



Report of the Director of Place

Planning Committee – 9 January 2018

Countryside Access Plan

Purpose:	To report to Committee on the need to produce an updated and revised Countryside Access Plan (Rights of Way Improvement Plan).
Policy Framework:	Under s60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act the Authority has a duty to decide whether to amend the previous Plan not more than ten years after publishing the previous plan.
Consultation:	Not at this stage. If the Committee decides that a new Plan is needed the draft Plan will require a statutory consultation period of 12 weeks.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that the Authority revises and updates the Countryside Access Plan 2007-17 and consults on a draft Plan for the next 10 years.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 In October 2007 the Authority adopted the first Countryside Access Plan (CAP) as required under section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Ten years after the publication of the previous CAP the Authority has a duty to decide if the previous CAP needs to be amended.
- 1.2 The legal title of the CAP is a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. However, local authorities may use alternative titles if they consider that this may be more appropriate, so long as the Plan makes it clear that the document

forms their Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the purposes of the CROW Act. Hence it is proposed to retain the title of the previous Plan.

2. Consideration of whether an amended Plan needs to be produced

2.1 Various circumstances have changed sufficiently in the last 10 years to make amending the previous CAP necessary. The authority is now in a different financial situation than it was in 2007. The public path network has been improved significantly; however, there are reduced staff resources to continue those improvements further. The Plan needs to take account of other legislation (non-specific rights of way legislation) that has been enacted since 2007, such as the Active Travel Act, local well-being assessments and plans, and area statements associated with the Environment Act.

2.2 The previous Countryside Access Plan (CAP) was the first strategy governing access to the countryside produced by this or any of the previous authorities. A great deal of experience has been gained from producing and using the previous CAP and a number of issues have arisen that need to be addressed in a new CAP. However, during the past 10 years there has been little change in either the legislative framework or the public's countryside access needs. Therefore, a new CAP does not necessarily need extensive revision.

2.3 Of the list of 27 Actions in the original CAP, 7 need to be removed, having been achieved or being no longer necessary, 8 need to be revised or updated due to, for example, the different financial situation and there is a need for 6 additional actions. Experience has shown that the Actions can lead to the acquisition of external funding and some of the changes are needed to allow improved opportunities for attracting funding. An evaluation of the Actions in the previous Countryside Access Plan can be found in appendix A.

2.4 A number of rights of way policies have also become obsolete or need to be updated/altered slightly, and the large number of policies needs to be reduced to make the policies as a whole more concise and easier to use.

2.5 There are, therefore, sound reasons why the previous CAP needs to be amended.

3. Equality and Engagement Implications

3.1 The Authority has a duty to produce a Countryside Access Plan and to consider the needs of those with mobility difficulties within the CAP. The main purpose behind the CAP is to improve access to the countryside for as many people as possible.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: Countryside access Plan 2007-17 and Welsh Government guidance for Local Authorities on Rights of way Improvement Plans, July 2016.

Appendix A: Evaluation of actions in the previous Countryside Access Plan 2007-17