

**Rights of Way Improvement Plan  
First Workshop for Local Access Forum  
24<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

**Attendees**

Julie Bate

Mark Camp

Tim Clarke

Kerry Clemo (Note taking)

Janine Cowl (Note taking)

Julie Downton

Peter Duthie

Mike Eastwood

Jill Goodman

Roger James

Mark Kacxmerek

Beryl Martin

Robin Moore (Chairman)

Rod Pascoe

Graham Ronan

James Scalie

Scott Sharples

Jane Sloan

Duncan Thurnell-Read

- MKE introduced SS, KC and JC to the group.
- MKE explained to the group the purpose of the meeting. The group will be split into two groups to discuss points, taking notes on flipcharts and then reform to give feedback on the points made. Each group split will be different to ensure a mixed range of points.
- SS explained to the group what the 'Peoples Panel' was and what they did.
- The validation of the Panel was questioned. Did it cover a wide range of the Cornish population? SS would be able to find these details and circulate them to the group.
  
- MKE welcomed each member of the group to speak about what their views on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan were:
  
- MK Suitable surfaces should be used for people to gain access to the RofW. Tarmac may be appropriate for urban paths but not paths in the countryside. Users should use their common sense of what they can do on each type of path i.e. Footpath – walkers, Byway – horse riding, cycling etc, unclassified roads – 4x4's, mountain bikers etc. Off road bikers are being forced off land they have used for years but are not being given anywhere else to go. Need to include everyone with all types of interests in the plan as to not discriminate groups. Need a warden/s to enforce the RofW.
- BM PROW are for quiet recreation in the countryside. Need connectivity between areas such as village to village, residential areas to schools etc this will help people to walk, cycle etc instead of using their cars. Furniture on paths is not access friendly, i.e. for disabled, mothers with pushchairs, elderly etc. The most important point when getting people to use the footpaths is they need to know the footpaths are reliable with no obstructions.
- JB People need to be able to choose where they can go. In the Lake District there are excellent roadside paths. When placing signs, furniture etc on paths/in the countryside needs to be sensitive to the surroundings. Not all RofW should be made accessible for pushchairs, the disabled etc but those that are should be easily identified.
- MC Don't want to see tarmac on areas such as footpaths and byways. Some farmers are purposely not up keeping the RofW so that people don't cross there land.

- RM The exercise needs transparency. 'Improvement' is not the right word to describe the Plan it should be 'overhaul' as to not give the public the wrong idea. All sections should be available to use by everyone and all types of users.
- GR Enforcement is the key. Must carry the job through and to be seen carrying the job through. To be used as a deterrent
- JS Education is the key. Users must be responsible. Better access is needed to the countryside and the rivers
- JSc. Would like to see a higher standard of existing PROW. Get rid of any PROW that are dead ends/missing links etc. Protect plants, woodlands, rural, urban, clear from dog mess, clear and defines styles/steps
- JG The process has to be well supported by Community, Landowners, User Groups, District Councils and Parish Councils. This way it is more likely to be implemented more effectively. Encourage more people to use sustainable transport to get to PROW. How will CLAF be involved? How will progress be monitored? The funding must be well spent.
- RP Network should be maintained and there should be a commitment. Access specialist list. Integrated transport. Progress and target info would be greatly received.
- SS The plan is not only about RofW but also the wider network and access of open land.
- MKE There is no point in producing a plan that won't have an impact or is not implicated. A wide strategic plan is needed to give wider access to the countryside. Need to be able to take it to Members of the CCC and other organisations and say "this is the way access is going in Cornwall".
- RM The large network of unclassified roads are open to everyone to use, even vehicles. There is no policing at all, including from County Highways. In Devon the unclassified roads are all part of their plan.

## SCOPE

The purpose of the workshop is for the Cornwall Local Access Forum to have the chance to influence the preparation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Cornwall.

In particular, the County Council is looking for suggestions on how best to interpret the output from the current public consultation and to derive a considered, deliverable 'Statement of Action' to which the County and partner organisations can commit. The report previously distributed from the Peoples Panel consultation will be used to illustrate issues likely to arise during the wider consultation.

- MKE reported in April a special LAF meeting would take place. Funds are fed through the Local Transport Plan. Group walks – are they advertised widely enough? Do people want/know to look on the internet. Posters/leaflets in Post Offices and shops.
- SS The findings from the next set of questionnaires should show different opinions/findings.
- DTR Visitors to Cornwall have not been surveyed, 50% of visitors (2 million) use the paths while visiting the County.
- JB The landscape is more important to most people than historic sites. Public paths take people into the countryside and into the landscape.
- MK 20,000 more homes are to be built in Cornwall over the next 5 years. Developers have to keep some space as 'open green land' but these don't get connected to RofW. Pressure should be put on developers to make them contribute more.
- MKE CCC has started to do this.

- SS For every (not affordable) house built the developers have to pay a tax, approximately £2,000, some district councils can't tell you where this money is going. If it is not used within 12 months the developers can reclaim the money.

## **SESSION 1 How to resolve conflicting views?**

### **Group 1**

- Enforcement is Key! (last report)
- Tools – cross compliance: RPS with-hold payments  
*If landowners are sensible and upkeep the RofW on their land then everyone will be happy as users will be able to identify where they can go. You can only be nice to people for so long. Landowners are getting money to up keep the RofW and some aren't using it for that.*  
*Farms being sold off, people buying them might not want RofW on their land. Need to change the attitudes of users/owners.*
- Cropping across path → lack of reinstatement.  
*Paths not being reinstated once cleared.*  
*If enforcement is in place then someone will loose out. Need to have an early word with landowners.*
- Change of house/land.
- Ownership – better searches that reveal PROW may stop conflicts arising.  
*It is not mandatory for Solicitors to look if there are any RofW on land when selling. Then when someone buys a house and the RofW is on their land and they don't like it. Law Society refused to make it a compulsory question. The search that includes RofW is only is a second level of searches, not usually used.*  
*Signing of paths is not very good, people then wonder off the path and this upsets landowners/farmers*
- Signage – poor signage may mean conflicts arise.  
*After diversions on PROW there should be signage for 10 years as people use old maps or just local knowledge.*
- Wardens – cost implications → Education/Health  
*At Penhale there is a warden, local landowners pay for it as they get a return for that. Partnership working/funding.*  
*Part of the Wardens role should be going into schools to give talks etc as well as enforcement.*
- Involvement of Police – linked to sites where users can go.  
*Police need to be more proactive, they don't want to charge people doing things they shouldn't be doing until they have an alternative place to go. Such as skateboarders, cyclists, travellers etc.*
- Diversion of footpaths – change in type/level – uphill, steps etc to avoid going past houses.  
*Dogs let loose – owners fault, People walking through gardens – using old maps. Polite landowners with time to sort these problems out.*  
*Bi-lingual signage – for visitors.*
- PAROW – best practice.
- Spread the load i.e. don't focus on a small number of paths.  
*Penwith DC PAROW – landowners, DC, BC, users, other organisations. 99.9% of problems are sorted out at these meetings. Joint funding.*  
*More paths open, less damage to those paths – few paths, more users, more damage.*  
*CCC should encourage the other 5 districts to have forums like PAROW. Could be a cover a smaller such as a few parishes.*
- Volunteer help, help reduce resources from CCC  
*National Trust use volunteers to help clear areas*

Off road use – identify legal sites for users → wildlife conflicts → noise issues.

## **Group 2**

### **User 'vs' Land Managers**

- Single payment fund for the management of Countryside.
- Both sides need to understand each other.
- The landowners do not cause mess on purpose – people should understand this.
- Users and Land Managers should communicate more.
- Process is to bring both parties together.
- Cross compliance.
- CCC could facilitate more discussion
- More users to approach landowner (Hard to know if the owner is and find them)
- Have a warden which would have a wide range of duties

### **User 'vs' User**

- More respect from Public/Visitors (Education)
- Publications – information – people choose what they can access (depending on their ability)

### **Accessibility 'vs' heritage wilderness**

- Traditional furniture heritage – some of this prevents people accessing path.
- Not all PROWS should be kept to the same standard.
- Make styles easier to use.
- Accessibility is different for all type of users.

### **Few good path 'vs' more ok path**

- Priorities – resources toward need.
- Gold/Silver/Bronze – people will know what they can walk

## **Feedback**

- MK RofW has the smallest budget in CCC, impacts on health, tourism etc. climate change – impacts – more rain, washes away paths, trees/hedges grow faster.
- RM 3 years £2M, 6 years £4M – to spend putting existing paths in good order. Then add all other points in the Improvement Plan – Mapping issues etc. Cant see it being prepared and implements in the 10 years available. Need to have clear priorities in the Plan.
- GR Does the CCC not realise if all RofW were in good order and open then the health budget would reduce as more people would take exercise.
- MK There is no real 'health' budget. No department wants to have cuts to their budget.
- SS Need the Plan to raise the status – strategic vision for everyone to work to.
- MKE How should the groups being questioned be made up to be fair.

## **Session 2 How best to rank consultation suggestions?**

### **Group 1**

- IDEAS → Geographical based approach. → Number of beneficiares. →Ensure the results/actions reflect the demographics. →Consider age spread.
- When making judgements use smaller area than county, maybe a group of parishes. How many people will benefit vs how much will it cost. It was felt that the older population was given the questionnaires. Need to get younger views – they are the of the future.*

- Interpretation of answers.

*Some % of answers were grouped, may give a misleading figure. Do we award more points to certain people – types of user, ages, importance in the economy etc.*

- Need views from visitors to the county.
- Do we target a specific area – health, economy, specific areas of interest etc or try to do all areas. Visitors don't contribute (£) to the RofW etc, 'we' do. Should there be tolls on paths.*
- Concern over responses from Peoples Panel being representative.
  - Need to consider different requirements of different users.
  - Need to reflect local character.
- Many stiles in Penwith are Listed Buildings. Should add an easy access, not get rid of the traditional features.*
- Should identify routes for disability users etc rather than make all routes suitable for them.*
- Use site by site basis.

## **Group 2**

### **Voting numbers – but what if packed**

- People Panel – gets questions on all aspects – covers all community.
- Is it a cross section of people? Good to information from targeted people and people who don't have a particular interest.
- User Group will always be biased.
- What are ROWIP PRIORITIES?
- Strategic leadership

### **Calculating Points/Values**

- 'Hardly ever user' – got them using path to get to places sustainable community
- Geographical Areas
- Sampling Questionnaires
- Consultation with tourist
- Inland 'vs' Coast Path
- Keys things – assessing future need and be able to deliver. Urban, suburban, Rural, School Walks, Living, Leisure 'vs' Amenity

## **Session 3 How best to coordinate delivery between different partners?**

Due to running over time on Sessions 1 & 2, it was decided by the Chairman to skip Session 3 and move onto Session 4.

## **Session 4 Public – better understanding of access**

### **Group 1**

- Variety of methods to access information.
- Is the internet a low priority – Ramblers Association are getting more and more enquiries via the internet.*
- People go out to explore, way markers are very important to let people know where they can go.*
- Village notice boards – map of where you can go in that area. Need to be updated regularly.*
- National Trust have leaflets in their car parks and visitor centres, and signs on their walks about where people are allowed to go. DEFRA walks (Stewardship) have similar.*
- DEFRA walks under CSS leaflets/booklets. Are people willing to pay? How much?
- A4 non glossy leaflets that are cheaper to reproduce. Is there revenue to be made? Available in B&Bs, shopping centres, supermarkets etc.*
- Could local Post Offices have a role for providing information.
  - Self printing via a website (copyright issues)
- Take copyright off – let Post Offices print their own and sell them locally.*

## **Group 2**

### **Info**

- Access to Access information
- Libraries – Internet (internet not being used to full advantage – PP 12%)
- Promote Tourist Information Centres more and Post Offices
- Expensive Publications – print offs would be good and up to date
- Let people know where they can find the information

### **Accessibility**

- Familiarity makes people feel safe
  - Not all walks are pre-planned
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- MKE asked for suggestions for a name change from ROWIP, ROWIP suggests just Rights of Way but ROWIP guidance makes clear ROWIP is about wider countryside access. A more inclusive name for the developing ROWIP is needed.
  - The idea most liked is Cornwall Public Access Strategy.
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- The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and MKE for leading the meeting.