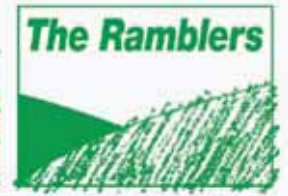


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Issue 8

The Newsletter Written for Rights of Way Officers Within Local Government

June 2008

Discovering Lost Ways - Not Dead and Buried Yet

Natural England may have 'pulled the plug' on the nationally organised archive trawls and applications for DMMOs, the sheer scale of which was their undoing, but there's life in the project yet. Natural England itself indicated in the paper which went to its Board in February that it would aim to provide advice and guidance to those who wish to claim paths at their own initiative and reports are reaching us of locally organised projects, where there is real enthusiasm for the work. In Hampshire, for example, a co-operative project involving local user groups and the county council's rights of way department has been set up. The project is being sponsored and managed by the Local Access Forum and was motivated by the apparent death of the national DLW project and local volunteers frustration that they had not been able to participate in it: they wanted to do something practical on the subject in their own county.



The project held two kick-off meetings in the spring, attended by about 50 volunteers from user groups and members of the

public who responded to a short article placed by the Forum in the Hampshire County Council newsletter. Everyone involved was surprised by the number of people who turned up and pleased by the degree of enthusiasm shown for the project. Rather than identifying paths at random, the 'lost ways', volunteers will be asked to find evidence for routes identified as needed in the Countryside Access Plan. Volunteers will receive further training at the Records Office and will then be asked to look for evidence on tithe maps, enclosure maps and OS first series maps. Where there is strong historical evidence for rights existing on any of these needed routes, they will be given to the Definitive Map Team for possible addition (through appropriate legal channels) to the definitive map. This will contribute to delivery of the Countryside Access Plans.

Initiatives such as this will keep the spirit of 'Discovering Lost Ways' alive and kicking and we would be happy to publicise details of other such projects to help local authorities to set up their own schemes. However, the RA remains firmly of the view that even with such new local schemes in place ways will still be lost forever in 2026 if the cut-off date is not repealed. We shall be lobbying hard for that to happen.

Ramblers Attend NALC Conference

This year the annual conference of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) took place from the 20th - 22nd May in Eastbourne. The RA were returning as exhibitors after a few years away. This gave staff the opportunity to meet and share information with local parish and town councillors.

Part of the RA's new national rights of way strategy is to work more closely at a local level with parish and town councils across the country to open up and preserve the path network. The Ramblers' stand therefore had the theme of 'working together', with the aim of talking to councillors about ideas and suggestions for new ways the RA could work with the first tier of local government.



As part of the RA display delegates were invited to take part in our 'Local Partnership Map', by indicating how much local partnership work currently goes on between their council and the RA (by way of a coloured sticky dot).

A large number of delegates stuck dots on the map, and it was very positive to hear about all the great work already going on locally between the RA and parish and town councils. However, it has also given us a clear idea of where more work is needed, and how we can further encourage partnership working at the grass roots.

Importance of Urban Paths Recognised by House of Lords

On the 14th May 2008 a debate in the House of Lords concentrated on the issue of Rights of Way and Definitive Map Modification Orders. During the debate Lord Addington spoke about the importance of urban paths and the part they play in the day-to-day lives of those people living in towns and cities across England.

In his speech Lord Addington said:

“There is no more appropriate form of mass exercise than pleasant or useful walking. If you can make it a pleasant walk to the shops, people will walk to the shops... if you encourage those urban walkways... you will help many other government directives and areas of activity that we want to encourage.”



Lord Addington's sentiments on this issue are shared by The Ramblers' Association. We believe that alleyways play an integral part in our urban landscape and are often well used through-routes to vital amenities for the local community.

It is for this reason that the RA is running a campaign which aims to prevent the use of gating orders on paths that form through-routes for pedestrians to local facilities such as doctor's surgeries, schools and shops.

As part of the campaign the RA took a case to the House of Lords on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence that use of a way was facilitating the persistent commission of criminal offences and anti-social behaviour. Unfortunately the RA lost this case and failed to get gates removed from this well-used path. However, the RA remains determined to uphold its charitable aim to protect public rights of way, which includes urban alleyways, and is continuing with its campaign to have the regulations surrounding gating orders changed. The RA would like amendments made so that if a member of the public objects to such an order it is heard before an independent arbitrator. We hope that this will have the effect of saving those paths that are genuinely used by the local community and which provide a real public benefit.

BOAT cul-de-sacs

All over the country there are many BOATs which end as cul-de-sacs for motor vehicles. The number of these greatly increased following NERC Act, when all remaining RUPPs became Restricted Byways. In the unitary authority of West Berkshire, which is a small area compared with many counties, there are 13 such BOAT cul-de-sacs.

The Mid & West Berkshire Local Access Forum has persuaded the West Berkshire Council to put up signs at the start of all these BOATs which end as cul-de-sacs, saying that there is no through route for motor vehicles ahead, and specifying the distance. This is a helpful practice, informing motor vehicular users on the ground that they will not be able to get beyond a certain point.



Blue Book Extra



The third cumulative supplement to the fourth edition of the blue book (to 20 April 2008) is now available on the BBE website at:

www.ramblers.co.uk/rightsofwaybook/bbe/

The Blue Book is an essential work of reference for anyone whose work involves rights of way, and at just £29.95 its a bargain too. To purchase a copy, or for further information, see: www.ramblers.co.uk/rightsofwaybook/

We'd love to hear any comments or suggestions you have. Simply contact us at:



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