

PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22nd APRIL 2024

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ASSET ASSESSMENTS

Purpose:

To consider and comment on the forthcoming Public Rights of Way (PROW) asset assessment. The assessment data will be collected via survey and will provide a complete record of assets across the whole of Carmarthenshire's PROW network. The report will provide a rationale for the assessment, details of how it will be delivered, the benefits and the risks.

THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO:-

To support the delivery of a Public Rights of Way Network asset assessment.

Reasons

Carmarthenshire's PROW network is extensive, it is over 2,500 kilometres in length and consists of circa 3,176 routes.

The report sets out the need to establish how many local authority assets exist on the network and the condition of those assets.

A complete set of asset data will allow for the development of a consistent, well-reasoned, risk-based methodology for prioritising the resources allocated to maintenance and improvement of our PROW assets.

The asset assessment will also establish a complete set of baseline data for overall network condition and operational status.

This will assist the Public Rights of Way Access team to develop strategic maintenance, enforcement, and improvement plans within the context of rising demand and the limited resources available.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER: - Cllr Edward Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services

Directorate:

Name of Head of Service:

Daniel John

Report Author:

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Designations:

Head of Environmental
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 APRIL 2024

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ASSET ASSESSMENTS

1. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT.

The report requests support for the forthcoming PROW asset assessment.

The PROW network in Carmarthenshire exceeds 2500km with circa 3176 individually recorded routes across all 72 Town and Community Councils. The completion of an asset assessment will provide a complete record of the local Authority's PROW assets across the whole network.

There is currently only a complete asset record for our higher priority paths, this has been collated through regular maintenance and inspection by the Countryside Access Ranger service. The forthcoming assessment will be undertaken across the remaining network to complete the record.

The data collected will enable the Countryside Access team to prioritise the recorded assets against the approved PROW network hierarchy which will ensure resources are directed towards the most urgent asset issues through the adoption of a risk-based approach.

The asset data will be collected by way of in person surveys. Thanks to a successful UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant bid back in August 2023, the Authority have been able to fund a part time Ramblers project officer. The appointed officer has been tasked with leading a new project, developing a volunteer resource that will survey the PROW network on behalf of the Authority. Details of this partnership and the project outlined above can be viewed online <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/pathways-partnership-carmarthenshire>

Whilst conducting the asset surveys the volunteers will also be collecting condition and infrastructure information that will establish a complete set of baseline data for the overall state of the PROW network in the County and the operational status of each route.

Having access to a complete record of detailed PROW condition data is unprecedented in Carmarthenshire. Ready access to this level of information will

1. assist the Countryside Access team in developing well informed and strategic maintenance, enforcement, and improvement plans.
2. create efficiencies in project planning, with the newly available data enabling officers to accurately determine earlier in the planning process whether a project proposal is likely to be deliverable within available resources and timescales.

3. inform and expedite grant applications by providing enhanced details on project deliverables in the early planning stages, avoiding the need for lengthy surveys prior to submitting applications.

Completion of the assessment and access to the resulting data will assist the service in achieving many of the objectives contained in the Carmarthenshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2019-2029.

The network survey project preparation is reaching its conclusion with over 80 volunteers signed up. Volunteer training is scheduled for late March/early April 2024 with survey work starting from mid-April 2024.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	YES
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: Daniel John

Head of Environmental Infrastructure:

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets	Bio-diversity & Climate Change
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NONE	YES	YES

IMPLICATIONS

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

The complete record of CCC assets on the County's PROW network will enable PROW asset management proposals to be integrated into the HAMP.

This integration would see the HAMP become a comprehensive asset management plan for all of Carmarthenshire's Public Highway networks.

2. Legal

A clear record of CCC assets and their condition will enable the service to prioritise asset improvements, taking account of risk and value.

This will provide a means of defending asset management decisions in the event of any form of legal challenge. It will also provide evidence of any substandard assets that require temporary legal closure to safeguard the public.

3. Finance

The asset assessment is being undertaken using the voluntary sector, coordinated by a grant funded project officer so it does not impact on Countryside Access budgets.

Completing the data collection through a commercial provider was prohibitively expensive.

The funding for the project officer runs until November 2024 and it is our intention to seek further grant funding to extend the term of this post.

The cost of ICT development in preparation for delivery of this project has been borne by the Countryside Access budget however a considerable proportion of those developments have wider benefits to the service and the public outside of the asset assessment.

The asset data collected is likely to identify an issue with available resources for PROW asset management. In the absence of comprehensive asset data, resources have not previously been allocated based on accurate asset figures. It is likely that the current list of assets is going to increase, consequently increasing the resources required to manage them.

4. ICT

The asset data collected will need to be embedded in the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS), the day-to-day PROW management tool for the Countryside Access team.

Working closely with Idox, the CAMS software providers, and investing in the CAMSWeb system since 2021 means this embedding will be a largely automated process.

CAMSWeb is the public facing PROW mapping site available via the public rights of way webpage. It will be the system our volunteer surveyors use to log their survey data and the data they collect can simply be imported into CAMS.

5. Risk Management Issues

Risk Management is a central principle of the asset assessment. It will be used to identify CCC assets and their condition so that they can be prioritised using risk-based scoring which will then direct our use of resources.

The data coming out of the asset assessment does pose a risk in respect of how deliverable our asset management outcomes will be.

The scale of the asset data that is likely to come out of the assessment, once prioritised, might highlight a significant shortfall in the resources required to adequately manage them.

Currently we are operating at risk as ignorance of our assets is no defence in the event of an incident involving one of them.

6. Physical Assets

The aim of the asset assessment is to determine the extent and condition of our physical assets across the PROW network. A comprehensive record of prioritised PROW assets will ensure CCC liabilities are appropriately targeted for investment.

7. Biodiversity and Climate Change

The process of surveying the network to gather asset data does not lend itself to biodiversity enhancement opportunities, however the exercise will be low impact with no mechanical tools or equipment involved that might adversely affect habitats supporting local biodiversity.

The asset assessment is being undertaken using volunteers, surveying on foot, predominantly in their local area. The impact of completing the exercise in this way ensures that there is a negligible impact on climate change.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Daniel John Head of Environmental Infrastructure

1. Scrutiny Committee

A copy of this report to be circulated to Scrutiny Committee for comment.

2. Local Member(s) - Not applicable.

3. Community / Town Council- Not applicable

4. Relevant Partners

The Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum (LAF) has been consulted on the principles of the asset assessment surveys. Positive comments were received from the LAF Chair.

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Not applicable.

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO
HOLDER AWARE/CONSULTED**

YES, discussed on numerous occasions at Carmarths Local Access Forum meetings with Cabinet member present.

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Carmarthenshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2019-2019	ROWIP 2019-2029	https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/media/1222043/rowip-english.pdf https://www.sirgar.llyw.cymru/media/1222044/rowip-welsh.pdf