

Norfolk Local Access Forum

Report title:	Countryside Access arrangements update
Date of meeting:	24 October 2018
Responsible Officer:	Steve Miller – Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage
Strategic impact To address the concerns raised by the Local Access Forum with regards to Public Rights of Way Management and delivering the service in an economic and cost-effective way.	

Executive summary

At the July 2017 Local Access Forum (NLAF), it was agreed that at each future meeting, a summary of the work of the Countryside Access Officers and Environment teams would be provided. At the October 2017 NLAF it was agreed that this report should be presented to the PROW sub-group prior to being brought to NLAF.

This paper highlights this work in terms of the volumes of customer queries received and responded to. The paper also highlights other key areas of work.

Recommendations:

That the Local Access Forum note the progress made to date since the Countryside Access Officer posts were introduced.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Since 1 April 2017, there is a single point of contact within each Highways Area office being responsible for their local rights of way issues. By having the officer within the Area office, they are more “on the ground” and better placed to deal with the operational reactive issues that occur when managing rights of way. They are supported by the wider Highways Area team staff. In addition, the Norfolk Trails team sits within the Environment Service at County Hall and carries out strategic and developmental aspects of developing the countryside access network.

2. Performance

- 2.1. The information below summarises the performance information available for the complete months in the financial year 2018-19 (June/July/August)

The new CRM defect reporting system went live Thursday 22 March 2018. Defect notes are being made visible to the public in the automatic update emails sent when third party defects have been inspected & more status options are available on tablets under the ‘No Defect’ category, as previously reported.

The provision of additional information appears to have led to a decrease in follow up requests.

Current situation as at 10 September 2018

Actual defect showing on systems as of 10/09/18		
Area	Mayrise defects Active	CRM's
North	97	25
South	131	11
West	16	1
TOTAL	233	35

Most enquiries received continue to be regarding damaged signs, non-reinstatement, obstructions, overgrown surface, overgrown hedges/trees and surface condition.

The Norfolk Trails Team had at 10 September, 303 open CRM issues.

The detailed situation over the last 12 months is attached in Appendix 1.

- 2.2. In addition to the numbers above, there have been a number of enforcement notices sent out to landowners since April 2018. The following have been issued:
- 108 x Section 131A, 134-137 Non-reinstatement Notices sent
 - 44 x Section 130's (obstructions) and s56 (out of repair) received and issued (enforcement against NCC).

It should be noted that processing these s130/56 legal notices is time consuming for NCC staff. As part of a legal process with set timescales, regardless of priority considerations it has an adverse effect on staff resources. Recent surveys of local authority Public Rights of Way (PROW) services indicate that across the country the average number of s130/56 notices served on any authority is only approximately 2 per year.

These issues remain ongoing and are being actively monitored and pursued with landowners.

- 2.3. In terms of other progress, key highlights include:
- Cutting contract has been updated and was sent out to the contractors in April (2018-19 financial year). The first (primary) cut was completed but there were some delays in completion, in part due to the density of the vegetation encountered. The issue was compounded in North and East as commencement relied on completion of the Trails first cut.
 - Information on the budget including the lengths and frequency of grass cutting was asked to be included in the regular report. In 2017, 820 km of PROW were cut in June and July with a second cut of some of the routes (490 km) completed in September and October. In 2018-19 the initial cut is of 840 km. The second cut has been ordered to be carried out in September/October and is underway, with just under 500km of paths included.
 - Data has been received from The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) regarding landowners, and is being processed by the I.T. department. This will show all

landowners who claim DEFRA grant aid and are therefore subject to “cross compliance” requirements including appropriate management of PROW on their land. This data is hoped to strengthen the enforcement process and will be updated annually. For data protection purposes this data can only be accessed by CAO’s and can only be used for PROW enforcement issues, not as a general landownership database. Update: This is still with the I.T. department at the current time.

- Money for PROW capital improvement work schemes has been approved. Schemes for 2018/19 have been submitted and work will be carried out at Hunstanton, South Walsham amongst others. The Hunstanton scheme is progressing, with quotes having being received to undertake improvement works. Use of the path is suspended from September to allow works to take place.

2.4. Additional work that the Trails team has completed during July and August 2018

Access for all works on the Boudicca’s Way

The access for all work has continued on the Boudicca’s way and work has been carried out at Stubbs Green, Joys Loke and on Naiden’s Lane to improve the accessibility of the route. This has included additional definitive map work to get the walked route back on the definitive line and landowner negotiations to improve the access opportunities.

Stubbs Green before:



Stubbs Green afterwards – route realigned onto the definitive line, boardwalk crossing structure installed, signage installed.



Naiden's Lane before:



Naiden's Lane afterwards – vegetation clearance, base layer laid, drainage installed and resurfaced throughout.



Joys Loke before:



Joys Loke afterwards – new bridge, new drainage, new surface.



National Trail

New signage from Holme through to Fring:



New boardwalk installed between the National Trail and Holkham Beach:



Boardwalk repair carried out at Burnham Overy Staithe and at Holme.

Coastal Treasures

This is a project looking at circular walks in the North West of the County and likely linkages from these to Stretch 4 of the coast path running between Kings Lynn and Hunstanton when it is defined by Natural England.

The project is time limited and the funding needs to be spent during the timescale, the funding comes from the Coastal Communities Fund. A combination of the Trails and Historic Environment teams have been installing and characterising new circular routes. Access improvements are a key part of this work. This includes:

Four new lighter bridge crossings to improve accessibility
Four new kissing gates and removing stiles from circular walks

The circular walks that are being installed are:

- Brancaster
 - Snettisham
 - Leziate
 - Burnhams
 - Ringstead
 - Heacham
 - The Wootons
 - Dersingham
 - Heacham
 - Thornham
 - Houghton
- Plus three cycle loops and routes.



These routes will be completed by the end of August/start of September and will offer increased access to the countryside through improved signage and promotion.

Publication of booklets will follow as will a series of business workshops etc.

Plus the team has been dealing with ongoing reactive issues reported through site visits inspections etc.

3. Financial Implications

3.1. None arising from this report

4. Issues, risks and innovation

4.1. None arising from this report

5. Background

5.1. The background information to this paper is covered by the preceding paper on Public Rights of Way Maintenance, presented to this Committee.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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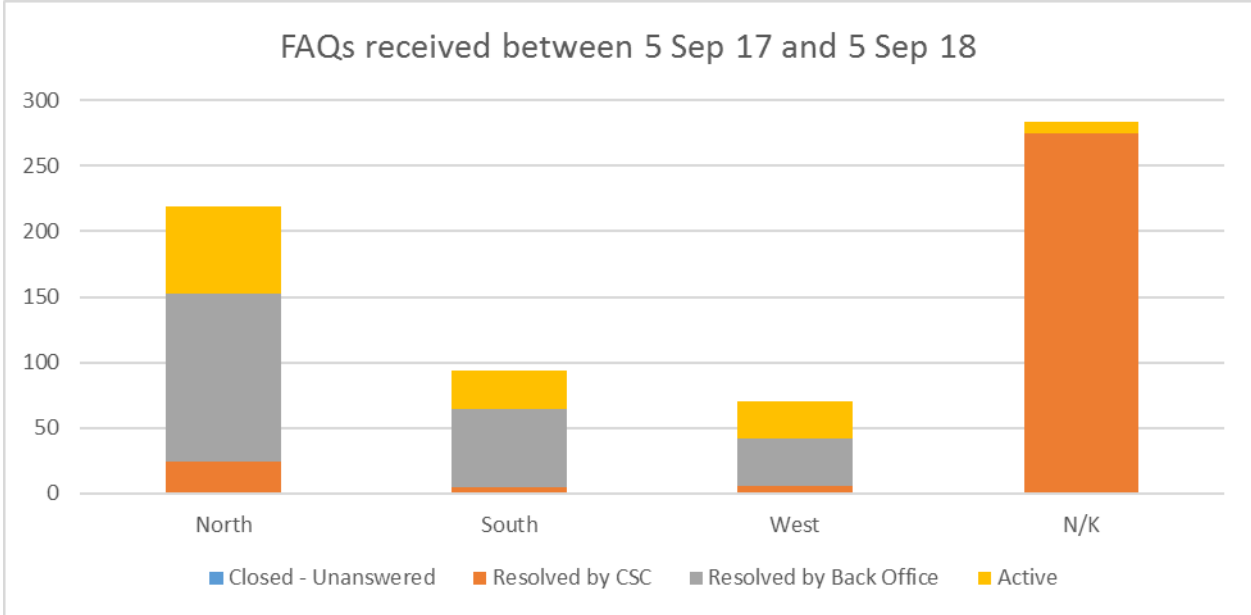


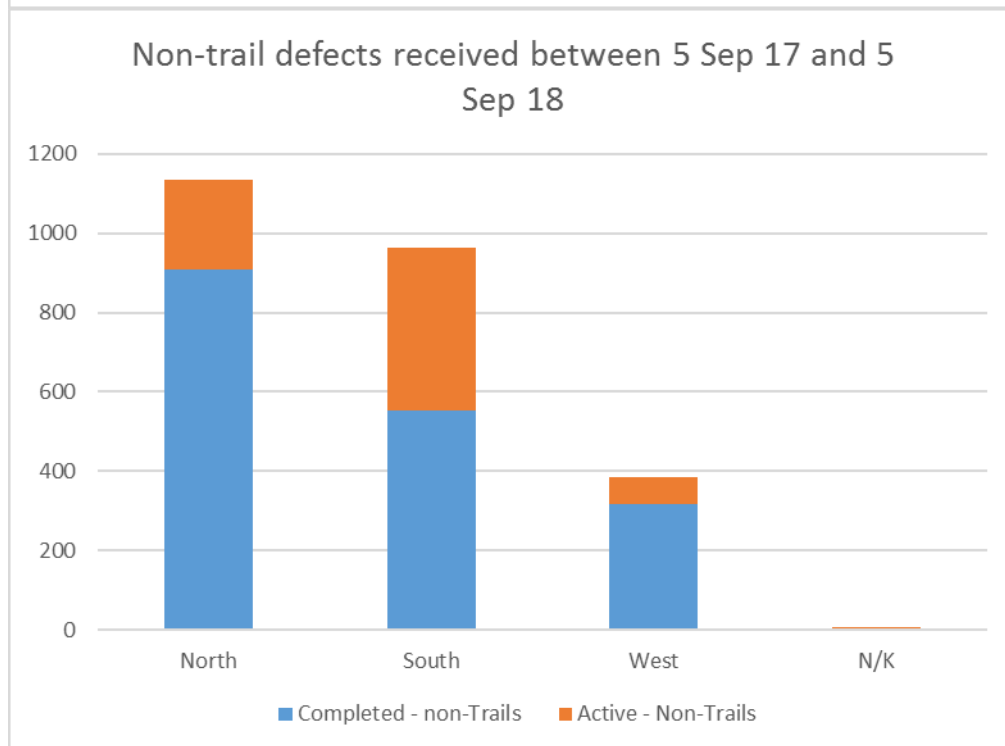
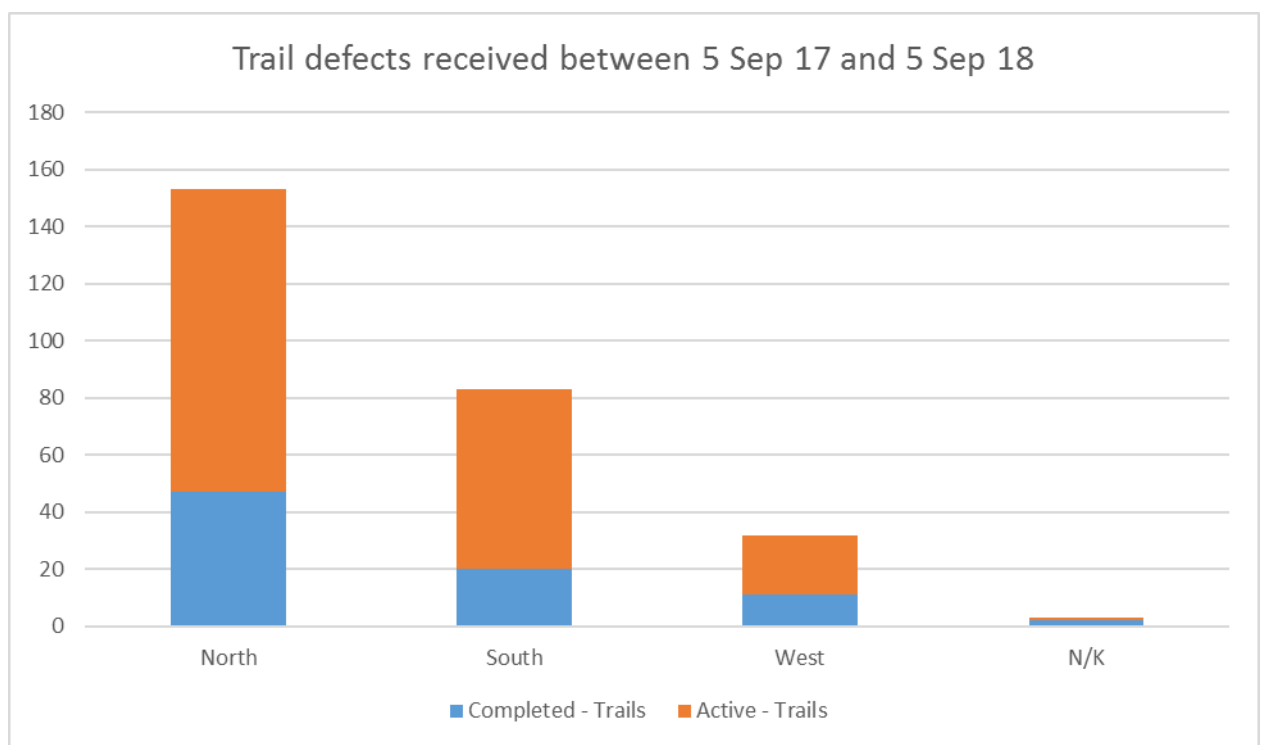
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Appendix 1: Performance information – detailed situation over the last 12 months

Enquiries received		FAQs					Defects			
Area	Code	Received	Closed - Unanswered	Resolved by CSC	Resolved by Back Office	Active	Completed - Trails	Active - Trails	Completed - non-Trails	Active - Non-Trails
North	N	219	0	24	128	67	47	106	908	228
South	S	94	0	5	59	30	20	63	554	411
West	W	70	0	6	36	28	11	21	318	67
N/K		284	0	275	0	9	2	1	3	2
All	*	667	0	310	223	134	80	191	1783	708

Generated Defects





Enquiries

All Active Enquiries as of 5 Sep 18

Area	Code	FAQ	Trails Defects	Non-Trail Defects
North	N	81	131	324
South	S	75	76	597
West	W	49	34	208
N/K		6	4	19
All	*	211	245	1148

All Active Enquiries as of 5 Sep 18

