1	Shoreham-by-Sea	Anti-slip improvement works to bridge decking.	£70,000 (Capital)
Footpath 1541	Crawley	Bridge design works.	£6,000 (Capital)
Footpath 2160	Angmering	Bridge design works.	£6,000 (Capital)
Bridleway 636	Plaistow	Replacement bridge works.	£20,000 (Capital)
Footpath 2388	Shermanbury	Replacement bridge works.	£18,000 (Capital)
Footpath 780/1	Billingshurst/Wisborough Green	Replacement design works.	£40,000 (Capital)
Footpath 1096	Fernhurst	Bridge design works & repairs.	£20,000 (Capital)
Footpath 1492	Rusper	Drainage and path revetment works.	£20,000 (Capital)
Footpaths 299/300	Aldingbourne	Surface and drainage improvement works.	£65,642 (s106)
Byway 3605	Angmering	Surface improvement works.	£80,724 (s106)
Bridleway 2370	Ashurst	Surface improvement works.	£19,850 (s106 & Capital)
Bridleway 614	Kirdford	Surface improvement works.	£30,000 (Capital)
Footpath 76	Selsey	Surface improvement works.	£42,000 (Capital)
Bridleway 6F	Fulking	Surface improvement works.	£15,000 (Capital)
Bridleway 1670	Horsham	Surface improvement works.	£20,000 (s106 & ITB*)
Footpath 5WH	West Hoathly	Surface improvement works.	£20,000 (Capital)
Bridleway 2443	Coldwaltham	Surface improvement works.	£35,000 (Capital)
Bridleway 1796	Nuthurst	Surface improvement works.	££30,000 (Capital)
Restricted Byway 3335	Fernhurst	Surface and drainage improvement works.	£10,000 (Capital)

\* ITB – Integrated Transport Block

6.2 The following table shows work to be carried over to be delivered in in 2022/23.

<b>Path No.</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Funding</b>
Bridleway 614	Kirdford	Surface works not completed last financial year due to weather conditions.	£10,000 (Capital)
Footpath 76	Selsey	Surface improvement works and replacement bridge works. Delayed due to issues with Order made to upgrade FP to BW.	£60,000 (Capital)
Footpaths 299/300	Aldingbourne	Continued drainage works and surface improvements.	£30,000 (s106)

Nick Scott (Principal Rights of Way Officer) and Jane Noble (Senior Access Officer)  
May 2022