Pensax Parish Council
Paths improvement scheme - Draft Proposal

Right of Way is the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council, not Pensax Parish Council. However, the paths network is critical to provide for the parish residents (WCC RPOIP:

- Recreation and Leisure
- Active Travel
- Health and Wellbeing
- Access to Nature

Pensax Parish has paths PX 501-PX604 & 2 Bridleways. It currently has 54+ reported issues ranging from bridge collapses to overgrown paths.



20 of the issues currently reported to WCC concern stiles, which is the landowner's responsibility. Current stile design is predominantly wooden step-stiles which require a high degree of mobility, restrict the disabled, are difficult to those with mobility issues & aids, and effectively bar those with pushchairs or small children, dogs etc. DEFRA guidance (2010) for local authorities meeting the Equalities Act 2010 points to the use of the BS5709:2018 standard for stiles adopted by WCC.

WCC aims to help landowners meet their obligations by providing gates where possible, but they have a limited budget to cover the entire county network. They are reviewing the P3 grant for parish councils to apply for, which enables the Lengthsman, under parish council direction, to work roadside on paths on a limited basis.

Conflict

Pensax has an ageing population profile. Landowners require stock-proof enclosures for animals which a step stile provides, but landowners fail to understand that this is discriminatory to less able or mobile users, children and young families.

The conflict between landowners and users comes from misunderstanding and anti-social behaviour. This can be open gates, free-roaming dogs, littering and fouling. Landowners equate additional use with additional problems. ‘Good user’ education must be a feature of any scheme, driven by the Parish Council to ensure these problems are addressed through the website, signage and the gates themselves.

Rock Parish has an exemplary scheme where a local farmer has widely supported this initiative due to its inherent benefits, providing him with a lack of future effort to maintain the wooden stiles and the ability to move easier around his farm and move stock. He installed all the gates at his own cost.

Landowners and residents are also keen to ensure local facilities such as the Bell PH are kept. Walkers provide local tourism, where good walking infrastructure is in place, and well-

placed local PHs capitalise on this for trade. Any future owners of The Bell PH could also advertise and display walks which could start and end at the pub.

Proposed Action
A Pensax Paths Improvement Scheme is delegated to the WCC trained parish paths warden to administer. They will coordinate all actions with WCC best advice to ensure compliance with the law. They will report to each Parish Council Meeting on progress. They will keep a directory of Landowners/tenants about their paths/bridleways obligations and in line with GDPR.

1. **Pensax Parish Council will offer every landowner to replace and upgrade their step stiles to become accessible gates by providing a replacement metal, galvanised, BS5709:2018-compliant gate.**

2. **Pensax Parish Council applies annually for the WCC P3 grant to support the Lengthsman in small roadside path works until the scheme is reformed or cancelled.**

3. **Engaged landowners are offered trailhead waste bins, small signage, and information boards – education for the responsible path user.**

The gates would be self-closing Marlow 1-way or Woodstock Large Kissing Gate to create both the longest-term benefit and a local path vernacular for the parish. Other gate types may be considered, but this would need to be authorised by a full PC meeting. An example could be a field entrance gate where a combination gate would meet the definitive path line.

Installation would be (preference) by the landowner/tenant, following WCC's guidance regarding the location of each route/gate. The agreement would be for installation within two months of delivery. If extenuating circumstances exist, the full PPC could agree to installation costs also, but this would be on a case-by-case basis requiring a full PPC agreement. All installs done by the PPC would be completed by the Parish Council's Lengthsman either under the P3 scheme (until closed) or our funds.

A central noticeboard (to be placed near the War Memorial / Bell PH due to ample parking and to direct additional trade) be bought and erected with local walks displayed and information for users of the paths to work in harmony with the landowners. Other notice boards in Menith and. Pensax would have similar but reduced information. Individual small metal signs be placed on gates and posts in cooperation with the landowners engaged in the scheme from the parish council. All new gates are to be labelled as provided by the Parish Council.

As a relatively small parish, the overall path length is low, but these actions will have a huge impact. This scheme has direct benefits in improving the parishes' paths network - supporting local people, including those with disabilities, mobility issues, young families, and ageing populations, to stay active and mobile with access to nature and improved well-being whilst at the same time helping local landowners meet their obligation to enable this.

This capital fund should not be used for ongoing repair, maintenance or like-for-like replacement. All gates must significantly improve, and provide additional functionality and increased longevity.

None of the above seeks to replace or remove WCC of full responsibility for the upkeep of the ROW network.

Installation
In2Out has experience of P3 ROW installations, having done this for 3 other PCs, including recently installing two gates purchased by Mamble PC. Each install will be costed separately due to the individuality, difficulty and time. Estimated costs, for a Marlow gate starts at around **£85.00** and for the Woodstock gate will be around **£150.00**

The overall lifetime cost of the scheme
Total fund cost **£40k**, based on 100% take up (which is unlikely). This doesn't consider any reduction we will receive from the P3 grant money.
This spend is envisaged over 6+ years.

This overall sum should be capped to limit the financial exposure to the council and create demand from landowners who may miss out once the fund is depleted.

Stakeholder Consultation
Jon White, ROW Team – WCC
Chris Bunn, Parish Lengthsman
Alison Tidmarsh, Stockton WCC Path Warden
Susan Humphries, Rock Pathfinders
John Nightingale, Rock WCC Path Warden

Alistair Kerion, Local landowner & Resident
Parick Russell, Resident
Sandra Pedersen, Resident
Alan Hudson, Resident

Appendix

BS 5709:18 Suppliers (WCC recommended)
Centrewire https://centrewire.com/
Secure-a-field https://www.secure-a-field.co.uk/ heavier duty versions with reversal handedness

- **Marlow 1 Way pedestrian gate** https://centrewire.com/products/marlow-gate-1-way/
  Equivalent SaF is **Charnwood**
- **Woodstock Large Kissing Gate with Radar**
  https://centrewire.com/products/woodstock-large-kissing-gate/
  Equivalent SaF is **Thornton**
- **Secure-a-field Combination** gate https://www.secure-a-field.co.uk/products/ravensden-2-in-1-gate
  Centrewire equivalent is York

Capital costs excl vat 2023 prices

Item (centrewire/secure a field)	**Cost**	Total costs based on an average gate cost and install cost of of £619 60 gates + Education costs *Clerk may have alternative suppliers
Marlow/Charnwood	**237/280**	
Woodstock/Thorton	**620/679**	
York / Ravensdean 2in1	**700/860**	
Noticeboards and graphic design	**2400***	

References
https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/ltp3_rowip_public_final.pdf

Authorising structures (gaps, gates & stiles) on rights of way, www.defra.gov.uk, Good practice guidance for local authorities on compliance with the Equality Act 2010, Version 1 October 2010

BSS5709 Explained, https://centrewire.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Pittecroft-Trust-BS5709-2018-explained.pdf










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