



Hampshire Rights of Way & Countryside Paths

Jo Heath

Interim Assistant Director CCBS

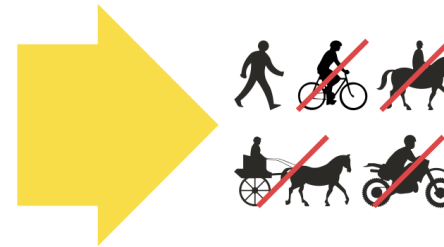


Hampshire
County Council

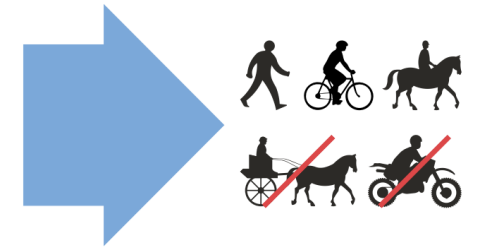
Public Rights of Way Network

- Total network 4,613km or 2,866 miles.
- 72% Footpath, 17% Bridleway, 5% Restricted Byway and 6% BOAT.
- Public have a right to pass and repass only.
- Rural routes and many are historical.
- Most rights of way cross privately owned land.
- There are 13 promoted routes across Hampshire.

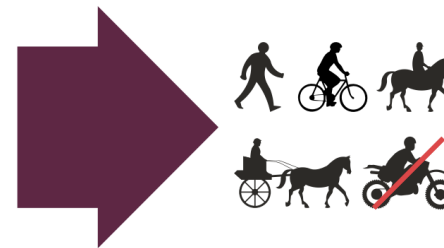
Footpath



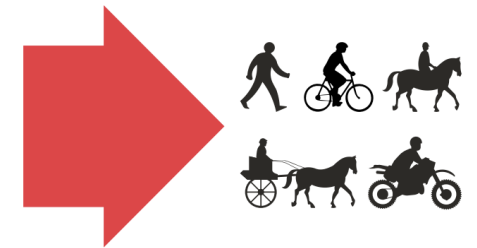
Bridleway



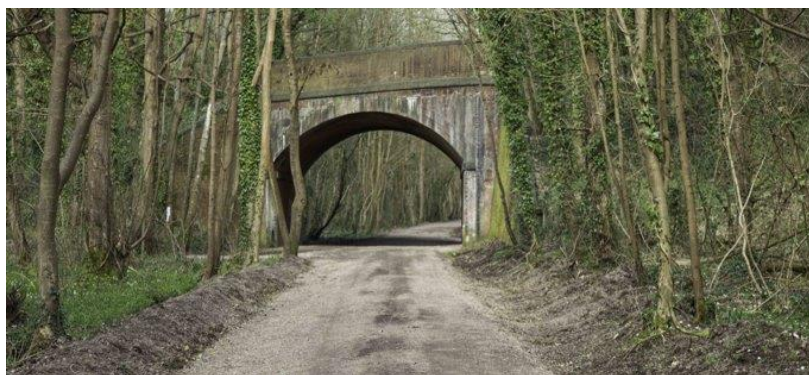
Restricted Byway



Byway Open to All Traffic – BOAT



Promoted Routes



Roles & Responsibilities

- HCC has a statutory duty to maintain rights of way in a fit state for public use.
- HCC include:
 - Maintaining the legal record
 - Surface of the path
 - Signposting from the highway
 - Bridges
- Landowners include:-
 - Access structures (stiles & gates)
 - Keep clear and unobstructed
- Parish Councils:
 - No statutory duty but powers



How we manage the network

- 3130 bridges on our network, 500 on a structural inspection programme
- Priority vegetation cutting list – contractors (660km / 410 miles) HCC team (284km /176 miles)
- Work closely with Parishes – to agree priority routes and assist with Parish projects
- Volunteers – normal year 9086 hrs in 2019 vs 4545hrs in 2020.



Images taken pre-Covid

Beyond the network - Countryside Paths

Permissive routes, promoted routes & rights of way exist across the Countryside estate to encourage active enjoyment and connection with nature including:

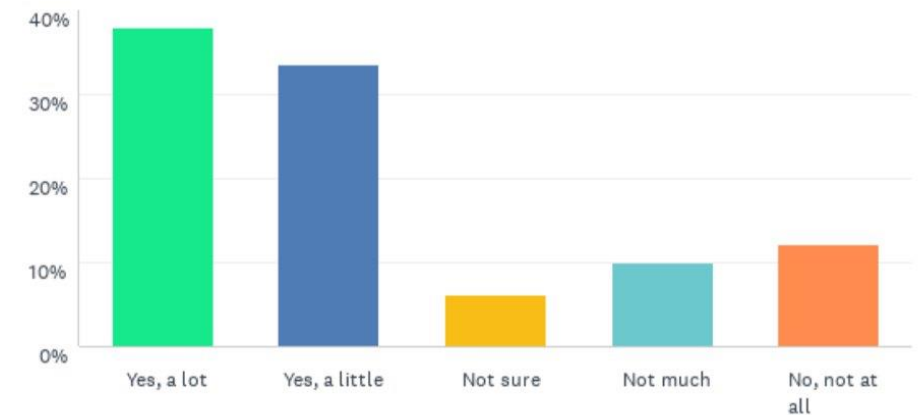
- 5 Country Parks – attracting 3m visitors in 2019/20.
- 80 countryside sites, comprising National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves and other conservation sites and green spaces.
- Basingstoke Canal towpath – 32 miles in Hants & Surrey.



COVID impact – Increased use and appreciation

- Survey conducted in June 2020 to assist with recovery
- Evidence of increased use and that this use is likely to continue.
- Significant rise in appreciation of the countryside and the importance of being outside for mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- 99% agree that it has a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.
- More than four in five respondents believe this has become even more important since the advent of Covid19.
- More than 70% confirm that their attitude to the outdoors has grown, with most of these confirming a major positive shift.
- The demand for visiting local greenspaces and using local paths is not likely to wain with an increase in staycations in 2021.

Has your attitude changed to view outdoor space more positively since Covid 19 pandemic?



90%

of the responses have **visited a country park or farm attraction** managed by Hampshire County Council.

80%

can not visit a country park by **foot or by bicycle**.

32%

have **visited a country park** after some **restrictions had been lifted** on 13th May 2020.

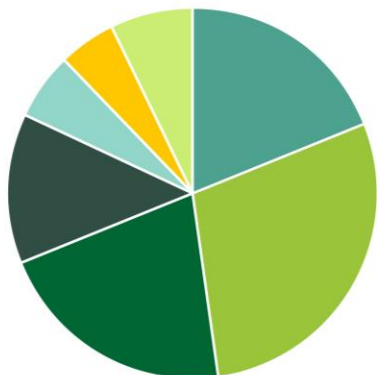
89%

agreed that they are most likely to **visit a country park within 3 months** of them opening after the COVID-19 restrictions.

Travel time

The responses show that the **majority of people travel up to 30 minutes to get to their local country park.**

- 19% travel 10 minutes or under
- 29% travel between 11-20 minutes
- 21% travel between 21-30 minutes
- 13% travel between 31-40 minutes
- 6% travel between 41-50 minutes
- 5% travel between 51-60 minutes
- 7% travel 60 minutes or over



SURVEY RESULTS



HAMPSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE



During lockdown

- Over **70%** would visit a local greenspace or park and use **local paths** for walking or cycling.
- 98%** of these **will continue** this post lockdown.

44%

stated that their appreciation for country parks or green spaces has increased a lot.

Visit frequency

52%

52% believe that the frequency of their visits to their local country park will **stay the same**.

42%

42% believe that the frequency would **increase**.

7%

7% believe it will decrease as they would prefer to use a **more local green space**.



99%

believe that outdoor spaces have a **positive impact on mental health and wellbeing**.

Of this, **81%** has found this more **important since lockdown**.

85%

are **unlikely to take a holiday overseas** in 2020.

72%

believe that Hampshire County Council's country parks have had a large impact in improving their **family's quality of life**, scoring between **8-10/10**.

8-10

10



The majority of people asked in this survey have stated that in order to encourage more frequent visits to the country parks, **full access to toilets and washroom facilities** would have to be provided, as well as **pre-visit information about the precautions taken** to ensure visitor safety.



Covid Impact – Increased use

Visits to the Country Parks has risen by between 120% – 160% over the past 6 months when compared to last year, despite reduced catering facilities and no events or activities for much of that period.

The Basingstoke Canal towpath - significant rise in pedestrian and cycle use – counts carried out during lockdown indicated that all use was at least 110% of previous levels and cycle use in places was up to 300% of previous levels

Increase in reports - number of reports to the Countryside Access Management System by members of the public has increased by as much as 60% some months (Nov 2020).



Covid Impact – management

- Increase in anti-social behaviour.
- Litter campaign – shared with other authorities.
- #walk the right way – using social media to promote responsible use.
- Supporting & responding to landowners and Parishes.
- Reduced volunteers – still able to undertake inspections.
- Teams doing more as no vegetation contract 20/21.
- Considering what more we can do this year to promote responsible use.



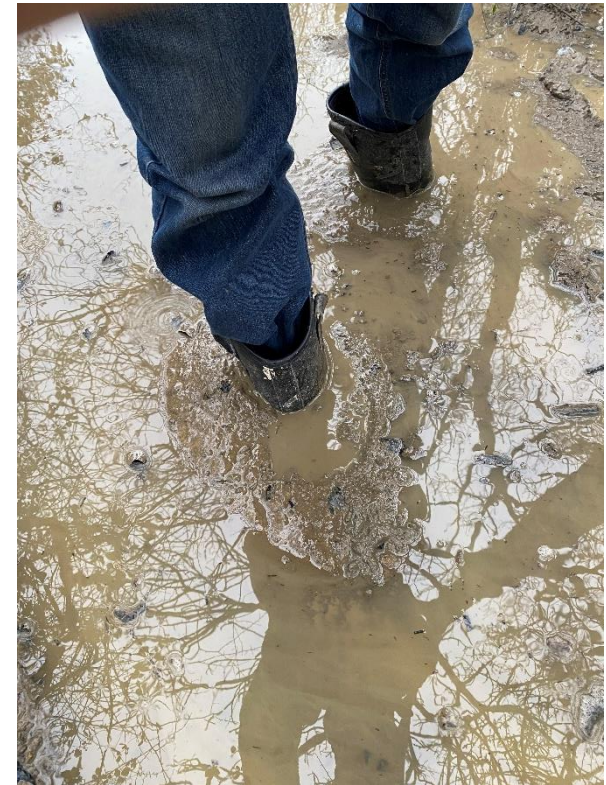
Covid Impact - Condition

- Met Office reported 2020 was top ten wettest years of all time, and several extreme weather events
- Weather conditions affecting all paths compounding the issue of increased use.
- Recognising the importance of being outdoors, investment required to ensure paths stay open and easy to use.
- Reduce the impact from spreading on surrounding sensitive habitats and farmland.



Proposed Path Recovery Programme

- Aim: to carry out remedial works to as many paths as possible that have been affected by increased use across the county due to Covid 19.
- Budget allocation of £500,000 from CCBS accumulated Cost of Change reserve.
- Majority of works to be completed between April & September.



Colden Common Footpath 21

Path Recovery Programme - prioritisation

Type/location of path

- Paths located close to communities
- Circular routes linked to car parks and communities
- Promoted routes
- Paths damaged through sensitive habitat areas

Damage/inconvenience

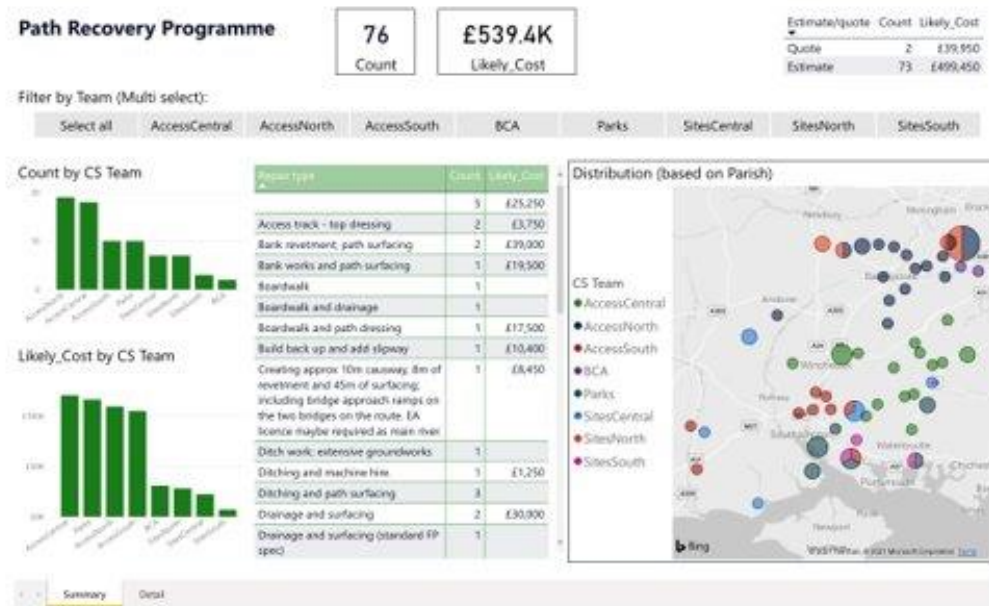
- Path un-usable in large sections (effectively closed)
- Path spread damaging surrounds in sensitive habitat areas
- Path un-usable in one specific location
- Path spread damaging surrounding areas
- Pinch points with significant localised damage
- Other

Community Concern

- High - Multiple frequently
- Medium - Multiple occasionally
- Low – few reports
- Not reported

Concern raised by MP/Cllr
/Parish Council - YES / NO

Path Recovery Programme - prioritisation



Programme prioritisation & monitoring

Type of works include:

- Removal of surface mud
- Drainage improvements
- Resurfacing – top dressing
- Funding split across rights of way, country parks and sites including Basingstoke Canal towpath.

Covid Impact - condition



Basingstoke Canal Towpath



Dogmersfield Footpath 3



Colden Common Footpath 21



Staunton Country Park

Covid impact - benefits

Developing New Partnerships

- Project Stride – Parish project to replace stiles with gates and promote responsible use.
- New partnership developed during lockdown with Walking with Wounded has seen the development of a volunteer scheme for veterans/services leavers - Funding now secured (£20k) from Armed Covenant Fund in February 2021.

Appreciated by others

Steep Parish Council asked me to write to express our gratitude for your continued efforts and hard work in maintaining the Ashford Hangers. The Ashford Hangers are much loved by everyone in the village, as can be evidenced by the visible wear of the increased footfall during the pandemic on all the footpaths and tracks.

Summary

- High level of use during lockdown has had a negative impact on the countryside however there has been a marked increase in appreciation.
- Investment in rights of way and countryside paths through the Path Recovery Programme will assist in keeping paths open to continue to be enjoyed.

Thank You