



November 2020

I can't quite believe we are already in December, what a year 2020 has been. For Access it has been a blessing and a disaster. I imagine we can all agree that certainly in Hampshire the numbers of people walking and cycling has seen its greatest increase ever in a short few months – a marketing campaign could never have created such a buzz. On the flip side, there has certainly been something lacking with a myriad of reports of irresponsible use of the Countryside – from littering, to picnicking in peoples back gardens, to the numbers of cyclists using footpaths and the repeated requests to close paths which do not allow social distancing. Unlike in Wales where law was implemented to help manage access and use of rights of way England was pretty much left to its own devices and at the start of 'lock-down 1.0' there was a flurry of reports of closed paths across the County. DEFRA's solution was to allow landowners to suggest alternative routes whilst requiring that the right of way remained opened – in the South of Hampshire we did not have any official requests to do this but repeated reports of unofficial closures which with the number of people using the network were reported swiftly and dealt with, usually locally!

All Access Staff remained working throughout the year with only 2 staff having a period of 2 weeks self isolation at the start of lock-down (before testing was available). We have been so busy this year but it has been great to see so many people out on the network when at other times you may spend the whole day seeing no-one!

The trick now is to work out how to keep people interested in using the beautiful Hampshire Countryside responsibly.

Historic Routes

Tatchbury Trail – for the last few years HCC have been working with the NFNPA on the Our Past Our Future project which involves creating a number of routes that have a story to tell. The project was due to complete this summer but due to COVID final works were not completed especially as many of these involved volunteers. However, with a slight delay the first of the Historic Routes is now in (minus its signage). Volunteers and The South Access Team replaced 2 stiles with gates, installed 2 new ditch crossings/sleeper bridges and undertook a significant amount of clearance opening up this route that goes through Copythorne Parish. Signage is due in around Christmas and we hope to move onto the next trail early next year.

Definitive Map

Fordingbridge 68 Diversion – objections received so order submitted to PINs, awaiting update.

New Milton DMMO FP Chestnut Avenue and Farm Lane North (FP703) – objections received so order submitted to PINs, being determined via written reps (result!)

New Milton DMMO - investigation to add a bridleway between Portnalls Farm and Irongate – completed, claim refused.

Ringwood DMMO - investigation to add restricted byways west of Kingston Great Common - Partially accepted (recording one route out of four claimed). Order to be made before or shortly after Christmas.

Path Closures

Ringwood 55 – for bridge and banks work – work to be completed Spring 2021 (contract agreed).

Hyde 774 – missing bridge – currently on waiting list for replacement.

New Milton 703 – gas mains replacement to be completed 18th Dec 2020.

Lymington and Pennington 75 and 504 – embankment repairs – to be completed 30th Nov 2020

Volunteers

Volunteering during 2020 has been up and down. From May time path wardens were able to go out on their local network during their daily exercise and report back however due to the vulnerability of some of our wardens we have lost about 6 and are now down to 22. The remaining path wardens have been doing a great job inspecting and resolving issues in their local patches.

The Historic Routes project has been the only opportunity to complete a group volunteer task.

Future Task Dates

There are no future dates set at present.

Summer Vegetation Cutting

The summer saw the cancellation of our annual path cutting regime as a result of COVID. The numbers of people using the network kept a lot of vegetation in check but we were able to work with a number of Parish and Town Councils and Ringwood and Fordingbridge FP Society to work out a way of trying to get as many paths cut as possible. This was through a combination of our in-house ranger team, use of other members of the Service, local path wardens, parish lengthsman and parish contractors. All of the promoted routes were cut as usual (Avon Valley Path and Solent Way). Thank you to all the local people who helped out this summer.

New Forest Mitigation

A Mitigation Project has just been delivered by HCC contractors in Fordingbridge – which included footpath improvements (430m hoggin paths) in Sweatfords Meadow (a public open space owned by New Forest District Council).

The next Mitigation Projects to be procured and hopefully delivered this financial year are in Ringwood – Avon Valley Path and Castleman Trail / Hightown Lake area.

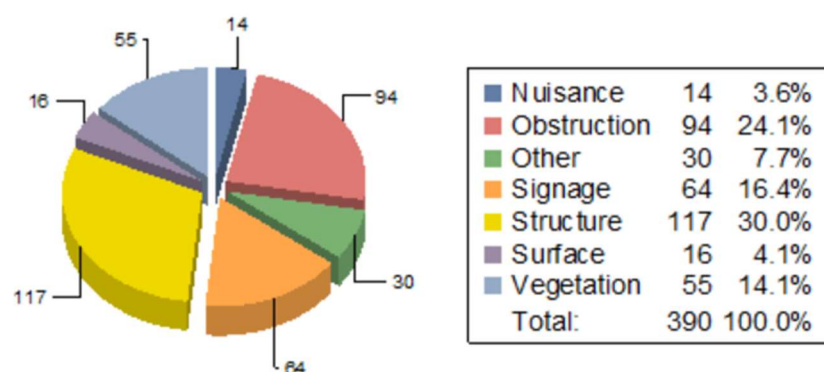
Stats

As I didn't get round to sending a report for the last meeting the results below are for April 2019-March 2020 and then from April 2020 to date from The Countryside Access Management System (CAMS)

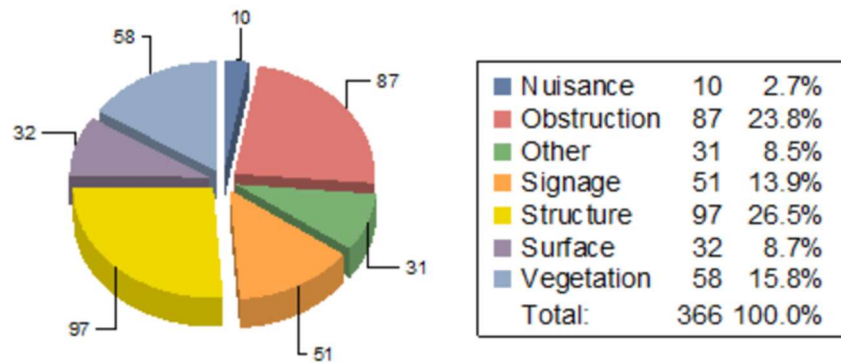
	April 2019- Mar 2020 Received	April 2019- Mar 2020 Resolved	April 2020 to date Received	April 2020 to date Resolved
Total number of Issues in the NF parishes	527	629	390	366
Total Number of Vegetation cutting jobs in NF Parishes	115	224	55	96
Total Number of Issues across South Area	1398	1501	976	862
Total Number of Issues across Hampshire	4162	4296	3045	2725

Both across Hampshire and in the New Forest Area we have so far this year received almost 75% of the total number of reports we received last year – with over 4 months of the year left. The vegetation cutting jobs are a lot less this year due to the cancellation of the vegetation cutting contract.

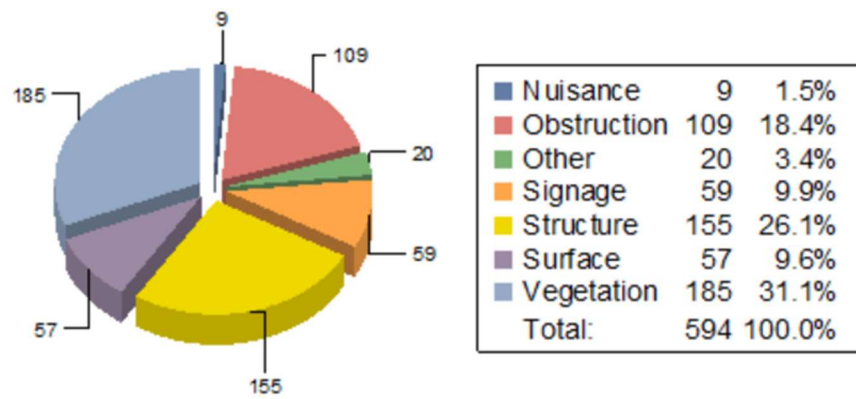
Types of Issues Reported in the NF Area between April 2020 and today (24/11/20)



Types of Issues Resolved in the NF Area between April 2020 and today (24/11/20)



Outstanding Issues in the NF Area by Type (to date)



Alison Perry
 Area Countryside Access Manager
 Nov 2020.