

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director for Communities

Report to:	Councillor W S Webb, Executive Councillor for Highways & Transport
Date:	16 July 2012
Subject:	Revisions to the Public Rights of Way Path Prioritisation Policy, Standard Issue Timescales and Inspection Regimes
Decision Reference:	02063
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

To consider revisions to the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Path Prioritisation Policy, Standard Issue Timescales and Inspection Regimes.

Recommendation(s):

That the revisions to the PRoW Path Prioritisation Policy, Standard Issue Timescales and Inspection Regimes are approved and that the new Policies are adopted by Lincolnshire County Council.

Alternatives Considered: N/A

Reasons for Recommendation:

That following workforce change and Core Offer implementation it is necessary to revise the policies on the basis that the Authority has increased the available network since the previous policy was approved in 1994 and that public expectation for the service has changed. The new policies will ensure that the County Council manages those expectations appropriately within the resources available to do so.

1. Background

- 1.1. Since 1994 Lincolnshire County Council has operated a priority system regarding works on public rights of way. This ensures that the County Council allocates the limited resources at its disposal for this type of work effectively and efficiently and provides the public with appropriate timescales for the completion of works.

- 1.2. The policy has been consistently reflected in the over-arching policies for rights of way work being the Milestones Statements of 1995 and 2000 and the current Countryside Access & Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2012.
- 1.3. Since that time a considerable amount of work has been undertaken on the network, improving access, ensuring that routes are signed correctly and ensuring compliance by land managers in keeping routes open. The result of this work has been that in the majority of areas of the county all available routes are categorised as either Priority 1 or 2 paths with the Priority 3 paths being the remainder of routes that would require substantial work to reopen either in the form of legal orders work, the resolution of longstanding and permanent obstruction issues (e.g. houses, large farm buildings) or the installation of a large, capital scheme, bridge.
- 1.4. Officers have reviewed the current priority and it is felt that following workforce change in 2011 there is a need to consider existing classifications, the associated resolution timescales and the regime under which the routes are proactively inspected for two main reasons.
 - Much more of the network should be available for usage compared to the situation in 1994.
 - The loss of the Enforcement Officer posts during workforce change will lead to greater input into ploughing and cropping / obstruction work by Senior Highways Officers. The bi-annual ease of use surveys consistently indicate that it is in this area that most path “failures” are found and clearly this dictates the need for enforcement work to be a priority whilst remaining mindful of ensuring that rights of way furniture (stiles, gates, bridges etc.) remains in a usable and safe condition.
- 1.5. Appendix A to this report outlines the amendments to the existing policy that are proposed.

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 That following Workforce change it is necessary to revise the public rights of way path prioritisation policy and associated resolution timescales and inspection regimes to reflect the reduction in available LCC resource to manage the network.
- 2.2 Also, that increased opportunity for increased community involvement through a variety of schemes will benefit both the Authority and the local community and will offset some of the potential decline in service provision.

3. Legal Comments:

The Executive Councillor has the remit to amend the policy, standard issue timescales and inspection regimes provided he has the delegated authority of the Leader.

4. Resource Comments:

There are no direct financial implications arising from the revision of the Public Rights of Way Prioritisation policy.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

n/a

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

2. Local Access Forum Consultation

The revised policies were submitted to both Local Access Forums (LAFs) who, in turn, formed a joint sub-committee to consider the alterations. The proposals were also issued to the Ramblers for comment. The responses to the consultations are found in Appendix B.

Local Access Forums are statutory advisory bodies on access matters and the membership represents users, businesses and land managers.

c) Scrutiny Comments

The Highways, Transport and Technology Scrutiny Committee considered the revised policy at its meeting on 14 May 2012 and recommended that the Executive Councillor for Highways and Transport approved it.

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

That there is likelihood that there will be an increase in volunteering and community involvement assisting the County Council in its delivery of PRoW network management.

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Revised Public Rights of Way - Path Prioritisation Policy, Standard Issue Timescales & Inspection Regimes
Appendix B	Ease of Use (formerly BVPI 178) Survey Scoring 2001-202 to 2011-2012
Appendix C	Consultation Responses
Appendix D	Screening for Equality Impact Assessment

7. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Leisure & Recreation Committee - Public Rights of Way - 10th January 1994	Democratic Services - County Offices, Newland, LN1 1YS
Countryside Access & Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2012	www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/countryside

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