

Report of the Head of Economic Development and Planning

Rights of Way and Commons Sub-Committee - 18 June 2014

COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS BUDGET

Purpose:	To inform the Committee about the sources of funding available for work on public rights of way and countryside access.
Reason for Decision:	For information
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report considers the resources available for works to improve and maintain the 400 miles of public rights of way and other public access in the County.

2.0 Current financial year

- 2.1 The funds available for the current financial year are as follows:

Authority	£43,000
Coast Path grant (100%)	£44,000
ROWIP grant (Countryside Access Plan) (100%)	£37,000
Natural Resources Wales (NRW) grant (50%)	£6,750
Gower Society grant (50%)	£8,000
RDP (100%)	£10,000
Total	£148,750

- 2.2 The Authority's funds are slightly less than last financial year. The Authority's £43,000 is used for maintenance, as funding from grants can only be used for improvements. The Coast Path grant is what has been offered for this year for specific storm damage repairs. The ROWIP grant and NRW grant are fixed amounts offered each year, although both are gradually declining. Both grants are tied to actions in the Authority's Countryside Access Plan (ROWIP). The funding for both the Coast Path

and ROWIP is from Welsh Government, but is administered and distributed by NRW. A Gower Society grant of £3,000 will be available for the foreseeable future, subject to agreement with the Gower Society. Additional Gower Society funds are also available for larger individual projects. The RDP grant ends this year with future funding uncertain at present. This round of RDP funding has only been available in Mawr and Pontardulais, but if continued it may be available in all of the rural areas of the County.

- 2.3 In addition to the above funds the Authority employs a two man Ranger Team to maintain the public rights of way network. The annual running cost of the Ranger Team is £58,000. The Rangers have worked exclusively for the Countryside Access Team since 2002.

3.0 Budgets 1996 - 2015

- 3.1 Since 1996 the funds available for the public path network have varied considerably, and are dependent on what sources of funding are available, as shown on the chart below.

- 3.2 In 2002 the UK Government provided extra funds to all authorities to carry out the additional duties under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Some of this additional funding was added to the existing Authority revenue budget and some was kept separate as a 'CROW' budget, although in practice both budgets were used to carry out improvements to and maintenance of public paths. Hence last financial year the CROW budget was added to the revenue budget.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The report is for information only.

5.0 Equalities and Engagement Implications

- 5.1 The report is intended for information purposes only therefore an Equality Impact Assessment Screening was not required. Policies pay due regard to the issue of access (particularly in respect of disabled citizens and those with limited mobility) and the network membership is inclusive of all protected groups.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: Budget Files

Appendices: Budget Chart