

**Countryside Access
Oxfordshire County Council
Speedwell House
Speedwell Street
Oxford
OX1 1NE**

**Bev Hindle – Strategic Director
for Communities**

RIGHTS OF WAY MONITORING GROUP

A meeting of the Rights of Way Monitoring Group will be held on Friday 12th October 2018 at 10.00am.

VENUE: Meeting Room 2, County Hall, Oxford

Chair: Hugh Potter – Group Manager – Area Operations Hub + South

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies and Introductions**
- 2. Minutes** To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2018
- 3. Matters Arising**
- 4. Countryside Records [formerly Definitive Map & Commons]** - Report by the Mike Walker - Principal Countryside Records Officer
- 5. Draft revised Statement of Priorities for DMMO's** – Report by Mike Walker - Principal Countryside Records Officer
- 6. Countryside Access and Information** – Report by James Blockley - Principal Countryside Access Officer
- 7. National Trails**
 - 6a Thames Path** – Latest Thames Path Partnership report by Thames Path Manager
 - 6b Ridgeway** – Latest Ridgeway Partnership report by Ridgeway Officer
- 8. OCAF papers** Draft minutes of 16 May 2018 meeting
NB. Next OCAF meeting is 21 November 2018 @ County Hall Oxford OX1 1ND
- 9. Any Other Business** – Impact of major roads on connectivity of the PRow network – Nick Moon Oxford Fieldpaths Society

Please note:

If you cannot attend the meeting **please advise**, and if possible send someone else to represent your organisation. If you no longer wish to receive these papers, or they should be sent to someone else, please let us know so we can make the necessary amendments the mailing list.

Future meeting dates: 05.04.2019 & 11.10.2019 TBC

RIGHTS OF WAY MONITORING GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on 6th April 2018 at County Hall, Oxford

PRESENT

Members

Nick Moon	Oxford Fieldpaths Society
Elizabeth Adams	Oxford Fieldpaths Society
Jim Parke	Ramblers (PPW's)
Gordon Garraway	CPRE
Stuart McGuinness	OCAF
Charles Wrench	British Horse Society & OCAF
David Godfrey	Ramblers
Stephen Fox	Chiltern Society
Alan Futter	Chiltern Society
Chris Hall	Open Spaces Society

Oxfordshire County Council Officers

Hugh Potter	Countryside & Records Manager (Chair)
Sarah Cotton	Technical Intelligence Admin Officer
James Blockley	Principal Officer Trees & PROW
Tom Scholes	Technical Intelligence Team Leader (part)
Eleanor Hazlewood	Senior Rights of Way Officer (Interim) (part)

1. Introduction and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and members introduced themselves. Apologies had been received from Chris Bell Oxford City Council, Chris Bloomfield - TRF, Jeanette Hinton- Smith - South & Vale DC.

2. Minutes of meeting 13th October 2017

Minutes were agreed with the following amendments:

2.1 Item 3.9 correction of spelling to "Brookes"

2.2 Item 6.4 correction of spelling to "was"

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Item 3.1 - Clarification needed from previous minutes of what this item refers to?
HP

3.2 Item 3.2 NM confirmed LG had got back to him in respect of Cuddesdon & Denton.

3.3 Item 3.3 Oxford Cruisers, GG enquired on progress of this, JB responded the route was still not clear, the written agreement had not been adhered to and was

unsure whether AMJ had any further information. JB will take this on himself

ACTION JB

- 3.4 Item 3.4 – Clarification needed as to what HP had resolved with CW? More details required. **HP**
- 3.5 Item 3.6 it was clarified that this item referred to Sunningwell. GG enquired if s106 money could be used for this, JB will investigate **ACTION JB**.
- 3.6 Item 3.7 NM enquired if anything had been heard from Natural England, in respect of the Thames Path at Shiplake HP responded not at present. NM had concerns about this being parallel to RB 31 Watlington, HP will take away **ACTION HP**.
- 3.7 Item 3.8 Volunteering Groups JB will roll this forward. **ACTION JB**.
- 3.8 Item 3.9 JB confirmed he had followed this up with Oxford Brookes Uni who had expressed an interest and he will follow this up further with them, if no response will follow up with Abingdon & Witney College **ACTION JB**.
- 3.9 Item 9.4 HP will circulate revised Terms of Reference with minutes. **ACTION HP**

4. Definitive Map and Commons - Presented by Eleanor Hazlewood

- 4.1 TS gave an overview of the current staffing and resources in DMC
- 4.2 JP enquired of the 7.6 staff, how many were currently in post, TS responded all but 1.6 so 6 in post and advised it was not ideal spending money on temporary staff. JP enquired as to when DMC would be up to 7.6 staff, TS responded they need to recruit the Principal Officer post which is due to be advertised shortly and possibly someone will be in post by mid-June. EH also reported that Gillian Ghosh will be leaving OCC as well.
- 4.3 EH gave an overview of the DMC report.
- 4.4 TS reported that Gwen Harris was now helping DMC with a review of the DMMO processes.
- 4.5 EH reported that people were going to the Secretary of State due to the delays in dealing with cases, the team were doing all they could do to keep delays to a minimum. SMG enquired if consultants could be brought in to assist, TS responded they are considering how delays can be lowered but it does need expertise to do this.
- 4.6 CW enquired if the Deregulation Act will have any impact, EH responded yes it would have an enormous impact, in the short term they had no resource's but should have in the long term, they were anticipating hundreds of DMMO's, TS asked members to let us know of any DMMO's they are likely to submit.

5. Countryside Access and Information - Presented by James Blockley.

- 5.1 JB gave an overview of the report and operations within the teams.
- 5.2 SF enquired where Jackie Smith's base will be, JB responded her nominated base will be the HUB, he confirmed she will not be doing any pothole related tasks. HP reported they are now reigning this back and the 'specialists' will just be doing their own work and not Highways related work. JB thanked members for their support in highlighting the problems this had caused. JB also confirmed that the budget for Countryside Access remains under his direct control.
- 5.3 SF enquired as to when the vacant Highways posts would be filled, HP responded they are currently recruiting which will ease pressures and there is a real push to recruit at present.

- 5.4 CH enquired if PRow was a 'Specialist Service', HP confirmed that within the terms of the restructure it was.
- 5.5 JP enquired as to when they get a list of unresolved problems, JB responded the base programme had recently changed, Adam McQueen was currently working on it to resolve and get the system up and running, no deadline currently available, JB will follow up – **ACTION JB**
- 5.6 JP enquired about the Task Team changes, JB responded they are currently one man down, they have 2 Land Rovers and still based at Signal Court, JP enquired as to what percentage of work was done by the Task Team as opposed to contractor's etc, JB responded approximately half.
- 5.7 SF enquired about the caseload in the south and that there was little input, JB responded there had been problems with Admin Support and this required expertise and access to CAMS. JP reported that he had raised this with his volunteers whom had reported resolved problems and it is very disappointing to the volunteers if no notice is taken of their reports. HP encouraged problems to be reported via CAMS web, JP responded CAMS web cannot report resolved problems which have be done via email. HP will take this away. **ACTION HP.**
- 5.8 NM raised concerns about putting Field Officers out to the Highways depot's and this needs to be fed back to management. HP responded the point was noted but we must work with what they've got and JB tries to keep the team together with office days etc. NM commented he was pleased to note that Jackie was covering the post left by Jon Beale.
- 5.9 NM enquired about some bridges being put in by contractor's and the gates were not closing correctly and can OCC pursue with the contractor? NM clarified the FP in question was Aston Rowant FP5, JB responded we had no record of it and asked him to raise it directly again with Jackie Smith.

6. National Trails

a) Thames Path

- 6.1 HP presented the report and gave an overview, highlighting that Natural England will give the same funding for 2018 as previous year(s) but there was no guarantee of long term funding for National Trails.
- 6.2 SF enquired if the TP and RW are still reporting to JB. HP responded that he will take responsibility directly.

b) Ridgeway

- 6.3 HP presented the report and gave an overview.
- 6.4 GG enquired about the new Ridgeway leaflets, HP responded to contact Sarah Wright
- 6.5 GG enquired if there is any way of reporting problems directly to one person in a team. JB responded and advised to report via email to: countryside@oxfordshire.gov.uk or the National Trails one.
- 6.6 HP reported that the Ridgeway had a new chair Simon Kearsley who replaced Ian Ritchie from April. Ian continued to represent the Association of National Trail Chairs at national meetings with Natural England & Defra.

7. OCAF Papers

- 7.1 Presented by Hugh Potter for Info. HP will send draft minutes when sending MG minutes **ACTION HP**

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 SF reported that Jon Beale had worked very well with the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers and now he had left he was keen to keep the work going but it needs input of people with knowledge & expertise. HP responded that Jackie Smith will pick up from Jon with the support of colleagues.
- 8.2 GG paid thanks to OCC staff for what they were doing and it was good to see the same faces around the table
- 8.3 DG enquired about the Local Forums. JB reported that the combined North was going ahead, South East was not happening and the South West was also going ahead.

NEXT MEETINGS: Friday 12th October 2018 & Friday 5th April 2019

DRAFT

**Rights of Way Monitoring Group
12th October 2018**

Report by Principal Officer – Countryside Records

Introduction

This report sets out progress in this period according to the different areas of Definitive Map work as follows: -

1. Definitive Map Modification Orders - Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
 2. Definitive Map and Statement
 3. Public Path Orders
 4. General
-

1. Definitive Map Modification Orders and Applications - Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 s53

108 cases are pending countywide.

More detail can be found in the “Pending DMMO case list” report (**Appendix 1**) which is updated monthly, and the statutory “DMMO Register” which lists all cases, both pending and complete, received since 31 December 2005. Both reports can be found at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/modificationsanddiversions.

2. Definitive Map and Statement

A PDF copy of the Definitive Map and Statement, relevant date 21.2.2006, plus a list of all changes made to the Definitive Map and Statement up to October 2017 is available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/definitive-map-and-statement-online>

All changes up to 10.03.2018 are also incorporated in the interactive Countryside Access Map at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/countrysidemap

The public rights of way data is also available on our website for download under the provisions of the Ordnance Survey Open Data. Note that this data is indicative only and is not the legal record.

3. Public Path Orders

There are 21 public path order applications outstanding at various stages. For further information on cases please refer to the monthly ‘Pending PPOs Case List’ (**Appendix 2**) and also available on our website at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/modificationsanddiversions

4. General

- **Deregulation Act 2015:** We are still waiting for secondary regulations and guidance to bring everything into effect. At the time of writing, we understand this may happen in Summer 2019.

- **Countryside Records staff changes:**
 - The team now has a permanent manager, Mike Walker.
 - In the process of recruiting 2 new Officers and a Support Officer.
 - Sarah Cotton who has, for many years, provided the entirety of what was then the Countryside Service with admin support, is moving to another job within the authority.
 - Gillian Ghosh has left the authority after almost a decade working with us.
 - The team has started using a new mapping system called ARC GIS. There are inevitable teething problems, but it should provide a better mapping tool in the long run.

Mike Walker
Countryside Records
October 2018

**Rights of Way Monitoring Group
12 October 2018**

Revised Statement of Priorities

Report by Principal Officer – Countryside Records

Introduction

The Council's Statement of Priorities setting out how it manages its Definitive Map caseload is long overdue for an update and would benefit from some new thinking. This report includes a revised Statement as a **draft** for discussion.

The Council's Statement of Priorities has not been updated since 2006.

Since that time, the world of local government and, as a result, the way in which public rights of way are managed, has changed noticeably. Factors include: -

- A long period of 'austerity' with major withdrawal of local government funding by central government, placing huge stress on public services and impacting on rights of way service provision
- New legislation in the form of the Deregulation Act 2015 which, while not yet introduced, provides a direction of travel and an emphasis on greater flexibility, reducing timescales and, as a consequence, backlogs of work
- A frequent restructuring and realignment of Council services with a view to greater overall efficiency where roles are less polarised
- Insufficient available expertise across the profession in the management of complex legal cases, where replacing and training staff is a lengthy process and takes other staff away from the day job
- Greater intervention by the Secretary of State
- A recent, thorough review of OCC functions and processes which is driving leaner activity, with the aim of reducing timescales and increasing customer satisfaction

Whilst each of these points, and probably several others, have impacted, they provide a backdrop where doing the same thing and expecting a better outcome has to be challenged. But this must also be balanced with the context of the work which is lengthy, contentious, routinely challenged and places a pressure on the case officer to reach a conclusion amid conflicting evidence and interests.

It is the final bullet point above that drives the Council's current thinking. At its heart is to challenge the acceptability of a public service duty where backlogs are in the order of 10-12 years. Of course, this is rights of way work and OCC finds itself in a similar place to many other Councils.

The attached revised Statement of Priorities is drafted in a way that accepts that there might be many ways a caseload can be shuffled, where there are winners and losers, or where the

constant prioritising and shuffling of the pack becomes an industry in itself. It is also drafted in a way that allows for the backlogs to be proactively examined and gives a degree of discretion where some cases may be taken out of sequence either because the route is under threat, a property might be blighted or simply for expediency with the overall aim of efficiency or backlog reduction.

The other balance to be drawn is that between those applications that are primarily user based and those based on historic documentary evidence. There are arguments for either to be given a priority.

In terms of actual DMMO priorities, the attached Statement sets out four possible scenarios for prioritisation. My recommendation is that we prioritise user-based and documentary-based applications in parallel – with effectively two separate lists.

Comments are invited.

Mike Walker, Principal Officer, Countryside Records

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**STATEMENT OF PRIORITIES FOR MAINTAINING THE DEFINITIVE MAP AND
STATEMENT OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY**

The Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) of Public Rights of Way for Oxfordshire is the legal record of public rights of way in the county. The Council is the Surveying Authority for such purposes. In accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 56, the DMS is conclusive evidence of the existence of a public right of way and its status, width, position and any limitations or conditions that affect it.

It has a relevant date of 1 February 2006.

In accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 53, Oxfordshire County Council has a duty as the Surveying Authority to keep the DMS under continuous review and to modify it by way of Orders as and when relevant events occur.

The Council's priorities in respect of its DMS are to: -

- Process applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders
- Update and maintain the DMS, including addressing anomalies and errors

This Statement of Priorities replaces the previous version dated October 2007.

Processing Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs)

Any person with substantive evidence of an error or omission in the DMS may apply to the Council for an Order to modify it to add or delete a right of way, to upgrade or downgrade one that is already shown, or to amend the particulars contained in the Map or Statement. Most are claims to add rights to the DMS on the basis that they legally exist but are not recorded. The procedure to do this is set out in schedule 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The Council is required, as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of applications, to investigate and determine whether or not to make the Order sought. If after 12 months no such determination has been made, the applicant may appeal to the Secretary of State who may then direct the Council to determine the application and may impose a timescale for doing so. Government Guidance in the form of Circular 1/09 states that the Secretary of State, when considering a response to a request for a direction to determine an application for an Order within a specified period, will take account of any Statement made by the Surveying Authority setting out its priorities for bringing and keeping the DMS up to date and the reasonableness of such priorities.

There are a large number of applications outstanding, each requiring significant research and investigation and are frequently contentious, further extending the period of the process. A single application might take between 6 and 18 months to conclude depending on the different factors that might impact on it. There is also a steady stream of new applications being received, the rate of which is anticipated will increase in the light of the impending legislative reforms which will introduce an end date for the making of applications based on historic evidence.

Details of all Definitive Map applications are contained in a statutory register published on the Council's website, alongside a 'Pending DMMO Case List' detailing the applications currently being progressed, updated on a monthly basis, and where progress can be tracked. These can be viewed at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/modificationsanddiversions

Rationale for Prioritising Applications for DMMOs

Oxfordshire County Council finds itself in a position similar to many Surveying Authorities across the country where the volume and complexity of applications makes it unsustainable to determine them all within the 12 months before any appeal can be triggered. Backlogs can then accrue, further exacerbated by the continuous flow of new applications. The waiting list for new applicants currently stands at more than 10 years.

The County Council recognises that delays of this kind do not reflect the level of service it expects to provide and has reviewed its resourcing and processes to ensure a renewed rigour is applied to the way in which it addresses its existing and future caseloads. A recent restructuring of the Council's duties and responsibilities has resulted in a further investment into this activity. This Statement is reflective of that review and further sets out an intention to address its backlog of cases and introduce some flexibility and discretion where this can improve its overall service to customers.

There remains a need to be as equitable as possible in determining the basis on which the list of applications is addressed. At its core, this necessitates addressing applications in chronological order of receipt; this being the fairest means of prioritising where no application is more important than any other. However, in certain instances, it will be necessary to address some applications out of turn and give them greater priority where the impact of deferral could have consequences. For this reason, the Council must retain an element of discretion. If it considers that action of this kind is warranted and there are exceptional circumstances, the Council will consider if the circumstances of that case merit it being taken 'out of turn'.

Similarly, the Council may target a particular application if this helps achieve a greater efficiency or reduce backlogs faster.

This means that, in some cases, an application already on the register may be taken out of sequence where circumstances dictate, or for the purposes of expediency.

The Council's plan for dealing with applications may also be disrupted should the Secretary of State determine, on appeal, to direct the Council to address cases out of turn and within specific deadlines.

Updating and Maintaining the Definitive Map and Statement

The processing of Definitive Map applications has to be addressed in parallel with other duties necessary to keep the DMS as up to date as possible.

The present Definitive Map, produced in 2006, was the culmination of significant investment to produce a modern map utilising digital mapping software replacing previous paper-based versions. This has many benefits, including improved management processes and a more straightforward means of physically amending and updating it when any changes occur.

This has also had the considerable added benefit of allowing an online version of the Map to be made available to view on the Council's website.

Managing the integrity of the Map data entails: -

- Addressing any issues of the accuracy of the DMS by systematically investigating discrepancies such as: -
 - Errors in drafting
 - Discrepancies between the Map and Statement

- Possible errors or omissions in the DMS (such as an unexplained change of status where a path crosses a parish boundary or where the route on the ground differs from that shown on the DMS).

Whilst these will be prioritised and researched as resources permit depending on their significance or impact, these are not matters that normally feature on Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 s53b Registers of Applications. As such, any work undertaken will impact on the rate at which formal applications on the Register are addressed.

Undertaking an investigation on a particular ‘anomaly’ may have a degree of urgency where, for example, a sale of property is reliant on it. The DMS can usually only be amended by fully researching the case and making and advertising a DMMO. As such there is inevitable impact on priorities.

- Keeping the DMS up to date by making regular ‘Legal Event’ Modification Orders to modify it in respect of changes resulting from Public Path Orders, Agreements, etc.
- To periodically republish the DMS, currently dated 2006. The timing for such a major piece of work will be kept under review and carried out when appropriate and balanced against other workloads.

Prioritising Applications for Modification Orders

This approach is adopted following consultation with the Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum, a body representing a wide range of interest groups including user groups and landowning associations.

A priority system primarily based on date of receipt is inherently simple and fair and does not discriminate between applicants. A disadvantage of this is that it lacks flexibility and does not allow any discretion. The Council must be able to exercise some discretion where circumstances dictate.

Addressing Definitive Map applications is undertaken by the relevant team within the Council alongside its other work involving keeping the Map and Statement up to date, public path orders, common land and village green registration and rectification, searches and landowner statutory declarations and deposits.

There are, essentially, two types of Definitive Map application – those based on historic documentary evidence and those based, primarily, on user-based evidence. A distinction can be made between the two in the sense that user-based applications are likely to be those routes in contemporary use, that may have been called into question by an action on the part of the owners of the land and where the integrity of the user-based evidence is at risk if there are inherent delays in dealing with them. It would seem reasonable that applications that are primarily reliant on user evidence be prioritised.

Balanced with this is an ongoing pressure to record those routes that have been 'lost' over time and remain unrecorded on the DMS. Frequently these can be routes that are (or would be) important links in the overall network. Such cases are also likely to be the ones where there is increased demand for them to be recognised as a consequence of the introduction of the 2026 cut-off.

Two thirds of cases in the Council's backlog are user-based, one third based on historic documentary evidence. As 2026 looms closer, the proportion of documentary-based applications is likely to increase significantly.

The prioritisation of applications is, therefore, as follows: -

[Four potential scenarios for Priority Number 1]

Scenario 1

- 1a From List 'A', applications with evidence that is primarily user-based, in date order of receipt and, in parallel as far as possible,
- 1b From List 'B', applications with evidence that is primarily historic / documentary, in date order of receipt.

[This gives parallel priority to both types of application]

Scenario 2

- 1a Applications on the Council's Register with evidence that are fundamentally user-based, in date order of receipt.
- 1b Applications based on historic documentary evidence, in date order of receipt.

[This gives priority to user-based applications meaning that the documentary ones will always drift to the bottom of the list]

Scenario 3

1. Applications on the Council's Register will be addressed in chronological Order of receipt

[Where both 1 and 2 are unpalatable, we end up back with this]

Scenario 4

1. Applications will be prioritised on a points-based system where each will be assessed on criteria such as strength of evidence, adding a useful route, etc

[Where the full case load must be re-examined and any new applications assessed before being registered]

In all Cases

2. The Council will exercise discretion to take a case out of the 'date order' sequence. Examples of where this might apply are: -
 - Where there is a development proposal or planning application that affects or threatens the claimed route
 - Where an affected party can demonstrate that they are experiencing exceptional problems due to the impact of an application on their property, such as where this potentially affects its sale
 - Where the evidence in support – or geographical location – of an application is shared with another and, therefore, it would be efficient to investigate them concurrently
 - Where the path would help fulfil one of the Council's strategic aims, such as where routes have been identified in a Transport Strategy or Rights of Way Improvement Plan
3. From time to time, with the aim of reducing its backlog and overall waiting times, the Council will use its discretion to identify any application on its Register where there may be opportunity to: -
 - Address an application by some other means (such as a public path order or agreement)
 - Address an application where the extent of the evidence and / or the lack of opposition would involve minimal workload to conclude the matter.

**Oxfordshire County Council
October 2018**

Principal Officer (Countryside Access and Trees) Report

1st April to 30th September 2018

1. Introduction

Countryside Access has seen continued change since March, and further uncertainty is waiting in the wings. Not all of this change has been negative however, and the team is beginning to achieve a more stable and sustainable structure.

The geographical and organisational dispersal of the team continues to bring challenges, but in some cases also opportunities from easier access to additional resources. Despite the presence of this change and uncertainty, including questions around the future location of the workshop facility currently at Eynsham, the team remains committed to countryside access, and continues to achieve incredible outputs on limited means. However, this operational efficiency is continually tested with additional unforeseen demands.

For the past six months for example the North of the county has experienced an unprecedented quantity of Highways Act notices being served on the Council from a single individual, arguably outside of the indented function of the legislation. Since June, a total of 81 individual notices have been received, each of which has to be assessed, investigated, recorded and responded to within strict timescales. These have primarily been relatively low priority issues in a small geographical area, but action is legally unavoidable and takes officers away from proactive work and higher priority issues. This has put an extraordinary amount of pressure on the team; at the peak of this influx for example, an estimated 1.2 full time equivalent staff posts were dedicated to the notices, but the team rallied, responded and recovered.

As above, not all change is inherently negative. The Principal Officer post, which since September of 2017 was shared equally between the Tree Team and Countryside Access will shortly once again be dedicated exclusively to rights of way. With additional staff resource also coming into the team over the next few months, we will be able to act more proactively on the network and provide a much better service to the paths and their beneficiaries. In addition, Countryside Access Officers (formerly Field Officers) are beginning to work solely on rights of way, with the additional 'highways inspection' element being almost completely withdrawn from their duties.

2. Personnel

As reported at the last Monitoring Group, Jon Beale left the post of Countryside Access Officer for the SE back in April. Jackie Smith stepped in to provide cover, and coped extremely well with the elevated demands, benefitting from help and guidance from other team members. The vacant post finally reached recruitment in June, and Jackie was successful in being awarded the permanent post.

Paul Harris is now working within the Natural Environment Team (part of 'Planning and Place'), but retains his access strategy and development remit. He continues to input into the work of Countryside Access identifying and seizing opportunities for development and trying to keep access central to internal and external policy. His move to the new line management has created the opportunity for an additional Technical Officer post within Countryside Access, which is being

recruited alongside the Principal Officer. The post will work closely with Paul on a range of projects, and will provide much-needed support in other areas of the team's work.

The vacant Assistant Countryside Tasks post has also been advertised recently after failing to recruit in the summer. We hope the Tasks Team will be back up to more sustainable levels within the next couple of months.

After much deliberation, I have decided to accept a post with Gloucestershire County Council and will be leaving OCC at the end of November. The dedicated Principal Officer post is currently being recruited and the aim is to keep the period of temporary cover as short as possible.

3. Operations

The Tasks Team continues to turn out an impressive quantity of high-quality reactive and proactive work despite the uncertainty and challenges mentioned above, and remain as efficient and dedicated as ever. They continue to work closely with all other elements of the team despite the challenges of not working from a single location. They are also dealing with additional demands on officer time arising from cut-backs elsewhere in the Council, for example taking on elements of the capital programme following reduction in the size of the county's Bridge Team.

Operations delivery has remained centred on five key elements:

- Urgent and emergency response, e.g repair of failed bridges
- Repeat maintenance, e.g drainage maintenance and roadside signage clearance
- Planned programmes, e.g soft and hard vegetation clearance programmes
- Major projects, e.g bridges capital programme and key surfacing schemes
- Worksheet-driven small-scale works, e.g kit bridge installation.

After a drawn-out procurement process, the Tasks Team is finally benefitting from a bespoke tractor / tool carrier. This amazing piece of kit can carry out a wide range of jobs such as side and surface vegetation clearance and will bring even more flexibility, independence and efficiency to the team. For example, we can now deploy a single machine and one operative to sites that would have needed two or even three operators to achieve the same results:



Some examples of improvements on the network:

- Islip Footpath 3 - Surfacing on part of Oxfordshire Way (more to do!)

Before



After



- Cholsey Footpath 30 – Installation of 40m boardwalk on the Thames Path using recycled plastic. Part funded by Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment.

Before



After



- Grafton and Radcot Bridleway 3 – Repaired sluice and replacement of failed concrete culvert with bagged abutments and wooden bridge. Partnership with local flood prevention scheme.

Before



After



- Woolstone BOAT 1 and Compton Beauchamp BOAT 12 - Bridle bridges replaced with vehicle culverts, opening up public vehicular rights for the first time.

Before



After



4. CAMS

The new and highly anticipated CAMS Web finally went live back in May. The benefits and improvements over the previous system are numerous, but of particular interest has been the ‘trusted user’ status, which allows issues to be allocated to volunteers to investigate, provides them a greater degree of access for processing caseload, and means much more efficient use can be made of both officer and volunteer time. The current trial of this functionality is already showing positive results.

A few of the other benefits:

- Users no longer need to log on to view the map / PRoW / promoted routes / network furniture
- Once logged in, users can create new issues and attach photos, comment on existing ones and view previously reported issues
- Ability to use the system on smart phones / tablets.

5. Feedback

A selection of comments from the previous six months:

- *“our thanks from and other local users for the recent work done on this byway which is now so much better for the cutting back etc. Good job.”*
- *“So pleased to see that the tree branches had gone and the path is now safe when I walked to Headington yesterday. Within a week! You really did mean asap!”*
- *“I am emailing to pass on the thanks of Scottish and Southern Electricity for the prompt, efficient and helpful service they received yesterday from the Countryside Services team”*
- *“Can I just say THANK YOU so much for all the works you and your guys have done on clearing the track. It’s brilliant!! You’ve been great! Please pass on my thanks to your team too – a really great job! Thankyou”*
- *“Please can you thank your Task Team for clearing the Freeboard/Tingtang bridleway. It has made a huge difference, Thanks again.”*
- *“I note our footpath has been given a thorough cut again. Very many thanks to you and your team. It’s much appreciated.”*

- *“The whole area has now been cut and it was a joy walking it last night with the dog. Many thanks”*
- *“I am writing to you to notify you of my intent to attain from a magistrate an order on the council to repair said rights of way”*
- *“we were out walking this morning, partly on the D’Arcy Dalton way, and on the other Horley/Hornton paths, and it was brilliant to come across the new ditch crossing and other improvements. Fantastic work! Thank you - and thanks to all others involved - for this work.”*

8. Acknowledgments

Finally, and it really is finally, I would like to offer thanks to staff and volunteers. The previous three years has been the culmination of my career in Countryside Access, and I have never been more convinced of the importance of facilitating access to the natural environment and never more proud of what I do. At the heart of this is the volunteers that add value to the work of the team, not just because of their tireless hard work, but also because of their infectious enthusiasm which has sustained all of us through some fairly turbulent times.

Perhaps most of all I will miss the team and immediate line management. I have never worked with a bunch of people that are so passionate about their vocation, and have been so impressed with how they have remained focused on their real work over the past year or so and how they have met challenges with a sense of unity and shared purpose.

I wish the team, the volunteers, the stakeholders and the countryside access network itself the very best for the future.

James.

ENDS.



Caseload at start of reporting period (1st March 2018) :

By Type (top 10) :	Total : 4,150
Stile/Repair or Replace	564
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	257
Def Map CAT/Alignment on ground incorrect	233
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	218
Finger Post/Request	213
Waymark/Waymarking Required	201
Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair	178
Surface Improvement Request	174
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	164
Fence/Fences	162
Others	1,786

By Priority :	
Priority : 1	1
Priority : 2a	275
Priority : 2c	548
Priority : 3	1331
Priority : 4a	1243
Priority : 4c	393
Priority : 5	355

**Issue added during reporting period
(1st March 2018 - 31st August 2018) :**

Issues reported by: (Top 10)	
Public	142

In this season the total number of reports including duplicates was : 953

By Type (top 10) :	Total : 756
Tree/Fallen Tree(s)	69
Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair	65
Stile/Repair or Replace	64
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	54
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	48
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	47
Fence/Fences	33
Surface Improvement Request	28
Waymark/Waymarking Required	27
Finger Post/Repair or Replace	26
Others	295

By Priority :	
Priority : 1	15
Priority : 2a	162
Priority : 2c	97
Priority : 3	371
Priority : 4a	70
Priority : 4c	27
Priority : 5	13

Issue resolved during reporting period (1st March 2018 - 31st August 2018) :

By Type (top 10) :	Total : 478
Tree/Fallen Tree(s)	56
Stile/Repair or Replace	50
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	44
Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair	35
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	28
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	21
Gate/Repair or Replace	19
Finger Post/Repair or Replace	18
Gate/Locked or Tied	16
Fence/Fences	13
Others	178

By Priority :	
Priority : 1	11
Priority : 2a	86
Priority : 2c	83
Priority : 3	203
Priority : 4a	76
Priority : 4c	14

Current caseload at end of reporting period (31st August 2018) :

By Type (top 10) :	Total : 4,386
Stile/Repair or Replace	575
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	275
Def Map CAT/Alignment on ground incorrect	236
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	230
Waymark/Waymarking Required	216
Finger Post/Request	211
Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair	206
Surface Improvement Request	186
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	185
Fence/Fences	177
Others	1,889

By Priority :	
Priority : 1	5
Priority : 2a	345
Priority : 2c	553
Priority : 3	1,487
Priority : 4a	1,229
Priority : 4c	401
Priority : 5	364



Current Caseload by Type and Priority (top 10 Issues) :

Stile/Repair or Replace : 590

Priority 2a : 33
Priority 2c : 11
Priority 3 : 125
Priority 4a : 411
Priority 4c : 4
Priority 5 : 6

Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required : 285

Priority 2a : 1
Priority 2c : 6
Priority 3 : 257
Priority 4a : 11
Priority 4c : 8
Priority 5 : 2

Def Map CAT/Alignment on ground incorrect : 236

Priority 10 : 1
Priority 3 : 2
Priority 4a : 6
Priority 4c : 18
Priority 5 : 209

Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path : 230

Priority 2a : 2
Priority 2c : 24
Priority 3 : 197
Priority 4a : 3
Priority 4c : 1
Priority 5 : 3

Waymark/Waymarking Required : 225

Priority 2a : 1
Priority 3 : 17
Priority 4a : 200
Priority 4c : 3
Priority 5 : 4

Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair : 212

Priority 1 : 4
Priority 2a : 50
Priority 2b : 1
Priority 2c : 11
Priority 3 : 38
Priority 4a : 101
Priority 4c : 2
Priority 5 : 5

Finger Post/Request : 211

Priority 3 : 4
Priority 4a : 66
Priority 4c : 130
Priority 5 : 11

Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required : 195

Priority 2a : 2
Priority 2c : 5
Priority 3 : 177
Priority 4a : 4
Priority 4c : 2
Priority 5 : 5

Surface Improvement Request : 190

Priority 2a : 6
Priority 2c : 4
Priority 3 : 32
Priority 4a : 1
Priority 4c : 142
Priority 5 : 5

Fence/Fences : 180

Priority 2a : 14



Priority 2c : 97

Priority 3 : 40

Priority 4a : 7

Priority 4c : 3

Priority 5 : 19

Others : 1,962

Priority 1 : 1

Priority 2a : 252

Priority 2c : 406

Priority 3 : 667

Priority 4a : 453

Priority 4c : 88

Priority 5 : 95

Thames Path NATIONAL TRAIL

PARTNERSHIP REPORT JUNE 2018

- Part 1: Meetings, Works, Information & Marketing.
Part 2: Trail Website Statistics May 2018.
Part 3: Counter Statistics.
Part 4: Budget 2018/19 June Update.

PART 1:

Meetings, Works, Information & Marketing

- Flooding widespread March- April especially upper reaches and sporadic areas Berkshire – Surrey
- Extremely challenging year for soft vegetation management. Grass cutting contracts West, Central, East have all been let out, with the first grass cutting contract complete. Several complaints have come into the office about overgrown paths shortly after they had been cut. There is a need to cut some areas three times during a growing season such as this.
- Thames Path Ashton Keynes Strategic Signage is now complete and installed on site. From the Chair of Ashton Keynes Council -
On behalf of Ashton Keynes Parish Council, I, would like to add my thanks for all the work that has gone into getting the new signs put up in the village, they look great.
and from one of the businesses ... *Just a quick note to thank you all for your effort on this project. The signs look wonderful and we have had many positive comments from both Villagers and Thames Walkers.*
- Met with E.A Officers looking at river vegetation management as part of the Thames Tributaries Flood Programme.
- Met with OCC Officers to ensure our databases are GDPR compliant. We have sent out emails to all on data bases who receive our quarterly newsletter.
- As part of a Thames Estuary Partnership networking event, spoke at the Watermans Hall about the remit and purpose of the London Working Group and the challenges of the Trail through London
- In partnership with Visit Thames we held three business engagement forums Buscot, Reading and Staines. An eclectic mix of businesses including boat hire, marinas, pubs, hotels /B&Bs, camp sites, cafes, and boat builders were present. Presented on the works the trail undertakes, also our business engagement and then handed over to the owner of the Hob Kettle Brewery who is producing our official trail ale, Liquid Highway.
- 2018/19 Natural England grant has been confirmed at 100% 2017/18 grant.
- Several site meetings took place with contractor and landowners to gain access for surfacing a stretch of Thames Path in Streatley, West Berkshire. The Parish have been made aware of the works, which are due to start towards the end of June, weather permitting. We have received several complaints including an article in the local newsletter about the state of the surface here. The contract has been let.
- As part of an art project for Totally Thames, 'acoustics along the Thames' was interviewed by the artist along an Oxford reach.
- Met with West Berkshire to discuss Purley creation order. One of the key issues

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is a Network Rail owned tunnel. Trying to find the correct person to discuss this with at Network Rail.

- Filming for the 4-part mini-series Tony Robinson walking the Thames Path now complete, contributed significantly for location choices, negotiating with landowners and was asked to be filmed around the upper reaches. Unfortunately, the area was still flooded the end of April and so had to change interview to speak about flood meadows and upper reaches history. Currently there is an embargo on promoting until Channel 5 release dates for the series – expected around August.
- Several site meetings with contractors and Bucks County to look at delivering this year's much needed revetment works and final surfacing job around Higginson Park Marlow. Everything in place now except for the E.A consent, which was applied for some time ago!
- Natural England grant funding forms 2017/18 forms filled in and sent to NE on time.
- Two large scale DEFRA RPA bids have been applied for specific works in Oxfordshire (Binsey and Abingdon) if successful delivery 2019-2020.
- London Condition Survey Issue reports divided into each London Borough have been uploaded onto NE Huddle, invitations have gone out inviting London Partners to Join NE Huddle and so be able to view and download the reports, below is the link.
<https://my.huddle.net/workspace/34683564/files/#/folder/45441511/list>
- Planning application in Hurst Park, Elmbridge District, Surrey was responded to. If successful the proposed building would impact on users of the trail and so an objection was sent based on numbers of users and the Definitive Line of the Thames Path next to the river.
- National Trails Officer Spring meeting took place in Birmingham. The meeting included a presentation from the Chair of the Disabled Ramblers, HLF resilience project update, (further meeting scheduled in June). National Trails Website update - will be revamped, and initial discussions about National Trail Quality Standards. A working group including N.E has been set up to standardise N.T Q.S of which I agreed to be part of. Further Birmingham meeting scheduled this July.
- London Working Group meeting hosted by Vice Chair took place at UCL. As an example of the London Condition Survey I demonstrated Hounslow's full conditions survey reports.
- Grant funding for a new board walk in Moulsoford has been successful however access to site for machinery is an issue due to N.R main line. Have requested assistance from E.A for a working boat to ferry materials. (recycled plastic sleepers are a lot heavier than wood).
- Picked up Google Trekking Camera from Norfolk Coast Path and handed over to OCC Fire Services. Unfortunately, due to heavy rainfall and camera issues the full trail has not been Google Trekked. The fire crew completed their trail walk and will complete the Google Trek up to Dorney Lakes over the next month.
- Meeting took place with Dr Parsons and PHD Student at Cranfield

Thames Path NATIONAL TRAIL

University to discuss further – The economic worth of the Thames Path National Trail. The student has taken on the project and milestone meetings will take place in July with a deadline for the project in October.

- Represented the trail at the London West Rivers group in Mortlake. Items discussed included Richmond's tree survey, P.L.A. river wall works and the reinstatement to the surface of the trail. There were further discussions on planning applications and the Mortlake Brewery development.
- Further meeting scheduled with Kew to Chelsea Landscape Strategy, Richmond/Wandsworth Boroughs and National Trails to discuss the trail issues reports for these boroughs.
- Visit Thames steering group meeting took place at Crowne Plaza Reading. Visit Thames website now has an updated look -

<https://www.visitthames.co.uk/>

The meeting included a presentation about the Great West Way – attracting tourism along the 125mile A4 corridor from London to Bristol. The Thames Path National Trail features in some of the itinerates where the geographic areas merge.

- Meeting took place with Cotswold Water Park, Wiltshire Council and new owners of lakes around Waterhey. Subject to approval the landowner has offered to improve drainage and surface conditions of the trail along this section.
- Site meeting took place between National Trails, Cricklade Town Council and Wiltshire Council to look at surface improvement works around Cricklade. Wiltshire Council has secured £7k for a series of minor surface improvement plans.
- Oxfordshire County have removed a high stepped bridge and replaced with a large boardwalk resolving 2 long standing issues and improving access on the trail through water meadows in Culham
- Works have been programmed in by Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead to install a surface over an enclosed muddy area of trail near to Hurley village.
- Circular walks project continuing well. Following on from one of our Business Forums, Trail Volunteer (DMW) has surveyed the Buscot circular and is adding it onto the trail website along with other walks <https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/thames-path/route/buscot-circular-walk>
- Cricklade Town Council has undertaken pilling revetment works along the Thames Path in Fairview Meadows, part of the works includes a dog friendly slope for river access.
- In line with Oxfordshire policy National Trails CAMs Systems have been upgraded from MapInfo to ArcGIS this has caused some ongoing issues with the GIS database.
- Thames Path Trail Ale please see separate item on agenda – Liquid Highway.

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- First larger scale access improvement project is complete for the year. A 40-metre recycled plastic boardwalk has been built over a heavily poached marsh area Purley West Berkshire.

Purley Before and After Photos



Thames Path English Coast Path Update (ECP)

Earlier in the year we ran a public consultation to get feedback on how we should brand the new England Coast Path National Trail from Woolwich to Grain. This is in light of the fact that the England Coast Path would realise the long-aspired for ambition to complete a National Trail from the Source of the River Thames to the Sea.

There were several responses and the dual branding: Thames Path/England Coast Path was favoured by a narrow margin to Thames Path on its own.

The reasons given were:

- Thames Path & England Coast Path are iconic trails and both deserve to be recognised equally.
- Avoiding confusion between the National Trails.



The end point of the Source to Sea route was voted to be Grain Coastal Park.

Ideas for a marker at the sea end of the walk are :

- Tower (20-30ft), something people can climb up.
- Stone Marker.
- A Sculpture of Thames Sailing Barge – which have graced the river for several centuries and still represent the coalition of north and south and London.
- <http://www.5thstudio.co.uk/journal/twelve-trees-ramp-tops-out/> something like that as maritime influenced.
- Book entitled “Liquid History” as emblem as Charles Dickens works.
- Maps and signage of history.
- Taking the acorn as a symbol for the start of the river, have a mighty oak at the end to represent perseverance, commitment and development.
- Design should reflect both coastal and riverside heritage of the trail.
- Modest ground plaque to start, then with funding a large plaque on a stone plinth that shows a map of the Thames part of the trail with points of interest along the way, distances and things to see.

Thames Path NATIONAL TRAIL

It is hoped that the Grain to Woolwich England Coast Path report will be published this Autumn. (2018).

THAMES PATH NATIONAL TRAIL VOLUNTEER WORKS

April to June

Each full volunteer day averages 5 hours with between 3 to 6 volunteers.

Workshop Tasks:

- Pre-Soft Vegetation Clearance (SVC) Machinery checks.
- 7 custom Finger signs.
- 1 finger post made.
- Machinery servicing.

Gloucestershire

- Lechlade: SVC SU22299500 to SU22539881 = 380m.

Wiltshire

- Ashton Keynes: Scrub Clearance SU 05177 94234 to SU 05064 94331 - 250m.
- Ashton Keynes: Gate installation SU 05295 94155.
- Cricklade: SVC SU09449416 to SU09659406 = 200m/ SU09999399 to SU10069396 = 190m/ SU10349381 to SU10419376 = 170m.

Swindon

- Castle Eaton: SVC SU16219582 to SU17469600 = 810m.
- Upper Ingelsham: SVC SU 19318 9636 to SU 20103 97251 = 1180m.

Oxfordshire

- Whitchurch step clearance SU 62473 78286.
- Chimney meadow: SVC SP33450042 to SP35369958 = 5800m.
- Chimney Meadows: SVC SP33450042 to SP35369958 = 5800m.
- Kelmscott: SVC SU25299883 to SU24409844 = 1310m.
- Grafton: SVC SU27229933 to SU28449944 = 1750m.
- Kennington: SVC SP 53113 01600 to SP 52802 02188 = 650m.
- Newbridge: SVC SP38920116 to SP39470128 = 560m /SP40530137 to SP40710133 = 200m.
- Swinford: SVC SP44280855 to SP44340861 = 70m/ SP44580865 to SP45470929 = 1,120m/ SP44280759 to SP44200768 = 130m
SP44440741 to SP44340739 = 120m.
- Wallingford, Clifton Hampden & Shillingford: SVC SU606867 to SU606872 = 480m/ SU547953 to SU549955 = 300m/ SU 59419249 to SU59529226 = 280m.
- Little Wittenham SU 56835 93457 to SU 57807 93214 = 1160m.
Shillingford SVC SU5969908 to SU61079173 = 1120 meters.
- Abingdon: New signage (metal fingers) SU 50506 97217.
- Newbridge: 1 tree cleared SP 39311 01226.

Oxford

- Osney: SVC SP50360583 to SP50890553 = 1,480m.

Buckinghamshire

- Marlow: SVC - 4 volunteers SU84788578 to SU83868448 = 1,920m.

Wokingham

- Sonning: SVC - SU75457560 to SU74517478 = 1,550m.

Thames Path NATIONAL TRAIL

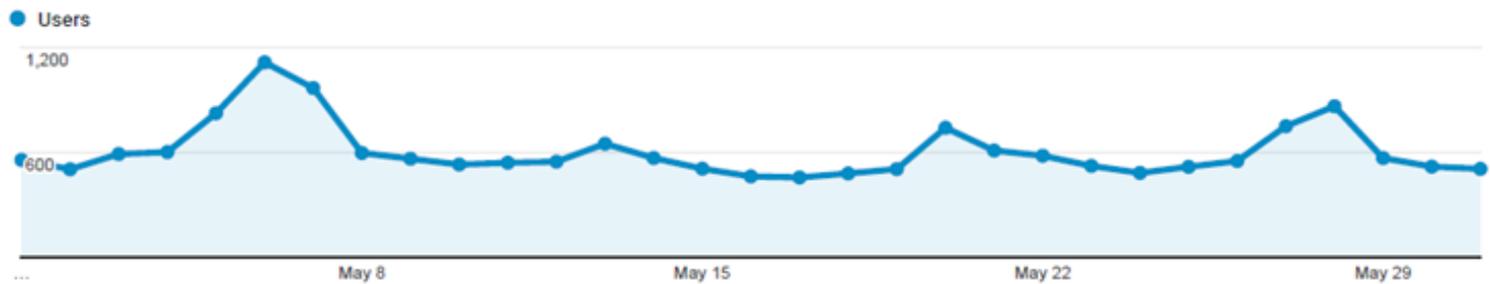
PART 2: Trail Website Statistics May 2018

Audience Overview

 All Users
100.00% Users

May 1, 2018 - May 31, 2018

Overview



Users
16,419

New Users
14,154

Sessions
20,704

Number of Sessions per User
1.26

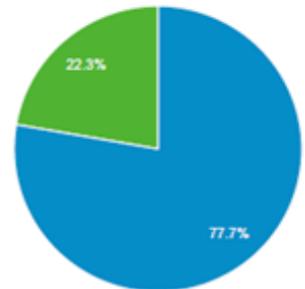
Pageviews
56,266

Pages / Session
2.72

Avg. Session Duration
00:02:24

Bounce Rate
48.75%

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor



Thames Path NATIONAL TRAIL

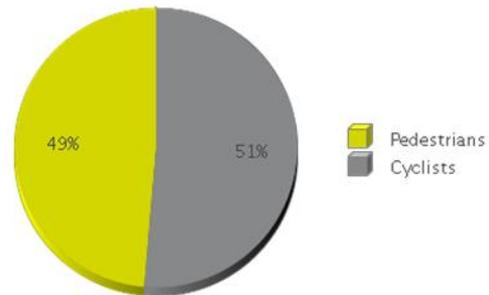


PART 3 : Counter Statistics

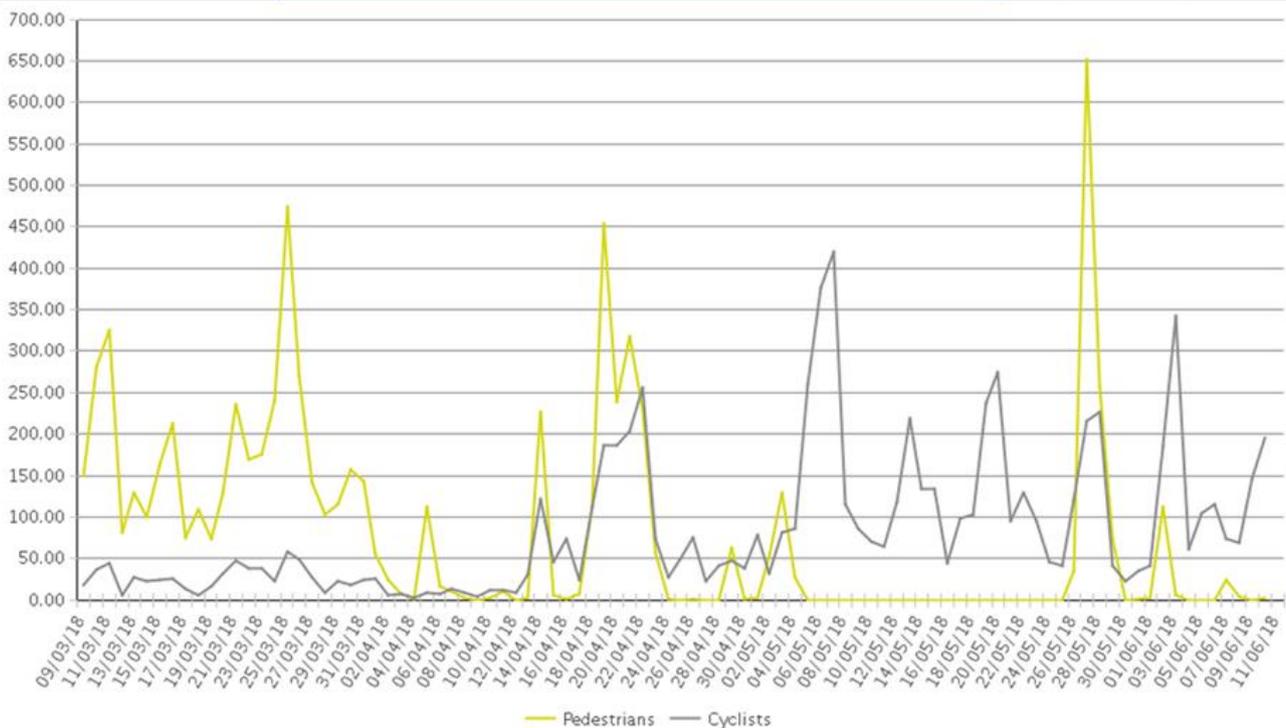
	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Fiddlers Island</h3> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">Period Analysed: Friday 09 March 2018 to Monday 11 June 2018</p>	
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	Total Traffic for the Analysed Period	Daily Average	Busiest Day of the Week	Busiest Month of the Year	Distribution	
					IN	OUT
Pedestrians	7,396	79	Sunday	March 18: 4,054	54	46
Cyclists	7,802	83	Sunday	May 18: 4,109	55	45



	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Fiddlers Island</h3> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">Period Analysed: Friday 09 March 2018 to Monday 11 June 2018</p>	
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Thames Path NATIONAL TRAIL



NATIONAL TRAILS 

Thames Path, Inglesham

Period Analysed: Friday 09 March 2018 to Monday 11 June 2018

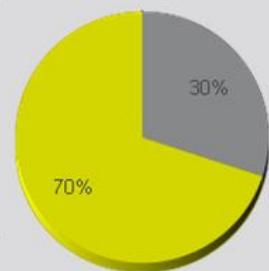


Key Figures

- Total Traffic for the Period Analysed: 1,472
- Daily Average: 16
Weekdays: 10 / Weekend days: 28
- Monthly Average: 477
- Busiest Day of the Week: Saturday
- Busiest Days of the Period Analysed:
 1. Saturday 26 May 2018 (98)
 2. Saturday 02 June 2018 (77)
 3. Sunday 10 June 2018 (77)

• Distribution by Direction:

■ IN: 70%
■ OUT: 30%



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PART 4 : 2018/19 BUDGET up to JUNE 30

INCOME

NE Grant	171,445
HA Contribution	11,283
Contribution to Vol Scheme (RW)	2,800
Contr to Bourne End NR bridge	1,000
Tescos Bags for Vols Equipment	1,000
TOTAL	187,528

EXPENDITURE

Staff Salaries (Inc on costs)	21,085
Staff Travel	688
OCC Hosting Charges (for year)	10,520
Partnership Exp	300
Vol Truck/Plant Fuel Est	200
Vol Travel Exp Est	216
Equipment	2,048
Grass Cutting Contracts (let)	16,153
Total	51,210

PROJECTS Committed to

	Total	N.T Contr.
South Cerney/FWAG Improvements	3,963	1,588
Marlow removal Hogin inst Gravel	11,700	5,850
Marlow Weld mesh Rvtmt.	18,680	9,340
Hurley Surfacing	5,850	2,925
Streatley Surfacing	9,727	4,864
Moulsford Boardwalk (£5k WREN Grant)		
Richmond Surfacing		
Oxford City Surfacing		
London Signage		
Culham Boardwalk	6000	
Wolvercote Revetment	1,500	
Pangbourne Boardwalk	27,000	
Bourne End NR bridge (est)	3,000	1,000
Cricklade Improvements	7,000	
	Allocated to date -	25,567

Ridgeway Officer report

12th May – 10th Sept 2018

Part 1: Work programme

Part 2: Volunteer update

Part 3: Website stats

Part 4: Counter stats

1. Work programme

National Trail Team work programme and events 2018

- Ridgeway Officer focus has been on grant-aided work (volunteer monitor training project), Ridgeway Riding Route, Avebury WHS TRO and recruiting new CAMS volunteer.
- Areas of work continuing to receive less attention than perhaps they should: Ridgeway theme projects; strategic links project.
- Risks: new CAMS volunteer learning the ropes, less Trail volunteer tasks on the Trail, new GIS (shift from MapInfo to ArcMap).

Key dates/events (see latest newsletter for partner events)

- 16th May – meeting with Buckinghamshire County Council 'Environment and Planning' portfolio holder, Bill Chappell
- 19th May – 3rd June – Chilterns Walking Festival
- May emergency closure of Trail in WHS extends restriction on public vehicles
- 25th July – RO meets with NE and other Trail Officers to define 'out of condition'
- 10th Aug – Chair and RO meet with HS2 Ltd
- 24th Aug - Sir Adrian Swire passed away
- 5th Sept – Wiltshire LAF
- 7th, 11th and 12th Sept – volunteer monitor events
- 14th Sept – launch of National Countryside Access Centre at Aston Rowant
- 22nd Sept – 6th Oct Chiltern Heritage Festival (Chiltern Society)
- 6th – 21st Oct – Chilterns Autumn Walking Festival (Chilterns Conservation Board)
- 9-11th Oct – National Trail Officer autumn meeting in Canterbury
- 10th Oct – joint practical event with Wildlife Trust and National Trust, Pulpit Hill
- Summer – surfacing project at Uffington
- 4th December – Friends of the Ridgeway meeting
- 2019 – Ridgeway Forum
- 2022 – 50th anniversary of Ridgeway

Fundraising by Trail Team

- RO attended a fundraising training event with Community Impact Bucks.
- Event donations for 2018 so far comprise £280 linked to three events - Ridgeway Rhino, SENSE Ridgeway and Ridgeway Relay (Marlborough Running Club). We are also expecting at least £2000 from Race to the Stones. RO will be chasing events who were expected to donate (MTB Marathon, Cancer Research UK Ridgeway and White Road Classic). We had promises of donations from 14 event organisers for 2018.
- RO assisted a film company working on the Trail near Aston Rowant in May, leading to a donation of £1,500 to Friends of the Ridgeway.
- HS2 Ltd made aware of opportunities for pedestrian and riding links over the HS2 line, improving the links between Coombe Hill and Wendover/Wendover Woods. Awaiting confirmation about what works could be integrated into HS2 construction

and what could be developed as separate projects/funding bids. There is an 11 year timeframe for the Community and Environment Fund (ending 2028).

- Bid to Friends of the Ridgeway for £2000 for volunteer monitor project was successful. This grant covers costs of three events and 37 packs of equipment for 'light jobs'.
- Bids to be submitted over the next 12 months:
 1. Bid to Friends of the Ridgeway for new Ridgeway leaflet, Avebury visitor counter and, if necessary, strategic links match.
 2. Bids for second phase of signing for agreed strategic links, including bid to Princes Risborough town council in November.
 3. POSTPONED - Bid to North Wessex Downs AONB SDF for promoted routes leaflet design and monitoring.

National Trail maintenance contracts

- Mowing contract was carried out by Buryhook Countryside Services, the same contractor as previous years. Only two sections are in this contract, in Oxfordshire. Grimm's ditch is being done by the Trail volunteers this year.

Major Trail maintenance projects

- New CAMS volunteer recruited and trained. CAMS is up-to-date in terms of issues on the Trail.
- Uffington surfacing project has been delayed due to Oxfordshire County Council staff and budget issues. It was due to be completed this summer using event organiser donations.
- A water tap near Sparsholt Firs burst in the freezing weather at the end of Feb and RO is currently seeking a leakage allowance to avoid paying a £700 bill.
- Volunteer scheme staff changes – Andy Mawer started 20th March and is focused on increasing efficiency. The loss of the assistant post and the drop to 1 day a week on the Ridgeway is causing a strain. The help provided by volunteer monitors doing 'light jobs' and the trial with the Vale of White Horse Ramblers practical group is very welcome. We hope work with the Chiltern Society PMVs will continue also.
- Chiltern gate project – there are 10 gates left to install, 5 of which are assigned to Buckinghamshire County Council. Trail Running Association has confirmed the 4 gates it wishes to link to its grant - plaques to be made for these gates.
- Avebury – Trail opened after a 21 day emergency closure longer than usual. Richard Broadhead advised RO not to hire consultants to compile information to inform a review of the TRO arrangements since his team could provide staff time. RO has quotes for a counter to be installed at Avebury and mapped the locations of field access gates to better understand agricultural vehicle movements. RO, Helen Miah (WHS Co-ordination Unit) and volunteer monitor have taken photos of the Trail once a month as part of a fixed point monitoring project. RO made a presentation to Wiltshire LAF on 5th September to provide an update on information gathered and the approach the Ridgeway Partnership is developing to tackle the problems in the WHS.
- RO yet to finalise the vehicle management paper – needs to run parallel with the WHS work.

National Trails Website and publicity/communications

- Numerous pubs, cafes etc have been added to the website thanks to new volunteer.
- Draft brief written for new Ridgeway Trail leaflet which will include an illustrated map.
- No progress made regarding circular walks and Facebook.
- Twitter followers increased from 775 to 855.

- TripAdvisor logos now on newsletters and Elaine Townson (Information Officer) is managing the account. TripAdvisor rating 4.5 out of 5 stars with 34 reviews (latest review 14th July 2018).
- RO is highlighting the 'Countryside Code' through new plaques, posters and newsletter articles. Summer newsletter included an article for dog walkers.
- Funding for the website remains a contentious issue amongst the Trail family.

Engagement with user groups and new audiences

- Oxford University Student Consultancy project produced a useful report about the population along The Ridgeway. This will inform future engagement work and allow projects to be tailored to local audiences.
- An Oxford University PhD student is starting a 'work experience' placement with RO.
- Alison Balfour-Lyn, on behalf of the Icknield Way Association, is leading on devising how the Ridgeway in the Chilterns will relate to the Icknield Way Trail (Riders' Route). Cycling UK is also taking a lead role in the Ridgeway Riding Route project.
- Through a presentation about WHS work at the Wiltshire LAF, the RO met several people representing GLASS and the TRF (vehicle user groups). RO has also made contact with GLEAM (against off-road vehicle use of byways).
- RO has made contact with a number of county archaeologists along the Trail. This is part of a Development Group initiative to develop an informed approach to conserving and promoting the Trail's historic features/aspects.
- Tim Clarke, on behalf of the North Wessex Downs AONB team, is liaising with farmers between Bury Down and Letcombe Regis to establish a farm cluster along The Ridgeway. This ties in with the Oxford University PhD research relating to managing long distance routes as ecological networks.
- Chilterns Conservation Board have been awarded a grant for their Beacons of the Past project. There will be opportunities for volunteers to take part in this project to improve the data and understanding we have about historic features within and around the Trail.

2. Volunteer update

- Andy Mawer is now recording volunteer hours.
- RO review of volunteer monitors has confirmed that 30 sections are covered by a Trail volunteer, leaving 7 sections needing volunteers. RO confident that these gaps in coverage will be filled in the next 3-6 months.
- Note that Andy Mawer started in 20th March and the volunteer task diary now allows for one day a week on The Ridgeway.

May (10th onwards)

4 Trail Tasks – 9 volunteers

1 Workshop – 3 volunteers

14th - Princess Risborough SVC (2 Vols)

29th - Ashbury SVC (4 Vols)

23rd – Sarah Wright Workshop – (3 vols)

30th - Hackpen Hill and Barbury Castle
SVC (3 Vols)

June

6 Trail Tasks – 11 Volunteers

4 Workshop Tasks – 8 Volunteers

4th - Tring Park signage removal (1 vol)

5th - Workshop - Tring Park signage
construction (3 vols)

6th - Tring Park Signage installation (2
vols)

12th - Snap to Liddington Hill SVC (2 vols)

14th - Sarah Wright Workshop – (2 vols)

19th - Blowingstone to Sparsholt SVC (2 vols)

20th – Sarah Wright workshop (2 vols)

25th - South Stoke SVC (2 vols)

26th - Watlington SVC (2 Vols)

27th - Sarah Wright workshop (1 vol)

July

4 Trail Tasks – 12 Volunteers

2nd - Lodge Hill SVC (3 vols)

10th - Grimms Ditch SVC (2 vols)

18th - Aston Rowant to Watlington SVC (3 vols)

26th Wantage Monument SVC (4 vols)

August

3 Trail Tasks – 11 Volunteers

1st – Snap SVC (3 Vols)

7th - Blowingstone to Letcombe Basset SVC (4 vols)

28th - Hackpen Hill SVC (4 vols)

Total tasks 12th May to 31st Aug 2018: 17 Trail tasks, 5 workshops

Total volunteers: 54

TBC Partner volunteers: None

0 corporate events

3. Website stats

No update for this report.

4. Counter stats (nr. Ogbourne St George)

A problem with the counter arose around 4-10th June and RO did an inspection mid July. The counters remain faulty, awaiting a fix by Traffic Technology. There is no reliable data for June onwards.

RO confirmed with Wiltshire Council that the vehicle counter at Ogbourne St George can be removed.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF 2018/19
Wednesday 16 May 2018 Speedwell House, Oxford

2018 (1)

Attending:

Members and their interest areas:

Stuart McGinness, **Chair** (SMG) - User - off-road cycling and leading youth cycle training
Matthew Judson, **Vice-chair** (MJ) - User- 4x4 use and leading youth outdoor hiking training
Gordon Garraway (GG) - Other – green space protection and recreational trails
Andrew Hawkins (AH) - Landmanaging – woodland owner and ecologist
Ilse Lambert (IL) -User-Trail riding (motorcycling)
Sarah Martin (SM) - User - walking and botany, permissive access
Harry St John (HSJ) - Landmanaging – land agent and district councillor

Observers/Guests:

Tom Bindoff (TB) – Update on BS5709:2018 and accessibility
Adrian Tremlett (AT) – Lost ways/DMMOs and legal processes
Rachel Livingstone (RL) – Lost ways/DMMOs and equestrian users
Beth Rutterford (BR) – OCC Rights of Way Officer

Oxfordshire County Council Officers attending to support OCAF:

Tom Scholes (TS) - Team Leader Technical Intelligence
James Blockley (JB) - Principal Officer Trees & Countryside Access
Adam McQueem (AMQ) – Officer Infrastructure Information Management
Lisa Gray (LG) – Acting Senior Rights of Way Officer
Paul Harris (PH) - OCAF Secretary/Countryside Access Strategy & Development Officer

1. Welcome and election/re-election of Chair and Vice-chair

Secretary opened the meeting and invited nominations. Stuart McGinness was elected Chair and Mathew Judson elected Vice-chair.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Members, guests, officers and observers gave brief introductions

3. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Apologies had been received from Philip, Dave, Troth, John and OCC officer Hugh Potter

Amend page 6 para 3 to “GG added that at Monitoring Group all were concerned that skilled field officers would have to go and look at potholes ~~instead of as well as~~ rights of way issues. He asked how staff can be expected to balance rights of way and road issues when it was likely that road inspections would have ~~to take over more priority.~~ Minor changes for two abbreviations. Signed as a correct record.

5. Matters arising

2018 (1) Action 1: (JB to supply group with examples of cost recovery or repairs to address extraordinary use and damage). JB reported that he had some work on this but pressures meant this needed to be deferred to a future meeting

2018 (1) Action 2: (HP to look at how TRO and other closure information is made available and how this could be improved). JB reported that Hugh Potter had not been able to update the meeting

about this

2018 (1) Action 3: *(Secretary to work with TW and YC and staff to set up a DMMO working group).*
On the agenda

2018 (1) Action 4: *(JB to supply OCAF with contact list of volunteer groups).* JB reported that he needed to check permissions for sending out contact details

Action 1: James Blockley and Hugh Potter to supply information/undertake actions 1, 2 and 4 to next OCAF meeting or provide a progress update

2018(1) 7 - Restructure

In response to a question on restructure impact by AH, JB reported that the team were settling down and contributing to the review of the first restructure phase – and it was hoped that stakeholders' views could be included. AH stated that it was unsatisfactory that skilled staff were looking at potholes which wasn't a good use of time. GG said there was a need to record time spent on pothole inspections as otherwise senior management would not be able to consider the impact. JB said he wasn't aware of records but that the 'Fix My Street' system may have this function. TS confirmed that some records are kept but that it was the intention of this approach that it would be an efficiency saving as potholes can be looked at whilst staff are in the area on rights of way assessments in that area – and staff can update records in the field. RL asked if parish contacts could do this. TS said that it was about minimising additional travel time and pothole inspection takes training – as well as highways safety issues. The added value of such a volunteer system 'superuser' including sending fix requests direct to contractor would have to be assessed for cost/risk benefits. JB recognised the good points made about community engagement and informed the group that a new post for community and volunteer engagement would be appointed to lead on other highways areas of operations. IL questioned the assumption that pothole inspections were opportunistic as some out of office messages indicated that officers were only focused on this and couldn't attend to rights of way issues.

RL asked whether the county had considered using college students such as Common Leys College as it could be beneficial to students as well as to the authority/public. JB acknowledged the value of this but as capacity in the team was down this active engagement with volunteers and groups could not be explored further yet. PH said that the team had used West Oxfordshire Training Service for many years but this and any scheme relies on committed staff/coordinators and other resources to support groups and this is why that scheme had stopped. It was acknowledged that Oxfordshire had restrictions on resources and that it should be a priority to work with community and volunteer groups – such as in Hampshire where community engagement officers had been appointed. BR said that from her time working recently for Hampshire the three officers for the area had made a real difference but there were still areas without any kind of community action. Some groups had access to additional matched funding sources.

6. Demonstration of the new CAMSWeb system by Adam McQueen

Adam showed attendees the new and improved CAMSWeb system including the means to report and track issues. The system was compatible with smartphones for use in the field. IL said that the new mapping system was a bit less functional than the old one as it didn't allow rights of way to be shown by use type and there was no provision to show restrictions and changes to the network on the web which should be used alongside on-ground signage. The Chair thanked AMQ for his presentation.

7. Update about Definitive Map related issues by Tom Scholes, Group Manager Asset Data & Systems

TS said that backlogs and team capacity were the main issue. The second phase of the departmental restructure had proposed half the numbers for team functions but this was successfully reversed thanks to making extremely detailed description of processes and the resources needed. The outcome of this was that most team members would be transferred into new roles without having to reapply for their jobs. The exception was for the replacement of Anita

Coghlan's permanent lead role and interviews were being held in June with a very strong internal and external applicant pool so hopefully the person would start soon. The new lead role would help to bring the team up to speed and build in succession planning, confidence and stability. A focus needed to be made on priorities up to 2026 especially as there are 105 applications for modification orders on the system.

RL asked about the 63 pages of anomaly reports and how they would be addressed including when they were OCC errors between different definitive maps. TS responded that he thought these needed prioritising in line with OCC's vision and values. LG added that when regulations were enacted the Deregulation Act could simplify some of these types of errors. RL and SMG said that the pressure for application processes is only going to increase so were resources going to be allocated to this. RL gave the example of the 63 cases in Shropshire with the Secretary of State (SoS) for an Article 14 direction (failure to determine an application within 12 months). TS said that pressures were being used to justify maintaining and increasing capacity and any directions by SoS would end up in a queue that could ultimately lead to a contempt of court situation but he wasn't aware of any authority that had been impacted in this way. SMG questioned if authorities had to stay within the law. TS confirmed that they do but there's no precedent of what happens if directions can't be complied with in the time period as there's no case law nationally yet. TS raised the learning and 'leaning' processes being undertaken by Gwen Harris that were looking at processes to check on efficiencies. Definitive map procedures need regular evaluating -just like motor racing where pit stops are essential to keep cars up to speed. From work done so far he said that some of the personal contact may have to drop away to make the application process more of a production line.

AT highlighted an issue he had been involved in and referred to text books on rights of way law which state that authorities should add claimed routes and upgrades under their own volition using the list of streets and inclosure awards as evidence of legal events meaning they could change the Definitive Map using a Legal Event Order. AT said that OCC rights of way officers would not look at the same evidence and hadn't given good reasons for this. He added that it is understood that resources are limited so the process should be streamlined. LG replied that they want to consider this but advice from OCC legal was that this was not the correct way to do this and meet the criteria for consideration as a qualifying legal event. She added that OCC can initiate the modification order process without an application but chooses to prioritise applications over anomaly investigations. TS added that some more thinking was needed about this based on legal opinion. AT said that he would like to challenge this advice but this had not been shared with him. He did not understand why OCC officers and processes seemed set up to obstruct. TB added that some years ago OCC seemed proud of its waiting list which effectively meant people had to go away and he felt it was used as a device to keep things ticking along as they were without changing ways of working. TS acknowledged that the list may have seemed like a brick wall and that the directorate need to improve as it was not acceptable to use the backlog to put people off. PH referred to the ambition set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan as well as to the corporate complaints process.

Working Group: TS said that the remit of this needs to be rethought with regard to how it fits into 2026 (cut-off date for DMMO cases based on pre 1949 documentary evidence) and the order of dealing with the outstanding modification order applications. SMG pointed out that it was still handy and necessary to have the working group meeting to understand priority setting and then bring to a future OCAF meeting. TS acknowledged this point and stated that the council was becoming less risk averse and so they will not write off any other approach including that undertaken by other authorities. The research into other authorities' work had been postponed due to the restructure case but this needed to be revised.

AT referred to Secretary of State's examination of backlogs and priority lists and how this can affect 'directions to determine' and said that where landowners could be persuaded to agree a dedication this should be prioritised. He gave the example where this had not happened in 15 years and he felt that OCC should pressurise and encourage landowners to dedicate in order to secure links without going through DMMO process. LG and TS jointly explained that this could end up with determinations being rushed in order to meet the 12-month target with later stages parked. This could be less efficient but this is the only current performance measure so may well be preferable to having directions imposed and subsequent disruptions to progressing workloads. In terms of dedication, OCC does prioritise these, but does not pressurise landowners.

Action 2: Tom Scholes to share legal advice on existing evidence and processing constituting a legal event

Action 3: Tom Scholes and OCAF Secretary to set up DMMO priority working group

8. Space for discussion following on from the Oxfordshire Rights of Way Monitoring Group 6th April: Nothing raised

9. British Standard 5709:2018 An update from Tom Bindoff

Tom gave the background to the development of the 2018 revisions to the standard and highlighted Natural England's significant role in bringing negotiations to a conclusion and enabling an agreed position to be reached amongst stakeholders. The standard should apply where an authority has the right to specify structures (e.g. public path orders and newly authorised structures). The guidance is non-statutory but as it included best practice it was a good aiming point for when public money was being spent on upgrading structures. The guidance doesn't go to the detail of specifying materials or suppliers and instead specifies the functions which can bring about new designs and/or modifications to suit local vernacular.

Bridleway gate changes had been brought about following extensive trials in York which influenced the development of the guide by field-based evaluation of what works and doesn't work. Minimum closing speed is now specified as well as the latching standard. Another new development is that all handles are to be coloured yellow so as benefit all types of user and make the gate operation more intuitive. Tom offered a more detailed presentation at a future meeting and undertook to circulate the 'understanding the new standard' summary. The Secretary agreed to circulate this with the minutes.

Tom highlighted the new National Land Access Centre opening at Aston Rowant. Until now there was nowhere where access practitioners, LAFs, farmers and councils could see all of the gates in place and working so Natural England made space at Aston Rowant to show best practice. Once the new standard-compliant structures are manufactured they would be installed. The site was being developed by volunteers and supported by Centrewire Ltd and there may have to be a charge for use and visits to offset some of the costs. The centre is intended to raise standards and encourage other manufacturers to innovate and produce more compliant structures.

The Chair thanked Tom for his informative presentation and the work he had done over the years to improve access.

Action 4: Secretary to circulate explanatory note about the new standard to members

10. Space for questions from members of public/observers or AOB

AT suggested that photos etc could benefit from a sense of scale using a pound coin or similar

The Chair reported that he had sent the managing vehicles letter to Councillor Constance on 2nd March but hadn't heard anything back. Secretary to follow up.

RL said that signatures were still visible on old DMMO applications. LG responded that the team were working to redact older files as a priority. SM requested meetings to be held in County Hall.

11. Next meeting

As per agenda item - fixed as far as possible for the 3rd Wednesday in May and November and optional 3rd Wednesday in February **-21 Nov 2018**, (27 Feb 2019) 15th May 2019, venue normally County Hall