



Photos: Explore Kent

Public Rights of Way & Access

ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

Public Protection Group



Public Rights of Way (PROW) & Access

SERVICE VISION

We protect, maintain, record and develop Public Rights of Way and access to provide high quality opportunities for residents of and visitors to Kent to explore and enjoy its iconic countryside, boost the rural economy and offer alternative transport options, as set out in the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan.

SERVICE OBJECTIVES

- **Well maintained countryside access;** delivery of a well-protected, better maintained and more accessible network.
- **Growth and development;** the protection of existing public rights of way in growth areas and securing improvements to the network associated with new development.
- **A more sensible network;** work to achieve a safer, less fragmented public rights of way network that better meets current demand.
- **Knowing what's out there;** providing high quality information that allows people to explore the countryside with confidence, promoting respect for the countryside, health benefits and supporting the rural economy and small business
- **Delivery of the customer services strategy;** react to changing demands and expectations using new technology to provide a better service to the customer.

“ [WE] WERE DELIGHTED TO SEE THAT THE BRIDGE HAS BEEN REPLACED WITH A DECKING 'CAUSEWAY'. THE CAUSEWAY IS A WONDERFUL PIECE OF WORK AND HAS ENABLED FOLK TO ENJOY THIS PATH ACROSS CHENNEL PARK. SO WE'D LIKE TO SAY THANK YOU FOR A JOB VERY WELL DONE! ”



“THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ALL YOU HAVE ACHIEVED ON THIS CASE. YOU WILL HAVE MADE THE LIVES OF MANY HORSE RIDERS MUCH BETTER.”



“
THANK YOU FOR YOUR EMAIL..... WE ARE
EXTREMELY GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR ALL YOU
HAVE DONE. IT IS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF
PROFESSIONALISM, COMPETENCE AND
POSITIVE ATTITUDE.”

2014/15 SUCCESSES

- The creation of a new public footpath now connects Kennington to the Eureka Leisure Park in Ashford. PROW and Access worked with the owners of the Leisure Park to create direct pedestrian access connecting 2,400 residents to the local cinema, restaurants and gym. The work included landscape planting and the route is fully accessible for people with reduced mobility.
- Following the extensive winter floods last year, a staggering 97 new bridge installations have been completed. The flooding caused significant disruption to the rights of way network and access to the countryside was severely restricted and hazardous in places. To maintain safety on the network and in response to overwhelming public feedback the repair and installations of these bridges was made a priority for the year with double the investment of an average year.
- £120,246 has been secured through the planning process for the protection and improvement of Public Rights of Way within new housing developments. Ensuring that pedestrian and cycle paths are constructed as part of any new development is critical to support independent living and provide valuable connections to local services that facilitate active lifestyles and sustainable transport choices.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION

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JUST WANT TO THANK YOU FOR GIVING MY WIFE AND I THE OPPORTUNITY TO WALK THROUGH ELHAM VALLEY, WE DOWNLOADED THE ROUTE MAP FROM YOUR WEB SITE AND SPENT 2 DAYS WALKING AND STAYING IN ELHAM ITSELF, WHICH WE ENJOYED AND HOPE TO RETURN TO.



I HAVE BEEN VERY IMPRESSED BY THE SPEED AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SERVICE THAT YOUR TEAM HAS PROVIDED AND AM GRATEFUL FOR THE PROMPT RESPONSE RECEIVED.

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECT

CREATION OF A TRAFFIC FREE PATH TO MERSHAM VILLAGE

KEYWORDS

Supporting Independent living, Active Lifestyles, Community Engagement, Quality of Life, Safety.

TARGET GROUPS

Residents and visitors to Mersham village

CONTEXT / BACKGROUND

Mersham is a small village in the surrounding countryside of Ashford with a population of approximately 1000 residents. The County member Andrew Wickham had been approached about an issue of pedestrian safety due to the lack of pavement along "The Street". Numerous residents and villagers have had to walk in the road, which has no speed restriction, to access Hatch Park and the frequent bus service on the A20.



DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT/ACTIVITY

- A Section 25 Public Footpath Creation agreement was negotiated with two affected landowners.
- The Parish Council were consulted on the surfacing, any furniture required and signage for the path.
- County Councillor Andrew Wickham used £7,500 of his Community Members Funds to help finance the project.
- The construction included a 150 metre long stone path, including a new timber bridge, two solar powered street lights and fencing to protect the arable field.
- The long term maintenance of the vegetation is to be managed by the Parish Council reducing the long term revenue liability of the scheme.
- Scheme cost £16,849.



RESULTS/SUCCESSES

The path was officially opened by the Parish Council, the local landowners and County Councillor on the 31st March 2015. Mersham residents and members of the local Parish Council turned out on a blustery morning to celebrate the completion of works.

Mersham Parish Council Chairman Mr Geoffrey Fletcher said "As soon as the contractors cleared the route, the villagers were using it. This is testament to the demand and desire for a safe alternative along this popular route to the A20. We are grateful to KCC for their dedication in seeing this project through and also to Councillor Wickham for the financial contribution. Naturally we are also indebted to the landowners, without whom this would not be possible."

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HIGHLIGHTED PROJECT

UPDATING THE REGISTERS OF COMMON LAND AND VILLAGE GREENS

KEYWORDS

Tackling disadvantage, Helping the Kent economy grow, Growth without Gridlock, Tourism, Public Health.

TARGET GROUPS

All Kent residents and visitors.

CONTEXT / BACKGROUND

Kent County Council is the 'Commons Registration Authority' for the county which means that it is responsible for holding the Registers of Common Land and Village Greens. These records were first compiled as a result of a duty imposed on the County Council by virtue of the Commons Registration Act 1965. Their purpose is to provide an official record of every piece of registered Common Land and Village Green in the county.

The current Registers of Common Land and Village Greens are held only in paper format, the vast majority of which were prepared in the late 1960s. Over time, these Registers have become increasingly susceptible to wear and tear and some have become very fragile. The maps are also increasingly difficult to interpret, not least due to the very small scale and often unclear depiction of the registered extent of the Common land or Village Greens, but also due to fact that considerable development has taken place across the county since the maps were produced in the late 1960s.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT/ACTIVITY

This is a long term project which it is hoped will culminate in the production of a modern and accurate record of all of the Common Land and Village Greens in the county.

The project will require each and every registration - which amounts to 215 Village Greens (roughly 900 acres of land) and 109 areas of Common Land (roughly 1940 acres of land) - to be carefully checked and the records to be digitised onto an up-to-date base map. This will involve going through all of the original application files and considering these against the current registrations.

So far, around one third of the registrations have been checked but there is still much work to do.

OUTCOMES/SUCSESSES

The project will result in the modernisation of the County Council's records in relation to Common Land and Village Green, as well as safeguarding the original records against further deterioration. In doing so, we will be able to deliver a more efficient service to customers.



THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TIME THIS MORNING, IT WAS BOTH HELPFUL AND INTERESTING TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE WHOLE PROW PROCESS. THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE SENT IS REALLY HELPFUL AND WILL INFORM OUR WORK FROM NOW ON.



HIGHLIGHTED PROJECT

ASSET MANAGEMENT – BRIDGES

PARTNERS INVOLVED

Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards, Bridge Engineers, Ecologists, Local Landowners, Volunteers.

KEYWORDS

Well maintained countryside access, Improving safety, Enhancing accessibility, A more sensible network, Developing partnerships.

TARGET GROUPS

Residents and visitors to Kent.

CONTEXT / BACKGROUND

The County Council has adopted asset management principles to maintain the 3000 bridges recorded on Kent's public rights of way (PROW) network. This approach aims to minimise disruption for path users by prioritising maintenance works and replacing structures as they reach the end of their effective life. Reports from the public, along with surveys by engineers, have identified issues with bridges across the county following recent winter storms and flooding events. The PROW & Access service is in the process of repairing and replacing these damaged structures to ensure the network is safe for the public to enjoy.

DESCRIPTION OF A BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

- Asset and conditional survey identified 6.5 metre bridge on Public Footpath KM196 (Yalding).
- Concrete structure found to be approaching the end of its operational life and in need of replacement.
- Obtained consent from internal drainage board to replace the bridge across the watercourse.
- Completed ecological assessment to check potential impact of bridge work on local wildlife habitat.
- Discussed plans with affected landowners and agreed site access for contractor to replace the bridge.
- New 10 metre timber bridge installed on top of the banks and securely anchored to avoid interference with drainage.
- The timber kit bridge design has relatively low maintenance costs and was the best value option for replacing the concrete structure.

RESULTS/SUCCESSES

The service resolved 189 bridge issues, including the installation of 97 new structures.

Diverse range of structures installed, included sleeper bridges, boardwalks and footbridges up to 15 metres long.

New bridges adhere to KCC PROW design standards. Where possible, steps adjacent to bridges were replaced with ramps to improve access.

PROW Officers completed training to help identify issues with bridge structures and plan remedial work.

NEXT STEPS

Maintaining structures on the PROW network is a constant challenge for the service.

Recent asset and conditional survey of 414 structures across Kent found 71 bridges that require attention.

Preparations are underway to resolve these bridge issues.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION

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