



Rights of Way and Countryside Access

Annual Report 2019 - 20



SURREY

INTRODUCTION

This report contains work carried out by Surrey County Council's Countryside Access Team for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. It follows the format of The Rights of Way Statement for Surrey, which was published in January 2010 and sets out the policies, procedures and service standards for work on public rights of way in Surrey.

Keeping Surrey's public rights of way network legally defined and well maintained is a significant challenge in the current financial climate. The County Council has set a budget for this work and officers in the Countryside Access and Operations Team continue to look for the most cost effective and efficient ways to undertake our statutory duties. Careful prioritisation of issues, with particular focus on public safety is very important. We have reviewed many of our processes and ways of working to deliver the best possible service we can within the available budget. We have increased our work with many different partners with an interest in countryside access to keep the path network in good condition. We are particularly grateful to the army of volunteers who continue to undertake a wide range of tasks to help keep Surrey's wonderful countryside accessible for local people and visitors alike.

Surrey County Council's Corporate Strategy sets out three Strategic Goals that we need to get right to ensure we are delivering good public services. Within this report, we hope to show how those goals are embedded in our countryside access work.

- Wellbeing – The County Council has a key role in providing health, wellbeing and social care services. Access to the Countryside provides residents and visitors with a valuable opportunity for fresh air and exercise in some of the most scenic landscapes in the country. Pastimes such as mountain biking, horse riding and walking are extremely popular in Surrey and the benefits from pursuing these activities is immeasurable for people's health and wellbeing. An understanding and appreciation of the valuable natural landscape around us can be gained by a simple walk with a good view.
- Economic prosperity – The rural economy forms a vital, but sometimes overlooked part of Surrey's successful and diverse economy. Many activities associated with countryside access play an important role in supporting businesses in rural areas. Village shops, riding stables, B&Bs, and cycle shops are just some of the examples of businesses who rely on both residents and visitors for trade. The rights of way network is an attractive magnet to draw people to these businesses and help support the local economy.
- Resident experience – Surrey residents' experience of public services should be easy to use, responsive and offer good value for money. The Countryside Access Team actively engage with users groups, parish councils and individual residents to try to reflect local priorities in the work we do. We have invested significant resources in improving our web based information and reporting systems. We regularly review our procurement activities to ensure we are spending our funding wisely and encourage volunteer self-help initiatives to help maintain the public path network whilst reducing the burden on the public purse.

I hope that you find this report interesting and informative and would like to take this opportunity to thank all those, particularly our volunteers, who have helped during the year. Please feel free to contact me if you would like more information or to discuss work covered in this report.

Steve Mitchell
Countryside Access & Operations Manager

The Rights of Way Statement and Annual Report set out three main objectives that we report on:

OBJECTIVE 1: LEGALLY DEFINED AND IMPROVED WHERE APPROPRIATE

The County Council's first objective for management of the public rights of way network is as follows.

- All of Surrey will be covered by a Definitive Map and Statement which correctly records the line and legal status of all rights of way in the County.
- Improvements to the rights of way network will be made, particularly to meet present and likely future needs of the public, to give opportunities for exercise, recreation and enjoyment and having regard to the needs of blind and partially sighted people and those with mobility difficulties.

Definitive Map and Statement

The Definitive Map and Statement is publicly available at County Hall - Kingston-upon-Thames, Merrow Depot - Guildford and at borough and district council offices for inspection during normal office hours (email: rightsofway@surreycc.gov.uk).

Priority Statement for Public Rights of Way

The Priority Statement (legal definition) sets out the County Council's priorities for keeping the Definitive Map and Statement under continuous review. It is available for public inspection.

Legal Event Order

The annual Legal Events Order to update the Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) will be made in September 2020. This will bring the DMS up to date for the year, covering 'legal events' as a result of orders made under the Highways Act 1980, Town & Country Planning Act 1990 or dedications accepted by the County Council during the last year.

Map Modification Orders

The County Council investigates applications (formal claims under schedule 14 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981) to modify the Definitive Map and Statement. Within the year to 1 April 2019 the position was as follows.

Number of new claims received:

Formal: 10 Informal: 12

Number of claims determined: 3

Accepted: 3 Rejected: 0

Number of appeals against Surrey County Council decision not to make a Map Modification Order:

Made: 1 Determined: 0

Total number of claimed paths received/ being investigated as at 1 April 2020:

30

Rights of way added to the Definitive Map following claims:

Bridleways 566 and 3 (Wisley) and 129 (Byfleet)

Restricted Byway 41 (Walton and Weybridge)

Footpath 602 (Busbridge)

The following rights of way were added to the Definitive Map following landowner dedications:

Bridleway 70 (Staines)
Parts of Footpath 194 (Camberley and Frimley)
Bridleway 31 (Camberley and Frimley)
Footpath 302 (Farnham)
602 (Thursley)

Definitive Map Modification Orders submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for determination:

From Rectory Lane and Lyndhurst Road and around the perimeter of the field, Woodmansterne, (Banstead) 2015. CP570
Winkworth Arboretum, (Busbridge) 2011 CP547

A [register of map modification orders](#) is available on the County Council website.

Register of Declarations, Statements and Maps

A register of Highways Act 1980 Declarations, Statements and Maps is available on the County Council website: www.surreycc.gov.uk/rightsofway

Temporary Path Closures

We processed 48 temporary path closure orders for reasons of public safety or essential works.

Anomalies

We are currently aware of 185 path 'legal anomalies', most of these are minor variations between the Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) and the used path on the ground. The target in the Rights of Way Statement is to resolve at least 10 anomalies a year. During 2019/20, 4 anomalies have been resolved and removed from the list following the making of legal orders or 'opening up' on their correct legal lines. A number of others are being worked on to seek resolutions.

Creation, Diversion and Extinguishment of Rights of Way

The County Council has powers under the Highways Act (HA) and Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) (where we are the Planning Authority) to make legal orders to create, divert and extinguish public rights of way. During the year 6 HA & TCPA diversion and creation orders were confirmed. These were:

- FP 602 Thursley – Dedication
- FP 85a Thursley – Diversion
- FP 603 Thursley – Creation
- FP 49 Woking – Diversion
- FP 130 West End – Diversion
- FP 494 Burstow – Diversion

We completed 1 TCPA diversion on behalf of Waverley BC: FP 300 Farnham.

We processed 2 HA diversions on behalf of Kent County Council. This work helps to generate income.

Traffic Regulation Orders

No Traffic Regulation Orders were made on BOATs.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The County Council has a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and update the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The plan was first published in 2007 and reviewed in 2014. It provides a framework to guide efforts to improve rights of way in Surrey. The ROWIP reflects a range of current policies and initiatives relating to public rights of way/access and provides us with guidance and support for improving public access. The County Council does not have a specific budget for ROWIP improvements, so rely on gaining additional funding for projects where available. This can come from planning contributions, grants and from other parts of the County Council, such as the Local Sustainable Transport Funds. Individual improvements contributing to the ROWIP Action Plan objectives completed since 2007 are reported in the revised document on our website.

A Case Study:

The Countryside Access Team worked closely with the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust, with the support of the local County Councillor, to make significant improvements to a well-used section of FP52. CCHT applied to Elmbridge Borough Council to secure Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to meet the cost of the works. The project to improve the surface and provide a path that can be used all year round, as well as a RADAR gate for less able users, was managed by SCC and has been welcomed by the community.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROPERLY MAINTAINED

The County Council's second objective for management of the public rights of way network is as follows.

- Rights of Way should be open and available for use so that any user can find the start, follow the line of the path and use it in accordance with its legal status.

The Priority Statement (maintenance and enforcement) sets out how we deal with practical problems on the rights of way network is annexed to the [Rights of Way Statement 2010](#)

Path Inspection

Paths are normally only inspected on a 'reactive' basis, as and when we are made aware of an issue that needs investigating. We received 3544 reports last year from members of the public of path issues for investigation. We prioritise these issues in accordance with the Priority Statement (maintenance and enforcement). 1997 issues were resolved and we currently have around 2406 'live' maintenance or enforcement issues to deal with. Public safety issues are inspected as a high priority. Routes that are actively promoted by the County Council, such as the North Downs Way and Thames Path are normally inspected on a 'pro-active' basis, once a year, to ensure they are maintained to a high standard.

Vegetation Clearance

The annual vegetation clearance programme is normally carried out between May and August. All paths likely to become obstructed by annual vegetation growth received one cut during the growing season. Paths were prioritised for cutting concentrating on routes to schools, stations and community centres. Some paths received 2 cuts where resources allowed. We cleared 129km in Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge. A total of 158.5km was cleared in Guildford, Woking, Waverley and NW Surrey. An additional 27km of vegetation was cleared along the North Downs Way.

The County Council also undertook a spraying programme for invasive plants (Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed) at 14 sites across the county.

Signposting and Waymarking

We have around 8,000 roadside signs (finger posts) to maintain. We repaired or replaced 333 signs across the county during 2019/20 and have a backlog of 289 signs still requiring replacement. We also replaced 125 non-roadside signs. Interim waymarking along paths has generally been done by Volunteer Path Wardens.

Bridges

The Countryside Access Team are now inspecting and maintaining over 1100 bridges on the public rights of way network. Last year the team received 224 reports regarding bridges and of these 128 have now been resolved by the team/contractors carrying out repairs, or required no further action. 27 have been scheduled for more significant works to be carried out over the next three years. We inspected 269 bridges in Mole Valley, Spelthorne, Runnymede, Surrey Heath and Woking areas on the rights of way network.

Funding for bridge repair and maintenance continues to be very tight and we have worked hard to keep paths open wherever possible, undertaking small repairs and working with volunteer groups to extend the lives of many bridges. 15 large bridges were refurbished/ replaced across the County last year, including West Clandon bridge, a significant structure which carries FP75 over the lake at Clandon Park (shown on the front cover of this Report).

Stiles and Gates

The County Council has continued to:

- assess any application for new gates and stiles on a “least restrictive access” basis
- remove stiles on routes to improve accessibility – Our programme for replacing stiles with kissing gates has been much reduced due to funding issues. In conjunction with The Ramblers, Surrey County Council are running a ‘Donate-a-Gate’ scheme whereby the cost of purchasing of a kissing gate can be covered by donations, the gate then being installed by volunteers. To date, 10 donated gates have been installed.

Surface Maintenance and Improvement

The County Council’s aim is to ensure that no paths are kept closed due to dangerous surface conditions for more than 12 months. Larger surface repair works (over £1,000) have been carried out on the following paths:

West Surrey

Public Bridleway 233 Farnham
Public Byway 92a Thursley
Public Bridleway 207 Albury
Public Bridleway 113 Elstead
Public Bridleway 319 Puttenham

East Surrey

By566 Nutfield
BW311 Charlwood (partnership BHS)
BW34 Claygate (partnership BHS/PC)
BW73 Limpsfield (partnership PC)
By78 Tatsfield

A Case Study:

Public Bridleway 233 in Farnham is a well-used cut through but the drainage pipe under the Bridleway had been dislodged by vehicles and had subsequently failed causing a large pooling of water which when wet became unpassable. Following contributions from Councillor Wyatt Ramsdale’s highways allocation and some last minute funding at the end of the financial year, Countryside Access were able to successfully rectify the problem.



Enforcement

The County Council addresses enforcement issues, firstly by negotiation, then by direct action, within a time limit established for each case. Enforcement work can be very time consuming for staff, so issues are prioritised in accordance with the Priority Statement (maintenance and enforcement). There were no prosecutions during the year as issues were resolved through negotiation.

A Case Study:

Following reports that Public Bridleway 63 Woking had been encroached by new fences which had been erected within the width of the Highway, Countryside Access contacted the landowner to explain that the Definitive Width had been encroached on. The Landowner took positive action and promptly removed the fences restoring the Bridleway to its original width between two banks over a length of 155m.



Working in Partnership

The County Council was grateful for partnership working with many landowners, volunteers, community and user groups, parish and town councils who either take responsibility for appropriate maintenance and improvement projects and programmes or help fund improvements. We continue to work closely with partners and our volunteers to deliver improvements to the network.

A Case Study:

Having developed a good working relationship with the British Horse Society, SCC was approached by them to consider improvements to Claygate BW34. Surfacing works to the western section of the path were completed in 2018 but the community was keen to continue improvements to enable wider access to the path and particularly to provide an all year off road link between Claygate and Chessington. BHS liaised with the Parish Council to arrange funding, and contractors to agree what works were required. SCC assisted with the specification and commissioning of the works. The cost was shared equally between the three interested parties. The improvements were very well received. One resident reported they can now commute by bike even in the winter, and families have said they are now able to take their children in pushchairs, and on bikes and scooters for an off road walk.

Before:



After:



Volunteers

Volunteer groups continue to carry out a significant amount of maintenance and improvement schemes. The level of volunteer involvement in rights of way work in Surrey is one of the highest in the country and the County Council is extremely grateful for this. Regular groups that have participated this year include:

- Ashcroft Care Services
- Bourne Conservation Volunteers
- Croydon Ramblers
- East Surrey Walkers
- Farnham Ramblers
- Godalming & Haslemere Ramblers
- Guildford Ramblers
- Surrey Choices Employability Growth Team
- Long Distance Walkers Association

- Mole Valley Ramblers
- Reigate Ramblers
- Surrey Heath Ramblers
- Staines Ramblers
- Woking Ramblers

We have supported/facilitated over **1,000 person-days** work by volunteer groups working on practical tasks on the public path network. This wouldn't be possible without the input of our task coordinators who are always enthusiastic and willing to put in the time and effort to make the tasks a success. There are too many to name here but we would like to extend our thanks to each one of them. One such individual, who over many years has contributed a vast amount of time and effort to the rambler's task group in the Farnham area, was John Plympton. John was always ready with a smile, some advice and a willingness to go the extra mile. It is with great sadness that we mark his passing and express our condolences to his family.

In addition to the task groups, volunteers from the Surrey Ramblers continued their annual survey of over 500 paths for our BVPI 178 path condition survey. Our special thanks to Rodney Whittaker for organising the surveys, Duncan Ellis for doing the mapping and Basil Minor for inputting the results.

Apart from the other many benefits of voluntary work, we estimate the total labour value of the work this year is around £125,000.

Donate-a-gate scheme. Our scheme allowing groups and individuals to donate gates and other infrastructure to improve the network has gone from strength to strength with over £10,000 in donations being received, allowing the purchase of more than 20 gates and one bridge. All of these purchases have been installed by our volunteers on paths across the county.

Volunteer Path Warden Scheme - We have continued with our Volunteer Path Warden Scheme, running three training sessions during the year. Around 350 wardens from across the county have now been trained and issued with tools and equipment. Wardens are encouraged to carry out minor maintenance tasks such as vegetation clearance and waymarking 'as and when' they come across them as well as receiving appropriate tasks from our officers as they come up. In the past year many more tasks involving minor maintenance were completed. These are the type of tasks we often struggle to do and local volunteer wardens are well placed to resolve these issues simply and effectively. Some ramblers groups have organised their local Volunteer Path Wardens to check issues from CAMS and have been instrumental in rectifying and resolving many issues in their areas. Our thanks go to Pauline Butcher for co-ordinating the ramblers VPW's and a particular mention to Suzie Duffy in Farnham and Andrew Bowden in Guildford for the work they have put in over the years.

Performance/ Monitoring

Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 178 – 'easy to use' path survey

During May and November, a random 5% sample of paths were surveyed and assessed as to whether they were 'easy to use' or not. The survey was carried out on our behalf by volunteers from the Surrey Ramblers. It follows nationally agreed methodology and is undertaken by many other authorities managing public rights of way. It provides a consistent and comparable tool for measuring our performance against statutory duties, the effect on the public and how we compare with other authorities.

81% of paths were found to be 'easy to use' in 2019.

National Highways and Transportation (NHT) Survey

The NHT Public Satisfaction Survey collects public perspectives on and satisfaction with, highways and transportation services in local authority areas. Rights of way questions are included in the Highways section. In 2019, we had a benchmark score of **58%** for Rights of Way. The national average is **57%**.

OBJECTIVE 3: WELL PUBLICISED AND PROMOTED FOR USE

The County Council's third objective for management of the public rights of way network is as follows.

- Up-to-date information about rights of way will be easily accessible to the public and a range of appropriate utility and recreational routes will be promoted for public use.

On-line Information about Rights of Way in Surrey

The County Council provides information about the rights of way network through the [Footpaths, byways and bridleways pages](#) of our website. The website contains details regarding public notices, how to report problems, Traffic Regulation Orders, advice to landowners and user groups and up-to-date maps showing routes on the Interactive Map. A fault reporting and a general enquiry report form are available for reporting problems/issues on the path network or general queries. Users can register, report problems and track progress of the problems they have previously reported.

How we reach Surrey's public and encourage outdoor recreation for health and wellbeing

Our Countryside Team continues to develop the Explore Surrey brand which uses social media, webpages and a seasonal newsletter to encourage greater enjoyment of the countryside for all ages and abilities. Amongst other things, Explore Surrey encourages volunteering for conservation, offers many different self-guided walking routes and signposts to what other related organisations or charities are doing, such as the National Trust, Surrey Wildlife Trust and the National Trails.

The team is also involved in seeking funding to promote off-road or quiet road cycling/all-user trails using public rights of way to help deliver the council's pledge to encourage more people to exercise outdoors for physical and mental wellbeing

Website: www.surreycc.gov.uk/exploresurrey

Twitter and Instagram: @ExploreSurreyUK

Our Surrey Hills AONB team work with us to promote the Surrey Hills and have their own website, social media accounts and newsletter.

Website: www.surreyhills.org

Twitter and Instagram: @SurreyHillsAONB

Routes for Special Needs

An Easy Walks section is available on the Explore Surrey website.

Public Liaison, Forums and Partnerships

We work closely with a range of organisations who share an interest and role in countryside access issues. These include:

- Surrey Countryside Access Forum - The County Council has a duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to establish a local access forum. We have supported the forum by providing a secretary and meeting venues. Countryside staff attend meetings, advising and consulting with the Forum. The Forum's [agendas, minutes and annual reports](#) are contained on the County Council's website.
- Parish/Town Councils – We work closely with town and parish councils across the county, consulting on path network changes and larger maintenance or improvement schemes. We

have been able to offer them training on general rights of way issues, support and training for setting up local volunteer groups and provide materials and resources for maintenance work. We will continue this work and our Countryside Access Guide is particularly aimed at supporting parish councils in rights of way work.

- The Surrey Horse Riders Working Group
- The Surrey Ramblers
- The British Horse Society
- The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty working groups:
 - Off Road Working Group
 - Mountain Bike Working Group
 - Equestrian Working Group

INFORMATION ABOUT SURREY'S RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

Path distances:

The rights of way network in Surrey is made up of:

Public Footpaths 2,247.1 km –	open to walkers
Public Bridleways 1,117.1 km –	open to walkers, cyclists and equestrians
Restricted Byways 2.4 km –	open to bridleway users and non-motorised vehicles

Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) 123.4 km -	open to restricted byway users and motorised vehicles
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3,490 km in total

Path assets:

On the path network, there are (approximately):

7980	-	finger posts
2899	-	waymark posts
965	-	culverts
940	-	kissing gates
711	-	wicket gates
1556	-	field gates
4008	-	stiles

The asset value (new replacement cost) of the above is approximately £59,000,000

Staff

The Countryside Access Team:

Countryside Access & Operations
Manager
Steve Mitchell

Countryside Contracts Officer
Katie McDonald

Senior Countryside Access Officer –
Maintenance & Enforcement
Claire Saunders

Senior Countryside Access Officer – Legal
Definition
Debbie Jones

West Team

Countryside Access Officer
Hannah Gutteridge
(Guildford, Waverley,
Woking, Spelthorne, Surrey
Heath, Runnymede)

Countryside Access
Assistants (West Surrey)
John Baker
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East Team

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Ewell, Elmbridge,
Tandridge, Reigate &
Banstead)

Countryside Access
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Eniko Nadas
Marie Holland

Legal Definition Team

Countryside Access Officers
Daniel Williams
Catherine Valiant

Countryside Access Assistants
Joanne Porter
Tom Jenkins

Countryside Access Officers (bank
staff/rechargeable works)
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How to contact us

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