**ANNEX 3**

Report on the Development of the Primary Network

**Ceredigion Local Access Forum - 20th JANUARY 2011**

**Report on the Development of the Primary Network**

The **Ceredigion Rights of Way Improvement Plan** (2008) recognises that resource availability and funding will dictate the extent to which ROWIP priorities can be met. Resources need to be used effectively and the categorisation of the various types of route can help ensure that staff inputs and funding are directed to best effect (for example, in devising path maintenance and improvement programmes and in responding to path complaints). This approach is especially relevant bearing in mind the financial challenges facing the authority.

The Plan provides a framework for identifying a primary network of routes. ROWIP Action **B.06** sets out the need to devise a path priority network to guide the allocation of resources. The Council has over the recent period been giving consideration to the way in which this action can be developed, having regard to the route categories set out in the ROWIP. As part of this process, the following path assessments have been completed:

1. Identification of ‘Strategic Linear Routes’ in Ceredigion - Coast Path; Aberaeron to Lampeter and Borth to Pontrhyfendigaid routes
2. Identification by Area Rangers, Community Paths Scheme Coordinator and Rights of Way Officer of all other routes known to be currently open and available e.g. community routes and other promoted routes
3. Identification of all routes on the annual brush cutting contract
4. Identification of routes ‘open and available’ based on the 2009/10 Performance Indicator survey (5% sample)
5. Identification of County Council promoted routes as listed on the Coast and Countryside web site[[1]](#footnote-1).

This data has now been entered against the individual rights of way numbers on a table linked to the Council’s GIS (MapInfo). Paths have been identified as follows:

* CAT 1 - Strategic Linear Routes
* CAT 2 - rights of way as listed above.

Routes which have not been identified by the above process have not been categorised at the present time.

Using this data it can be established that 46% (1150 km) of Public Rights of Way (PROW) in Ceredigion fall into either category 1 or 2, as shown by Table 1 below.

Previous surveys can be used as a basis for estimating the expenditure implications of maintaining such a network, notably a Countryside Council for Wales report into path condition in Wales, produced in 2002[[2]](#footnote-2) (referred to in Ceredigion ROWIP Assessment No. 3 (‘The Condition of the Public Rights of Way Network’, 2007).

Based on figures derived from the 2002 survey, the annual budget required to maintain 1150 km of PROW would be in the order of £284,000 per year (i.e. £247 per km). This does not take into account any staffing requirements or overheads; nor does it take account of inflation in the intervening period.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CAT | F/P | B/W | R/BY | BOAT | Total Km | % of all PROW |
| 1 | 100.80 | 4.22 | 1.39 | 0 | 106.41 | 4.24 |
| 2 | 560.44 | 304.28 | 178.23 | 4.90 | 1047.86 | 41.84 |
| **Total** | **661.24** | **308.50** | **179.62** | **4.90** | **1154.27** | **46.08** |

*Table 1: PROW in Ceredigion in Category 1 and 2 (in Km)*

The Council’s core budget for rights of way work currently amounts to approximately £120,000 per annum. It should also be noted that there are other programmes that provide for path improvements (such as the Coastal Access Programme and the ROWIP Implementation Programme), although these are by their very nature time-limited. The Council is in the process of setting its budget for 2011-12; whilst it is clear that future budgets will be constrained it is difficult to predict with any certainty the impact on resources available for rights of way management. However, it is apparent that in order to maintain the network in its current condition the Council’s current core budget is substantially less than the figure suggested by the CCW survey.

In addition, as part of the categorisation process the outstanding complaints list which dates back to 2000 was examined and cross referenced with those paths identified as either CAT 1 or 2. Those paths which had more than one query registered against them were examined further and these are listed in Appendix 1. The remaining complaints which pre-date the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and do not fall within current CAT 1 or 2 will not be processed unless reconsidered as part of a wider project which attracts additional funding.

It is proposed that this information will be used by the Rights of Way team from April 2011 in the day to day path management work and that the ‘primary network’ will provide a basis for redefining the ranger areas and their work programmes over the coming years. The aim is to ensure that Ceredigion has a network which is well maintained and therefore easy to use. It should be noted that the primary network will evolve and develop over the years as additional routes become available through project work which attracts additional funding. For information large-scale maps have been produced which give an indication of the geographical location of the network these will be available for perusal prior the Local Access Forum meeting on 20th January.

As recognised in the ROWIP, this approach will help ensure that staff inputs and funding are used most efficiently and to the best effect. The Council will also investigate ways in which this data can be used to provide the public with base-line information on those paths which should be available for use (thereby providing a level of information on rights of way, as previously raised by the Forum[[3]](#footnote-3)).

*January 2011*

1. [www.ceredigion.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=12137](http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=12137) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Rights of Way Condition Survey 2002’ CCW [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Paper to the LAF, January 2010 - ‘Publicity on walking routes that have been improved by the County Council’ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)