

WALKING ENVIRONMENT REPORT

HEALTH AND THE WALKING ENVIRONMENT

The number of people in Britain getting active has declined over recent years and continues to do so. There was a short term improvement after the Olympics but that did not last. There is much talk of the anti-obesity campaign and plenty of dietary advice coming out, but little meaningful seems to be being done to encourage more activity. Many people are involved in various sports but a great mass of the people take no regular exercise at all. All sorts of stats are bandied about when talking about activity but they are usually based on asking organised sports bodies and I don't think reflect the full position. I suspect a lot more people get some activity but are never counted but it remains the fact that the average person is heavier year on year. In the last 30 years the number of ten year olds overweight has gone up 300% making up about a quarter of their age group.

Government thought is that too many sports bodies receive millions of pounds of public money and just don't get the numbers through their doors. Funding needs to go instead to those organisations that can actually get people participating.

Walking is the cheapest and most readily available opportunity to take exercise and enjoy fresh air. As a country we need to encourage non walkers to give it a try; for the slightly more ambitious, jogging and running are similarly inexpensive and cycling is also very beneficial although there is a cost implication in that.

We all have to help to promote active, healthy lifestyles, protect the places people walk and improve access to the outdoors. A number of your officers represent the views of walkers on several outside bodies pushing our agenda.

There are a range of barriers to participation, including lack of time, cost or poor health. Walking can be done from your doorstep at nil cost. Another of the barriers to walking the countryside is a fear of the unknown as many people are reluctant to go down a path which has a footpath sign with no indication as to where it goes and how far it is. They also turn back at the first sign of undergrowth intrusion.

Three quarters of all local authorities have cut funding to maintain green routes and open spaces, some by more than 30% and under-investment and neglect of the walking network is storing up problems for the future.

We are fortunate in Leicestershire in that whilst they have not escaped the financial squeeze, the rights of way team is still doing a good job.

There are plenty of walking clubs out there who can give people confidence in going for a walk before they are happy to strike off alone or with their families. As the RA here in Leicestershire & Rutland we organise nearly 1000 walks each year ranging from short family walks including many walking-for-health events to much more difficult and strenuous ones. The challenge is how to promote these opportunities which could save the NHS millions if the general health and wellbeing of the population could be improved.

Walking must be the easiest to take up if only walking to the shops instead of driving. Many social benefits can be attributed to walking in addition to better health; including social interaction and a greater appreciation of the countryside. It is not just physical fitness but mental health and reduction in stress levels. It has a major role in the protection of cardiovascular health and function.

Walking not only saves the nation money from the health budgets but also generates large sums for local economies which increases the tax take and in turn helps provide the revenue which funds the NHS amongst other things. A report commissioned ten years ago suggested that leisure and tourism walking triggered expenditure of over £6,000,000.

Walking is the most accessible form of exercise irrespective of age, lifestyle or location and we must do more to encourage people to do it. Whilst the benefits might seem fairly obvious we need to get that message over. It should reduce levels and risk of high blood pressure; lower the risk of developing diabetes and cancer of the colon, and reduce depression and anxiety, lowering overall mortality. These are perhaps surprisingly difficult benefits to sell, but the potential benefits of walking as enjoyment, social interaction and in providing contact with natural environments, perhaps more so.

How to make this pitch is challenging but the best route is probably for government and the health service to support and coordinate activities of user groups and promote what is already on offer. Through the Local Access Forum we work at involving the local Health Service as prevention is better than cure.

The other major way we can help locally is to work to keep footpaths available and safe and to promote additional links in the network and working with the LAF we are working hard to this end. All members can help with this in a variety of ways.

Walking local paths helps keep them open and reporting any problems found helps the local authority. You can help with our ongoing cycle of inspections and / or become a warden or set of eyes for a particular stretch of a named route. You could also help research to find evidence to support claims for lost or contested routes.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

For those of us no longer young and in particular those with medical issues, getting travel insurance to go walking abroad is not easy. It sometimes helps to go to specialist providers but even that is not necessarily good. One insurer will do insurance through the British Mountaineering Council policy for their members allowing reasonable levels of walking and climbing etc., taking a view that such people are basically healthy and know what they are doing. If however you are a diabetic, no matter how well it is controlled, they bump the premiums.

The same insurers will do deals for members of the Diabetics Society on the basis that people who are members are getting proper advice and look after themselves but mention high level walking and up go the premiums. It is the same insurer and you cannot talk to them.

Members have mentioned Saga and Age UK policies targeted at the older person but some have said they have done much better elsewhere.

We are not financial or insurance advisers and have made no comparisons for ourselves but these have been mentioned as providers worth looking at.

Free Spirit - Insure and Go - Blue Bear Travel – Bengo - Covered to go. Said to be especially good for worldwide travel, HolidaySafe - Insured to travel and Lets go insure

We do not recommend any of their products as such but are always happy to share tips with the wider membership.

I have personally been asking around as I always have difficulties. Strangely the last two worldwide policies I have taken out have been with the YHA who use Columbus Insurance but they will not do annual policies for people of my age so I am looking elsewhere as I am likely to be travelling extensively this year and see no point in a series of single trip policies.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

For those not going so far afield to find somewhere for a walking break, we should encourage the use of public transport. We have from time to time raised issues about bus availability and reliability but the article last edition about using bus passes has triggered a bit of a debate and included discussion on rail ticketing.

Most train ticketing is a con as I have personally discovered twice recently. As a result I have been looking on the web and there are plenty of confirmations of this situation there.

Instead of buying tickets for the through journey, buying for part of it separately can cut the price dramatically and you may well be travelling on exactly the same train if you book carefully. You need to be cautious though as if it is not the same train and the first is delayed you would have problems. Also you can save on peak fares this way. On a long trip if you need to leave during a peak period, it is possible to only pay peak prices for the part of the journey that's actually in the peak time by splitting the ticket wherever the train will be when it leaves that time slot.

Two singles are frequently cheaper than a return and buying train tickets before you travel is usually a big saving. Advance purchase can sometimes be permitted as late as a couple of hours before setting off.

Think about which station you use each end if time is not critical. You can sometimes get a better deal one station up or down the line so it may pay to drive or catch a bus to a different start point.

Many advance booking agencies charge fees and delivery charges including the Trainline. East Midlands Trains own site is very competitive. EMT is owned by Stagecoach, the owners of South West Trains and a partner in Virgin Trains so you can buy for other than just EMT trains.

Stage coach also host the Megatrains site where you can get some journeys for £1. They currently appear to cover about 25 destinations. As you can imagine bearing in mind the Stagecoach ownerships, Megatrains run between London & Sheffield via Derby, Leicester & Nottingham which can be very useful for us and also from Birmingham up to Glasgow or Edinburgh and from London to the South West.

COAST PATH UPDATE

Natural England is moving on well in its work to deliver the England Coast Path, with work underway to open up half of it at present. Eventually the path will stretch out across 2700 miles of often stunning walking routes if you fancy a really long walk. To establish the route they have divided the coast of England into 66 bite-sized stretches with teams working closely with local authorities, land owners and occupiers, communities, interest groups and others to ensure the best and most appropriate alignment for the new coast path.

They have already opened up over 100 miles with almost as much again opening any time now in Kent and Somerset. They are now building on this progress with the aim of still completing the coastal path around England by 2020.

Stretches are open in Dorset and Norfolk; in the North West the Cumbrian stretch from Allonby to Whitehaven is now open and the rest between Gretna and Silecroft is currently being worked on. Work on the coast round Morecambe Bay down to Cleveleys should start this year. In the North East the Durham stretch is open and south from there to the Humber is being worked on.

The new routes will also improve access to our coastline, beaches and foreshore, with some existing coastal footpaths actually moved nearer the sea so walkers have a better opportunity to properly enjoy our coastal views and beaches. The England Coast Path will be a well way-marked National Trail around the whole of the English coast.

Closer to home the Cromer to Sea Palling stretch is open and the stretch running north of that to Skegness is being worked on as is going south as far as Aldeburgh

Other stretches open and opening can be found on the government web site

RIVER TRENT SUCCESS

Last year the Ramblers were celebrating our success in the Court of Appeal, when judges ruled that section 10 of the 1801 Inclosure Act did authorise Inclosure Commissioners to set out and award public footpaths and bridleways when making inclosure awards. The justices gave a clear ruling that the judgment in the original Andrews case, back in 1993, was wrong, and that section 10 of the 1801 Inclosure Act did authorise Inclosure commissioners to set out and award public footpaths and bridleways when making inclosure awards.

This new judgment vindicates the long-held view of the Ramblers and other experts that the 1993 case was wrongly decided and is a tribute to the tenacity of John Andrews. John was Ramblers Area Footpath Secretary in Suffolk for many years, and was responsible for many successful claims to add paths to the definitive map in that county. John, working closely with historical map expert Dr Yolande Hodson led the Ramblers' research project which studied many inclosure awards to find evidence to help back this appeal. It took nearly 15 years of research and legal debate to get this result.

Now that the 1993 court ruling has been dismissed, an important source of evidence about the existence of historic public rights of way can again be fully utilised by researchers working to make

sure that the rights of way network is properly recorded. On the strength of the decision of the Court of Appeal, an Inspector has already confirmed a definitive map modification order adding a strategically-placed public footpath of no less than 1,538 metres in length, at East Stoke, in the Trent valley. This is an excellent result for us and creates a circular walk in attractive countryside by one of the three great rivers of England.

The application to add this path was made in 2010 by Nottinghamshire Area and this new ruling came out in time to affect the inspectors decision.

BEASTS

We recently saw the trial of a farmer charged with gross negligence manslaughter, following the death of a walker. It was alleged that he was killed by a Swiss Brown bull, a breed of dairy bull not proscribed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In the event he was found not guilty. This tragic incident raised the question of whether the list of dairy bulls proscribed under the 1981 Act was in need to review. Following this the National Farmers Union and the Ramblers jointly approached the Health & Safety Executive to discover it only gets involved in cases involving the public if an incident involves a "reportable injury." A reportable injury is one where the injured party gets taken directly to hospital for treatment for that injury. Because they don't necessarily get to hear about all incidents, they would welcome reports from the public, so they are happy for us to encourage the public to report incidents. There is however a big proviso attached to this: they can't follow-up all of these cases (particularly if a person has just been chased or frightened).

The HSE officers took the view that bulls are not the main issue. Examination of their reports shows that most incidents seem to involve people with a dog in a field with cows and calves. Almost no incidents involve a group of people (good news for our group walks), but most people involved seem to be over 55. Cattle also seem to dislike high-viz jackets!

Walkers do need to be aware. You wouldn't step out onto a road without looking to see if there were any cars coming even though you have every right to be crossing the road. In a similar way, when entering a field you should look around and assess the situation regarding livestock. However farmers are running businesses and need to have done risk assessments -this is key- and to take sensible measures such as siting feeders and drinkers away from stiles where possible, considering electric fencing and providing good signage. We are also aware of, and are awaiting more news about, a pilot project in Cornwall at which the possibility of providing permissive alternative paths (avoiding fields with cattle and calves) is being looked at. The definitive right of way would still be available, but there would be another route for those who did not wish to use it.

Please do let us know about any incidents involving the public and cattle on rights of way, or on access land. It is very important that we have an accurate picture of what is happening.

In the meantime do take care: It is advised that people make noises to ensure they don't surprise animals when entering a field with them present. It is normally important to keep any dog under close control as animals can be disconcerted by the dog. If however cows in particular look nervous and move towards you let the dog go and it can fend for itself and the beasts should not normally bother you. Never allow your dog loose in a field with sheep no matter how trained you think it is. Their natural instinct is to herd or hunt and in either case sheep will be distressed.

Having contacted a spokesman in the National Farmers Union about horses, this was his response:

"There are no specific rules about horses and the NFU does not put out any special guidance about them and walkers. The general rule applies that land managers must not have animals which are dangerous in fields with public rights of way in them. Horses can be curious about dogs and people should generally keep dogs on leads around horses rather than let them off, but in the unlikely event the horse(s) are obviously upset by the dog, perhaps because there is a foal nearby, let the dog off the lead to fend for itself. Horses are most unlikely to harm people or even bother them, but if you feel they are coming too close for comfort then "make yourself big and shout" - easier said than done, I know, for those unused to animals.

The slight exception to all this is when you enter a field of horses that are used to being fed by passers by, when the horses can and do mither those who enter the field. This is why you see some signs asking you not to feed them

There are roughly ten incidents a year with cattle and walkers - the numbers involving horses are extremely infrequent and not recorded as far as we know.

There are probably more problems with horses when they are being ridden on shared routes and this is usually where they are surprised by a cyclist or walker. It is often the horse rider who comes off worse so once again the answer is; make yourself known to be there.

It is easy to understand walkers not familiar with animals losing confidence on occasions when confronted with livestock. It's a shame, but discretion is the better part of valour

MOUNTAINS CLIMBING

Summits in the more geologically active parts of the world are mostly slowly rising. Certainly getting higher quicker than they are being eroded. Our records of the heights will need checking from time to time. Earthquakes can have dramatic affects on the surface but they also cause or reflect major changes in the earth itself.

All the great ranges are where the tectonic plates meet and effectively one continent is bumping into another.

Some are pushing head on and some grinding past each other. When the latter build up pressure it can suddenly be released with a quake. When they meet head on one tends to ride up over the other but again not in a smooth motion and the sudden releases can cause mayhem. Quakes can differ greatly not only in magnitude but whether they are deep seated or nearer the surface. It makes a great deal of difference to the affect on the surface.

The constant movement of the Indian sub continent pushing north into Asia at a rate of 37mm a year is what has produced the great peaks of the Karakoram, Pamirs, Hindu Kush and Himalayas. As the one is being pushed under the other, one rises and one sinks and the recent apparently major quakes in that region could have been a great deal worse had the quake been nearer the surface.

BEN IS GROWING TOO

The latest measurements have thrown up a bit of a surprise. The O. S. has now determined that Ben Nevis is 1,345 metres above sea level, one meter higher than previously thought.

The actual height is apparently 1,344.527

Given the technology available then it is surprising perhaps that the last measurement, taken in 1949, was so accurate

MORE PARKS FOR SCOTLAND

The Scottish Campaign for National Parks supported by a number of other organisations is calling on the Scottish Government to honour its election manifesto commitment to explore the possible creation of new national parks.

Scotland only has two national parks, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs and the Cairngorms. They are suggesting seven areas to consider as future national parks, including possible marine national parks taking in Lochaber and South Skye and / or the Argyll Islands and coast.

LONG DISTANCE FOOTPATHS

For those members who like long distance walking there are two less well known paths you might wish to consider.

The Cowal Way in Argyll is one of Scotland's newer trails and is of a distance to allow it to be walked in a weekend. It is also very accessible, being not very far from Glasgow. Basically the start of the Highlands it offers beautiful coastlines, pretty dramatic scenery, quite a bit of up and down without achieving major heights, and abundant wildlife.

Only established in 2000, it runs the length of the Cowal Peninsula, depending on which way you walk it, beginning at Portavadie in the south of Cowal winding its way up to end at Inveruglas on Loch Lomond. It also connects with the West Highland Way and Kintyre Way.

Feasibility studies are in hand for a coastal path on the north side of the Solway Firth, to extend the Clyde walkway in Lanarkshire, and for improvements to parts of a 'Pilgrim's Way' across Scotland between Iona and St Andrews.

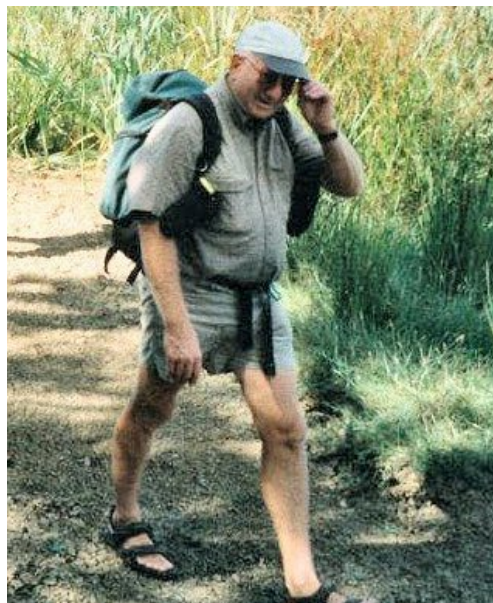
If you do not want to go so far north, the Teesdale Way is a 92 mile trail, from Cumbria and Cow Green Reservoir in Upper Teesdale through County Durham and Teeside to the North Sea coast at Warrenby in Redcar.

A £3.7m programme supported under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Programme will deliver improved signage, surfacing and path furniture on the Way and along a series of linked countryside and urban trails.

BERNARD TIMPSON

Members of Hinckley Group have fond memories of Bernard, who died earlier this year. He joined the club in the late 1990s and was an active member until a stroke in 2006 meant he was no longer able to join walks.

Described as an “innovator” and a “fixer”, Bernard was instrumental in many aspects of the group’s affairs, including organising map reading courses during his time as Walks Coordinator, to encourage more members to lead walks. He organised rail rambles, always popular, despite the 7.30 a.m. starts he insisted on; cycling tours and walking holidays both in UK and abroad.



Ellen Sandeman reminisced about some of the many trips he organised for the Tuesday Group; one to Kew Gardens and the London Eye, where they enjoyed superb views over the city, and another when they left Hinckley at an unearthly hour to drive to Dover, caught a ferry to Calais, then spent an interesting day walking round the town. Ellen remembered a delightful continental lunch of French bread, cheeses and local wine in a beautiful park, before visiting a supermarket Bernard knew, to stock up on alcohol to bring back on the ferry.

Rita Gildroy remembered Bernard keeping everyone’s spirits up as they cycled from Whitehaven to Wallsend, then back along the Reiver’s Way, one of two Hinckley Ramblers Coast to Coast cycling trips in 2000 and 2001. Rita was also touched to discover afterwards that Bernard had written a lovely article for a local publication about her achievement in raising £400 for Loros, in memory of her late husband.

Wendy Martin remembered one of his favourite walks, the Donington Ale Trail in the Cotswolds, which Hinckley Ramblers completed on several occasions. These were always perfectly timed, to enable walkers the opportunity to sample as many ales as possible en route.

Living in Earl Shilton, Bernard was instrumental in starting a walking group from the Dog and Gun, his local pub, and was also a popular member of Nuneaton Ramblers. A keen member of the Campaign for Real Ale, Bernard fought hard to prevent The White Swan, a historic pub in Stoke Golding, being turned into a private dwelling.

Perhaps his biggest triumph came in February 2002, when he founded a Walking for Health group on Burbage Common in conjunction with Hinckley Ramblers and the local council. “Lets Walk Hinckley” subsequently went on to become one of the most successful in the East Midlands, now in its 14th year, with well over 80 members, and three walks of various lengths each Wednesday morning, led by Ramblers members. Bernard’s tireless efforts for this group were recognised when he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Hinckley and Bosworth’s Sports and Physical Activity Alliance.

Bernard was Area Publicity Officer for some years, manning display stands, and raising the profile of Ramblers at events such as the Countryside Festival on Burbage Common, and the Leicestershire Walking Weeks. His good humoured chat must have persuaded a number of people to sign up for Ramblers groups over the years.

Bernard’s cheeky grin and infectious laugh will be greatly missed.

WETHERSPOONING



Coalville Group recently embarked on a 'Wetherspoon Challenge'.

They made a Wetherspoon pub the start and finish point of a three legged, eighteen mile walk done in three legs.

They had this written up as an article in the Wetherspoons News which should give good publicity

Valerie Hope, publicity officer for Coalville Ramblers, said: "The Wetherspoon Challenge idea came up at a meeting last year and has been very popular with our members.

"The age range of the group is such that we require good refreshment, usually a decent meal and a place of interest. Wetherspoon's pubs offer these, as well as a great price and are good fun."

Coalville do of course have an informal meeting every Friday lunch time for a meal and chat at 'the office' – Wetherspoon's Monkey Walk, in Coalville.

The Wetherspoon Challenge began in July 2015 with a six-mile ramble from The Lord Burton, in Burton, to The Sir Nigel Gresley, Swadlincote. Part two, in August, saw the group walk six miles from The Sir Nigel Gresley to The Shoulder of Mutton, at Ashby de la Zouch.

The members are pictured at the start of the Wetherspoon Challenge part three, The Shoulder of Mutton back to 'the office' at The Monkey Walk, a leisurely six miles, with well-earned refreshments at the pub in Coalville.

A number of us might have joined this last leg as a boost to the publicity but it clashed with the Area AGM.

Plans are being discussed for another one, to take in pubs in Leicester and Loughborough, so watch this space...

THIRTY YEARS YOUNG

On April 30th Coalville Group celebrated their 30 years in existence by organising two walks on a lovely bright and sunny morning, followed by a buffet lunch at the Bagworth Working Men's Club

There were over 40 on the walks and nearly twice as many for the buffet including past and present members and two founding members



During the buffet Jackie Seager thanked all for attending as well as proposing toasts to friends who are no longer with us and to the success of the group. A very well received surprise contribution was given by Bob Reddington, founder member and the first chairman of the group

He explained how Coalville Ramblers came into existence. Back in 1986 it is thought that there were only two Ramblers groups in Leicestershire (Leicester and Hinckley) as part of the East Midlands Ramblers Area. The Ramblers had a big push to increase membership and a meeting in the Coalville area was held with a good number of local residents. This meeting was chaired by Mike Statham the then secretary of Leicester who is still a Vice President of the Area and represents the Ramblers on a National Forest Committee.

It was decided that there was enough local interest to start a local group and 4 days later Bob Reddington led a 12 mile walk from Darley Bridge in Derbyshire for an anticipated dozen or so participants but found himself with a walking group of 47!

The pub stop landlord nearly had a heart attack and had to co-opt a number of his regulars to help serve behind the bar. Also during the walk a number of the group managed to get themselves distracted by a car boot sale and 'Disappeared into the Ether'.

Within a week of this amazing success it was decided to formalise the creation of a Coalville group and the very first committee was formed - sometime later the Coalville group, including Bob Reddington, assisted in the formation of Loughborough Ramblers and these two groups maintain a close relationship. By 1989 there were enough groups in the Leicestershire and Rutland district to create the area organisation that we still have today.

Mike Statham is not very well at the moments having had a stroke but he is out walking again and we wish him well.

FOOTPATH LEGISLATION

We still await a final enactment of the changes pending. The Deregulation Act got Royal Assent at the end of March 2015 but will only impact on our work when the rights of way provisions come into effect, hopefully later this year. DEFRA is now saying that is likely to be in the Autumn (not April as last proposed) because it's taking longer than anticipated to produce the Regulations and guidance for local authorities and the public on how the new laws will operate. Government has other pressing matters on its plate at the moment.

As far as we can see on receipt of a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application local authorities will have to subject the evidence submitted to a basic evidential test: an initial assessment of the quality of the evidence provided. These tests will be known as BETs but I hope that does not mean that applications will be a bit of a gamble. This should relieve authorities of the burden of dealing with poor or spurious applications but the cynical would suggest it is a bit easy presumably for them to take a view based on how busy they are or how costly any action might be. If an application is rejected, it will still be open to an applicant to resubmit that application if more convincing evidence can be found. One plus factor is that local authorities rather than applicants will have to approach landowners in the first instance, letting them know about claims for paths across their land, but only where claims pass the BET

Another good change should be that a local authority will also be able to negotiate an alternative route with the landowner before recording the way which should reduce the number of applications that result in objections from landowners and hence the number of cases which go to public inquiry.

Other measures cut the number of cases that are referred to the Secretary of State for resolution; these include providing for recourse to a local magistrate's court rather than the Secretary of State where a local authority has failed to deal with a viable application, and ensuring that any given case can go before the Secretary of State only once, rather than several times, which can often be the case at present. The downside of this is that few magistrates will have any depth of knowledge about highways law which is a very specialist area. Another measure enables authorities to refer only those parts of orders that are disputed to the Secretary of State for resolution where at present the whole of the application is rejected if any element is disputed.

There is a formal 'right to apply' for extinguishment and diversion orders under the Highways Act 1980. In future there will be a requirement on an authority to deal with an application for an order within a certain period of time. It gives a right of appeal to the Secretary of State if the time limit is exceeded, or if the authority refuses to make the requested order. There will also be changes to the cost regime for orders.

Essentially the result of this will be to allow local authorities to exercise discretion as to the sum recoverable from those applying for path orders, provided that it does not exceed the sum actually incurred. A further amendment makes it clear that the Secretary of State may recover costs of determining cases by written representations under the same principles which govern the recovery of costs when cases are dealt with by the holding of a public inquiry or hearing.

Procedures will be simplified and hopefully streamlined in giving local authorities discretion to disregard irrelevant appeals and objections, rather than having to submit them all to the Secretary of State as is currently the case. There will be a fast track procedure for correcting minor administrative errors on the definitive map and statement, rather than authorities having to go through the full modification order procedure reducing the requirement for advertising rights of way orders in newspapers.

If it does get as far as the courts they would quash only the Secretary of State's decision, where that is found to be at fault, so that the order-making process does not have to start all over again from scratch as happens at present

Other very helpful changes are that applications to have a right of way recorded do not have to be accompanied by copies of documents that are already in the authority's possession; volunteers will be able to transfer applications, so that work does not have to start over again where an applicant can no longer pursue it and that, just as rights of way cannot be claimed or upgraded after the cut-off date on the basis of pre -1949 evidence, they also cannot be deleted or downgraded.

Hopefully there will also be measures providing for local authorities to designate a right of way for protection during a short window after the cut-off to enable local authorities to derive maximum benefit from the work undertaken by volunteer groups in the period leading up to the cut-off date. Given how many cases there are likely to be this should mean that if we get all claims on the table before Dec 31st 2015 they should be dealt with.

We are therefore gearing up to progress this work

CANAL & RIVER TRUST

The trust has been developing a website mapping section which displays a wide variety of information supposedly showing access points to the towpaths, potentially very useful for walkers. They've developed a simple form to submit reports on a range of facilities that we feel need to be updated on their map and access points do seem fairly badly marked. If you're going for a canalside stroll see if the details of that particular area are right. If not, just fill in the form and submit the correct details. We think at the moment only official access points should be included but it may be possible to get well used 'unofficial' access upgraded in the future where it would be useful. Obviously as it says you can comment on any other facilities but access is the most important for us. There is an option for entering 'other' so we would suggest that is where you show informal access points.

It has been suggested that we should give a GR as well as the nearest feature, and indicate the type of access, e.g. whether it has stiles, steps, ramps etc. One issue causing problems with the map at present is that walkers have had problems by assuming that every public highway gives access to the towpath automatically, which is often not the case. Fortunately in Leicestershire this is not such a problem as a lot of our towpaths are rights of way.

Check the map at: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-network> If you click on the red 'i' in the bottom right-hand corner of the map you get the list of the symbols. Official access points are lime green circles it would appear. Fill in new details using this form: <https://form.jotformeu.com/53132988179366>

Changes to Footpath Network since the last edition

Blaby District.

Sharnford - V30 diversion to correct mapping errors. V109 extinguishment as it has no real value being so close to V30 and not very pleasant. Route has been unavailable for several years.

Harborough District.

Foxton - A32. Confirmed by Secretary of State Inspector. Path changed from cross field route to headland route to make way for holiday chalets.

Houghton on the Hill - C50, D10 Definitive Map Modification Order to amend the map to the route historically used.

Shawell - Diversion of X23 and X24 which passed through an underbridge on the old Great Central Railway. The underbridge has started to become unsafe. The new route crosses the trackbed on the level.

Gilmorton- Y89 A minor diversion to make way for a development.

Hinckley and Bosworth.

Markfield - Small extinguishment of a path (R17) through a garden where there is a pavement <10m away.

Carlton - A small diversion of S48 which makes the definitive map show what has been actually walked for many years.

Melton Borough.

Hose - Small diversion of G29a to use track around a paddock.

North West Leicestershire.

Bardon - Small diversion of N48 to allow development to site. After requests from the Ramblers and LFA an extra exit was provided to the SE of the new route.

Diseworth - L48. Diversion was made to improve the security of houses along Clements Gate and to allow for better land management (crops). The path has been diverted along a wide, grassy, headland and then along Long Holden (unclassified County Road). Long Holden is a track and carries very little traffic.

BEST KEPT FOOTPATH AWARD

Nominations for this years winner close at the end of July to allow judging to take place during the growing season.

Last year's award went to John Blunt and the Staunton Harold Estate for the permissive Staunton Ridgeway & Poets Path.

There is a lovely 10k circular walk to be had taking in these paths and Breedon Hill or, missing out Breedon, a 6k alternative.



AREA WEBSITE

<http://www.leicsra.org.uk>

The new Area web site has now gone live. We have managed to transfer and retain the old address but it is now hosted by the Ramblers, London and is managed locally

Future editions of Write of Way will appear there although for the time being we will continue to send out paper versions. It is not possible to add in old versions but selected articles from previous editions have been added

There are a number of new features.

Local walks will be detailed and background information on local sites provided.

There is an up to date weather forecast

There is a gallery of members photographs as well as those in the newsletters appearing in colour rather than black & white.

Hot news items will be headlined

It has a members area with an events and meetings diary, the constitution, standing orders and role descriptions

This is your newsletter and your web site so it will be as good as the material provided to the Editor. Photographs and articles which might interest or inspire fellow members are welcome and hopefully these will also show the wider walking community what we get up to and maybe tempt them to join.

Any suggestions for other items to be covered are welcome.

If any group has an activity they wish to promote to the wider membership we will happily feature it.