

Record of Officer Decision

Decision title:	Highways Act 1980, Section 119 Proposed Public Path Diversion Order Footpath ZK29 in the Parish of Ross-on-Wye
Date of decision:	16 March 2026
Decision maker:	Group Manager - Streetscene, Public Rights of Way and Traffic Management
Authority for delegated decision:	Directorate scheme of delegation: Economy and Place, section 75. To act on behalf of the council in respect of the legislation specified in the foregoing: Highways Act 1980
Ward:	Ross-on-Wye East
Consultation:	<p>Consultation undertaken by the Council included:</p> <p>Prescribed organisations as set out in the Defra Rights of Way Circular 1/09 – No objections</p> <p>Local Member Councillor O’Driscoll - No objection to the proposal</p> <p>Ross-on-Wye Town Council – No objection to the proposal</p> <p>Statutory Undertakers – No objections to the proposal</p> <p>Herefordshire Council (in capacity as landowner) – No objections to the proposal.</p> <p>All affected landowners have been consulted and have no objections to the proposal, apart from one section of land where Land Registry documents indicate the landowner is deceased. Efforts have been made to contact the heir to their estate; however, no response has been received.</p>
Decision made:	<p>THAT:</p> <p>(a) A public path diversion order, for definitive footpath ZK29 in the parish of Ross-on-Wye, is made in accordance with section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, as shown in the draft order and plan D571 in Appendix 1 attached to this report and;</p> <p>(b) In the event that there are no un-withdrawn objections to the formal advertising of the order, it is then confirmed.</p> <p>(c) If sustained objections are received, the matter can be passed to the Secretary of State for a decision.</p> <p>See Appendix 1 below.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>The rights of way department undertook to divert the right of way following a request from a local resident for the current route to be extinguished as it was holding up the sale of their property due to the current route being obstructed by houses and garden fence lines.</p> <p>The Council will pay the costs associated with advertising the order and any works required as the order is clearly within the public’s interest and</p>

	<p>should have been resolved at the time the dwellings were built. The land over which the proposed route will run is currently owned by Herefordshire Council.</p> <p>The Council has carried out a pre-order consultation based on a proposed route (see Appendix 2). There were no objections to the proposal.</p> <p>The Local Member, Councillor O’Driscoll, has no objections to the proposal.</p> <p>The proposed diversion meets the specified criteria set out in Council policy and in accordance with the provisions of section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 in that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal is expedient as it benefits the owners of the land crossed by the existing path and the public. • It is expedient to confirm the order, given the proposal is not substantially less convenient to the public, and it is expedient, having regard to the effect which (i) the diversion will have on the public enjoyment of the path as a whole, including any compensation which becomes payable (ii) the coming into operation of the order would have as respects other land served by the existing right of way and (iii) any effect the new public right of way created by the order would have as respects the land over which the new right is created, including any compensation payable.
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>Community impact: Herefordshire Council has carried out a comprehensive pre-order consultation, which included Ross Town Council, local user groups, and statutory undertakers, to which there were no sustained objections.</p> <p>Equality: Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows:</p> <p>A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; • advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; • foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. <p>The majority of public rights of way are in a very rural environment, often remote, with uneven surfaces and varying gradients. There are stiles and gates on many paths which are necessary for stock control. There are also bridges and steps on many paths which aid access to paths by providing crossings for streams and rivers and to help with steep gradients. The nature of the paths means that access may be difficult for members of the public with mobility issues or a disability.</p>

Diversion/creation orders seek to remove stiles wherever possible and improve access by installing gates in their place which allow use by a wider group of people. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan also aims to improve access to public rights of way in this way.

For this proposal the existing route is obstructed by fences and houses and therefore cannot currently be walked. The new route follows the Ross-on-Wye Town and Country Trail. It is an accessible route that can accommodate prams and wheelchairs and has no stiles or gates resulting in a positive impact. The proposed route will resolve an anomaly of a route that has been obstructed since the 1950s – when the development was built - and therefore will result in a positive impact.

Finance:

All administration and advertising costs associated with this order are to be covered by Herefordshire Council. There are no works necessary to bring the new route into being. If the matter has to be referred to the Secretary of State, the costs associated with any Inquiry or Hearing will be met by the Council.

Environmental Impact:

This decision/proposal seeks to deliver the Council's environmental policy commitments and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan.

Improve residents' access to green space in Herefordshire.
Increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel – walking, cycling, public transport.

Resource implications:

The affected landowners for the proposed route are Herefordshire Council therefore there is no risk of compensation claim as the Commercial . If the matter has to be referred to the Secretary of State, the costs associated with any inquiry or hearing will be met by the budget allocated to the rights of way service through the annual plan.

Legal:

The Council has a discretionary power under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 to make diversion orders in relation to public paths where it is 'expedient' to do so. This power is exercisable if it is in the interests of the owners, lessees or occupiers of land to do so or of the public and provided that the termination point of the path is onto the same highway or a highway connected to it. In making such an order the Council must consider any material provisions of its Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

It is considered that the criteria under Section 119, referred to in paragraph 6 above, are met. Once an order is made it must be advertised as prescribed in Schedule 6 of the Highways Act 1980 and in accordance with the Public Path Order Regulations 1993. A minimum of 28 days must be given for objections to be made from the first publication of the notice of order.

If no objections are received to the formal advertising of the order, or any received are withdrawn, then the Council may itself confirm the order, provided that it is satisfied that the criteria in Section 119(6)(a) – (c) and 6A (b) of the Highways Act 1980 are met. These are listed in 'Reasons for Decision' above.

	<p>If there are objections which are not withdrawn, then the order will be referred to the Planning Inspectorate which will act on behalf of the Secretary of State to determine the order. The Secretary of State will appoint an Inspector who will either hold an inquiry or hearing or deal with the matter by way of written representations before making a decision on whether or not to confirm the order.</p> <p>Risk Management:</p> <p>There is a risk that if the Order is made as proposed, it may receive objections. If objections are so received, the matter must then be referred to the Secretary of State for a decision, which will place an increased demand on officer time and resources. The costs necessary for this referral cannot be passed onto the applicant.</p> <p>In this case a comprehensive pre-order consultation has been carried out by the Council, to which no objections have been received and, therefore, the risk of receiving objections at Order making stage is relatively low.</p> <p>There is a minor risk associated with the diversion due to the inability to identify the landowner of the existing alignment. This risk is mitigated by having undertaken reasonable enquiries to trace ownership and the Order will be advertised at either end of the existing footpath – one end of which is on the land in question.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Under the provisions of Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 the Council has the discretionary power to make diversion orders but has no duty to do so. The Council could therefore reject the case on the grounds that it does not contribute sufficiently to the wider ambitions and priorities of the Council. As the case meets the tests set out in Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 it may be considered unreasonable for the Council to not make an order.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>If any officers or members involved or consulted in the decision-making have declared an interest you should include the declaration here. N/A</p>

Signed:
Date: 16 March 2026

Appendix 1

Public Rights of Way

-  Footpath
-  Bridleway
-  Byway Open to all Traffic
-  Restricted Byway

-  Proposed Diversion D - E
-  Proposed Extinguishment A - B - C

