

CONSULTATION ON “MILESTONES STATEMENT & PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN ANNUAL REVIEW 2021 - 2022”

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consult the Forum on the priorities, targets and service standards to be included in the ‘Milestones Statement & Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review 2021-2022’

**2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The Council produces a **Milestones Statement & Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review**, which sets out priorities, targets and service standards for public rights of way work in the coming year, and reviews progress made in the previous year. The Statement also includes an update on progress with implementation of the Public Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016/2026.
- 2.2 The Milestones Statement helps guide the work of the Council’s Public Rights of Way Team, ensures that available resources are directed towards agreed objectives and priorities, and enables effective monitoring of progress.
- 2.3 The Milestones Statement is scheduled to be submitted to the Council’s Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel for approval in March 2021, prior to publication in April 2021. The published Milestones Statement will then be circulated to all members of the Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel, Parish Councils, Local Access Forum members and others with an interest in the public rights of way network, and will also be published on the Borough website.
- 2.4 The views of the Local Access Forum are requested on the following:
- Priorities for 2021/22: Are there any recommended changes to the priorities listed in the current (2019/20) Milestones Statement (see Appendix A)?
  - Milestones Targets for 2021/22: Are there any recommended changes to the Milestones Targets listed in the current (2020/21) Milestones Statement (see Appendix A)?
  - Service Standards for 2021/22: Are there any recommended changes to the Service Standards listed in the (2020/21) Milestones Statement (see Appendix A)?

Progress towards the ‘Milestones Targets’ in the current year is also attached, and could be used to help inform the setting of targets for 2021/22.

# OBJECTIVES

## **2.1 Priorities for 2020/21**

- Maintenance and enforcement: bring all public rights of way up to an acceptable standard for all users.
- Encourage and support the involvement of volunteers in the maintenance and improvement of public rights of way.
- Equality of service: ensuring that the needs of all users, regardless of race, disability, sexuality, age and religion, are taken into account.
- Ensure that the Thames Path National Trail is consistently safe and easy to use by all members of the public.
- Seek to complete the missing links in the Millennium Walk.
- Partnership working: working with all interested parties in the management of public rights of way, (e.g. Local Access Forum, Parish Councils, Civic Societies, residents associations, user groups and landowners)
- Changes to the network: seek improvements in association with development and other proposals.
- Improvements: seek improvements and additions to the network to enhance connectivity for horse riders, cyclists and people with restricted mobility.
- Explore opportunities to extend, create or promote Multi-user Routes
- Ensure effective early consultation with interested parties on proposed changes to the network, in accordance with government regulations, circulars and codes of practice.
- Liaise with landowners and occupiers on all public rights of way matters, including updating and advising landowners on changes in legislation and encouraging the establishment of permitted routes.
- Maximise the use of recycled and reused materials in rights of way maintenance where practicable.
- Develop and enhance the information available online for public rights of way, including the use of social media where appropriate.

- Accessibility:

Aim to establish a network of urban, semi-urban and highly used footpaths to be reasonably accessible for people with disabilities, older people and parents / carers with young children.

The initial six localities to be surveyed are Battlemead Common, The Green Way, Ockwells Park & Thrift Wood, Cock Marsh, Boulters Lock and the Thames at Old Windsor

Recommendations from the annual footpath surveys to be considered for inclusion in the annual Milestones Statement and Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Investigate best practice path surface materials that enable people with disabilities to use public rights of way and other footpaths. Use the results to develop a list of suitable surfaces and the circumstances in which they might appropriately be used.

Adopt the signage and information approach used by South Downs National Park for all online and hard copy maps of green spaces and accessible walks/routes: access for all/many/some; mapping symbols include gradients/resting places/access controls; standard information templates

Consider the needs of people with disabilities in all footpath design and improvement programmes. Key aspects to consider: access to the route/site; appropriate footpath surfaces and width; removal of access barriers; resting places; connections with other footpaths/green spaces and transport (parking, bus stops); signage and information.

Develop a footpath survey template for use in areas where access for all or some routes are considered feasible. It should include the following elements: footpath surfaces, gradients and condition; obstacles (access barriers, stiles, gates, steps); hazards (tree roots, overhanging or intrusive vegetation, barbed wire); signage and information; resting places.

## **2.2 Milestones Targets for 2020/21**

### **Well Maintained**

**WM 1:** To ensure that all public rights of way are easy to use by members of the public. (This is based on the former 'Best Value Performance Indicator' for public rights of way). Target for 2020/21 is **95%**.

**WM 2:** To carry out major surface improvements/ vegetation clearance on **10** public rights of way.

**WM 3:** To repair or replace **7** bridges.

### **Well Publicised**

**WP 1:** To produce **1** new Parish rights of way leaflet.

**WP 2:** To assist others to produce effective promotional material: a minimum of **1** new or updated publication.

### **Improving Access and Connectivity**

**AC 1:** Create **1** new strategic path, either public right of way or permitted, to fill identified gaps in the public rights of way network, as/when opportunities arise.

**AC2:** To make **10** physical access improvements, including the replacement of stiles with gates or gaps, to facilitate use by those with special needs, the elderly, people with pushchairs etc.

***Note:** the above targets are 'subject to funding', and subject to change should the need arise. This will ensure flexibility considering changing circumstances, for example to take advantage of opportunities that may arise during the course of the year, discussions with landowners, funding sources for specific projects etc.*

## APPENDIX 4

### **Service standards**

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has the following key aims in relation to public rights of way:

- To ensure that the borough's public rights of way network is properly maintained and well publicised
- To ensure that public rights of way are safeguarded and enhanced
- To help landowners and users to understand their responsibilities and rights
- To consult and work with interested parties to achieve the provision of a well-maintained and signed network of public rights of way

### **We will liaise with and involve:**

- Local Access Forum
- Disability and Inclusion Forum
- Parish and Town Councils
- Natural England
- East Berks Ramblers
- Disabled Ramblers
- British Horse Society
- British Driving Society
- Cyclists' Touring Club
- Sustrans
- Vehicle User Groups
- National Farmers' Union
- Country Land & Business Association
- Thames Path Management Group
- Any other interested parties

**We will comply with British Standards** on all new structures and furniture, and where possible, upon replacement of existing structures or furniture. BS 5709-2018 gaps, gates and stiles; order of preference; a) gap, b) gate, c) kissing gate, d) stile. Barbed wire, razor wire, farm type electrical fences and suchlike should not normally be used in the vicinity of structures covered by this standard, but where these wires are necessary then assessment should be made of the effect they have on the safety and convenience of people in the vicinity. BS8300: part 1 2018: (Designing accessible and inclusive environments).

### **We will carry out:**

- A condition survey of each path every three years based on a rolling programme of six-monthly surveys (in partnership with East Berks Ramblers Association).
- An inspection of rights of way in a dangerous condition within one working day of notification, make safe within one working day of inspection, and inform correspondents of the results within three working days.

### **We will use our powers:**

- To enforce removal of any obstructions to the public rights of way network within three months of inspection, enforce compliance with the Rights of Way Act 1990 (ploughing etc) in accordance with the Council's Ploughing and Cropping procedure below, and give consideration to all available statutory powers including prosecutions where appropriate.

**Ploughing and cropping procedure:**

1. Make first contact with farmer via telephone and email (with a read receipt) to explain the report or issue. This telephone call and email should agree the date with the farmer for the resolution of the issue based upon the statutory 14-day deadline. Explain that if the works are not done by this deadline the issue will be reported to the Rural Payments Agency.
2. Take the 14-day deadline from the date that the farmer is first contacted by the Council. Where necessary, agree an extension of this deadline for up to 28 days, for example where ground conditions do not allow proper reinstatement within the normal 14-day period.
3. Request the farmer to contact RBWM when the reinstatement works have been done, if possible, providing photographic evidence. If the agreed deadline has not been met, the breach of regulations should then be reported to the Rural Payments Agency.
4. If the path has not been cleared and the path reinstated by the stated deadline the Council to arrange for a contractor to clear the path and reinstate the surface (as required) and the cost of these works is re-charged to the farmer. This issue is then closed.

**Public Rights of Way Milestones 2020-21: monthly summary (running total)**

		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar 31 <sup>st</sup> 2021
<b>2019-20 Achieved</b>	<b>Target 2020-21</b>												
<b>93%</b>	<b>95% easy to use</b>	-	-	-	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%				
<b>10</b>	<b>10 major surface or clearance jobs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>				
<b>11</b>	<b>7 bridge repairs or replaceme nts</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>				
<b>1</b>	<b>1 new Parish leaflet</b>	<b>0</b>											
<b>1</b>	<b>1 new prom. info. (assist others)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>										
<b>3</b>	<b>1 new path created</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>				
<b>10</b>	<b>10 access improvements</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>				