

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016-26

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consult the Forum on the “*Consultation Draft Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Public Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-26*”.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 Background

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 all local highway authorities have a statutory duty to publish and review their Public Rights of Way Improvement Plans every ten years. The Royal Borough’s current Plan runs from 2005-2015 and the replacement Plan will cover the period 2016-2026. The Plan sets out the Council’s strategy for managing and improving the public rights of way network and other accessible routes in the Royal Borough over the next ten years.

During the period January to May 2015 a number of meetings and discussions have been held between the Council’s Rights of Way team and members of the Forum, and a Consultation Draft Plan was circulated in May to all Parish Council’s, neighbouring Highway Authorities and Natural England, as required by the legislation.

Copies of the Consultation Draft Plan were also sent to Maidenhead Civic Society, the National Farmers Union, the Royal East Berks Agricultural Association, and the Royal Forest Agricultural Association.

The 2016-2026 Plan is called a “*Public Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan*”, as it covers the management and improvement of the existing path network as well as seeking new or upgraded routes where possible. Unlike the 2005-2015 Plan, the new Plan includes maps showing the existing path networks and proposed new routes.

Annual “*Milestones Statements*” will be published each April as a mechanism for planning and monitoring the implementation of the ten year Plan.

The consultation draft Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2016 is included as Appendix A to this report. There are 7 maps which accompany the consultation draft which can be downloaded from <https://db.tt/w3pzdlj7> (42.5 mb). Paper copies of the plans will be available at the meeting.

2.2 Timescale

Following consideration by the Forum on 24th June, the Consultation Draft Plan will be submitted to the Council’s Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel on 20th July. This will be followed by a 10-week public consultation on the Draft Plan during August-October, then submission of the Final Plan to the Forum for comment on 11th November and to the Rights of Way Panel for approval on 7th December. The Plan will then come into effect from 1st January 2016.

2.3 Responses received to the Consultation Draft Plan

Maidenhead Civic Society: suggestion that the existing route of the “Millennium Walk” could usefully be shown on the maps contained within the Draft Plan. (*officer note: there is already a web-link in the text of the Draft Plan that takes readers to the Millennium Walk route map and leaflet, and this may be considered sufficient?*)

Wokingham Borough Council: suggestion that the two Borough's jointly investigate a proposal to provide a new horse riding link between Star Lane (part of the Knowl Hill Bridleway Circuit) and Canhurst Lane (Restricted Byway 40 Wargrave), within Wokingham Borough Council area. (*officer note: agreed that this would be a desirable network improvement, and could usefully be added to the list of site specific schemes in the Draft Plan*)

2.4 Commenting on the Plan

Any comments on the Consultation Draft Plan agreed by the Forum **at the meeting** will be reported to the Council's Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel which will be considering the Plan on 20th July.