

National LAF Conferences 2013 – 14

Presentation: Paths in Crisis

Anastasia French, Paths in Crisis Report Coordinator, Ramblers

Summary

Highlights from the full presentation

New report, 'Turning the Tide of Inactivity', on the pandemic caused by inactivity. Information at local authority level is useful for comparative purposes.

<http://www.ukactive.com/home/more/8265/page/1/growing-physical-inactivity-pandemic-laid-bare-by-ukactive-report>

The Ramblers has been running its 'Go All Out' project to get people to state what they think the Ramblers vision should be for the next 10 years. Feedback is coming in and it is hoped to unveil the vision in the autumn this year.

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/goallout>

An article in a recent edition of 'Walk' magazine suggested a presumption in favour of access and collaboration with other access groups.

It was confirmed that the Ramblers works closely with other organisations and is a member of the Stakeholder Working Group which is continuing to meet to discuss the Deregulation Bill.

For city authorities and those with minimal staff it is very difficult to compile or complete the Definitive Map. Volunteers could be used for this process e.g. Hampshire's PATHH project (Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage). Birmingham City Council did its Definitive Map for the first time five years ago.

A spreadsheet had been compiled from local authority data provided through a Freedom of Information request. Where local authorities could not provide the Ramblers with budget data they were given 10 penalty points. This was because there were up to 30 points available for councils who had cut their budget severely and the Ramblers wanted to ensure that councils were not hiding their cuts by not providing data. Some authorities commented that they felt this meant they were being unfairly penalised for otherwise good performance. Requests for information from the data spreadsheet should be made to Anastasia French, the Ramblers – anastasia.french@ramblers.org.uk

Question and Answers

Q: Does the report consider the impact of climate change to the RoW network

A: Currently not although AF acknowledged the issue and that damage to the RoW network would probably increase in future. She agreed to consider this in future reports

Q: One National Park Authority handed their RoW work back to the Local Authority how are these relationship working?

A: There is significant variation in how national parks and second tier councils manage RoW across the country. But the 'Duty' always remains with the Local

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Authority (county council/unitary authority). The report doesn't always show how these NP/second tier authority relations effect management of the RoW network. *Observation: Point was made that LAF champion better management of the RoW network too.*

Q: Point made that the term 'footpath' could be misleading, as it does not include the broad range of users that RoW network supports.

A: AF accepted this but felt that 'footpaths' was a term that most of the general public could relate to and understand. The report does try to make use of the term 'path' to try and move away from the focus on pedestrian use.

Observation: Is the current repair model fit for purpose? Analogy made with pothole repair whereby an authority will repair a group of potholes in one area as this is more efficient than repairing potholes as and when they are reported. Applying this to the RoW network, should a more strategic approach be taken to maintenance of the network.

Observation: RA do a great job but the user groups and LAF can influence locally.