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Dear Chairman,

I am writing with your 2020 annual update on West Sussex County Council's (WSCC) Public Rights of Way (PRoW) matters within your parish.

As you are aware local paths have proved to be even more important to people during the last year and Council's Rights of Way team has had a busy year dealing with work arising from Council's inspections and addressing reports we get in from users around the County. After a short delay to the routine 15-month inspection and maintenance programme last spring due to COVID restrictions normal business resumed.

All high priority maintenance works including signage, small bridges, steps and other minors works for which the Council is responsible are completed by our routine maintenance contractor, County Tree Surgeons, once inspections have been completed. The current Inspection and Maintenance Schedule is available on our webpages, so you can see when we will next be visiting your area. We will contact you approximately a fortnight before inspections start so you can make your Local Access Ranger aware of any matters you would like them to specifically consider in the inspection.

We were also able to undertake a full programme of larger bridge replacements and surfacing schemes. These are included in the attached Parish Works report, which shows work carried out by WSCC during 2020. Unfortunately, one element of our work we were unable to deliver in 2020 has been our Volunteer Ranger task programme. This has impacted our delivery of schemes that fall outside routine maintenance and our Capital Improvements Programme. However, we are pleased our Volunteer Rangers are now back out working delivering some much appreciated improvements.

Last year we also successfully completed our summer clearance programme, cutting surface vegetation from 363km paths across the county. Paths to be included for 2021, are shown in the attached SC report.

As you are aware last year has been unique due to the Covid pandemic and it is a credit to the Access Rangers, PRow teams and volunteers that we have continued to provide a good service to our customers.

The matter of Ash Dieback continues to be an issue across the UK. The disease, which has the potential to kill 95% of West Sussex ash trees over the coming 10-20 years, is having a significant impact on the landscape. The responsibility for managing trees along PRow sits with the respective landowner and as a Parish Council you may find yourselves dealing with this problem. Where works are required to fell trees, WSCC would expect landowners to carefully consider how the work can be done without closing any PRow. If this is not possible, advance notice and an application to WSCC for a closure will be required. If the Parish Council is the landowner it will be responsible for making sure no damage is caused to the surface of the PRow so you should make sure any contractors you use are aware of this. Further information can be found on the Council's Ash Dieback web pages.

To assist Parish Council's we have also included a helpful summary of the legal powers Town and Parish Councils have regarding access and public rights of way. This is a useful reference to explain what you can do to help manage your local network, but if you are unsure about anything included in this list then feel free to contact the Public Rights of Way team on prow@westsussex.gov.uk.

Should you need further advice on PRow matters, your Local Access Ranger will be happy to assist and I have attached a map showing their contact details, though please do not give their details out to the public.

Yours faithfully

Deborah Urquhart
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