

Local Access Forum

Report title:	Countryside Access arrangements update
Date of meeting:	3 April 2019
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 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 since the last report in September 2018.

The new CRM defect reporting system went live 22nd Thursday 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 available on tablets under the ‘No Defect’ category, as previously reported.

Minor updates continue to be made to CRM to enhance operation and feedback elements.

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

A new report has been prepared to display the relevant PROW/Trails information and is attached below.

PROW and Trail Defect Report

The information presented on this page looks at PROW and Trail defects reports. Countryside Access Officers (CAOs) receive PROW defect reports on tablets for investigation and in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System if the defect is on a trail. CAOs review these and reallocate to the Trails team queue for action if required.

Volume of PROW/Trail defects by type

Description\Offault	C	N	S	W	Total	
PROW - Animal(s)		2	6		8	
PROW - Bridge		8	13	1	22	
PROW - Crops/ploughing affecting footpath		21	31	3	55	
PROW - Damaged or missing sign		45	49	14	108	
PROW - Flooded Path			2	2	4	
PROW - Gate/Barrier	1	12	13	7	33	
PROW - Illegal / Vehicle Use		3	2	3	8	
PROW - Misleading sign		12	6	1	19	
PROW - Obstruction -e.g. building works, fences, ditches, locked gate		21	28	5	54	
PROW - Overgrown hedge/tree		18	7	2	27	
PROW - Overgrown surface -e.g. grass/weeds		18	18	5	41	
PROW - Steps damaged/other		1	2	2	5	
PROW - Stile damaged/too/high/other		6	5		11	
PROW - Surface condition		8	11	3	22	
PROW - Tree dangerous/fallen		8	9	1	18	
Trail - Bridge		1	2		3	
Trail - Crops/ploughing affecting footpath		3	3		6	
Trail - Damaged or missing sign		11	9		20	
Trail - Flooded Path		1			1	
Trail - Gate/Barrier		5	2	1	8	
Trail - Illegal / Vehicle Use		1	1		2	
Trail - Misleading sign		2			2	
Trail - Overgrown hedge/tree	1	7		1	9	
Trail - Overgrown surface -e.g. grass/weeds		1			1	
Trail - Steps damaged/other			1		1	
Trail - Surface condition		8	8	7	23	
Trail - Tree dangerous/fallen		4	2		6	
Trail - Obstruction -e.g. building works, fences, ditches, locked gate		4	3	2	9	
Total	1	1	231	234	60	527

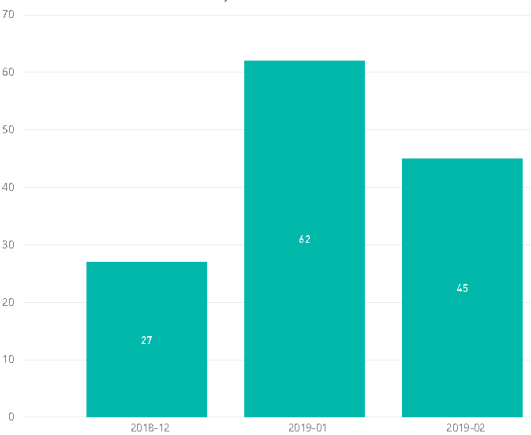
Public Right of Way and Trail FAQ Report

FAQs relate to all enquiries made by customers that include queries on policy, information requests, formal notices and chasing requests. These are logged by the Customer Service Centre and managed within the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM).

These present to either the PROW 'queue' (managed by Countryside Access Officers) or the Trails queue (managed by environment).

Alter the Report Date Range in the top right hand corner to see FAQs received over a different time period.

Volume of PROW/Trail FAQs received by month

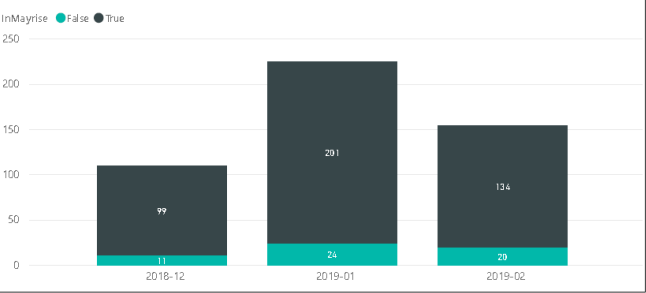


Report Date Range

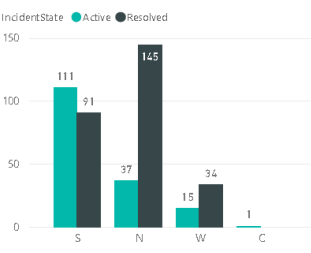
Last 3 Months (Calendar)

12/1/2018 - 2/28/2019

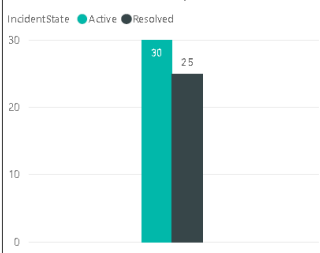
PROW and Trail defects received by month



PROW Defects by Status (in HMS)



Trails Defects by Status



Report Date Range

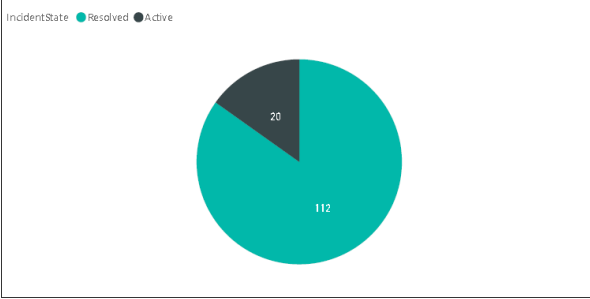
Last 3 Months (Calendar)

12/1/2018 - 2/28/2019

Volume of PROW/Trail FAQs by question

Question	Count of CaseNumber
I have an enquiry about a PROW or would like to speak to a PROW officer	68
I have an enquiry about PROW or Trail grass cutting	27
I have an enquiry concerning common land	15
I would like information about a Norfolk Trail	12
I have an enquiry about the definitive map	7
	2
I've seen unauthorised cycling, driving or riding on a Public Right of Way or Trail. What can be done?	1
Other	-
Total	134

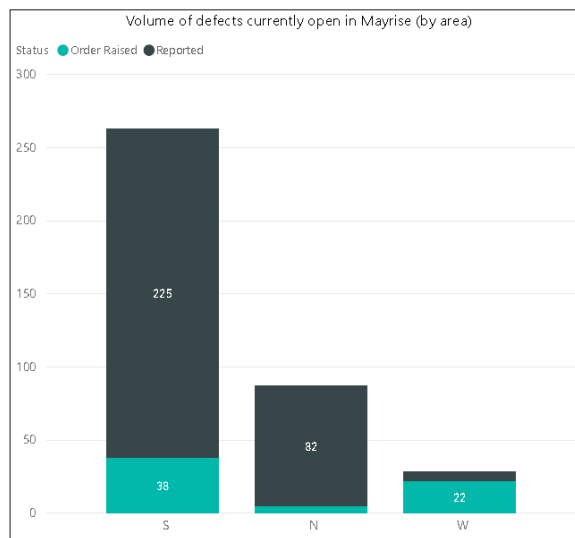
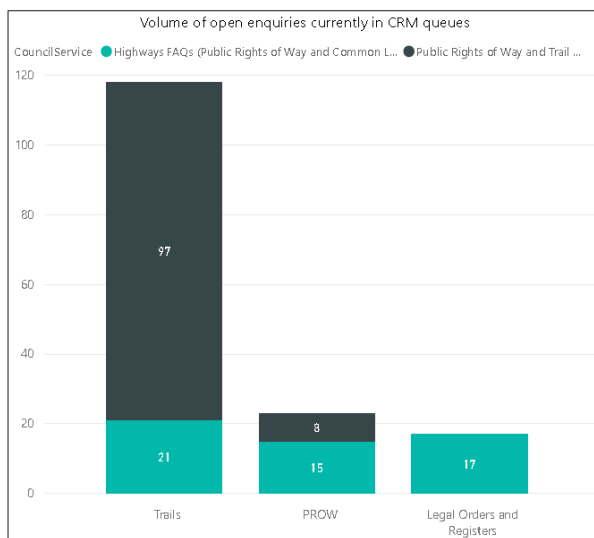
PROW/Trail FAQs received by Status



Active Enquiries

This page provides a snapshot of the customer reported defects and FAQs that are currently open in Mayrise and CRM.

The graph below reflects what is currently open in the team Queues in CRM. You will notice that some queues have both FAQs and defects. This is because Trails defects are still currently managed within CRM. Defects registered on PROW's will automatically 'leave' CRM and be sent through to Mayrise. You can see the open PROW customer reported defects that are in Mayrise in the graph to the right. Anything with the status 'reported' indicates the defect is awaiting investigation.



In summary:

The Mayrise system of logged complaints had at 28th February, 247 open issues.

The majority of enquiries received continue to be regarding damaged or missing signs, non-reinstatement, obstructions, overgrown surface, overgrown hedges/ trees and surface condition.

The Norfolk Trails Team had at 28th February 2019, 128 open CRM issues. The Norfolk Trails Team had at 20th December 2018, 284 open CRM issues. This shows an additional closure rate of over 50%. These reports are often historic and do not relate to current issues which is why a focus is on dealing with current issues which is currently running at over 80% closure rate.

Highways has at 28th February, 28 open CRM issues

These figures do not reflect the substantial volume of reports and correspondence still received through direct email communication from members of the public.

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:

- 181 number Section 131A, 134-137 Non-reinstatement Notices sent
- 57 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 PROW services indicate that across the country the *average* number of s130/56 notices served on any authority is only approximately 2 per yr.

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

2.3. In terms of other progress, key highlights include:

- 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 was for 840 km. and the second (partial) cut was just under 500km.
- CAO's have been reviewing feedback from contractors over the winter and making minor adjustments for 2019 season. Essentially the 2019 programme will run unchanged from 2018 but work will progress towards amalgamation of this and the Trails cutting contract for practical and efficiency purposes by 2020
- Landowner data from The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) regarding DEFRA grant aid and "cross compliance" requirements is now live and can be used by CAO's along with Land Registry searches to identify the majority of landowners.
- Money for PRoW capital improvement work schemes has been approved, a total of £200,000 over 2 years. Schemes for 2018/19 totalling £120,000 have been largely completed. Improvement works have been carried out on well used paths in village settings. (E.G. South Walsham FP1 surface improvements are underway : Cromer FP19 surface improvement is in for Easter 2019: Hunstanton FP10 riverside scheme is progressing with a physical route now restored. The route is now being fenced to protect walkers. The footpath will remain closed until the end of April to allow some vegetation regeneration but is hoped to be open for May Bank Holiday 2019)
- Bids for 2019/20 PRoW capital improvements have been submitted for the remaining £80,000.
- CAO's are also allocated £15,000 annually for small scale improvements, usually for urban paths, and a small number of surface improvement schemes have been carried out across the County as a result. (E.G. West Winch FP3 well used local route to shops and the school has been widened over February 2019 half term).
- County Councillors are allocated monies for small scale locally approved highway improvements and some of these have included PROW improvements. (E.G. Widening out of overgrown Restricted Byways within Downham Market.)
- Highways also operate a Parish Partnership scheme where Parish Councils can co-fund small scale parish highway improvements such as informal trod footways along road verges. PROW improvements are eligible (E.G. Snettisham FP18 path surfacing and bridge replacement due May/June 2019)

Norfolk Trails team Countryside Access arrangements update

Management update:

Significant tree works completed on Marriott's Way at Drayton to allow future surface works to commence

Reactive tree works across the trails network, responding to feedback from users.
Continuation of *Chalara* tree management

Engagement:

Discover England project delivered 3 business workshops during the winter at Hunstanton, Cromer and Great Yarmouth.
Coastal Treasures delivered 3 business workshops in the coastal treasures area during February these were at Hunstanton, Snettisham and Thornham
Series of 9 engagement events held for recycling the railways project which had an attendance in total of over 450 people

Access improvements:

New signage installed on Cockthorpe circular
New signage installed on Blakeney circular
New town signage installed through Aylsham, Stalham and North Walsham
New signage installed on Bath Hills
New kissing gate installed on Bath Hills
Completion of Angles Way signage that now is complete between Beccles and Great Yarmouth – 30 miles of signage improvement.

Reporting update:

Trails team to migrate to the same reporting and management system as Highways during March 2019. Significant resource has been allocated to this work during the past 3 months and during the year prior to that.

Promotion:

Google Trekker completed and press release timed for March 2019. Final data check and image clarification being undertaken by team currently
Coastal Treasures book currently in final draft of production – expected print run to be completed by Easter 2019
Boudiccas way leaflets produced and distributed

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. None arising from this report

4. Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1. None

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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