



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Working Group - Public Rights of Way**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Wednesday, 22 November 2023 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor T M White (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P M Black
P R Hood-Williams
M W Locke

Councillor(s)

C M J Evans
D H Jenkins

Councillor(s)

V A Holland
L R Jones

Other attendee(s)

Cllr Andrew Stevens

Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure

Officer(s)

Paul Meller
Chris Dale
Phil Marshall
Caroline Gregg
Kevin Thomas
Rachel Percival

Natural Environment Section Manager
Countryside Access Team Leader (Rights of Way)
Countryside Access Officer
Countryside Access Officer
Countryside Access Officer
Scrutiny Officer

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

In accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea the following interests were declared:

Councillors Andrew Stevens, Paxton Hood-Williams and Chris Evans declared a personal interest in Minute Item 4.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None.

3 Public Questions

No public questions were submitted.

4 Public Rights of Way Report

The Cabinet Member and relevant officers attended to give an overview of their briefing and to answer questions from group members. The following items were discussed:

- The benefits from public rights of way including physical health, mental health, social, a boost to tourism and awareness of heritage. The importance of the countryside code was raised.
- Statutory duties of the Countryside Access Team include, managing, maintaining, protecting, recording, and promoting the rights of way, producing a countryside access plan and working with the planning department,
- The work of the Countryside Access Team is overseen by the Swansea Local Access Forum. They provide advice to the Council and Natural Resources Wales.
- Public Rights of Way have a maintenance budget of around £45,000 per year with additional grant funding where possible. Pressures on the budget and staffing were discussed with further clarification requested around finances.
- There are differences in English and Welsh regulations regarding the way diversion orders are advertised.
- Collaborative working with internal department and external agencies is explored where possible.
- The team are consulted in the planning and pre planning of new developments to ensure the path network is maintained, enhanced, and linked into the existing network and the local development plan is reviewed.

5 Discussions and Conclusions

Working Group Members made the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. Members praised the Countryside Access Team for providing an excellent service with limited resources.
2. Members request the Cabinet Member lobby the Welsh Local Government Association to introduce legislation in Wales regarding diversion orders.
3. The Working Group requested additional financial information.
4. Consideration of a more integrated approach to the Active Travel network and the Public Rights of Way map.
5. Partnership working where possible including the National Trust and the Active Travel Teams to maximise the opportunities to share resources.
6. Councillors to be encouraged to promote local routes.
7. Continued development of local marketing and to include the bus station, railway station and other high footfall locations for advertising.
8. Collaborative working between the Countryside Access Team and the tourism department to promote active holidays.
9. Consider Apprenticeship schemes to help with outdoor work and shadowing officers.
10. If footfall and usage increases this may demonstrate the need for increased budgets.

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Cont'd

Following on from this meeting a letter will be written from the Convener of the Working Group to the Cabinet Member, summarising the discussion and outlining the Working Group's conclusions and recommendations.

The meeting ended at 3.31 pm

Chair