



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
EPSOM AND EWELL**

RIGHTS OF WAY MAINTENANCE

14 SEPTEMBER 2009

KEY ISSUE This report outlines Public Rights of Way Maintenance work within the Borough of Epsom and Ewell and is for information only.

SUMMARY This report summarizes recent and proposed work carried out within Epsom and Ewell to improve public access.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

NONE – For Information

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 There are a total of 3436.71 kms of rights of way in the County of Surrey. Epsom and Ewell has 54.05 kms comprising 37.5kms of public footpaths (69%) and 16.5kms of bridleways (31%). There are no BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic) or Restricted Byways (open to all except motorised vehicles) in the Borough. Most of the urban tarmaced paths are also classified as Town Paths and maintenance responsibility for these is shared with the Highways Service, who look after the surface and drainage issues on these paths.
- 1.2 Town paths are routinely inspected by Highways, whereas other rights of way are inspected by countryside access officers on a reactive basis i.e. in response to reports from the public.
- 1.3 A programme of vegetation cutting takes place every summer on rights of way. Within the Boroughs of Reigate and Banstead and Epsom and Ewell over 77kms of rights of way are cut each year, 6.6kms in Epsom and Ewell. The cost of the annual vegetation cut for the two Boroughs is just in excess of £10,000, which represents very good value for money. In addition to this many of the town paths are on the Highways weed spray list.
- 1.4 The most important priority for officers is always public safety. High priority is also given to improving access for all and in this regard officers are always looking for opportunities to make improvements such as changing stiles to kissing gates and removing barriers which would prevent disabled use, although this is not always possible especially in rural areas where livestock control is necessary.
- 1.5 Last year public footpath 104 Epsom, which runs from Reigate Road to Cheam Road immediately adjacent to NESOCOT, was resurfaced with Local Transportation Plan funding. A list of routes for future LTP funding includes footpath 94 Ox Lane (Church Street, Ewell to By Pass) 270m; footpath 97 (West Street to Ewell West Station) 360m; footpath 24 (West Hill Avenue to Meadway) 75m, and footpath 35 (Hillside Road to Springfield) 55m. All these schemes have been requested by members of the public. Unfortunately, however, LTP funding for rights of way has been cut drastically this year and it is unlikely that any of these projects will go ahead this year. It is hoped that monies from planning sources may be forthcoming in the future. If the proposed rebuilding of NESOCOT goes ahead it is anticipated that improvements will be made to the two bridleways that cross or adjoin the site as part of planning gain.
- 1.6 A great deal of the general small works (signposting, stile and sleeper bridge repairs etc) is carried out by volunteers in Reigate and Banstead. Unfortunately, there are currently no volunteer groups available to work in Epsom and Ewell, so all such work has to be carried out by contractors working under the SCC Countryside Works Contract.

- 1.7 A package of Legal Orders was finally confirmed recently to address anomalies found on Epsom Downs where rights of way had strayed from the definitive line over the years. The whole area has now been signposted to reflect the changes and this included the installation of 21 new signposts. Two other anomalies have been found in the Borough and are to be dealt with by staff in the Countryside Legal Team. These are both discrepancies between the Definitive Map and Statement and relate to footpath 51 by the new grandstand on Epsom Downs, and footpath 82 where it crosses the railway between Stones Road and Miles/Blenheim Roads. Both of these will probably have to be resolved by means of Legal Orders.
- 1.8 Works are currently being undertaken to resolve a flooding problem on footpath 34 (Chessington Road into Horton Country Park). During the last two winters the path has been subject to severe flooding, with water laying several feet deep and lapping around the electricity sub-station. The Lower Mole Countryside Management Project have carried out work to raise the surface of the path (jointly funded by the Borough and County Councils) and contractors working from the Countryside Works Contract are now to reinstate the ditches on both sides in an effort to prevent future problems.
- 1.9 Officers are currently working with Borough Council officers to make significant improvements to the rights of way network in Horton Country Park. These include upgrading footpaths to bridleways and the dedication of new routes to improve access and to offer an alternative recreation area to Epsom Common. These changes will largely reflect existing use.

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 Maintenance and improvement of the public rights of way network.

3 CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1 Consultations are carried out with landowners, user groups and other interested parties. Officers do also consult with colleagues from both Councils where appropriate.

4 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All rights of way maintenance work is carried out under the Terms and Conditions of the Surrey County Council Countryside Works Contract. The contractors approved under this contract are generally smaller companies who are recognised to offer good value for money and quality of service.

5 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Equalities and diversity issues are taken into account when planning maintenance and improvement schemes. Countryside Access Officers are always looking for opportunities to improve rights of way for less able users e.g. removing unlicensed structures, seeking removal of structures and replacing stiles with kissing gates wherever possible.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no crime and disorder implications.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is expected that rights of way maintenance will continue to be undertaken by officers in a cost effective manner within future budgetary restraints.

8 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 8.1 See above.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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