

MEETING : CHESHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
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CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL

RESULTS OF COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS MANAGEMENT (CAMS) SURVEY

1.0 Introduction

The network of Public Rights of Way (PROW) that weave their way through the fabric of the urban and rural landscape of Cheshire West and Chester provide one of the best ways for the local and visiting communities to enjoy and explore the area.

In enabling and promoting access to the countryside and greenspace, the path network serves both amenity and recreational purposes and is an important means by which environmental, social exclusion and community health issues may be addressed.

High quality access in rural areas in particular also allows residents to enjoy, appreciate and understand their environment and is therefore essential for the development of a wider and deeper constituency of support for countryside issues.

It is also the case that well managed and marketed access is often the foundation of a sustainable tourism industry and through this association a well-managed path network can provide significant economic and social benefits.

2.0 Survey rationale

Whilst a key driver for all authorities embarking on path survey projects is to ensure the quality of user experience, it is important to understand in detail the exact uses of survey generated data as this can have an important bearing on the detail of survey design.

The main purpose of the project was to enable the Council to have the necessary information to develop and deliver an effective asset management plan for the PROW network and to identify those paths with high accessibility (or with the potential to provide high accessibility).

This will enable budgetary forecasting of works required, provide detailed and current works lists, generate a complete and consistent inventory of structures as well as assisting in the management of liability.

3.0 What was surveyed?

Using Global Positioning System (GPS) and the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) surveyors checked paths against the electronic Definitive Map. All furniture items were assessed including bridges, drains, stiles, gates, steps, bridges and fingerposts. Photographs were taken of every path surface, furniture item and fault (termed issues). Any issues were logged to the appropriate Network Officer to be resolved.

4.0 Condition & practical works

Information will be required to establish what practical works are needed to upgrade and maintain each path to provide a certain quality of experience for the user. This implies that a quality standard exists (When is a stile satisfactory or not? What height does vegetation have to reach to become problematic?) Compared to other authorities, it is suggested that we generally have a very high standard of network. In light of this we asked the surveyors to have a high standard when logging faults (issues)

5.0 Budget setting

If estimates for the upgrade and subsequent maintenance of the path network are needed for the future then specific information needs to be captured in the field. For this survey we have identified the costs of furniture items (stiles, gates, fingerposts etc) and resurfacing types and compared this to the longevity of the product to produce reports on the cost of maintaining the PROW network over a period of time.

6.0 Health & safety

Information about user safety may be needed with a risk assessment of features, both to ensure the safety of users and to manage the liability of those responsible for their management. The information provided with the survey will enable the authority to risk assess logged issues and manage liabilities

7.0 Survey frequency and data management

Although this project is concerned only with a one-off survey event, certain aspects of the survey design are dependent upon how the dataset is to be kept up to date in the future. It is therefore important that any changes on the PROW network are continuously cataloged with new information and images continue with annual partial network surveys. The investment made in an initial survey needs to be protected by keeping the dataset up to date. It is a lot more cost-effective to undertake a detailed baseline survey and then update this periodically than it is to commission independent surveys each year.

8.0 Results

All the results of the survey were migrated directly into the electronic CAMS database which the authority uses to manage the network. This system allows work sheets and issues to be raised and resolved. It also allows legal work to be logged against paths (eg Diversions) and continues to build information as time goes by. The amount of data on the system is huge but we can interrogate this system and pull off analysis reports as and when needed.

Appendices 1-4 are four summary reports pulled off CAMs for you to look at

Appendix 1 - Furniture item summary
Appendix 2 - Issues summary
Appendix 3 - Overall surface summary
Appendix 4 - Accessibility summary

However I will bring a few more examples to the meeting for members to look at. To give you some idea of the size of some of the reports, the Furniture Inventory is 1442 pages long and contains information on the 12 244 items of furniture on the entire PROW network.

9.0 Phase 2 Website project

Although the CAMS database is a working tool, it is possible to pull some of the information from the survey and enhance the current interactive mapping on the Council website.

The IT and Web Teams are currently working with new software to transfer furniture icons and images across to the interactive mapping. This will enable residents, visitors and groups to look at routes and assess their accessibility and suitability. Appendix 5 is pulled directly off CAMS but gives some idea of the furniture information that can be migrated to the interactive mapping.

10.0 Summary

The CAMS database is a dynamic database which is constantly changing and being updated by officers. The information is a valuable tool for assessing the accessibility of the PROW network and as an asset register for the authority. The survey has given us a valuable snap shot of the PROW network and the tools to interrogate that information in a myriad of ways to help us manage, maintain and develop the network

RECOMMENDED:

That the report be noted.

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