

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND ACCESS SERVICE

Review of the ROWIPs 2007 - 2017



Our approach



The Improvement Plan is produced in line with the statutory and subsequent guidance. In producing the RoWIP the PROW and Access Service has applied the Council's core project / commissioning process

(ANALYSE – PLAN – DO – REVIEW)

ANALYSE:

In the preparation of the earlier iterations of the Improvement Plan extensive research, consultation and engagement were undertaken. Further research, consultation and engagement has been undertaken in the preparation of this plan, including:

- Market research
- Relevant Strategies and Policies and Literature
- Data including – demographic information, health outcomes etc.
- Spatial data relating to the character and extent of the PROW network and accessible greenspace.
- Limitations to the use of the network such as fragmentation, structures and hazards.

PLAN:

Through analysis we have identified key objectives that the plan will aim to deliver. From these objectives the following themes have emerged:

A Well-Maintained Network – This is key to encouraging use by the public of the network and green space

Knowing What's Out There – The public need to know where routes and accessible green space are, where routes lead to and how they get there.

Evolution of the Network – The network needs to evolve to meet new demand in growth areas, to better meet existing need where there is a deficit in provision, and to better meet the needs of an ageing population.

Active Lifestyles – Society faces significant challenges particularly in respect of inactivity and mental health. Use of the PROW network and access to greenspace can play an important role in combating these challenges.

Efficient Delivery – Pressure on the public purse will continue, it is therefore critical that services are delivered as efficiently as possible and that resource is targeted most effectively to achieve the greatest benefit.

Rights and Responsibilities – Responsible, respectful use of the PROW network and accessible greenspace facilitates good relationships which in turn unlock the wider benefits that use may deliver.

DO:

The plan will guide the PROW and Access Service's work over the next 10 years. The delivery plan will detail the key themes, activities, timescale, available and required resource, and outputs and outcomes as well as the key partners we will need to work with to deliver each outcome. The plan (or Plan) will be used to guide activity to secure resources, for instance where projects may be eligible for and attract external funding.

REVIEW:

Progress will be monitored throughout the ten years of the plan and will focus on the delivery of the outcomes. Key themes annual report. The following areas will be reviewed: will detailed the delivery plan

Review of the ROWIP 2007 - 2017



The first Rights of Way Improvement Plan was produced in 2007–17. This plan was updated in 2013 to reflect the adoption of Bold Steps for Kent, the County Council's strategic statement. It was also an opportune time to reflect the focus on coastal access following the introduction of the Marine and Coastal Access Act of 2009.

Titled the Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP), the first plan was produced following extensive research and analysis, wide ranging public consultation and stakeholder engagement. Through that process seven key themes emerged:

- **Well maintained countryside access**
- **Growth and development**
- **A more sensible network**
- **Knowing what's out there**
- **Education and respect for the countryside**
- **Working smarter**
- **Improving customer service**

When updating the plan in 2013 the last two themes were combined under the heading '**Delivering the Customer Services Strategy**'.

The CAIP included a delivery plan setting out key objectives and actions to be delivered through the life of the plan to achieve those objectives.

Reviewing the CAIP has provided the opportunity to also reflect on where it hasn't been possible to deliver actions or delivery has only been partial. Understanding where and why it has not been possible to deliver is critical in helping frame the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2018-28. Our achievements from 2007 to 2017 are set out below against each of the objectives.

Responding to
600+
planning applications

Improving safety

4 Rail crossings improved



586

additional PRoW were recorded on the **Definitive Map**

Light commercial traffic rose
3.6%

10
10 TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS INTRODUCED



LEARN TO RIDE COURSE SET UP



Knowing what's out there



34
PROW CREATED

WALK TO WIN
web pages received
16,500
page views



EXPLORE KENT SOCIAL MEDIA



18500
followers on twitter



5000
on Facebook



14000 EXTRA VISITORS BECAUSE OF ACTIVE RAMSGATE



BRINGING £350000 IN TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY



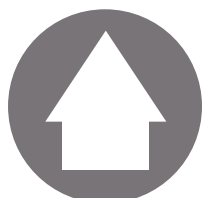
1127

Hectares of land have been mapped.

Legal Event Modification Orders made
789

Education and respect for the countryside

LEARN TO RIDE COURSE SET UP



Volunteer Countryside Access Wardens
12120 WAYMARKS

4805
obstruction issues resolved



A more sensible network

FIRST 2 sections of the England Coast Path opened in 2016

34
PROW
CREATED



586
additional PROW
were recorded on
the **Definitive Map**

Legal Event Modification Orders made
789



58
WITH HIGHER RIGHTS
(bridleway or
restricted byway)

**327 PUBLIC
PATH ORDERS**

Growth and development



13
multi user
routes
created

Responding to
600+
planning applications



**LEARN TO
RIDE COURSE
SET UP**

45
TOWN / VILLAGE
GREENS
TOTAL AREA OF

155
HECTARES WERE
REGISTERED IN
KENT



166

MISSING BRIDGES INSTALLED



4805
obstruction
issues
resolved

INSTALLED
12120
waymarks
10726
path end
plates

141 new oak
fingerposts / **25**
waymark posts
installed

**10 TRAFFIC
REGULATION
ORDERS
INTRODUCED**

2044
Existing bridges
were replaced or
repaired



Review of the ROWIP

Well Maintained Countryside Access

Increase the number of stiles that meet the British Standard.

- Countryside Design Standards, reflecting where applicable the British Standard BS5709:2006, were produced and promoted on the website and to land managers.
- A good design guide was produced and circulated to developers.



Improve the quality of path furniture.

- The Service produced and adopted an Asset Management Plan.
- Quality path furniture and materials meeting the design standard are supplied to landowners.

Improve signing and way-marking and enable destination signing

- Signage is replaced and maintained in line with the asset management plan.
- Path fingers were designed to include pictorial information, providing information about the use that may be made of Public Rights of Way (PROW). A coloured chevron consistent with the onward way-marking of the routes was also included
- Countryside Access Wardens were recruited and trained to undertake way-marking and the installation of path end plates. Since 2008 the Wardens have installed 12120 waymarks and 10726 path end plates.
- Templates and a mechanism to produce destination signs were produced.
- The North Downs Way was re-signed with distance and destination information and at a standard reflecting its status as a National Trail. 141 new oak fingerposts and 25 waymark posts were installed.

Make appropriate path surface improvements.

- The service created a simple prioritisation tool that enables surfacing improvements and asset management programmes to be evaluated on the basis of risk, compatibility with the asset management plan, CAIP policies, feasibility and funding.
- Using this tool surfacing schemes were prioritised that provided greatest benefit for the public.

Continue the responsible management of byways following Government guidance provided in 'Making the Best of Byways'.

The management of 56 byways were considered. Many of the byways were subject to drainage improvements and repair after which they were capable of supporting the motor vehicle use made of them. 10 Traffic Regulation Orders were introduced including permit systems and seasonal closures. The ability of all users, to continue the use byways, were preserved as far as is possible.

Install bridges where they are currently missing.

- Extensive surveys of the PROW bridge stock condition were completed.
- A risk based inspection regime was established.
- A schedule of the missing bridges was prepared and prioritised.
- 166 missing bridges were installed.
- 2044 existing bridges were replaced or repaired.

Seek the removal of stiles and barriers and only authorise new stiles where they are absolutely essential.

- A policy of least restrictive access was adopted.
- No new stiles were authorised on the network.
- During the period 2007-17, 5000 stiles and other restrictions to use were removed from the network. 70% of the network is now stile free.

Take appropriate enforcement action to resolve any illegal obstructions and changes to rights of way.

A complete network survey 2004-2007 identified 1452 obstruction and alignment issues. Of these 637 were resolved in the period through to 2013. The number of similar issues has grown to 1011. This was largely as a result of a number of alignment issues becoming evident as a result of the precision provided by the base mapping for the 2013 Definitive Map and Statement and the fact that this was far more up to date.

Between 2007-2017, 4805 obstruction and nuisance issues and 79 alignment issues were reported and resolved. 522 Notices were served and in 142 instances direct action was taken, following Notice, to remove obstructions.

Effectively manage resources through prioritising routes.

A system of route prioritisation was introduced giving greater priority to those paths in regular use and most likely to deliver beneficial outcomes to the public. The Service also introduced a simple costs benefit analysis to identify those works best delivering the statutory obligations and strategic objectives of the authority.

Remove and reduce the dumping of illegal waste on rights of way and open spaces.

A protocol was established with District and Borough Councils for dealing with fly tipped waste. Part of the initiative included 'signposting' customers to report incidents directly to their district council. The initiative was established in 2014 and Figure 1 below shows the number of fly tipping reports, to the PROW & Access Service, over the period of the CAIP:

Fly tipping Reports: 2007-2017

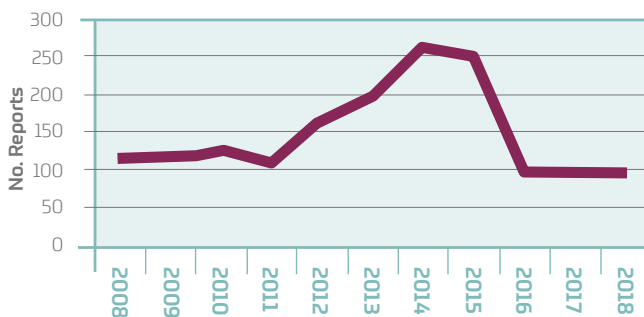


Figure 1

Fly tipping remains a common problem. Ninety-nine instances were reported in 2017. Levels seem to reflect general economic activity rather than the impact that enforcement may have

Three access by permit traffic regulation orders were introduced on byways which addressed significant issues, including fly tipping, at Bredhurst Woods, Lenham and Holly Hill.

The Service is actively working with other KCC departments, and the RSPCA, to address the dumping of dead horses. The collation, and mapping, of intelligence reports is helping to establish patterns in this behaviour and particular hotspots around the county.

Effectively manage access land and open green space.

The County Council was the first authority to have brought an enforcement action in respect to access

to Access Land. The action did expose the short comings in the legislative provisions for dealing with such obstructions. Only two further reports have been received in respect of access land which would suggest that in general its introduction has not posed any significant difficulty for users or land managers.

Reflection:

Much was achieved during the decade, not only in continuing to maintain the network but, in what became a very challenging financial environment, to better target activity at those projects and areas delivering, or likely to deliver, the greatest benefit to the public.

Adoption of asset management principles and the completion of a whole network survey in 2007 allowed maintenance activity to be better planned; and for the impacts of changing furniture specifications or materials to be fully understood. Above all it graphically demonstrated the gap between the cost of maintaining the network in an optimum condition and the funding available. Decisions as to which elements of the asset to under-resource could therefore be made on an informed basis. The plan also resulted in elements of the asset which were reported most regularly by the public as being out of condition, such as sleeper bridges, being proactively targeted. This not only brought these elements up to a higher standard but helped manage the numbers of reports being made. In 2010, 299 faults were logged relating to sleeper bridges by 2017 this had fallen to 35.

The removal of stiles and other barriers greatly increased the accessibility of the network (70% of which is now stile free). However, gains were haphazard and piecemeal often reflecting locations where existing stiles had failed or land managers were wishing to co-operate on access improvements rather than where their removal would provide greatest benefit. Greater analysis has now been completed to identify where a small number of stiles could be removed to improve access.

The introduction of Single Farm Payment and the requirement to follow Good Agricultural and Environmental Practice for those in receipt of the payment had a marked impact in reducing the levels of reported obstructions by crops.

Growth and development

Promote good design principles for new PROW created as part of development schemes.

The Service worked with David Huskison Architects to produce a Good Design Guide to inform and influence the design of new access provision associated with development.

Comment on and influence emerging policy documents that may impact on access to green space and the PROW network.

The Service responds to 600+ planning applications and planning strategy consultations annually. In 2017 the Service assessed 1085 applications and responded to 995 of these.

Proactively work with developers and local and regional planning authorities to protect and enhance existing public rights of way and green space, and advise on proposals for new green infrastructure.

In responding to planning applications and planning strategy consultations annually, the Service has the opportunity to influence strategy and design, protect the existing network, safeguard the benefits that it delivers and to secure funding for improvements associated with new development.

Develop multi-user routes that allow walking, cycling and horse riding from towns to the wider countryside.

13 multi user routes have been created during the period 2007-17. Including Loose Greenway, the A21 Tonbridge – Tunbridge Wells multi user route.



Seize the opportunity to implement improvements to the network through major transport infrastructure schemes.

Improvements to public access were secured through schemes to realign the A2 at Gravesend, to dual the A21 between Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells and construct a link road between the M20 and Kings Hill.



13
multi user routes created

Responding to
600+
planning applications



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TOWN / VILLAGE GREENS
TOTAL AREA OF
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18500
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Reflection:

Growth areas such as Dartford Gravesham and Ashford saw not only the greatest housing growth but consistently provided opportunities to improve the network to meet future need. This reflected the ability to secure new provision of well-designed routes within development through the planning process and just as importantly improvements to the surrounding network, to address increasing demand, funded through developer contributions.

Despite amendments to legislation in the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013, that enabled orders to be made for the diversion of PROW in advance of planning permission, inherent frictions remain between highways and development legislation. Development may be delayed while legal orders to divert or extinguish PROW are concluded. Worse, the development may progress in the absence of such orders. To address this issue the Service has:

- Entered into 10 service level agreements with Planning Authorities in Kent to process public path orders to ensure timely progress of such applications.
- Adopted practice to ensure that development does not progress in the absence of confirmed orders.

Prior to the 2013 Act applications to register land as a village green were often received when planning permission was being sought for a site. While often considered that applications were made to thwart development in reality a significant proportion of the applications were successful and entirely vindicated. In the period 2007 -17, 45 Town and Village Greens total area of 155 hectares were registered in Kent. The introduction of the 2013 Act initially resulted in a reduction in the number of Town and Village Green applications. There are currently 12 applications to register land as a Village Green under investigation.

There is a real opportunity through neighbourhood planning, community infrastructure levy, developer contributions and good design to deliver improvements to the network.

While growth and development provides the greatest opportunity to improve the network it does bring distinct challenges:

- Unless carefully designed the increased length of high quality routes brings with it an increased maintenance cost in the long term.
- Response to planning applications and the delivery of, off site, improvements place a demand on officer time, and can see disproportionate time committed to the principal growth areas.

A more sensible network

Establish a more complete PROW network, creating new links through consultation with members of the public and our partners.

789 Legal Event Modification Orders were made reflecting changes to the network following the successful confirmation of some form of order.

In all 586 additional PROW were recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement, including 58 with higher rights (bridleway or restricted byway). This principally reflected the recording of existing PROW in 10 formerly excluded areas.

34 PROW were created during the period 2007 -17 including 11 for bridleways and cycle tracks.

Increase provision for off-road horse riding and carriage driving.

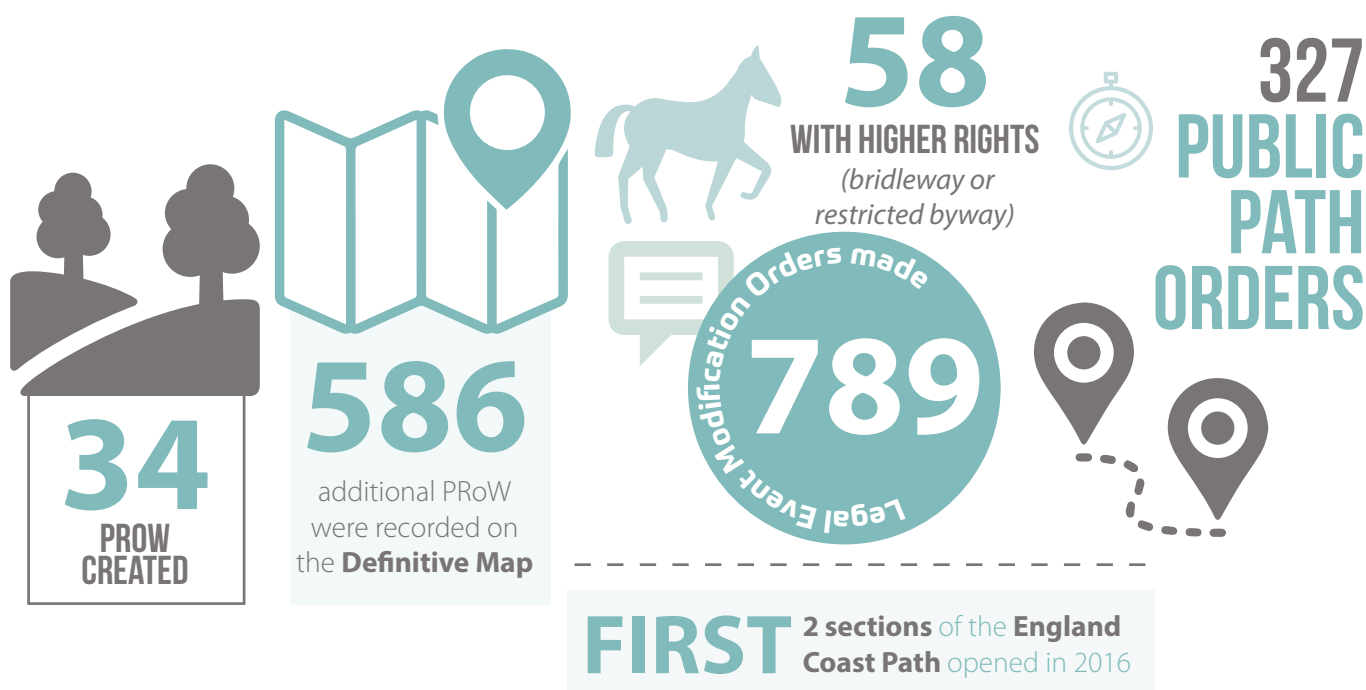
Deliver the needs of customers through developing new routes and improvements in areas of demand using data from customers, organisations and local communities.

Several PROW created in association with new development



Register requests for network improvements and projects coming from customers and community groups and organisations and prioritise these for action against this plan.

A record of requests and proposals for new provision was created and these proposals mapped. Unconstrained by any requirement to identify how such proposals could be delivered and how their delivery and future maintenance resourced it is perhaps no surprise that a great many desired links were identified while very few were delivered.



Establish greater provision of quality and promotable routes in the areas surrounding Ramsgate, Ashford, Folkestone, Dartford and Gravesham.

Significant growth in the Ashford, Dartford and Gravesham particularly resulted in the provision of additional PROW and work to improve the existing network.

Work closely with Natural England to establish the English National Coastal Trail and other routes requested by communities.

The first two sections of the England Coast Path in Kent, Camber (East Sussex) to Ramsgate were opened in July 2016. The remaining sections in Kent are currently in development.

Deliver a continued increase of traffic-free routes and a better connected network to support the development of tourism, and family and recreational cycling.

Two significant lengths of cycle track were created beside the Thames in Dartford and beside the River Medway between Barming and Aylesford.

Support increasing cycling for everyday journeys, seeking improvements to routes serving transport hubs, large employers and schools, and connecting cycling.

The continued extension of the equestrian and cycle network around Ashford provides excellent links to Ashford's key transport hubs and facilities. The creation of the Local Enterprise partnership funded Loose Green Way provides a high amenity link to Maidstone on foot and cycle as an alternative to the areas congested road network.

Develop closer links to Parish Councils who may be in a position to support locally important projects through the Community Infrastructure Levy or a higher precept.

The Service worked closely with a number of Parish Council's to deliver locally important projects such as the Hunton Village link (village centre to the School, Village Hall, park and church) and the off-road link between Mersham and the bus stop on the A20.

327 Public Path Orders were made in the landowner interest. These landowner funded applications often delivered some element of improvement to the network through the provision of less intrusive, better connected and safer routes that are more likely to be used by the wider public.



Reflection:

Improvement of the network to reach a point where it is "more sensible" and better meets current and future need will always be a slow (if not glacial) process as it is dependent on the successful confirmation of Public Path Orders in one form or another.

The greater opportunities in the next decade may well relate to making the best use of the existing highway network as a whole. The PROW network is currently fragmented, particularly when higher user rights (cycle, equestrian and carriage driving) are considered. There are existing elements of the road network where verges could be better maintained or improved to link PROW, or where it may be possible to amend intervention standards on lesser used, lower speed, sections of the road network so that pedestrian / cycle/ equestrian use are encouraged.

Knowing what's out there

Maintain and update the County's Definitive Map of PROW and Commons and Village Greens Register.

10 formerly excluded areas were mapped, allowing consolidation of the Definitive Map and Statement. After considerable work to digitise the Definitive Map information a new edition of the Definitive Map and Statement was published with a relevant date of 31st May 2013. A similar project to produce a full digital record of Common Land and Village Greens is underway. 1127 hectares of land have been mapped.

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In July 2016, local authority property searches changed and the PROW question (CON29) become a mandatory check for all property transactions; previously this was optional. In order to meet the anticipated uplift in demand The Service needed to develop a technical solution to help meet that demand within existing staff resource.

The bulk of search requests come through from our district/ borough partners and, following a process mapping exercise, a system was commissioned and developed with colleagues in ICT. The finished system reduced duplication of effort and automated the workflow wherever possible. This led to better back-office processes; improving the resilience of this service and helping officers manage their workload more efficiently.

The system allowed our district/borough customers to keep track of the searches they had submitted without contacting The Service. The system also allowed our district/borough partners to ascertain where a property was unaffected by PROW and did not, therefore, need the full input of The Service: this improved their response time to customers and ensures that The Service is only responding to 'affected' enquiries. where it is best placed to add value through its professional expertise.



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The Service actively responded to 2,482 search requests, where a property was deemed to be affected, in 2017. A further 14,784 searches carried out by district partners which did not result in a full search request to the service. These figures don't include personal searches requested outside of the system.

The next stage of development will be delivered when an online payments system is delivered (corporately). The intention is to make this system more widely available to anyone wishing to conduct a property search with us directly i.e. solicitors, search companies, homeowners etc. This will ensure a consistent method of contact and response for all of our customers. The Service is also engaging with colleagues in KHS to investigate potential integration of the two search processes.

Improve and develop the content and functionality of the "Explore Kent" website (www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent).

The Explore Kent website Explorekent.org was developed independent of Kent.gov.uk. The website was designed to have broader appeal to a wide audience and a greater reach. Content is regularly updated to promote current opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Increase awareness of the Explore Kent brand and the benefits of exploring the countryside and coast through targeted marketing and promotional activity. Raise awareness of Kent's walking, cycling, horse riding and disability provision and access to green space. Awareness of the Explore Kent brand was increased through informed, targeted marketing including through local papers and magazines and bus advertising. Social media was carefully used to promote the brand in a more efficient and lower cost way. Explore Kent now has 18500 followers on twitter and a Facebook community of 5000. A range of activities are promoted suitable for all users.

Produce and distribute information on cycling and horse riding.

High quality cycling information has been produced both in terms of online information and publications such as the town maps. A selection of riding opportunities, such as the Wye and Crundale rides,



are also promoted along with additional information about horse box parking. There are fewer promoted riding opportunities reflecting the fragmented nature of the bridleway network.

Produce and distribute information on circular walks and health walks.

Explore Kent continues to produce and promote high quality information on circular and health walks. This offer has expanded to include information about rainy day ideas, rail trails, links in to local transport and work place challenges.

Ensure that all information is accessible to disabled people.

Explorekent.org meets web content accessibility guidelines.

The PROW Interactive Map was developed to display limitations to use such as steps and stiles, so that users can make informed choices when planning a walk.

Knowing what's out there

Lead a strategic approach to expand the leisure walking, cycling and riding market in Kent in order to increase economic benefit, including improving understanding of the resource and development needs.

Explore Kent have led on a number of projects to secure the economic benefit of walking and cycling to local economies. One example of such a project was "Active Ramsgate". The project promoted Ramsgate as a destination for walking visits and breaks. On evaluation the project was estimated to have brought an extra 14000 extra visitors to Ramsgate over 2 years bringing £350000 in to the local economy and 5150 additional overnight stays.

Work closely with health care professionals to promote the health benefits of using public rights of way.

A particular highlight was the Walk to Win campaign; a three month campaign to encourage people living in East Kent to take more exercise through walking. The campaign built on previous joint initiatives and project work with the Primary Care Trust and other partners, such GPs who had made direct referrals to health walks.

The campaign targeted people living in areas of 'health inequality' in Thanet and sought to encourage them to take up regular healthy exercise by accessing the countryside and coast on their doorstep. Working with a health professional and using Mosaic, areas of health inequality were identified to ward level.

The campaign adopted a multi-media approach to achieve maximum reach. Activity included radio adverts, live on air reads, listener phone-ins, bus posters, and newspaper adverts. A popular local radio presenter supported the campaign and acted as a figure head for it. The results of the campaign

included 600 people from the target audience taking up the Walk to Win challenge, and 2,500 people visiting the local radio studios to collect a free pedometer and Explore Kent Walking information. The Walk to Win web pages received 16,500 page views.

Work with transport partners to ensure information is available at key gateways, including the Port of Dover, Manston Airport and International Rail Stations.

Information was made available at key transport hubs such as the Port of Dover and Ashford International Station. Links to the North Downs Way from stations along the route were promoted.

Reflection:

The health benefits of walking are well known and increasingly well articulated. Work with the East Kent Health Trusts and the Walk to Win campaign particularly demonstrated how beneficial health outcomes could be delivered. However, for longer term benefits to be delivered there needs to be consistent funding and an ongoing programme of activity rather than, as has tended to happen, one off short term funding for specific projects.

Explore Kent has been at the forefront of promoting outdoor recreational opportunities and has been an early innovator in this field: photo -guide, production of an Explore Kent App, the use of social media, providing quality assurance for the promoted walks and rides. Continued promotion and innovation will be key to ensuring that the health and economic benefits identified in this plan are secured for residents of and visitors to Kent.



Improving Safety

Manage the rights of way network with consideration for public safety and security, including identifying and improving road, rail and river crossings where there are safety concerns.

Substantial civil engineering challenges – importance of progressing PROW up the agenda of other agencies. A2 equestrian bridge installed 2010.

4 Rail crossings improved. Tovil- East Farleigh Crossing
A21 Tunbridge Wells – Pembury bridge provision.

Identify and investigate where the public rights of way network can provide safe alternative routes to avoid people having to walk, ride, or cycle on busy roads.

The Service has worked with landowners to provide “behind the hedge” links as an alternative to the far more costly construction of footways. The routes not only deliver the same outcome as a footway but are usually of higher amenity. An example of this is the creation of footpaths KM335, KM336 and KM337 to the north of Forge Lane, East Farleigh.

Develop the PROW network to support the County Council’s “Healthy Schools” initiative.

There are several examples of the Service working with local landowners and communities to deliver safer routes to school such as HB84 Palmarsh, linking local housing with Palmarsh Primary School.

At Hunton a permissive agreement allowed the construction of a path between the village centre and a range of local amenities including the Village Hall, recreation ground and church.

Promote guided walks and events through Explore Kent products & services to increase public confidence in the countryside.

The Explore Kent website promotes a comprehensive range of activities including guided walks and free “learn to ride” courses for cyclists designed to encourage use and build confidence.

Reflection:

It is a requirement that in preparing a Rights of Way Improvement Plan the whole highway network is considered. While the focus in terms of safety has been on improved crossing points, and as far as possible getting non-vehicle traffic off roads too little consideration has been given to non- motor vehicle access on the road network.

Motor vehicle access continues to grow. 325.5 billion vehicle miles are estimated in 2017, up 35% from 239.8 billion miles in 2010 . Notably light commercial traffic rose 3.6% from 2016. The impact that motor vehicle use of rural roads has on non-vehicle use of the network has been significant. It discourages more vulnerable users: 2070 road accidents involving equestrians were reported to the British Horse Society between November 2010 and March 2016. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents reports 18477 injuries to cyclists in road accidents. The PROW network becomes fragmented as a result as otherwise useful PROW cannot be reached other than via roads.

The provision or improvement of existing road verges (HA 1980 sec 71 duty) particularly where these may, if better maintained provide safe links to existing PROW should be a prioritised.

Measures to give greater priority to non- motor vehicle users particularly on quieter, slower sections of the road network, and to adopt different intervention measures for such sections of the highway network to discourage traffic growth should be explored.

4 Rail crossings improved

Light commercial traffic rose **3.6%**



LEARN TO RIDE COURSE SET UP

Education and respect for the countryside

Provide support and guidance to landowners, to ensure they are aware of their legal responsibilities.

The Service maintains a dedicated webpage to help landowners understand and fulfil their legal obligations. Eleven PDF leaflets have been produced to provide guidance on various aspects of landowner responsibilities. Additional sources of information are also sign-posted from this page.

In addition periodic reminders about landowner responsibilities are circulated via the National Farmers Union and the Country Land and Business Association.

The Service has also been active in engaging with the farming community through attendance at ploughing matches, livestock markets and Kent County Show.

The Service has worked with the Rural Payments Agency to ensure compliance with Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition 7b – keeping public rights of way open and accessible, a requirement of the Rural Payments schemes.

Figure 2 below shows level of reporting in regard to crops over the 10 year period 01/01/2007 to 31/12/2017.

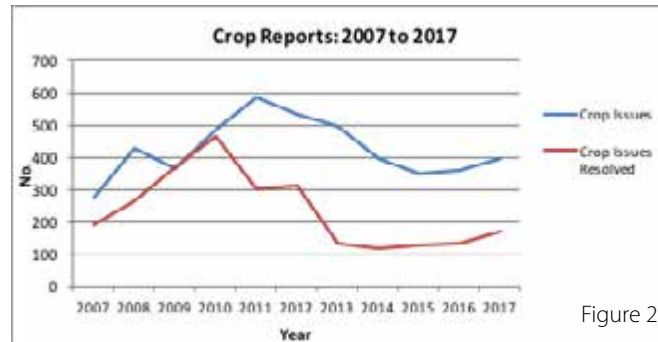


Figure 2

Produce information and relevant signs to protect and improve our natural environment.

Provide information and relevant signs to encourage use and protect landowner interests.

The Service has continued to have a range of signs produced and made available relating to the responsible use of the network by the public. Volunteer Countryside Access Wardens have installed 12120 waymarks to assist path users in navigating and to help minimise the impact of inadvertent trespass for land managers.

The Service provides advice and guidance to landowners who are seeking to prevent further public rights being established over their land. Approximately 30 statutory deposits and declarations are received each year from landowners.

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Ensure that our promotion activities inform the public about their rights and responsibilities.

The Service maintains web pages dedicated to promoting responsible access. The Kent Countryside Access Forum has been active in promoting responsible access with dogs, including information about where dogs must be kept under close control. Explore Kent promotes the Countryside Code and responsible dog walking on its home page. The Service produced an educational resource promoting the responsible exploration of the countryside. This was closely tied to the national curriculum for key stage 2 and was circulated to all primary schools in Kent.

Aim to deliver wider environmental benefits through the delivery of improvement schemes using guidance included within the Good Design Guide.

The Service has increasingly included elements within the design of improvements and repairs to deliver wider benefits, whether this be through leaving cleared wood in situ as habitat piles or the including sowing wildflowers in the verges of surfacing schemes. The Service worked with the Natural Environment Team to produce a guidance pack for Officers to ensure that proportionate environmental assessments are undertaken prior to the delivery of schemes and where appropriate mitigation measures included.

The Service has contributed in the delivery of landscape scale projects such as the Valley of Visions – in the Medway Gap and the Old Chalk New Downs project in the Kent Downs AONB.

Reflection:

While active in this area the joint pressures of a growing population and increased housing provision, particularly in the growth areas will bring new challenges. Previously little used PROW that were some distance from the urban fringe may see a substantial increase in use, as is apparent at Ashford and Gravesend. This increase in use will inevitably bring with it a level of irresponsible and nuisance use. There will be a significant challenge in these areas to not only promote the benefits of access to the wider countryside but to promote responsible and respectful use. The Kent Countryside Access Forum may be well placed to lead in this area.



Delivering the Customer Service Strategy

Regularly review our policies and procedures to maintain efficiency and improve customer service.

Constant review. Engaging with wider corporate initiatives to ensure a consistent message and brand across the wider council.

Embrace new technology and procedures in to delivering an effective service.

The Service adopted the use of the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS), in 2007, as its back-office asset management repository. This allowed a move towards a digital format, centrally-held, single source of information; signifying a departure from disparate data and traditional paper files held locally. Regular meetings are held, with system stakeholders, to ensure consistent recording of information and to identify, and deliver, system development to improve efficiencies in workflow.

The Service realised its desire to enable on-line customer fault reporting in 2010. Working closely with the supplier of CAMS, a pioneering system was developed whereby customer reports could be logged via an interactive map and could be vetted before automatic acceptance directly into CAMS. The customer experience was improved by allowing faults to be logged quickly and at a convenient time for the customer; not just office hours. The automation of customer update emails was also a key customer improvement: from acknowledging the initial report to keeping the customer informed as the fault progresses.

There were myriad back-office benefits to the reporting system. Prior to the system, fault reports were made descriptively and may have been received in text containing multiple reports. To accurately determine the nature of the problem, and the actual location, was more time intensive for officers and often resulted in either more time spent on site, or, in additional time clarifying the location with the customer. With the customer pinpointing the fault location on the online map the location was determined more accurately, than through descriptive text. Capturing the entry of key fault type information, through drop-down options, also ensured that information was being



captured consistently and time was being saved, in the back office, in transcribing fault details from other formats: email, letter, telephone etc.

The on-line reporting system was further developed to incorporate the logging of volunteer activity under the Countryside Access Warden scheme. This replaced a paper-based system, which was very resource-intensive in manually inputting this same information into CAMS.

The latest update to the on-line reporting system (2017) has delivered a number of key improvements, many of which are the result of customer feedback. The site is now mobile-responsive, meaning that it can be used on smartphones and tablet devices while out walking. The site will integrate with the GPS, on these same devices, to allow customers to locate themselves on a map accurately: beneficial for both navigation and for accurate fault logging. Customers are now able to include photo attachments with their reports. This helps illustrate the nature and extent of the problem and allows officers to assess priority, more accurately, without visiting site. The on-line reporting site now also shows existing faults already known to The Service and allows customers to add additional detail to these faults and also to opt-in to email updates reducing duplication in the back office and ensuring a better customer experience.

Maintain a condition survey of the entire PROW network, in order to keep an up-to-date asset register to help with management decisions. This should include logging any observations and evidence of climate change impacts as appropriate.

Volunteers: 2007 to 31/12/2017

- 465 volunteers (CAWs) over the course of the CAW project (139 recorded as active currently*)
- Paths visited 49,621 (No work required on 22,620 and work carried out on 27,001)
- Gates Adjusted 686
- Spot vegetation carried out 28,043
- 12,120 waymarks installed
- 10,726 Path end plates installed

*likely changed since the time of first publication
 Fault Reports – These are all fault reports (excluding officer logged) so in some instances represent the same fault reported by multiple persons i.e. they have the same Maint Code.

Year	CAW or Other Volunteer	Member of Public or Other Interested Party i.e. parish, district, landowner etc.
2007	22	3751
2008	63	4835
2009	180	4489
2010	442	6465
2011	300	10228
2012	264	12400
2013	259	10721
2014	164	14832
2015	98	10786
v2016	55	16525
2017	10	9248

Weather events – flooding impacts: 100 bridge anchors installed to prevent loss of bridge to flood event.

Provide intelligent analysis of customer contact so that resources are focussed on those areas that matter to them.

Mosaic analysis, market research and wider analysis of research and policy is undertaken in the production of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This ensures that customer needs and views contribute significantly in aligning service delivery with the priorities of our customers.

Seek additional funding to deliver the objectives of the Improvement Plan.

Secure external funding to support Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan objectives that can be invested in Kent’s businesses and communities. The Service has been incredibly successful in securing funding for improvements to the network through sources as diverse as: developer contributions, Interreg, landowners, Borough and parish councils, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, elected members, stakeholder groups and Tesco’s bags of help. The funding has not only allowed elements of the network to be improved at a time of austerity but critically has acted to off set some of the revenue pressures faced by the Service.

Data analysis is used to help identify trends and patterns that are of assistance in supporting bids.

Increase understanding of the needs of groups that are under-engaged in access to the countryside, and champion this agenda across other service providers.

In production of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan the Service has undertaken extensive market research, stakeholder engagement and focus groups. This further builds on the work and projects delivered during the first 10 years of the plan.