

Appendix 2:

Report to DMT: The Second Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP2), progress against key priorities in 2019/2020

The RoWIP is a 10-year strategic document that sets out how we intend to work with others to improve the management, provision and promotion of the Bracknell Forest Rights of Way (RoW) network.

There are ten RoWIP policies as follows:

1. Rights of way for all
2. Fulfil legal duties
3. Routes and links
4. Information and marketing
5. Responsible use
6. Preserve rural character
7. Sustainable benefits
8. Working in partnership
9. Raise strategic profile
10. Monitor and review

In summary, the actions required to make progress against all policies are underway, including:

1. Work is being completed by the council staff and volunteers to continuously capture data about the condition of the network and to prioritise works.
2. The Definitive Map is being maintained, TRO notifications and restrictions are being implemented and reported defects are being addressed.
3. New and adjusted links on the network are being explored and implemented.
4. Publicity about the network is ongoing with a vibrant Local Countryside Access Forum (LCAF) meeting regularly.
5. Work underway to engage with local landowners, and tackle issues such as fly-tipping, amongst other communications.
6. Where required input is made to the planning process to shape the protection and enhancement of the network.
7. Sustainable benefits are delivered wherever possible, through schemes such as school access routes and joint events with Public Health for instance.
8. Extensive work completed and in progress with Parish and Town Councils along with Police and other agencies, such as Natural England.
9. Various works to raise profile completed, including creating a logo for LCAF and embedding the network within the council's local plan.
10. Completed on a cyclical basis, through regular officer meetings, LCAF meetings, Quarterly Service reporting and these annual updates to DMT.

The detailed actions delivered in 2019/20 against each RoWIP policy are annexed below for reference. It should be noted that the capacity to deliver RoWIP actions has been affected during 2019/20 by several factors, including:

- Secondments of two P&C officers to other work/teams.
- Reduction in revenue budgets in the third and fourth quarters due to council-wide savings needed. This meant that works not already contractually or financially committed have been deferred to the next financial year.
- The impact of COVID-19 in the fourth quarter.

Update on actions delivered in 2019/20 against RoWIP2 policies

1. Rights of Way for All

Increase accessibility of the RoW network.

1.1 Identify and remove hindrances to using Rights of Way, such as stiles, unclear signage, poor surface condition, overgrown vegetation, etc.	
Where?	Actions delivered
Warf FP12	2 new accessible gates replacing a step-over stile and squeeze gate.
War FP23	Improvements to surface including a raised section of footpath and new edging
Bin RB17	Surfacing around western end
Crow RB12	Surface improvements to Devil's Highway (see further update under fulfilling legal duties).
Sand FP14	Surfacing to bottom 50 yards to alleviate waterlogging
Wink FP19	Repair to footbridge sleepers
War BW19	20 ton of road planning to lane
War FP24 into Wink FP28 Bin BR22 Warf BR24 / Bin BR22	Culvert crossing/bridge repairs
Wink FP19	Repair to footbridge sleepers
Sand FP24 Sand FP13A	Boardwalk repairs

1.1 Identify and remove hindrances to using Rights of Way, such as stiles, unclear signage, poor surface condition, overgrown vegetation, etc.

Where?	Actions delivered
Various	Vegetation maintenance - contractors completed approximately 15kms of verge flailing and 16km of strimming/hedgecutting twice per year.

2. Fulfil Legal Duties

Deliver statutory functions of Rights of Way.

2.2 Maintain the surface condition of Rights of Way to a level that's appropriate for its type of use.

Where?	Actions delivered
Crow RB 12	<p>Restrictions came into force on the 18 November, which restricts motor vehicles from using the section of Devil's Highway leading to Crowthorne Woods.</p> <p>The Right of Way is open to authorised users, which includes pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and carriage-drivers. Essential access is also available for carrying out forestry work, for emergency services and to homeowners with private access rights to their property.</p> <p>The restriction is necessary to prevent damage to the RoW surface along a route that is not constructed for motorised traffic. These changes will also help to protect the rare and valuable wildlife that can be found in Crowthorne Woods and Swinley Forest, which are part of the wider Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA).</p>

2.3 Ensure footbridges and culverts on Rights of Way are maintained.

Various locations	<p>Footbridges and culverts are visually inspected through six monthly BVPI surveys as well as volunteer inspections. Formal inspections are completed by Atkins as part of BFC Highways department inspections.</p> <p>See above</p>
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2.4 Ensure that paths are free from obstructions and misleading signs or notices.

Warf FP5	The council continues to seek a permanent solution to the unauthorised diversion and obstruction of the footpath, working with the various landowners involved.
Wink FP19	The council is seeking reinstatement of the unauthorised diversion and obstruction of the footpath across the polo pitches.

3. Routes and Links

Provide additional PRow network linkages and safe circular routes, expanding this to a wider Green Infrastructure network.

3.1 Provide safe links between Rights of Way along roads and improvements in standards of safety where paths cross the road and rail network.	
Where?	Actions delivered
Sand FP9a	<p>The only level crossing in the borough is in Sandhurst, across the mainline from Ambarrow Court.</p> <p>Network Rail and the council consulted on closing this unguarded crossing (Rail Crossing Diversion Order) which is on a public footpath.</p> <p>The Section 119A Order to close the level crossing at Ambarrow Hill and divert Sandhurst FP9A was made on 14 November and was confirmed as an unopposed order (no objections received) on 20 December 2019. The Order came into force on 27 January 2020.</p> <p>The National Trust has constructed a length of new path, funded by Network Rail. The footpath has been diverted over an existing bridge over the mainline, with the right of way diverted through the National Trust woodland at Ambarrow Hill. Access via footbridge much improved with new gates, FP surfacing and directional signage. The National Trust and Wellington College – as adjoining landowners, co-operated in enabling the diversion over their land.</p>
3.3 Provide a more joined up and useable network by identifying and addressing missing links and gaps in the network which will enhance existing access provision.	
Various to the north of the borough	Paths and routes that are included within new public open spaces created as a result of development have created new links and extensions to the network, most notably around the Warfield development where the Cabbage Hill SANG, East-West Green Corridor and The Cut riverside park have created paths that connect to existing byways and quiet lanes.
RoW and open spaces in Sandhurst	BFC working with Three Castles Path and LCAF to explore proposal for a footpath dedication in Ambarrow Hill to link with Sand FP10.
RoW and open spaces in Warfield	BFC working with LCAF and Thames Water to explore proposal for a new link between Cabbage Hill and Hazelwood Lane.
3.5 Improve routes between urban areas and the countryside.	
War BW8	Multi-use crossing constructed for Avery Lane byway where new access road crosses the byway, with segregated waiting area for horse riders. Required for new highway leading to the Newell Green housing development. TRO closed byway to motorised traffic.

4. Information and Marketing

Provide access information on Rights of Way and promote the network to encourage use.

4.1 Encourage use of Rights of Way via events, publicity and marketing.	
Where?	Action delivered
Borough-wide	Volunteers lead several free walks each year, which were advertised via P&Cs 6-monthly events leaflet, on BFCs events web page and via social media.
4.2 Promote Bracknell Forest as a prime destination for walking, cycling and horse riding.	
Lily Hill Park	P&C publicised traffic free cycle routes and a health and wellbeing initiative (social prescription) on viewing screens at an Outdoor Cinema event last summer.
4.4 Provide adequate waymarking on Rights of Way.	
Sandhurst	The Three Castles Path has been affected by the level crossing closure in Sandhurst. We have been working with the Ramblers and Open Spaces Society to ensure that the diversion from the published route is clearly signposted on site. (see also 3.1 above)

5. Responsible Use

Promote and publicise legal and responsible use of Rights of Way and access to the countryside, supporting landowners and land managers regarding public use of their land.

5.1 Work with landowners to secure improvements to Rights of Way and ensure their legal obligations are being maintained.	
Where?	Action delivered
Bin BR24 / War BR11	Thames Water resolved flooding issues to Hazelwood Lane caused from their property.
War BW17	Surfacing to Western end of Pendry's lane completed by landowner
War BW18	Stone supplied to residents of Goughs Barn Lane who intend on moving the stone and surfacing the lane themselves
Wink FP5	Footpath surface to be reinstated by landowner following vehicle track damage.

5.2 Reduce conflict between cyclists, walkers and horse riders on multi-use routes.	
Warf FP6	Installed No Cycling signs
N/A	Working with LCAF and Trail Riders Fellowship to design new multi-user path signs to encourage courteous behaviour and make users aware of rights and responsibilities.
5.3 Reduce the vulnerability of the PRow network to fly-tipping.	
Warf BW20	New metal bollard installed along western end of Hawthorn lane
5.5 Facilitate legitimate use of byways by recreational motor vehicles where this does not cause unacceptable surface or environmental damage and is unlikely to conflict with the enjoyment of other users.	
Byways in Warfield/Winkfield	Use of width restriction TROs instead of total prohibition of motorised vehicles on some byways in Warfield/Winkfield enables continued use by trail riders.

6. Preserve Rural Character

Protect the rural character of Rights of Way in the countryside.

6.1 Where a path is presently earth or grassed it shall not be surfaced with tarmac or aggregate unless there is a demonstrable strategic need, or to address issues such as erosion or flooding.	
Where?	Actions delivered
Warfield FP12	Newell Green, reconsult on Scotland House planning application, where rural path across field would be embedded in tarmac of new highway, contrary to RoWIP and Defra Rights of Way Circular (1/09).

7. Sustainable Benefits

Manage a countryside and access network that delivers benefits to health and wellbeing, economy and biodiversity.

7.1 Identify and promote the potential of the network to promote health and well-being.	
Where?	Actions delivered
Borough-wide	BFC supported volunteers to lead several free countryside walks, which contribute towards improving resident's health and wellbeing.
7.3 Improve and enhance the traffic free Rights of Way network around urban areas to increase the use of sustainable transport for accessing work, schools and services.	
See update provided under Rights of Way for all	Improving access to Right of Way, particularly to their surface, encourages more sustainable forms of travel (e.g. by foot, bike, wheelchair/mobility scooters, horse and carriage).

8. Working in Partnership

Develop volunteer initiatives and partnerships with other organisations to help make resources go further; collaborate with neighbouring authorities to deliver solutions to cross-border maintenance, legal and improvement issues.

8.2 Provide an integrated approach to highways, housing development and Rights of Way management.	
Where?	Actions delivered
N/A	We're working closely with Planning and Highways and are involving them more with LCAF related work.
8.3 Recognise existing support and encourage increased future parish /town council involvement in the management of public access. (Producing end of financial year report for town/parish council's) Regular reports on rights of way to Parish, Parks and Public Realm meetings.	
N/A	Copy of future DMT reports sent through to parish councils and updates provided at Parish, Parks and Public Realm meetings.
8.4 Make greater use of volunteers/ user groups' involvement in management of public access.	
War FP12	Volunteers used to remove and install gates
Various	Volunteers inspect 63kms of PRow twice per year spending roughly 105.2 hours. Local volunteer groups have spent 70 hours on PRow improvement works.
Sandhurst	Community Payback Service used to clear soil and leaf build up along Sandhurst footpaths

9. Raise Strategic Profile

Increased awareness of organisations and policy and decision-makers about the importance of Rights of Way and the wider green infrastructure network will enable better planning and development of neighbourhoods.

9.1 Promote the key role that Rights of Way play in maintaining Bracknell Forest's high quality of life within other strategies e.g. health and well-being benefits.	
Where?	Actions delivered
N/A	RoWIP is already embedded in council plans including Local Plan, LTP3, BAP etc. to promote the key role that RoW play in maintaining Bracknell Forest's high quality of life.
9.3 Improve the enhancement and protection of the PRow network through the planning process. Ensure RoWIP2 is quoted as a reference during planning applications affecting public Rights of Way.	
N/A	RoWIP is quoted in internal planning consultations where appropriate, to protect the network, prevent or reduce the effects of urbanisation and to prevent unauthorised obstruction or diversion. This includes pre-app advice where RoW are on or adjacent to sites.

10. Monitor and Review

Monitoring the condition of the PRow network and assessing progress made with RoWIP actions.

10.1 Monitoring the condition of Rights of Way and benchmark this data against that obtained from other neighbouring Local Authorities.	
Where?	Actions delivered
Various	BVPI inspections carried out last summer, covering approximately 8 kms of PRow per year.
N/A	BFC provides information to IPRow surveys and Ramblers FOIs, as well as comparing information with other unitary authorities and county councils through ADEPT South East Rights of Way Managers Group.
10.2 Review progress made with completing actions in the RoWIP.	
N/A	RoW team meet on a regular basis (either in person or via Microsoft Teams) to review progress made with delivery of RoWIP actions. Updates are provided as part of BFC's Quarterly Service Reports and the three LCAF meetings held each year. Report review outcomes to DMT annually.