

**Asset Management and Enforcement  
Public Rights of Way and Unclassified County Roads (uUCRs) Inspection Cycle**

Report of the Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste

***Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.***

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that inspections of public rights of way and Unclassified County Roads (uUCRs) move from a 900 day (approximately 2½ year) to a 3 year inspection cycle from 1 July 2015.

**1. Introduction**

Devon County Council's Public Rights of Way Wardens are responsible for inspection, maintenance and enforcement on 5,000 kilometres of public rights of way (PROW), 42 kilometres of permissive paths, 225 kilometres of recreational trails (off road cycle walking and multi use trails) and 563 kilometres of unsurfaced Unclassified County Roads (uUCRs). These are currently inspected on the following cycle:

	<b>Inspection frequency</b>	<b>South West Coast Path National Trail</b>
PROW and DCC permissive paths	900 days	Annual
Recreational Trails	Annual	-
uUCRs	900 days	-

**2. Proposal**

It is proposed to move the PROW and Unclassified County Roads (uUCRs) inspection frequency from 900 days to 3 years effective from 1 July 2015 to reflect the resources available and increases in the extent of the network.

**3. Background**

'Well Maintained Highways' is the code of practice for highway maintenance management. It advises that providing planned safety inspections on PROW similar to those for other roads and footways would exceed currently available local authorities' resources. It recommends including metalled urban PROW within the highway safety inspection regime, an approach already implemented in Devon.

To manage the rest of the network an 'Ease of Use' inspection regime was developed and implemented across Devon's PROW network as a Public Service Agreement with Defra, as agreed by the Audit Office in 2001/04. This inspection considers both maintenance condition and safety. In order to properly manage the asset, it makes good sense to set an achievable, Ease of Use inspection cycle. Ease of Use averaged 94% for Devon's PROW network and 91.9% for uUCRs in 2014.

The original inspection regime was purely for public rights of way – Footpaths, Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic but since then the team has taken on 42

kilometres of permissive paths, 225 kilometres of recreational trails (off road cycle walking and multi use trails) and 563 kilometres of unsurfaced Unclassified County Roads (uUCRs).

Lengthening the inspection cycle will ensure that PROW Wardens can remain responsive during extreme weather events and other disruption to the network whilst maintaining a reasonable level of Ease of Use and user safety, ensuring local and visitor satisfaction and meeting the requirements of the County Council's insurers.

On 1 May 2015, the PROW service agency arrangement with the North Devon Biosphere ended. Thus, the PROW team acquired responsibility for the north coast's Coast Path and Tarka Trail with no additional resource. Warden areas have been reallocated accordingly, also for implementation on 1 July 2015.

#### **4. Financial Considerations**

The County Council's liability is unlikely to be effected by this proposed change as consideration has been given to the balance of safety and inspection frequency to ensure a reasonable method of inspection and repair.

#### **5. Legal Considerations**

The implications and consequences of the recommendation have been taken into account in the preparation of the report.

#### **6. Risk Management Considerations**

The purpose of a routine cycle of inspections is to maintain Ease of Use and to ensure user safety. Lengthening the frequency may impact on Ease of Use. However, our greatest inspection asset are the users of the network who report developing problems through the Parish Paths Partnership scheme, the Customer Service Centre and the online Public Information Portal. Therefore, the likelihood of a significant problem developing unnoticed on a path is slight.

#### **7. Equality, Environmental Impact and Public Health Considerations**

Equality, environmental impact or public health implications have, where appropriate under the provisions of the relevant legislation, been taken into account in the preparation of the report.

#### **8. Conclusion**

It is recommended that inspections of public rights of way move from a 900 day to a 3 year inspection cycle from 1 July 2015.

#### **9. Reasons for Recommendations**

To ensure an achievable, yet safe, inspection cycle.

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#### **Electoral Divisions: All**

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Background Paper

Date

File Ref.

None

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