

Appendix E

RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES - PROGRESS 2020/21

Key: PROW = 'public right(s) of way'; WBC = 'West Berkshire District Council'; AONB = 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'

ROWIP Reference: Green: complete

Amber: partially complete

Red: no work done.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP reference	Progress to date
A well-maintained and safe access network		
Produce a strategy to reduce the instances of laying of unauthorized tarmacadam surfaces on PROW and a policy to set out the District Council's approach to tarmacadam on PROW.	ROWIP 1	Ensure the message is continually disseminated via Land Charges searches, web site etc.
Carry out a complete condition survey of all Definitive PROW every five years.	ROWIP 2	Survey completed 2010. A new survey is planned for 2021/22. The volunteer Ramblers' Work Party group carries out a complete survey of the entire network once every 5 years, on a rolling programme.
Investigate the feasibility of a limited scheme to remunerate landowners for carrying out repair, maintenance and improvement works on PROW.	ROWIP 3	No progress.
Implement measures to ensure that landowners maintain all hedges adjacent to PROW so as to prevent obstruction of PROW by overgrowth.	ROWIP 4	Complete - WBC does not clear hedge overhang, and enforces against landowners when such growth impedes public access. A reminder to landowners about their responsibilities is sent in the annual autumn ploughing/cropping reminder letter.
Formally adopt the draft policy governing the maintenance of PROW used for access to residential properties, farms and other private land or establishments.	ROWIP 5	Completed.
Produce a design and consultation protocol for the repair, replacement and installation of bridges on PROW.	ROWIP 6	The WBC Bridges section inspects and maintains PROW bridges, and a system is in place
Review PROW sign and waymark designs to reduce future instances of fading and unauthorized relocation or redirection.	ROWIP 7	Some work has been done with manufacturers regarding reduction of fading, and monitoring takes place. Particular attention is to be given to monitoring the new generation of resin-coated signpost fingers which contain the WBC logo within the arrow. We are monitoring the performance of newer signs. Taller signs are

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		now used to prevent tampering. Procurement process beginning.
Remedy all unresolved PROW signage defects by the end of April each year.	ROWIP 8	The PROW Ranger team aims to complete this every winter.
Produce a prioritization scheme for physical works, vegetation clearance and enforcement on PROW.	ROWIP 9	Complete, and partially ongoing - a scheme of routine vegetation clearance has been in place for some years. A priority review was undertaken in 2018 to take into account increased growth due to climate change, and an increase in on-line reports from the public.
A legally-recorded PROW network		
'Consolidate' and publish the Definitive Map and Statement in a clear and useable format.	ROWIP 10	Re-digitisation at 1:1250 scale is complete and the new Definitive Map and Statement was published in 2019. The data is being added to the National Street Gazetteer, so that utility companies, etc. can see locations of PROW.
Each year to complete the processing of the annually-agreed list of applications for modification orders and path orders.	ROWIP 11	Completed each year. Any amendments to the programme are agreed by the Portfolio member.
Produce a published prioritization scheme for dealing with applications for modification orders and applications for path orders.	ROWIP 12	Completed.
Carry out risk assessments for trees within PROW and formulate a prioritized plan of action to ensure the safety of PROW users.	ROWIP 13	Priority locations have been identified and regular inspections and works take place. More locations may need to be added. Landowners are contacted where relevant.
Consider appropriate legal mechanisms to recognise acquisition of cycling rights along urban footpaths.	ROWIP 14	Little progress. Recent thinking is that cycling may lead to restricted byway status. 'No cycling' signs should not be installed where it is not known if the landowner objects. Sustrans may be of assistance.
An environmentally-sustainable access network		
Implement methods to prevent fly-tipping and littering of PROW and also improved methods for clearance of litter and fly-tipping when instances occur.	ROWIP 15	The Furniture Project group clears litter from selected routes. Fly tipping strategy is the responsibility of the WBC Waste Team. Tipping on PROW is cleared when accessible, otherwise contractors are needed. Approximately 150 fly-tips are cleared from PROW by the Waste Team each year. The Waste and PROW sections have used enforcement cameras at some hot spots. This work sits more

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		appropriately with the Waste Team.
Implement improved sustainable procurement practices	ROWIP 16	Sustainably-sourced wood is stipulated and recycled surfacing material used where possible. Vigilance will continue in the field of procurement. In 2018, some input was made into the WBC procurement process as part of a consultation following a procurement workshop.
Introduce improved environmentally-sustainable working practices, which also protect and enhance biodiversity and historic landscape and features.	ROWIP 17	To be done via a review of procedures and ongoing monitoring of environmental effects. A checklist has been compiled of environmental aspects to consider when carrying out practical works. PROW staff and volunteers have been trained in basic habitat identification. More advanced training is required. Consideration is being given to the use of recycled plastics for certain purposes. More work is needed on the impacts on trees of different types of surfacing - liaison with WBC's Tree and Ecology sections is taking place.
Providing information / promoting the use of the access network		
Increase the availability of PROW / access information and promotional material and explore greater use of a wider range of formats, to compliment relevant work carried out by others.	ROWIP 18	More work on improved use of electronic media and a more interactive web site are needed, with improvements to the WBC on-line map already having been made. Many Parish Plan teams are producing promotional leaflets. Work is needed to re-design and print the set of 8 WBC walks and rides leaflets, and the two WBC riding routes. However, there is a WBC hold on such work (councillor instruction). An on-line app is being created by IT for the series of WBC rural cycle maps.
Support parish councils and parish plan groups to increase the range and availability of promotional material for PROW / access.	ROWIP 19	Many Parish Plan teams are producing promotional leaflets. WBC officers have been told by councillors not to fund promotional work, but this instruction may have been rescinded.
Education / encouragement of responsible behaviour		

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Produce published material to provide information about PROW / access and about the responsibilities of PROW users, landowners and other bodies.	ROWIP 20	There is now a series of information sheets, and these need to be placed on the web site. Greater efforts are needed at dissemination of the information more widely. Greater use of social media needed.
Produce a formal policy for the management of vehicular use and vehicular surfaces, with the aim of improving the condition of PROW used by recreational vehicles.	ROWIP 21	Completed.
Implement procedures to remove unsuitable PROW from published satellite navigation routes.	ROWIP 22	A couple of routes have been removed from the material produced by some sat. nav. companies. More work is needed. Prospects for progress may be limited as there are so many companies. The best way appears to be to take measures on the ground at each problem site, e.g. signage. New 'Sat. Nav. Unreliable' signs have been installed at Drove Lane, Cold Ash (Byway 5).
Continue to contribute access information to the "Greenways" newsletter.	ROWIP 23	This particular newsletter has lapsed. More use of newsletters and publications is desirable to spread PROW news and good practice.
Explore opportunities to work with schools within the National Curriculum to increase understanding of the role of access within the countryside and the responsibilities of citizens.	ROWIP 24	No work done directly by PROW team. Some discussions on this subject have taken place at the Local Access Forum.
Development of new access		
Seek to promote, improve and create (where necessary) safe and commodious links between, within and around population centres, rural and urban facilities, attractions and transport interchanges.	ROWIP 25	Piecemeal work done annually via the annual programme of improvements and maintenance. A more planned approach is needed. BBOWT approval for the Snelsmore bridleway link has been given, and obstructions have been removed. Completion is planned for 2020. The Hermitage to Hamsptead Norreys railway line path was completed in 2020. New and improved routes are often created as part of the Path Orders Case Programme work.
Seek to promote, improve and create (where necessary) suitable routes to school and consider an increased maintenance programme for these routes.	ROWIP 26	Important school routes are prioritised for the regular clearance of vegetation. A priority is also given to surface improvements which may be required. The PROW team works with the School Transport

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		team.
Seek greater partnership with businesses and landowners to secure the provision of additional permissive or Definitive access for all users.	ROWIP 27	Some work to protect CAP permitted routes has been done by the LAF, which is active in campaigning independently for access post-Brexit. Work of this kind is not carried out by the PROW team unless opportunities arise indirectly from other work, e.g. path diversions.
Increase the provision of suitable equestrian routes where existing provision is low or fragmented, and where demand is high, especially routes which facilitate riding to and from livery yards without horseboxes.	ROWIP 28	Piecemeal work is done annually via the annual programme of improvements and maintenance. A more planned approach is needed.
Develop circular interlinking equestrian routes around settlements (“community circuits”) which also link to longer rides.	ROWIP 29	Piecemeal work is done annually via the annual programme of improvements and maintenance. A more planned approach is needed.
Increase access for equestrians and carriages on West Berkshire-managed commons.	ROWIP 30	Liaison needed with BBOWT. Note that BBOWT have recognized the lawful rights for horse riding on those commons with a Scheme of Management made under the 1889 Act following submissions by the BHS & LAF to the access audits.
Physical improvements to the access network		
Research and implement mechanisms to realign the road user hierarchy in favour of non-motorized transport modes, especially walking (LTP 2, policy WI9).	ROWIP 31	Need to review in the light of new LTP policies.
Work with partners in rural areas to identify opportunities for improving the safety of the physical environment, in particular for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders (LTP2, policy RSI 7).	ROWIP 32	Need to review in the light of new LTP policies.
Implement measures to ensure that all gates on equestrian routes are easily-openable from horseback, using best practice gate and latch designs and gate configurations. Mounting blocks to be installed where dismounting cannot be avoided.	ROWIP 33	To improve 10 to 12 equestrian gates per year would be achievable given resources. The British Horse Society has been consulted and has reported on the results of a survey of visiting 62 gates known to be a problem. The British Horse Society has offered a grant of £1000.
Increase the numbers of PROW signposts indicating destinations, distances and local attractions.	ROWIP 34	Some signposts already show these from an old project with parish councils. There may be scope to produce such signs where replacement is needed and the information would be useful.

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		<p>Some authorities, e.g. Herts, have much information on every signpost (e.g. path number, destination and mileage). An investigation revealed that the signs cost about twice as much to produce as those with basic status information.</p> <p>There are no plans for any major progress at present due to staff resource constraints and the higher priorities of statutory duties. There is also a question over the practical usefulness because the signage would often have to continue each time at several points beyond the roadside.</p>
Improve the signage of PROW in and around West Berkshire's countryside sites.	ROWIP 35	Much recent work has been done by the BBOWT access audits. Need to check that they are promoting access beyond the boundaries of their sites.
Implement measures to improve signage and promotion of all permissive access.	ROWIP 36	The routes are digitised for internal staff use. We cannot publicise these widely because there are so many variations in permission and we do not have the resources to review the paths and to keep the records up to date. Some are signed by WBC or by landowners.
Implement measures to improve management and promotion of open access land and links to and from access land.	ROWIP 37	Initial work only was done to waymark access routes when the legislation was introduced.
Improving accessibility for all users		
Identify routes and circuits which are suitable for promotion for use by those with restricted mobility, including within countryside sites. Promote and sign the routes in terms of grading and carry out works, where needed.	ROWIP 38	<p>Work is ongoing on a circular route at Purley. Another priority location needs to be identified, preferably in the urban fringe so as to provide maximum benefit.</p> <p>BBOWT have established routes on Snelsmore & Wokefield Commons, with a web page being developed.</p> <p>The WBC on-line map now shows locations of structures on PROW. There could be scope for a circular route around Speen Footpath 2.</p>
Continue to provide buggies, for those with restricted mobility, at West Berkshire countryside sites.	ROWIP 39	There was once a stock of buggies at Snelsmore Common, but there were some problems with use of the scooters, and booking. Find out from BBOWT if they plan any more such work.
Continue to improve the accessibility of structures on rights of way and introduce	ROWIP 40	There is an ongoing project to replace stiles with gaps or gates,

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and implement new incentives for landowners to do likewise.		mostly via volunteer help. For a number of years, one new easily-accessible gate was installed on average every three weeks via the volunteer Ramblers' Work Party team, and their 300 th gate was installed in 2019. The scheme is to continue, but a review in 2017 has concluded that one gate every four weeks will be less of a strain on staff and volunteer time, and will also allow the internal PROW Rangers to install additional gates occasionally.
Implement improved promotion of access to the PROW / access network for Walking the Way to Health (WHI) participants.	ROWIP 41	Waymarking of some 'Walk4Life' mile routes has taken place. More local short routes are planned around population centres. Work being led by the Public Health team. Closer working with the Public Health Team would be desirable going forward.
Establish greater dialogue with ethnic minority groups, children and young people and groups which traditionally do not visit the countryside, to produce an action plan of high-quality measures to encourage and maintain participation.	ROWIP 42	No progress by PROW team but work could be done to encourage this via other sections of WBC.
Support and encourage measures to provide shower, clothes-drying and cycle-parking facilities at schools, work places and other destinations, to encourage non-car transport.	ROWIP 43	For Transport Strategy Team, also via Cycle Forum.
Audit car park barriers on the access network, and ensure that access is possible for horseboxes, where appropriate.	ROWIP 44	Examples are Bury Down, Paices Wood, Hosehill Lake, Sheffield Bottom, Snelsmore Common, Bowdown House. Progress has been made by removal of the height restrictor at Snelsmore Common.
Seek new car parking, cycle parking and horsebox/trailer parking on the access network, where there is a proven need.	ROWIP 45	Little progress made.
Working with partners		
Provide support, where needed, to other bodies whose aspirations compliment those of this ROWIP.	ROWIP 46	Any offers of help are welcomed and considered. We try to use all offers if we can, providing it is cost-effective.
Encourage parish councils to use their full range of powers where appropriate and support the appointment of parish council public rights of way officers.	ROWIP 47	WBC is encouraging parishes to assist more with PROW work via the 'Devolution' scheme. There have been a number of enquiries

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		from parishes about how to take this forward.
Arrange formal rights of way training for parish public rights of way officers, parish plan teams and voluntary groups.	ROWIP 48	The Parish Council Devolution Scheme involves exploring how parishes can assist more with PROW work, therefore training requirements may arise. Advice sheets have been sent to parish councils on several occasions, and the Devolution literature also includes guidance. Advice has also been added to the WBC PROW web site. There are few requests for training from parishes but the PROW team would be willing to meet any such requests.
Continue to provide support and direction to voluntary groups and to encourage the participation of volunteers of all ages in access work.	ROWIP 49	The Furniture Project and Ramblers' Work Parties continue to help to maintain and improve the ROW network. A new volunteer strimming group was set up by WBC in 2017. A new group of volunteers to assist with surveys and site visits was set up in 2018. The idea of a volunteer volunteer co-ordinator has been discussed.
Support the access work identified within parish plans and 'Area Visions'.	ROWIP 50	Reactive support given when ROW team approached.
Improving working practices and customer care		
Create a comprehensive PROW / access library incorporating controlled copies.	ROWIP 51	An on-line and hard-copy library exists but it is not controlled, therefore there is no system to identify superseded items. It is also not a comprehensive library, but is added to only when items come to light.
Use all appropriate internal District Council communication channels to inform relevant parties of developments in PROW / access work.	ROWIP 52	More work could be done, e.g. Reporter.
Improve the efficiency and speed of use of available legal powers in relation to PROW.	ROWIP 53	Legal Notices can now be issued by the PROW team and in some cases the team have devolved powers to sign letters. Much work has been done to identify where direct action can be taken, thus reducing the length of some procedures.
Improve awareness of land management priorities and procedures amongst District Council PROW staff.	ROWIP 54	Efforts ongoing to increase knowledge of relevant aspects of land management. Recognised as an ongoing training need, some training has been given.
Liaise more closely with West Berkshire's Planning and Transport Strategy group, and other planning consultees, so as to benefit the PROW / access network.	ROWIP 55	At present the main mechanism is via the Cycle Forum (meets quarterly).

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Funding		
Investigate the feasibility of a grant scheme for access work by parish councils, parish plan groups and others, taking into account funding already available.	ROWIP 56	Successful schemes already run in Hampshire and Wiltshire. A cost/benefit analysis is required. Budgetary constraints following the 50% cut in the capital PROW budget means this is probably not a practical option at present.
Seek to involve community and special interest groups in funding and delivering small access schemes.	ROWIP 57	Little progress made, beyond the Parish Council Devolution Scheme.
Investigate opportunities for external and grant funding for PROW / access projects.	ROWIP 58	Little progress made, partly due to lack of staff time. Also, many grants are not available for statutory Council work. However, new promising sources can be accessed via Government money for sustainable transport, particularly cycling, and where the network has been severed by major roads. Some AONB funding has been acquired in the past but effort needs to be made to source more. Other possible promising sources might be the Greenham Common Trust, Landfill Communities Fund, etc.
Monitoring / continued consultation		
Continue to receive and consider requests for improved access, and to incorporate them into an annually-updated list of requests for specific access improvements.	ROWIP 59	Ongoing. All requests to date are shown on the staff mapping system. The 2005 ROWIP public requests are also shown on the public on-line map.
The Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum to advise on implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.	ROWIP 60	Via annual report to the LAF.
Learn and listen to views of others, at the same time seeking and implementing best practice in relation to PROW / access work.	ROWIP 61	Ongoing
Implement an effective internal method of recording good practice and lessons learnt in PROW / access work, for the benefit of present and future staff.	ROWIP 62	All staff are required to read the IPROW publication 'Waymark' each month. Efforts are made to record legal advice and learning points on the WBC shared system. There is an annual WBC training budget. The Senior Rights of Way Officer attends the quarterly

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		ADEPT SE Region working group meetings of PROW managers (and chaired the group 2018/19).
Produce an annual progress report on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Action Plan.	ROWIP 63	Sent to LAF and Portfolio member annually.

