



There have been two subsequent reviews one in 1960 and another in 1965. The introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 made it a legal requirement to keep the map and statement under continuous review.

In order to fulfil our statutory duty, there are specific policies for the major elements of public rights of way management. These were recently updated and included within the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy 2018-28, which fulfils the requirement to have a Rights of Way Improvement Plan as per the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/media/10853/go-strategy-oct18-final2.pdf>

Public rights of way, whilst protected by the same legislation as Highways within Shropshire, are more complex in that we do not own the asset. Public rights of way more often than not run across private land which often involves several different land owners. This is why a specialist, experienced team is required to manage the network.

## **Current Situation**

### **Achievements 2017/18**

#### **Key facts and figures**

- ✓ Over 1,100 improvements to Right of Way, Parks and Sites
- ✓ 182 stiles replaced by gates to make access to the countryside easier for those with limited mobility
- ✓ Shropshire Way Main Route South launched
- ✓ 26 improvements to the Definitive Map
- ✓ Responded to 447 planning applications
- ✓ Responded to 5811 Public Rights of Way Searches.
- ✓ Successful ploughing and cropping campaign
- ✓ 64 Parish Paths Partnership groups, with 340 Parish Paths Partnership volunteers contributing over 10,000 hours of work on the ROW network, equivalent to 5.34 FTE members of staff (based on 7.4 hours/ day and working days of 253 days/ year). Many of these volunteer groups are affiliated to their Parish or Town Council.
- ✓ 134,000 users of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website, 76% of whom were under 45
- ✓ 2,960 likes on Facebook and 2,258 Followers on Twitter

We have excellent relationships with user groups and landowners and work together to find solutions to issues and prioritise routes. A national Trustee and Shropshire Chair of The Ramblers and the Director of the British Horse Society are members of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board, along with the CLA and NFU. It is these relationships that keep the more militant members of these organisations from making complaints about the state of the network.

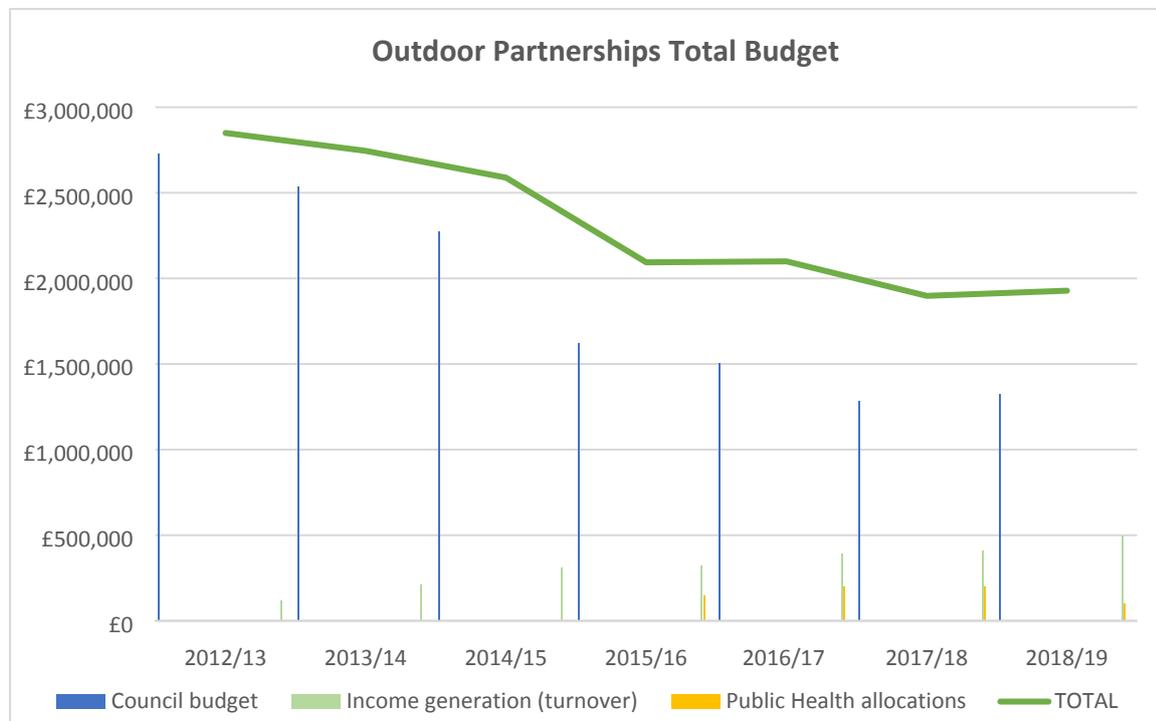
The Outdoor Partnership Team continue to be focused on income generation; with £500k expected in 2018/19 and increased income targets for 2019/20.

The Team Report for 2017/18 can be found here:

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/media/10082/outdoor-partnerships-annual-report-2017-18.pdf>

## Issues

The Outdoor Partnerships Team, including the Country Parks and Heritage Sites are facing £100k budget cut in 2019/20 due to the withdrawal of Public Health funding- 11.25% of the current controllable budget of £888,270. This will be met by the Voluntary Redundancy of the Country Parks and Sites Manager and ceasing to run the Shropshire Wild Teams unless external funding can be secured. In addition, a £50k budget cut in 2019/20 is specifically targeted at public rights of way.



The figure above shows the total (including uncontrollable) trends in budget since 2012/13. The slight increase in 2018/19 is due to the NJC salary rate increases.

Outdoor Partnerships have already had a 58% cut in total budget since 2012/13, resulting in the Best Value Performance Indicator on accessibility of the ROW network falling from 85% to 66% in 2018/19.

## Rights of Way Budget

The total 2018/19 projected year end controllable budget for the Rights of Way Maintenance and Mapping and Enforcement teams is £573,277. This is equivalent to 10p/m of ROW.

The teams are currently generating an income of £148,000, which is contributing to staff and maintenance costs.

We are aware that there are around £1m capital works required for the maintenance of bridges and other major infrastructure and a similar sum could easily be required if the Council was required to respond to notices served.

## **Future Pressures**

There is concern that there may be more pressures in the future:

- Additional Budget Cuts
- Loss of staff/insufficient staff to cope with demands
- The introduction of the Deregulation Act 2015 which has significant implications for claims based on historic evidence. There is already a backlog of 74 Formal Applications and over 100 potential claims as a result of the Discovering Lost Ways Project.
- Lack of Capital Investment for bridges and resurfacing
- Increased closures as result of the above and associated cost
- Revision of the Definitive Map at 1:10,000 scale and to incorporate all the legal orders made and confirmed since 1 September 1965

## **Conclusion**

The management of the public rights of way asset is essential to maintain the network of access and character of the Shropshire Countryside. This along with other access provision, the physical nature of the landscape and the uniqueness of the area make it a popular place to visit and live.

The team do a remarkable job with very little funding. This is achieved by careful budget management, volunteer co-ordination, relationship building and income generation.

Whilst the Outdoor Partnerships Team has and is continuing to explore the most efficient and effective way of managing the network officers would welcome members thoughts on any other potential initiatives.

