

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT
2.	Date:	4 APRIL 2011
3.	Title:	THE RAMBLERS 'DEAD END' POSTCARD PETITION
4.	Directorate:	ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

5. Summary

To make Members aware of a campaign by The Ramblers Association to seek to protect budgets for rights of way activities within local authorities.

6. Recommendations

That the report be noted.

7. Proposals and Details

The Ramblers Association are running a national campaign, termed the 'Dead End' postcard petition, with the aim of raising awareness amongst Councillors of the importance attached to the maintenance and management of rights of way by regular users of the network.

The Association have asked participants on some of their organised walks to submit postcards to them to express support for the campaign. These postcards are then forwarded on to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the rights of way network at appropriate councils. An example of the postcards involved is attached as an appendix.

The first batch of 34 postcards has now been received by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Environment, and others can be expected to follow.

In publicity material relating to the campaign the Association explains how maintaining rights of way is beneficial to local communities and helps boost local economies and secure livelihoods. Whilst the Ramblers do not expect rights of way budgets to be immune from cuts they are asking that reductions are proportionate to the overall level of cuts. They point out that Ramblers volunteers do play a part in keeping paths open and accessible, including undertaking maintenance work on site, but stress the need for the support of qualified officers in doing so.

8. Finance

Routine maintenance and management of public rights of way is funded from the Streetpride Revenue account.

Rights of way improvement works can benefit from development e.g. at Waverley and also external grant funded projects like Connect2 through Sustrans and the Big Lottery Fund.

Minor improvement schemes are also undertaken on the network through LTP allocations.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The Rights of Way Team is small and staff reductions can have a disproportionate impact on elements of their work. An example of this is the recent loss of the Review Officer post through voluntary early retirement which has resulted in individual cases being dealt with only where future access is seen to be at risk.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

A well maintained, accessible and well publicised public rights of way network contributes to two elements of the draft Corporate Plan; **helping to create safe and healthy communities** and also **improving the environment**. This is achieved through encouraging more people to be physically active and have a healthy way of life in providing opportunities for active leisure, and also encouraging more people to walk, ride and cycle.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Not applicable

Contact Name : *Richard Pett, Public Rights of Way Officer, tel 25448, richard.pett@rotherham.gov.uk*