

## **Wirral Rights of Way Newsletter January 2017:**

### **Welcome to the annual update regarding Wirral Public Rights of Way.**

The ongoing work on the Wirral Public Rights Of Way network continues to maintain and enhance the public's access to these routes. The network length is over 100 miles, and is made up of about 75 miles of public rights of way, plus an additional 25 miles of permissive footpaths, bridleways and off road cycle tracks in addition to the 15 miles of the Wirral Way within Wirral Country Park.



These public routes provide a free and accessible recreational facility, while helping to improve the health and well-being and connectivity to employment for Wirral residents and visitors alike. They are also a major contributor to the Wirral Visitor Economy which is now worth about £350million per year with an ambitious target of reaching £550million by 2025.

### **Port Sunlight River Park and the new River Dibbin Bridge:**

Work continues on a new bridge across the River Dibbin near its mouth with the River Mersey thus providing a vital link from the Riverside Park to Dock Road South, Bromborough Pool, The Old Court House Site, The Croft Retail Park and all routes south along the East coast including The Port Sunlight Cycle Track. The existence of these routes will help reinforce the case for the re-instatement of the old historic footpath 56 between the factories and the estuary to Eastham Country Park.



The bridge itself is currently under construction at the Contractor's factory in Yorkshire. It is hoped it will be delivered and put into position near to the current United Utilities Bridge early on in 2017. Planning consents from the Planning department and the Environment Agency for the Environmental Permit are all in hand, as are the paths linking up to and from the new bridge.

The 80 acre Riverside Park opened in August 2014 and the popularity of this public open space has increased considerably. It rises 37 metres above the adjacent Mersey Estuary with views across to Liverpool and beyond. The Park is currently accessible via the main entrance in Dock Road North and on foot or by cycle to the north via a link from Shorefields Park.

### **The Wirral Section of the England Coastal Path:**

We expect to start work on planning our long awaited section from Birkenhead to the Welsh border in January 2017. Natural England will be working closely on all aspects

of the programme with ourselves as the relevant Access Authority, as well as with other key stakeholders.

Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 aims to improve public access to, and enjoyment of, the English coastline by creating a walking route for the whole English coast, together with an associated margin of accessible land between the route and the sea. It allows existing coastal access to be secured and improved and new access to be created. The route – the England Coastal Path - will be a well way-marked walking trail combining existing public rights of way with new linear rights under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, usually along existing walked routes on the ground. When it is complete it will be the longest National Trail in Britain and the longest coastal route in the world.

### **Improvements works**

**Stiles to Gates:** Replacement of the footpath ‘climb over’ stiles with kissing gates and space saving lift up / drop down concertina gates has been one of the major projects of the last 3 years. We can now say that with the exception of a few historic sandstone step over stiles ‘Wirral is mainly stile free’.



### **Imminent Work**

- **Footpaths 10 and 13, Woodchurch – Prenton:** The work instruction has been issued to the contractor to upgrade some of this very busy ‘Walk to School’ route from Woodchurch High School to Christleton Close and Woodchurch Road, Prenton.  
Unfortunately the more ambitious specification as originally hoped with lighting improvements proved very difficult to overcome due to the overhead power lines that straddle above most of the path. Therefore we should now have some extra money to pay for a wider bridge over the River Fender.
- **The claim for the slipway at Monks Ferry** to become a public Right Of Way has necessitated a report to The Licensing, Health and Safety and General Purposes Committee in early 2017.
- **Surface upgrade** of the Wirral Circular trail Pasture Road – Reeds Lane section is also due to be done early on in 2017.
- **High Voltage Direct Current Cable:** The acquisition of all the 20 or so personal gates along the route where the cable crosses the public footpaths have been secured, plus many 100s of tonnes of gravel and a 1,000 plus wooden shuttering boards that can be re cycled into new steps or used for revetments etc. The mountain of gravel and the pile of boards can easily be seen while passing the Arrowe Park Road depot.

### **Work completed in 2016**

- Surface improvements to the Royden Park Horse Route, and **Footpath 49** west of Raby.
- **Footpath 17 from** Thingwall and Storeton has had the 1<sup>st</sup> 9 tonne of gravel and 50 gravel boards from the cable route to renovate the steps between the Prenton Brook and the railway. This is an otherwise remote location to get materials on site.
- **Footpath 6 at Meols:** the application to make a minor diversion along part of the path onto an adjacent concrete track instead of using a cross field path is now confirmed.

**The Maintenance Schedule** has proved a success this year with an 'in house' seasonal contractor from April – December. We hope to repeat this in 2017.

### **The RA Big Pathwatch**

This has been a worthwhile exercise nationally to provide a snapshot of the public rights of way network. On a local basis, this initiative has confirmed the fact that the standard of footpaths across Wirral is quite good.

### **The Wirral Circular Trail**

This continues to be a very successful 35 mile walking and cycling route around Wirral, signposted and described in an 88 page booklet detailing the trail is widely available across Wirral and via the Council website at:

[www.visitwirral.com/attractions-and-ctivities/walkingguides](http://www.visitwirral.com/attractions-and-ctivities/walkingguides)

Having recently conducted a full audit of missing and broken signs, the order has been submitted to the contractor for replacement soon.

### **Wirral Conservation Area and Heritage Trail**

Work is almost complete on producing a trail that will encourage people to walk and cycle around Wirral visiting the 26 Conservation Areas and 40 Heritage Sites. This will be a web based publication.

**Thursday Morning maintenance sessions with our Volunteers** have continued throughout 2016 from early March until December. Each morning's work results in a huge amount of maintenance work cutting and trimming recent growth of brambles and nettles on selected public footpaths and bridleways across Wirral. If you wish to join us for approx. 3 hours a week please contact Robin Tutchings. (Contacts below)



### **Discovering Lost Ways**

The cut-off date for claiming public rights of way is 2026 and our rights of way officer is working to collate historic information for further investigation.

### **Wirral Walking Festival.**



The 2016 event throughout the whole of May was hugely successful, with over 100 walks promoted by a superb 26 page booklet. Hopefully the 2017 event, again from 1st – 31st May, will be bigger and even more popular than last year. The Senior Ranger at Wirral Country Park is again at the helm of this multi-strand project with over 100 walks planned throughout the glorious month of May. It is hoped there will again be themed walks

relating to improving health, looking at the history, heritage and nature of Wirral, plus wheelchair / accessible walks and Guide Dog walks.

### **Royden Park Permissive Horse Route via a Definitive Map Modification Order to Public Bridleway**

This conversion has not quite gone to plan in the last 12 months, but it is hoped to progress with the Legal Order soon. However the regular maintenance work on the permissive bridleway has continued throughout the year along the northern edge of Royden Park. This superb off road route links Sandy Lane near Irby Mill with Irby Quarry, alongside Greasby Brook, across the main entrance road to Royden Park and then alongside Montgomery Hill to Pikes Hey Road near Caldby roundabout. This then completes an almost traffic free route from Arrowe Park to Caldby.

### **Other Definitive Map Modification Orders**

Footpath from **School Lane / Thurstaston Road**, Irby: Links to footpaths 54 and 55.

**Spital Station car park** linking to footpaths 29 and 55.

**Shorefields:** from Shore Bank, via the River Park access to Corona Road.

**Caldy Hill**, from footpath 49 at the view point a short distance to footpath 51.

**Thurstaston Common** from where footpaths 56 & 57 join, to Telegraph Rd.

**Grange Hill**, from footpath 43 at the War Memorial to footpath 45 via the start of footpath 44 and extend footpath 42 from footpath 41 to the start of footpath 43.

**Covertside** – Grammar School Lane: through woodland linking with Gorse Lane.

**Gardenside:** permissive path from end of footpath 7 to Leasowe Road.

**The Wirral Circular Trail route** from Pasture Road via Reeds Lane along the River Birket to The Solar Campus fields across to Leasowe Road.

## Website

The Definitive map 'on line' is not currently available due to the continuing Ordnance Survey licensing issues. The paper version remains available to view at the 5 main libraries. Other rights of way information, the definitive statement and links to the leaflets and some of the local walking / cycling / horse riding groups are available on the council website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/transport-and-streets>

## Rights Of Way Improvement Plan

Wirral's Rights of Way officer will lead and co-ordinate the delivery group for **ROWIP 2 for 2018 – 2028** covering the whole of **The Liverpool City Region**. The group is made up of all the Rights Of Way Officers of Merseyside and Halton. The document plan will link up with other strategies such as the Local Transport Plan and The LCR Transport Plan for Growth.

## The Highways Asset Management Plan continues

Work has progressed in compiling an extensive register of the rights of way assets eg fingerposts, stiles, gates, bridges, surfaces etc being entered on this register with photos and map references and accurate pinpoint locations.

## Potential Developments

- **The Hoylake Golf Resort:** outline descriptive plans for consultation have continued to develop.
- **Dong Energy, East Street, Seacombe:** the current plans will not affect access along the Seacombe promenade or public footpath on the north side of Alfred Dock.

## Potential work to progress

- **Thornton Hough – Raby:** improved signing on the permissive horse route.
- **Prenton Way to Landican Lane:** new path to initiate the Prenton – Pensby route.
- **Landican Lane at Prenton Brook:** to prevent heavy vehicles damaging the culvert.
- **Barnston – Brimstage route:** An old 'lost Way' currently being investigated.
- **Bridleway 3, Park Lane – North Wirral Coastal Park:** Improvements to the gates.
- **B&Q Cycle Track:** Sign improvements & collapsed surface to repair.
- **Port Sunlight Cycle Track:** barrier painting.
- **Frankby Road / Larton Stables,** road & horse safety improvements.
- **Bridleway 8, Noctorum Lane:** revetment to repair.
- **Footpath 12, Newton:** Grange Cross Lane: drainage & surface improvements.
- **Roydon Park:** Horse route surface works in preparation for right of way upgrade .
- **Footpath 13, Feather Lane to Dee View Road,** hand rail for the steps.

## **The bigger National picture:**

The Institute of Public Rights of Way (IPROW) have continued to provide invaluable assistance regarding access issues via their forum and information database continually updated by their Practicing Professionals. The IPROW Conference in October helped hugely with gaining ideas.

**Groups and committees Wirral's Rights of Way officer is involved with:**

- Chairman of the Wirral Rights Of Way User Group meetings.
  - The North West Coastal Trail Implementation Group.
  - Wirral Road Safety, Bikesafe and the Merseyside Motorcycle Thematic Group.
  - The Wirral Coastal Partnership.
  - The Wirral Active Travel Pedestrian and Cycle Forum.
  - The Merseyside Active Travel Group.
- The Merseyside Local Access Forum.
- Heswall Dales Advisory Group.
- Royden Park Advisory Group.
- The Wirral Walking Festival 2016 working party.
- Wirral Volunteers Judging Panel.
- Several Local and Regional Footpath, Cycling and Horse Riding Groups.

**Get in touch:**

If you would like an update for your local group, or have any queries regarding any past, current or potentially future Rights Of Way, then please get in touch:

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