

**Countryside Access  
Oxfordshire County Council  
Sutton Farm  
Sutton  
Witney  
OX29 5RY**

**Bill Cotton - Strategic Director  
for Environment & Place**

## **RIGHTS OF WAY MONITORING GROUP**

A meeting of the Rights of Way Monitoring Group will be held on Friday 13th October 2023 at 10.00am.

**VENUE:** This meeting will be hybrid at County Hall & virtually via **MS Teams**. **If you wish to attend in person @ County Hall please advise the Chair asap as space is limited. Thank you.**

**Chair: Hugh Potter** – Group Manager – Countryside Operations & Volunteer Coordination

### **AGENDA**

- 1. Apologies, introductions & house rules for hybrid meeting**
- 2. Minutes** To confirm the minutes of the last meeting held on 14th April 2023
- 3. Matters Arising**
- 4. Countryside Records** - Mike Walker - Principal Countryside Records Officer
- 5. Update item – Deregulation Act 2015 & Rights of Way reforms** - Mike Walker - Principal Countryside Records Officer
- 6. Countryside Access – Combined report**
  - 6a Countryside Access Team** – Steve Tabbitt, Principal Countryside Access Officer
  - 6b Countryside Access Delivery Team** – James Smith, Countryside Access Delivery Team Leader
- 7. National Trails – For information only**
  - 7a Thames Path** – The Thames Path Partnership haven't met for several months so please see the annual report for 2022.23 capturing activities across the National Trail during 2022.23
  - 7b Ridgeway** – Is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & as the Ridgeway Partnership also hasn't met for several months please refer to the many events taking place this year to celebrate the anniversary [The Ridgeway National Trail 50th anniversary](#) or sign up for the newsletter for updates at [ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk)
- 8. OCAF papers – For information only** – Papers for the last meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 can be found [here](#)

Next OCAF meeting is Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023 @ 9.30am over MS Teams – Contact Paul Harris [paul.harris@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:paul.harris@oxfordshire.gov.uk) for more details
- 9. Any Other Business**

**Please note:**

If you cannot attend the meeting **please advise**, and if possible send someone else to represent your organisation. If you no longer wish to receive these papers, or they should be sent to someone else, please let us know so we can make the necessary amendments the mailing list.

If you require the meeting link resending or sending to a colleague, please advise & I will forward it to you.

**Future meeting dates: 12.04.2024 & 11.04.2024 TBC.**

## RIGHTS OF WAY MONITORING GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023 on MS Teams

### PRESENT

#### Members

Isobel Budden	National Farmers Union
Dave Cavanagh	Ramblers
Becky Crockett	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
David Godfrey	Oxfordshire Fieldpaths Society & Ramblers
Ilse Lambert	Trail Riders Fellowship
Susan Maguire	Chiltern Society
Nick Moon	Oxford Fieldpaths Society
Bryan Moore	British Horse Society

#### Oxfordshire County Council Officers

Alex Humphreys	Countryside Records Officer
Andy Mawer	Countryside Access Delivery Team
Hugh Potter	Acting Head of Environment and Circular Economy
Laurence Smith	Countryside Records Officer
Steven Tabbitt	Principal Countryside Access Officer
Mike Walker	Principal Countryside Records Officer

### 1. Introduction and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and members introduced themselves. Apologies had been received from:

Chris Atkins	OCC Countryside Records Officer
Chris Blomfield	Trail Riders Fellowship
Ben Gibbons	Nation Farmers Union
Rachel Livingstone	British Horse Society
Petronella Nattrass	British Horse Society
James Smith	OCC Countryside Access Delivery Team

Thanks was given by the Chair for the work of the late Jim Parke who was a regular attendee of the group & instrumental in establishing and supporting the Parish Path Wardens Scheme in the county.

### 2. Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022 were agreed, subject to an edit in the list of members: Oxfordshire Fieldpaths Society is actually Oxford Fieldpaths Society.

### 3. Matters Arising

3.1 Item 3.3: HP to deliver minutes faster. These were received around Christmas this time around (which was faster than usual).

3.2 Item 6.7: Someone from the Access/Delivery team was going to look at Chinnor BR26 in February/March to assess surfacing works once they've had a season to bed in and decide if/what further work is required. Nobody has yet

been out to inspect, although to-date no complaints of erosion/degradation have been received despite it being a popular route.

3.3 Item 6.8: Problems arising from cyclists' use of Oxford City FP74 during closure of Marston Cycle Track. As a Cycle Way, this route is not managed by the Countryside Access team so all reports/comments will be passed on to the relevant team. NM raised concerns that this could occur again as further work is due on Cycle Track. **Action: ST to relay to Sarah Aldous to ensure awareness/monitoring of the situation.**

3.4 Item 6.9: Hailey BR31 obstructions and flooding issues. People have been out to investigate and ST has a large report on this. Two areas currently have standing water but are passable. Further investigation to happen following a period of drier weather.

3.5 Item 6.10: Reopening of ford on Stonesfield BR4. ST not heard of any issues and so it has been assumed all is well.

3.6 Item 6.16: PROW signage replacement - currently in a better position to deliver this following changes to how signage is being delivered (outlined in report papers from ST). There are currently 100 footpath plates, 25 bridleway plates, 16 restricted byway plates and 19 destination plates ready to go.

3.7 Marcham Mill bridge – HP met with the local community in Marcham. Final version of legal agreement for works is with landowner. Everything lined up for work this Spring once final signature received.

3.8 Issue 9.1: Neville's Farm Restricted Byway issues - ST spoken with area officer. Some issues have been resolved at Neville's Farm. **Action: BM to contact Arthur McEwan-James [AMJ] directly about remaining issue(s).**

3.9 Issue 9.2: Automatic responses generated by CAMS - Responses should be received when issues are resolved or rejected. Generic responses are replaced by specific ones but glitches in software can cause problems in receiving these responses. Attempts are being made to keep the system as up-to-date as possible. Specific problems experienced in responses/issue reporting should be sent to area officers/ST. **Action: ST to talk to team about the approach to this.**

3.10 Next meeting will be a hybrid meeting following poll from HP with in-person part based at County Hall.

#### **4. Countryside Records Report – presented by Mike Walker, Principal Officer – Countryside Records**

4.1 **DMMO programme:** Key figures in appendix 1. The number of overall outstanding cases has dropped from 71 to 47 over 12 months (this figure includes non-schedule 14 cases (those without applications)). Figures show that the rates at which cases are being addressed and worked through is increasing. Cases are also being taken on pro-actively to address anomalies on the Definitive Map. Lots of cases now with Planning Inspectorate, where inquiries etc. take much time and organisation from officers.

4.2 NM raised that amenity groups have evidence that could support some of these non-schedule 14 cases. If they were informed of which cases were being investigated, this could be provided to help case officers. **Action: MW to speak with NM to identify how this could best be facilitated.**

4.3 HP highlighted the encouraging news that the team is now able to address backlog issues and the tidying of the Definitive Map as well as processing applications received from members of the public.

4.4 **Public Path Orders:** Figures (appendix 2) show the number of outstanding cases remaining fairly constant over the year as cases are coming in as fast as they're going out. Confirmation numbers over the year represent about half of the typical total case load. These figures don't capture time spent on dealing with inquiries, discussions that then don't result in applications. Proactive work to address anomalies is also taking place.

4.5 **Village Greens:** There are few applications and those that have been received this year (or straddling into this year) have been dealt with.

## **5. Update item – Deregulation Act - Mike Walker – Principal Officer - Countryside Records**

5.1 Deregulation and reforms are now back on the table following review by the new Secretary of State. The deadline has been extended to 2031 (31<sup>st</sup> January 2031\*) for applications based on historic evidence. This reintroduces the problems (listed in the paper) around exceptions which need to be identified in secondary legislation to prevent future problems. Stakeholder Working Group meetings now taking place every 2-3 weeks to try and work through this.

*\*correction: the reference in the CROW Act is to "any claim made after 1 January 2031"*

5.2 NM identified two ways applications could be better facilitated – notification by the council (not the applicant) to landowners, and removal of the need to supply copies of evidence. MW confirmed that this will be the case.

5.3 NM asked for this secondary legislation to be brought in as quickly as possible so that the remaining time for applications can be maximised. MW confirmed this point has been raised at stakeholder working groups too as OMAs also need to adapt their systems and working practices. Lots of work has already been undertaken to formulate other reforms under this legislation – question remains whether these will be delayed to 2031 as well. The timeline for this is under discussion with DEFRA.

Also concern for LAs and PINS and how they will respond to the inevitably increased workload and resourcing issues.

## **6. Countryside Access Combined report - presented by Steve Tabbitt, Principal Officer - Countryside Access**

6.1 New NE area officer now in place – Tracy Sutton – who moved across from the Delivery team. That vacancy has been advertised & will be filled shortly<sup>1</sup>. Two

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<sup>1</sup> [15.05.23] An offer has now been made to the successful candidate following recent interviews

team members from the Milestone highways contract have also been brought across to the team. While focusing primarily on the fabrication and installation of small 'kit' type bridges this will also increase capacity and opportunity in the team.

6.2 The team are currently in a period of restructuring. HP mentioned public rights of way are explicitly identified as a focus for the current political administration at council<sup>2</sup>.

6.3 Having CAMS mobile on OCC tablets will be a useful development but facing problems with OCC IT firewalls. Yet to get a working trial version to test it. There is a new how-to manual for the CAMSWeb system. This is ready to go but we are awaiting our in-house GIS team to upload.

6.4 Figures show an increase in winter vegetation clearance work. These figures represent an amalgamation of both the Delivery team and 3 external contractors. A new attachment for the loader has been purchased which will hopefully assist in speeding up this work further.

6.5 Issue stats from CAMS – of 788 reported in last period, only 510 were new issues, highlighting importance of data cleansing (i.e. merging of same/similar issues).

6.6 Milcombe FP10 - substantial repairs have been made to a boardwalk. A replacement is needed but this is a significant job.

6.7 **Capital Programme.** Regular meetings are being held with Milestone which feed into the capital works programme. The next two big projects are Sunningwell steps and revetment works on the Thames Path at Warborough. There are also significant increases in erosion needed to be worked on and the replacement of Cradle Bridge at Radcot (although there are currently legal issues to work through with adjacent landowners). Oxford FP16/North Hinksey FP1 Fishes Bridge was shown as a good example of amalgamated delivery which can have financial and time saving benefits.

6.8 Community engagement via social media is up including a particular peak in November.

6.9 HP identified a significant reduction (745) in caseload highlighting value in merging issues and removing outdated/historic cases. There has been a change in the types of issues reported as well – signage is now top, although there is currently a plan in place to address the outstanding backlog.

6.10 NM asked for clarification on Oxford FP79 clearance - City Council/ODS was supposed to be working on a delegated basis under s42 of Highways Act. HP identified that the relationship changed at start of last financial year. ODS undertake smaller projects like light vegetation clearance in summer and urgent inspections and emergency repairs where required. OCC are addressing larger projects as they possess the requisite knowledge and this makes more financial sense.

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<sup>2</sup> Priority 6. *Preserve & improve access to nature & green spaces*

6.11 NM identified that Buckinghamshire County Council have symbology for areas covered by the seasonal vegetation clearance program on their CAMSWeb system, but OCC don't. Could this be introduced to prevent issues being reported unnecessarily? **Action: ST to talk to Joanne Taylor about the feasibility of this.**

6.12 DG asked whether thought had been given to anchoring and weighting of bridges so they don't float off downstream as there's been a significant increase in this occurring. AM identified that where bridges are at a likely location for flooding these are secured with stakes. Currently the delivery team are looking into better practices for future. HP highlighted that in some circumstances in the floodplain it was better for smaller bridges to lift & move, then repositioned later than be damaged by water flow & debris in the water.

6.13 SM seeking delivery of waymark posts for the Chiltern Society as current stock levels are very low. **Action: ST to arrange this with James Smith.**

6.14 SM asked for an update on when Jackie Smith (OCC Area Officer) will be returning to work. ST confirmed that this will be next week.

6.14 Chinnor FP9/Sydenham FP1 - issue with boards rotting on crossing beam/bridge. BC seeking clarification on how this (and other path closures) are communicated. There's no identification on CAMSWeb that the section is closed. ST identified that signs are posted on-site but PCs/DCs have not been contacted. **Action: BC to message the countryside inbox with current CAMSWeb views as it may be that issues are not showing.**

6.15 BC also highlighted Culham Green Belt Way closure. ST identified that TROs/TTROs are not managed by Countryside teams at OCC but by the Road Traffic team. Currently there is not the capacity to show all closures online but longer term closures are published. The One.network system (used for road closures) is linked to the National Street Gazetteer, but ROW are not on this system at present so it can't be used for this. There is an ambition to address this.

6.16 IL requested an update on the Green Road area near Wantage which is currently closed by TROs. ST confirmed a decision will be made soon on how best to proceed. BM identified some of these TROs are now showing online on CAMSWeb.

6.17 BM asked about progress on Hardwell Lane as at the last meeting OCC were waiting until the Spring before undertaking any works. ST identified that this needs looking into more before timelines are identified for opening/additional works.

## **7. National Trails – reports for information only**

7.1 The latest set of Thames Path papers were circulated shortly before the meeting.

7.2 There is no copy yet of the Ridgeway Partnership Papers. **Action: HP to circulate these papers alongside the minutes of the meeting.**



## 8. OCAF Papers

8.1 Next meeting is 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The Agenda/papers are not yet out.

## 9. Any Other Business

9.1 Nuffield woodland is up for sale but has many rights of way currently blocked and offline including Nuffield 16 & Nettlebed 21. **Action: SM to email ST and Jackie Smith to report this and to provide further details.**

9.2 BM asked when AMJ's south-west area meeting will be. ST identified a provisional date had been set for an open day summer forum on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023\* at Sutton Farm. It will be for all of the county with all access officers and drawing in other teams (e.g. Countryside Records, delivery and GIS teams). The aim is for this to replace the Summer Forum and then to have the standard forums in Autumn/Winter.

## 10. Date of next meetings

Make

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2023 – Hybrid meeting County Hall/MS Teams

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024

\*This has since been cancelled – a Doodle Poll has been circulated to all attendees and further dates/meetings will be set shortly



## **Countryside Records Team – Update**

### **1. DMMO Programme**

The programme of work to address DMMO applications for the 6-month period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 is attached at **APPENDIX 1**.

During this period: -

- The number of outstanding cases remains fairly constant as new (non- schedule 14) cases are being added. These are cases we are pro-actively investigating to resolve anomalous issues on the Definitive Map.
- We have recently been alerted that 1 case that was heard at public inquiry earlier this year (the addition of a footpath in Checkendon and Stoke Row) and which was confirmed by the Secretary of State, has been appealed to the High Court by the owner of the land.

### **2. Public Path Orders**

The programme of work to address PPO applications for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 is attached at **APPENDIX 2**.

7 Orders have been confirmed during the period.

### **3. Town and Village Greens**

- No Village Green applications are outstanding

### **4. Con29 Searches of Common Land**

780 common land searches have been completed during the 6-month period.

### **5. Landowner Deposits under Highways Act 1980 section 31(6)**

35 were accepted during the 6-month period.

<b>ALL DMMO CASES (SCHEDULE 14 &amp; NON SCHEDULE 14)</b>	<b>Apr-23</b>	<b>May-23</b>	<b>Jun-23</b>	<b>Jul-23</b>	<b>Aug-23</b>	<b>Sep-23</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>ALL CASES OUTSTANDING AT END OF MONTH</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	
<b>ALL WORK DONE IN MONTH:</b>							
1. ALL new cases (applications & non schedule 14 cases) recorded		1		4			5
2. Non determination appeals started							0
3. Research started		2	1	1	1		5
4. Pre Order Consultations started		1	1				2
5. Finalising report started	1			1	1		3
6. Determination report sent to Legal		1	1		2		4
7. Cases determined / decided against	1	1					2
7. Cases determined / decided in favour	1	1		1			3
8. Processing applicant appeals against determination decision started						1	1
9. Orders made	1	1		1			3
9. Orders advertised		1	1				2
10. Processing objections started							0
11. Orders confirmed by OCC	2		2				4
12. Orders referred to PINS		1					1
13. Public Inquiries or hearings held							0
15. Objected to orders confirmed by PINS		1					1
15. Confirmed Orders advertised	2		1	2			5
<b>16. ALL cases completed</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>No. of cases progressed to next stage in month</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>47</b>
Stages 1-6 Cases not yet determined	31	30	30	33	33	33	
Stages 7-15 Cases determined, but not yet 'complete'	15	14	14	15	14	14	
	<b>46</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	
N.B ALL case figures above include non schedule 14 cases.							

## APPENDIX 2

PPO	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Total
<b>CASES OUTSTANDING AT END OF MONTH</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	
<b>WORK DONE IN MONTH:</b>							
1. New applications	2		1	1	3	3	10
2. Pre Order Consultation started		6	3			5	14
3. Applications not progressed							
4. Orders made	1		2	4	2		9
5. Orders advertised	1		2	2	4		9
6. Orders confirmed by OCC		2	2	1			5
7. Orders referred to PINS			1		1		2
8. Public inquiries or hearings held							
9. Objected to orders confirmed by PINS		1					1
10. Confirmed orders advertised	1	2	2	2			7
<b>11. Cases completed</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>No. of cases progressed to next stage in month</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>BREAKDOWN OF THE OUTSTANDING CASES:</b>							
Application received, awaiting pre-order consultation	11	6	4	5	8	7	
Cases undergoing pre-order consultation	2	4	6			5	
Pre-order consultation complete, Order not yet made	8	11	9	11	11	11	
Orders made but not yet advertised				2			
Orders being advertised	1		2	2	4		
Orders advertised but not yet confirmed (and not with PINS)	10	9	6	7	8	12	
Orders with PINS, no decision yet	3	2	3	3	4	4	
Orders confirmed but not yet advertised		1	1				
Confirmed orders being advertised	2	2	2	2	1		
Confirmed orders advertised but not completed yet			1	1			
	37	35	34	33	36	39	

### **The Deregulation Act 2015 and Right of Way Reforms - Update**

There is not a huge amount to update, but The Stakeholder Working Group and sub-groups meet regularly to compile / edit the required secondary legislation needed for many of the reforms to be introduced and there is a sense – certainly from the DEFRA perspective – to make progress and introduce the package. This progress can tend to be hampered by the availability of DEFRA lawyers for drafting / redrafting. But DEFRA officials are awaiting Secretary of State feedback on its delivery timetable.

The Right to Apply Cost Recovery Statutory Instrument has been redrafted and provisionally signed off including an application form process.

The exceptions criteria for historic use continue to be the subject of robust discussion, especially by user-groups.

Work on Circular 1/09 revision is to be done in parallel. DEFRA intends to issue the Guidance at the same time as new processes. HA reps advise that this will take time to produce.

Last month, one document that was produced by the SWG, was issued as Government Guidance. This is the so-called 'presumptions guidance' in respect of the diversion or extinguishment of paths in certain situations. A copy of this is attached. Essentially, where an application is made to divert or extinguish a path which runs through the areas defined in the guidance, there will be an expectation that the Council will make the relevant Order and a similar expectation that it will be confirmed by either the Council or the Secretary of State if the legal tests are met.

**Mike Walker**



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Government guidance on diversion or extinguishment of public rights of way that pass through private dwellings, their curtilages and gardens, farmyards and industrial or commercial premises

Date: August 2023

Version: 1.0

## Please note

1. Sections 118ZA and 119ZA of the Highways Act 1980 and section 54B of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 have not yet been commenced and are not in force.
2. Therefore, this guidance currently applies only where local authorities choose to consider diverting or extinguishing a right of way under s119 and s118 respectively of the Highways Act 1980.
3. Defra will inform local authorities in good time prior to commencing 118ZA and 119ZA of the Highways Act 1980 and section 54B of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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## Contents

Extracts from Hansard 23 March 2016 .....	4
Introduction .....	4
Context .....	4
Guiding principles .....	6
Conclusion .....	7
Appendix.....	8
Highways Act 1980.....	8
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 .....	8
Town and Country Planning Act 1947 .....	8
Crime and Disorder Act 1998 .....	8



# Extracts from Hansard 23 March 2016

*As a Government Minister, Baroness Williams of Trafford made the following statements:*

*“The right to apply will be supplemented by guidance that will effectively act as a presumption to divert or extinguish public rights of way that pass through the gardens of family homes, working farmyards or commercial premises where privacy, safety or security are a problem.*

*The guidance will give authorities more scope to confirm orders made in the interests of the landowner in circumstances where a right of way may cause hardship because it goes through the garden of a family home, a working farmyard or other commercial premises.*

*I am happy to reaffirm the commitment made by the previous Government that we will review, within two years of implementation of the reforms package, how effective the right-to-apply provisions and the accompanying guidance have proved to be. The review will send a message to authorities that the Government are determined that the new policy should work and that if guidance does not bring about sufficient changes, we will consider the introduction of further measures.”*

## Introduction

1. This guidance sets out Government policy on changes to public rights of way through gardens and curtilages of private dwellings, working farmyards and other commercial premises. It sets out how local authorities should respond when considering diverting or extinguishing public rights of way under s119ZA and s118ZA of the Highways Act 1980, or when considering making a ‘modification consent order’ under section 54B of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It also applies where local authorities choose to consider diverting or extinguishing a right of way under s119 and s118 respectively of the Highways Act 1980. It should be read in conjunction with all other relevant guidance, including rights of way Circular 1/09 (or as revised) and sections 118, 119, 118ZA and 119ZA of the Highways Act 1980 and Section 54B of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; the relevant web links are appended to this guidance.

## Context

2. The majority of public rights of way cross privately owned land. In general, members of the public and farmers/landowners are used to the concept and see no inherent inconsistency between the fact that land may be privately owned and the presence of public routes across it for both passage from A to B, and enjoyment of the countryside and the natural environment.

3. However, the general view of both groups can change markedly in situations where public rights of way pass through contained spaces such as private gardens, farmyards or commercial premises.
4. Members of the public may not be comfortable following a path through a contained space of this type because doing so feels like infringing on the privacy of a house owner, or potentially disrupting, or being endangered by, activities within a farmyard or commercial premises. Such path alignments can deter people from exercising the public's right to use the path.
5. The less contained such a space is, the fewer the public's concerns tend to be. People are used to walking past a house along an adjacent road or pavement, and this feels acceptable because they are clearly outside its visible domain. The degree of proximity can also make a big difference. Few people are troubled by using public paths across privately owned land around a house or farm, so long as they feel they can keep a reasonable distance from it. But the more that a route over privately owned land brings people into close proximity with the associated house or operational farm buildings, the less likely they are to feel comfortable using it.
6. Even where a public path through a private garden or farmyard has existed for centuries, and perhaps even pre-dates the use of the land for these purposes, there may be one or more reasons why its presence could be problematic for the landowner:
  - a. A reasonable expectation of being able to relax in the garden or spend time with family and friends without strangers appearing in the same contained space;
  - b. Greater concerns today than in previous eras about the security of children or property in such situations;
  - c. An increased use of public rights of way for general leisure and recreational use rather than local people using them to get around the locality, particularly where rights of way are promoted by local authorities.
  - d. A concern that having a public path close to the house has a negative impact on the value of the property;
  - e. Farmyards or commercial operations putting the public potentially at risk, or being regularly disturbed, because of the limited space within which a route passes.

## Guiding principles

7. This guidance applies where a public right of way passes through:
  - a. A garden or curtilage of a residential dwelling
  - b. a farmyard or
  - c. other commercial or industrial premises
8. It does not apply to gardens, dwellings or commercial premises which do not have the necessary permission for the current use of the land (most land and property will have an authorised use, either by way of existence of that use prior to the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 or, post 1947, either by way of an implemented planning permission or an authorised use as a consequence of a relevant period of use).
9. In all cases where the guidance applies, the order-making and confirming authority should weigh the interests of the owner and/or occupier against the overall impact of the proposal on the public as a whole. They should note that reducing or eliminating the impact of the current route of the right of way on the owner and/or occupier, in terms of privacy, security and safety, are important considerations to which due weight should be given. In relevant circumstances, the duty on authorities to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may be a consideration.
10. The order-making authority should therefore be predisposed to make, and the confirming authority will be similarly predisposed to confirm, an order if it satisfies the respective relevant legislative tests. There are different tests for extinguishment and diversion; these are set out in s.118 and s.119 (respectively) of the Highways Act 1980. The relevant web links are appended to this guidance.
11. In such circumstances, it is in the public interest that any change to remove or reduce the impacts on the property owner or occupier of the existing public right of way should, wherever possible, involve diversion or replacement of the way rather than extinguishment alone. Before making an order, authorities should consider all the options available to them and/or to the landowner, and should be open to using the combination of powers, agreements and management arrangements that best suit the circumstances, whether mentioned below or not.
12. These options include:
  - a. Diversion of the right of way onto land already owned/occupied by the owner/occupier.
  - b. Diversion of the right of way onto other land –
    - i. either by agreement with that landowner, or

- ii. where agreement is not forthcoming, using powers under s119 (5) to require the owner or occupier to underwrite compensation payable to a third party.
- c. Concurrent extinguishment of the right of way and creation of an alternative route under s118 and s25 and/or s26 Highways Act 1980 –
  - i. on land already owned/occupied by the owner/occupier, or
  - ii. on other land by agreement with that owner/occupier, or
  - iii. using the power under s26 to create a route across other land, bearing in mind the provisions of s28 of the Act.
- d. Extinguishment of the right of way where other existing rights of way (including carriageways) would meet the need of the public for access
- e. Extinguishment of the right of way where an existing path is not needed for public use. (For the purposes of section 118, in order to be not needed for public use, a public right of way does not necessarily have to be unused. In assessing non-use, authorities should disregard any temporary circumstances that prevent or diminish the use of the way, such as obstructions).

13. Authorities should also consider:

- a. The potential for improving a path so diverted or replaced (for example, by replacing stiles with gates).
- b. Where a route is to be extinguished, the scope for the owner/occupier to defray the cost of improving an existing alternative route or of creating an alternative route

## Conclusion

14. In determining an application to which this guidance applies, it is for the authority to consider the case on all its merits taking into account all the statutory requirements and available guidance. In making its decision as to whether the existing path should be diverted or extinguished, an authority should consider in particular the impact of the existing path on the property owner and/or occupier against the benefit that having the right of way through the land brings to the public, taking account of this guidance.

# Appendix

Links to legislation referred to in the guidance

## Highways Act 1980

Section 25: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/25>

Section 26: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/26>

Section28: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/28>

Section118: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/118>

Section 118ZA: [not yet commenced]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/118ZA>

Section 119: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/119>

Section 119ZA: [not yet commenced]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/119ZA>

## Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Section 54B: [not yet commenced, see Schedule 7 of the Deregulation Act 2015]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/20/schedule/7/enacted>

## Town and Country Planning Act 1947

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1947/51/enacted>

## Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/section/17>

## **Countryside Access Team – Monitoring Group Report October 2023**

It has been a particularly challenging six-month period, partly due to the weather and a significant soft vegetation growing period. During this recent period, the Delivery Team have been undertaking their Soft Vegetation Clearance (SVC) programme with a further three contracts covering the County's geographical areas, see separate report. We are still analysing the data for the SVC programme, which will include the numbers of requests to cut additional Public Rights of Way [PRoW] not currently on our cutting regime. We are looking at how in future we will be able to resource this increasing workload and pressure to our service.

We have introduced a new process for booking certain work which has enabled us to catch up with our backlog of signage works which we're aware has been a cause for concern for some while. Other works have taken place, within the report are some example photos taken from across the county.

### **Restructure**

The whole service is currently subject to a restructure with the consultation period on proposals closing on 6<sup>th</sup> October. This will have minimal impact on the Countryside Access Team [CAT] with existing structures remaining as they are now and continuing to report into Hugh Potter as Group Manager. While unsettling for those involved it should have no impact on service delivery.

### **GIS and IT**

We are looking to invest in a mobile platform for the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) system the teams use. Our CAMs desktop system requires an upgrade so we are looking to increase functionality for officers allowing live data to be updated in the field. This will provide a step change in efficiency and reduce the need to apply updates to issues & reports in the office.

A request has also been sent to our CAMs providers (Idox) to redesign the Issue Upload page on CAMS web. The proposed changes will emphasise the importance of uploading a photo to an issue which greatly aids an immediate informed assessment of the issue and the priority that should be applied.

### **Trees**

During this period 91 issues concerning fallen or dangerous trees were reported. 36 tree jobs undertaken by the Delivery Team (often for multiple trees), 94 tree issues resolved in total (this figure includes landowners, volunteers clearing and data cleansing data). See the Delivery team report below.

### **Caseload**

The current CAMs caseload of reported issues is at the end of the report.



**Improvement projects**

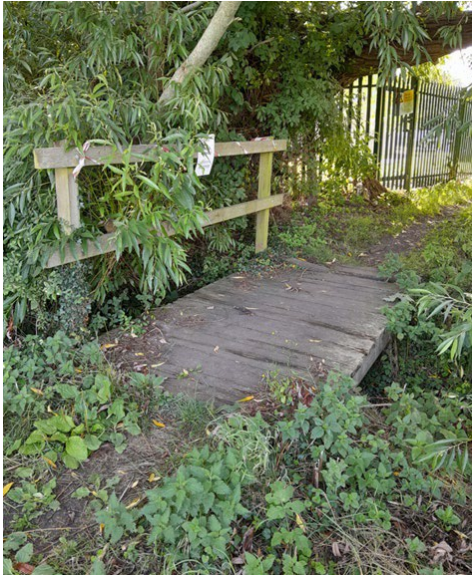
**SOUTH EAST**

**Stoke Talmage Footpath 4** – Bridge replacement. Working closely with the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers [SCPMV] as part of their Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment [TOE] funded project replacing stiles with gates. We removed the old bridge and replaced it with a new beam bridge, we also installed a self-closing gate at the southern end. We installed stock proof netting on the northern end as a temporary measure until the SCPMV’s installed a wooden gate to accommodate the landowners’ requirements.





**Tetsworth FP47 Two bridges full replacement**



**SOUTH WEST**

**Thames Path Wallingford**





**Appleton with Eaton FP3**



**WEST**

**North Leigh FP35**





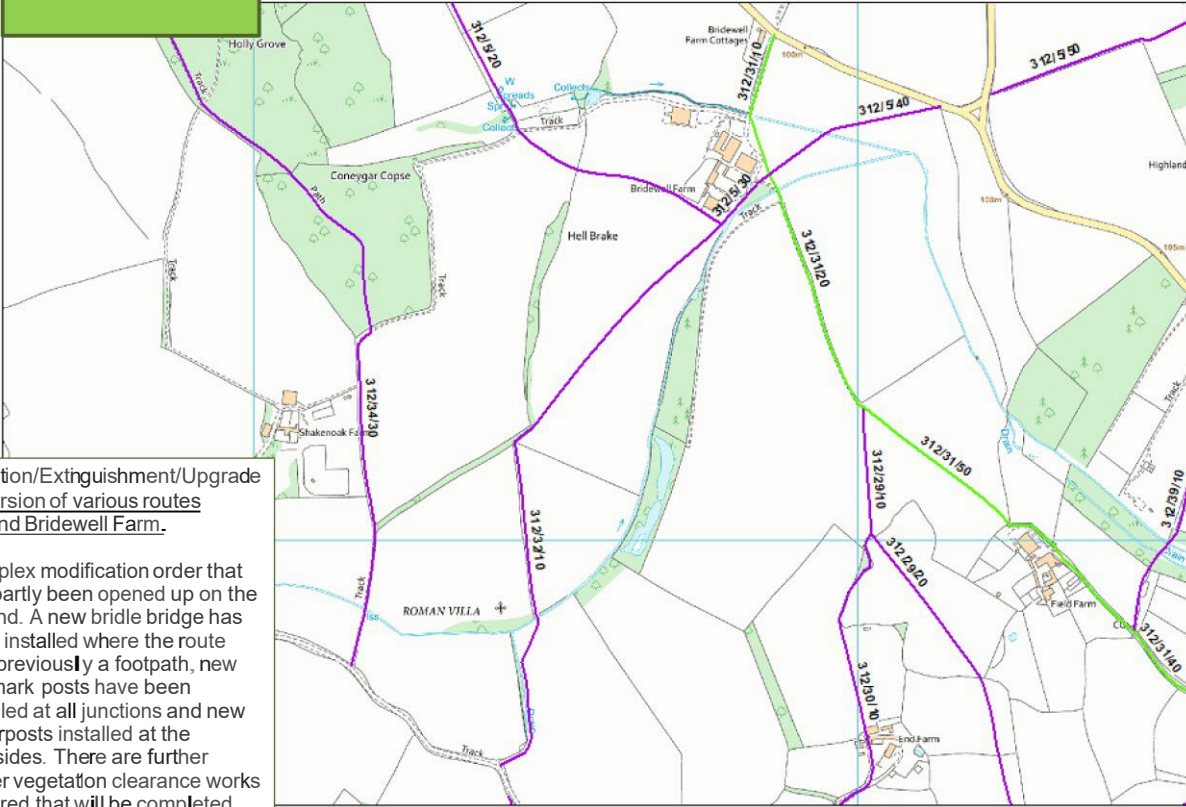
**Idbury FP1**



**Bletchingdon FP28**



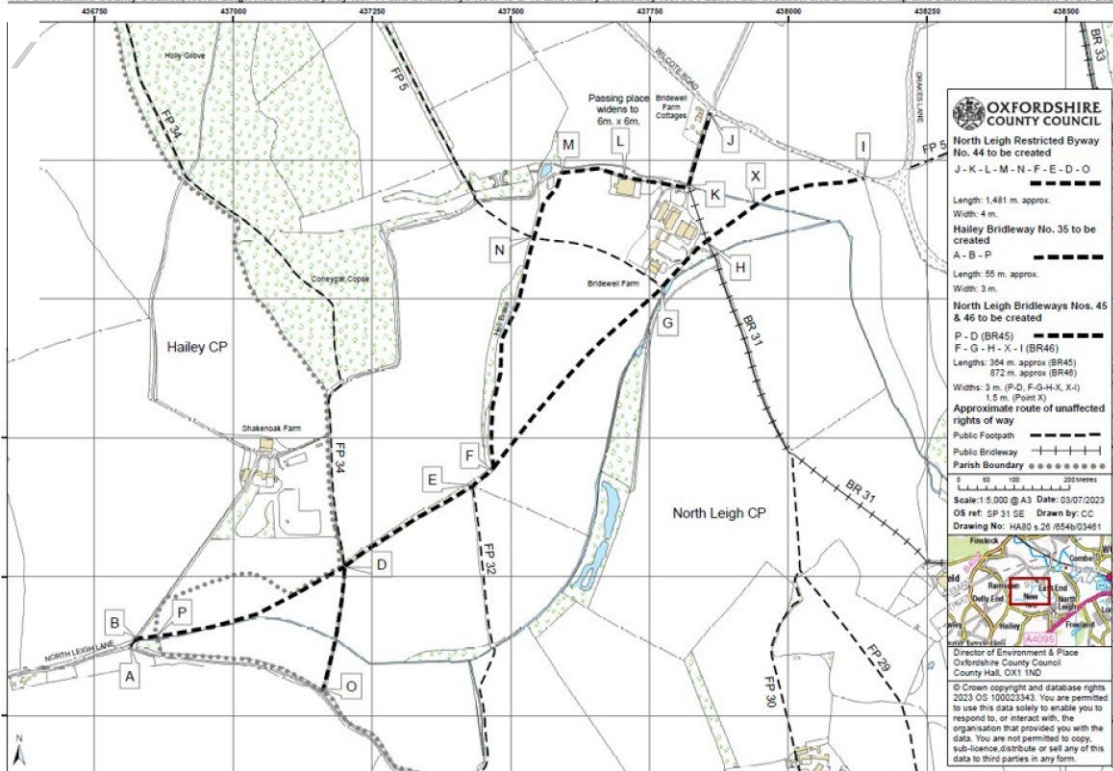
**DMMO North Leigh**



Creation/Extinguishment/Upgrade /Diversion of various routes around Bridewell Farm.

Complex modification order that has partly been opened up on the ground. A new bridle bridge has been installed where the route was previously a footpath, new waymark posts have been installed at all junctions and new fingerposts installed at the roadsides. There are further winter vegetation clearance works required that will be completed next month.

The Oxfordshire County Council, North Leigh Restricted Byway No. 44 and Brideways Nos. 45 & 46 and Hailey Brideway No. 35 Public Path Creation and Definitive Map and Statement Modification Order 2023





**Examples of work undertaken on the ground to create the new paths**



**NORTHEAST**

**New Steps installed Ardley FP22 and Epwell FP4**



**New bridge Middle Stoney BR1 & boardwalk extension Launton FP 9**



## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

### **Uffington Parish Council**

With funding from TOE, Uffington Parish Council, White Horse Show Trust, and OCC, fifteen new gates (a mixture of kissing and self-closing gates) were installed by Uffington Parish Council in July 2023 to replace stiles on Uffington Footpath 387 / 4. This was the fourth in a series of projects by the Council to improve access to the footpaths in and around Uffington for walkers of all abilities. Starting close to the centre of the village, near the village shop, this has greatly improved a vital community asset.



### **Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Green Belt Way Project**

Funding was secured by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, supported by TOE to provide much needed access improvements on the interconnected Public Rights of Way that make up the 65-mile Green Belt Way around Oxford. This project would not have happened without the tireless work undertaken by Gordon Garraway along with colleagues at the Oxfordshire Branch of CPRE who sought and secured the necessary funding to sponsor his vision of a 'stile-free' Green Belt Way. This aspiration continues.

The project has been led by Matt Ball working alongside our selected contractors and in partnership with local land managers and farmers, our contractors have replaced nine stiles with gates, kissing gates and improved access along the southern section of the Oxfordshire Green Belt Way.

### **Nuneham Courtenay GBW improvements**





### Shrivenham FP12/Swindon boundary



### Capital Programme

Monthly meetings take place with Milestone design engineers and OCC structural engineers as we move forward with our capital programme. The capital programme is full, but we still need to add unplanned reactionary works when new larger issues arise on our network. Future works will include Oxford City Thames Path bank repair scheme and a replacement for Cradle Bridge at Radcot

### Sunningwell FP8 Steps and bridge



This project has reopened a footpath closed for many years using Fibre Reinforced Plastic [FRP] material in its construction. The material is very light, long lasting & cost



effective compared to wooden/steel alternatives. We will assess its durability/cost and may use this product more widely on PRow structures in the network.

### **S106 Spend by Countryside Access Development Team**

As at the end of September overall s106 spend for 2022/23 totalled £31,000.

The work done consists of installation of a large mobility kissing gate in Eynsham for more users to access the Thames, the surfacing of North Hinksey Bridleway 4 using self-binding path gravel for access to Brookes Campus and the recreational facilities there and a wildlife survey on the bridleway around the Ardley ERF site ahead of surfacing works.

#### **Eynsham FP7**



#### **North Hinksey BR4**



Works planned for the remainder of the financial year include the completion of the surfacing of Portway at Upper Heyford, providing an accessible route between Somerton and Heyford Park facilities, the purchase of several gates to replace stiles in various parishes and the upgrading of Chinnor Footpath 18 to bridleway status, which will include widening to allow for cycling up to The Ridgeway. We might also get some of the bridleway around the ERF site surfaced. There are also projects in Henley, Faringdon, Stanford in the Vale & Chesterton to be completed.

It is hoped we will exceed the target of £200,000 spend by March 2024.

### **Bridges Data Assessment Tool (DAT)**

Matt Ball (former Tasks Team Supervisor) has been working with the team to design a tool that assists in creating a proactive programme of inspections and replacements of OCC bridges. There are over 2100 bridges on the network so this is a huge area of work for the team. The aim is to inspect bridges on a 5 year cycle and build up intelligence on all bridges including those that are not owned or maintained by OCC. The emphasis is to change the management of bridges from a reactive to proactive workload over time. This is very much an ongoing project and it is going to be challenging to meet the 5 year inspection target with current resources.

## HS2

With the recent government announcement that the Northern leg of HS2 has been scrapped this is a hot topic at the moment. Work on the ground is now well underway in Oxfordshire with various closures and diversions in place. Although we only have a relatively short section of the line in the county there are a number of rights of way affected, with 3 new bridges being built to accommodate bridleways and two bridleways that will be running under new viaducts. The parishes directly affected by the works are Finmere, Mixbury, Newton Purcell with Shelswell and Godington. The team are still attending regular meetings about the final design of structures as well as meetings about temporary works affecting the routes.

HS2 have a Helpdesk if you have any issues or questions about their works, telephone 08081 434 434 or email [hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk](mailto:hs2enquiries@hs2.org.uk) You can also let us now about any issues via [countryside@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Spot the deliberate mistake? Below is a kissing gate installed by their contractors on one of our paths. Not sure what instructions they were following! We asked for it to be removed straight away.



## Summary

The Countryside Access Team continue to work with a range of partners to deliver both maintenance & improvement projects on the PRow network. These partnerships continue to be vital to ongoing delivery and especially at this fiscally challenged time. The team greatly appreciate the help and support of those individuals and organisations that continue to offer their time and expertise to enable this work to take place.

Steve Tabbitt - Principal Countryside Access Officer  
October 2023

## Countryside Access Management System – Current Caseload Stats – October 2023

Issues reported (including duplicates): 1,455

### New Issues during reporting period

<b>By Type (top 10):</b>	<b>Total: 739</b>	<b>By Priority:</b>	
Stile/Repair or Replace	91	Priority:	8
Tree/Fallen Tree(s)	66	Priority: 1	10
Vegetation/New SVC Request	56	Priority: 10	1
Finger Post/Repair or Replace	53	Priority: 2	1
Crossing/Bridge Repair or Replace	46	Priority: 2a	79
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	31	Priority: 2b	4
Surface Improvement Request	31	Priority: 2c	126
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	29	Priority: 3	349
Gate/Repair or Replace	27	Priority: 4a	117
Waymark/Post Repair or Replace	26	Priority: 4b	6
		Priority: 4c	2
		Priority: 5	24

### Issues resolved during reporting period

<b>By Type (top 10):</b>	<b>Total: 1,154</b>	<b>By Priority:</b>	
Finger Post/Repair or Replace	121	Priority:	2
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	109	Priority: 1	10
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	104	Priority: 10	2
Stile/Repair or Replace	85	Priority: 2a	83
Tree/Fallen Tree(s)	67	Priority: 2b	3
Crossing/Bridge Repair or Replace	62	Priority: 2c	105
Finger Post/Request	54	Priority: 3	557
Surface Improvement Request	43	Priority: 4a	280
Waymark/Post Required	43	Priority: 4b	6
Waymark/Waymarking Required	27	Priority: 4c	66
		Priority: 5	38

**Caseload at end of reporting period****By Type (top 10):**

Stile/Repair or Replace	491
Def Map CAT/Alignment on ground incorrect	300
Crossing/Bridge Repair or Replace	242
Finger Post/Repair or Replace	223
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	215
Surface Improvement Request	190
Fence/Fences	179
Gate/Repair or Replace	152
Waymark/Post Required	141
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	138

**Total: 3,956****By Priority:**

Priority:	9
Priority: 1	16
Priority: 10	22
Priority: 2	7
Priority: 2a	103
Priority: 2b	5
Priority: 2c	558
Priority: 3	1,738
Priority: 4a	886
Priority: 4b	14
Priority: 4c	141
Priority: 5	432
Priority: UN	2

## **Monitoring Group Delivery Team Update. October 23.**

We welcomed our newest member of staff Devon Ryder into the team after a successful recruitment process for the Countryside Access Delivery Team Officer post. We received a good number of applications for this role, shortlisting down to four candidates who went through to interview.



Devon comes from recently completing an apprenticeship with Milestone Infrastructure (OCC's Highways term contractor). During his apprenticeship he spent some time with our ROW Bridges Team, fabricating and installing kit bridges on the network. This is where he found out about the work that the Delivery Team carries out and was interested in the Officer role. Devon started with us mid July and has quickly settled in. He is keen to learn and brings a new youthful dimension to the team.

The Delivery Team is now back to full strength which means we have capacity to start to get back on top of the backlog of work.

### **Machinery & equipment**

We recently bid a fond farewell to a very old member of the team, after 16 years of service our old compact tractor "The Victor" was sold back to Kilworth Engineering with another piece of plant and equipment. After some negotiation a deal was struck, for a new tractor and flail which has already been out earning its keep with this year's Sumer Vegetation Programme. With an ever-aging fleet of plant this was a very welcome step in the right direction for the team.





The teams have reported back how quiet and smooth it is compared to the old Victor that was definitely showing its age!

### **Bridges Team**

Bridges team have been busy replacing bridges throughout the summer. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September they've fabricated and installed a total number of 42 Bridges and have carried out repairs on a further 24. There are lots of examples undertaken by the team in the CAT report.

Currently the Delivery Team are out replacing and repairing Harvest Bridges, which are bridges that we can only get access to after the fields have been harvested.

When out on the PRow network, depending on the severity of the issue, you may have seen warning signs with hazard tape on some of our bridges that require works to them.

Picture of parapet replacement on Bodicote Bridleway 17 below, replacing the failing wooden parapet with key clamp.



We have also tasked the Bridges Team to carry out roadside signing works during any particularly wet periods when ground conditions have made it difficult for them to access sites for bridge replacements, this has made a start in catching up with the backlog of signing works currently in the system.

### **Seasonal Projects**

The major Delivery team's project in recent months has been on the Summer Vegetation Clearance [SVC] programme cutting approx. 287km of PROW, as part of a planned proactive programme. Due to the type of year we've had, ideal for vegetation growth, and the demand this has placed on the team, we have not been able to address many reports on other paths in the network not on the core programme. We continue to refine the work we take forward as a priority however the size of the programme depends very much on the budget available and our capacity to deliver along with other financial impacts beyond our control e.g. the increasing fuel costs, increasing contractor costs and this year, increased mechanical failures, means we can't address as many reports as we'd like.



As well as the SVC we have also cleared 45 fallen trees from the network.

Looking forward we are fast approaching our HVC season starting from mid-October through to late Feb, we are already oversubscribed with a large amount of work to carryout we have a busy winter ahead.

James Smith  
Countryside Access Delivery Team Leader  
October 2023



## Monitoring the condition of National Trails

This form is to be used by Trails (Trail Partnerships and Coastal Management Managing Authorities) for providing monitoring information relating to trail condition. See guidance to Trail Partnerships for more information. Where trails have section of ECP, a separate report for these sections should be submitted.

Completed forms should be submitted to your Partnership Manager.

**Please refer to Annex 1 for further guidance on out of condition reporting.**

### Part A: About you

Trail:	Thames Path National Trail
ECP if applicable	
Completed by:	Hannah Gutteridge
Role:	Thames Path Manager
Date:	25.05.2023

### Part B1: Condition assessment

#### (i) Path surfaces

Audit		2022/23 assessment			
Total off-road trail length* (km)	288km	Length that is out of condition (km)	6.49km	Length that is out of condition (%)	2.3%

\* i.e. excluding sections where the trail follows an adopted highway

#### (ii) Vegetation management

2022/23 assessment	
Length of soft vegetation cutting (m)	<i>[41,657] m [x2] times per year</i>
	<i>[6,690] m [x1] times per year</i>
	<i>[41,117]m x1 times per year-volunteer</i>
	<i>Total: [131,121] m</i>
Length of scrub clearance (m)	950m- Contractor 3384m- Volunteer programme

**(iii) Structures and signage**

Audit		2023/23 assessment			
Number of stiles	0	Number of stiles out of condition	0	% out of condition	0%
Number of gates	397	Number of gates out of condition	16	% out of condition	4%
Number of bridges	221	Number of bridges out of condition	9	% out of condition	5%
Number of fingerposts	386	Number of fingerposts out of condition	13	% out of condition	3%
Number of flights of steps <sup>1</sup> .	5	Number of flights of steps out of condition	0	% out of condition	0%
This needs to be reviewed in 23/24 to include London					

**(iv) Replacement of stiles**

2022/23 assessment	
Number of stiles that have been replaced with a more accessible alternative	0

**Part B2: Capital projects reporting**

The 2022/23 grant includes a specific sum to be spent on capital projects. For example, but not limited to -

- removal of stiles to be replaced by new gates
- the flagging of moorlands paths and other landscape appropriate improved surfacing
- new fencing and drainage
- new accessible physical signage
- creating or signing step-free alternative routes
- new accessible interpretation boards.

Please give details of the projects here. More detailed information and photos should be included in the annual report.

Project description and location	Total project cost
Thames Path surfacing project in partnership with Bucks CC near Temple Lock- Marlow	£23,500
Thames Path Improvement project in partnership with Bucks CC near Marlow Rugby Club	£16,500

<sup>1</sup> For reporting purposes a flight consists of 10 steps or more.

Thames Path – Rail to Trail signage to engage a wider community to find and enjoy the Thames Path. Improved signage.	£989.50
Thames Path and PLA project to create accessible walks in parts of London that have known deprivation. Walks aimed at families and are fully accessible. Walks available for free on Go Jauntly App.	£7,518

### Part B3: Additional Funding

In some years additional funding becomes available. If this is the case please give details of the projects funded here. More detailed information and photos should be included in the annual report.

Project description and location	Total project cost

### Part C: Other Information

(i) **Long term diversions** (this data will now be collected from other sources)

(ii) **Reports of problems by users** (this data will now be collected from other sources but please include any anecdotal evidence under enhancement in your Quality Standards Report)

(iii) **Exceptional events**

Trail Partnerships should keep a log of exceptional environmental events where substantial damage has occurred such that a National Trail has needed to be temporarily closed and re-routed whilst major works are undertaken to reinstate the path.

Number of coastal retreat incidents	
Number of river bank collapse incidents	12
Others (please specify)	

Please provide the following information for each event

Date	April 2022
------	------------

Location	Thames Path near Marlow
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU846851
Description of the event	Significant erosion of path, path membrane and wash out of original material.
Impact e.g. length of path affected	15m of eroded path and reduced width of extremely popular part of the Thames Path. Will need to be closed if any further slippage.

Date	April 2022
Location	Thames Path south of Streatley
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU595803
Description of the event	Failed revetment and general bank erosion following river level changes.
Impact e.g. length of path affected	Very narrow on this section now, and tricky to get pass when wet and muddy. Will continue to deteriorate, with possibility of path having to be shut.

Date	March 2023
Location	Thames Path east of Somerford Keynes
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU030940
Description of the event	Erosion of revetment encroaching on path
Impact e.g. length of path affected	20m of path at risk of full failure without investment.

Date	March 2023
Location	Shiplake
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU783788
Description of the event	Various and significant bank collapse from height.
Impact e.g. length of path affected	30m of path at risk of requiring diversion.

Date	March 2023
Location	South of Radley (Oxford)
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU535978
Description of the event	River has eroded bank and starting to undercut bank
Impact e.g. length of path affected	5m of path may require closure and or diversion

Date	April 2023
Location	Thames Path east of Reading
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU750750
Description of the event	The path edge and bank have been severely eroded, both around existing revetment and bank edges. Path height now below water levels
Impact e.g. length of path affected	Various and significant failures over 50m plus- long term closure and diversion may be required.

Date	Feb 2023
Location	Windsor

Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU958773
Description of the event	Severe bank erosion- loss of path width
Impact e.g. length of path affected	15m of path- may require a diversion is anymore width lost.

Date	April 2022
Location	Thames Path south of Maidenhead
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU905798
Description of the event	Wash out and collapse around major culvert- losing significant width of path.
Impact e.g. length of path affected	5m of path- risk of closure and diversion

Date	May 2022
Location	Thames Path south of Maidenhead
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU901799
Description of the event	Severe undercutting and collapse of the bank affecting the walked line of the Thames Path
Impact e.g. length of path affected	5m- If continues to fail, path will need to be closed.

Date	Nov 2022
Location	Thames Path east of Shillingford
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SU602919
Description of the event	Tree has fallen taking out a significant amount of the bank and half of the width of the path. Path initially closed and now barriered off, any further erosion and the path will need to be closed. Significant and costly revetment required. This is also not far from a section that failed last year.
Impact e.g. length of path affected	25m of path affected by tree and weaking of bank along that length.

Date	Nov 2022
Location	Thames Path near Eynsham
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	SP443086
Description of the event	Bank failure and collapse of EA land. The EA have officially closed the path as there is insufficient width to safely get around the collapsed bank. This will require significant revetment works.
Impact e.g. length of path affected	50m of path closed, luckily there is a diversion which is not too long.

Date	Jan 2023
Location	Thames Path north Staines
Grid Reference for affected section of the route (mid-point)	TQ025717
Description of the event	Tree has fallen on unregistered land and a huge chunk of bank was pulled out during the high winter flows. The water level is now 2 meters below the path with a significant drop and has reduced the width of the path. This will be very costly and difficult to repair.

Impact e.g. length of path affected	25m of path affected with likely closure and diversion should the bank slip further.
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## Guidance note to Trail Partnerships on completion of the end of year Quality Standards Report.

Explanatory note – ‘We’ in the context of this document is Natural England and ‘you’ refers to the individual Trail Partnerships

### Annual Report for 2022/23 for:

Insert Trail name	Thames Path National Trail
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### Executive Summary

What we are looking for here are the highlights: – What is it about your Trail that you really want to get noticed for this year? We got a sense of this from the unscripted highlights that people offered when they introduced themselves at the start of the Trail Partnerships meeting but what else do you also want to highlight? This is also an opportunity to mention any particular problems, delays disappointments.

The Thames Path having been without a manager for a significant period of the previous year along with a dry winter masked problems with the condition of the path which would present themselves during 2022/23. With the help of the volunteer monitors, we have gained a better understanding of the true condition of the Thames Path. The Thames Path is at significant risk from erosion, bank and revetment failure along its length and numerous events this year have highlighted that risk. Lack of investment and future proofing by the Environment Agency has also resulted in closure of two significant bridges severing important local links as well as impacting the tourist hotspots of Henley and Marlow. The EA have no funding available to replace these bridges and we foresee their closure for some time.

The Thames Path Partnership has been affective this year; partners have come forward to work on interesting improvement and engagement projects to maintain the National Trail as a significant tourist attraction. We have also employed a new member of staff Clare Jaratt to assist us in our wider engagement and income generation work.

Six separate large scale surfacing projects were undertaken across the Thames as well as the installation of the modern and ground-breaking Dukes Meadows footbridge, built under the arch of the Grade II listed Barnes railway bridge and within the river Thames.

[New walkway underneath Barnes Railway Bridge opened - Chiswick Calendar News](#)

[Dukes Meadows Footbridge - Wikipedia](#)

A new section of the Thames Path opened up this March 2023 on the north bank of the river Thames. The section is close to the Millennium Bridge and runs underneath a set of former warehouses that are now residential flats. It has been closed for 20 years, but re-opened this March, removing a diversion that's been in place since 2003, and in doing so has completed a long desire to open up the Thames Path along the entire width of the City of London. The stunning views of the Globe Theatre across the river are why the alley has been officially named Globe View Walkway (Photo 1).

The annual vegetation contract was a success, and we receive very few complaints about vegetation along the length of the path. However, the vegetation contract has increased in costs due to inflationary rises and we foresee this going up further in 23/24. The balance between the sections the volunteers cut vs contractors may have to be

reviewed with the potential for reactive cutting, however we wish to avoid this to keep the Thames Path as a world class National Trail.

The volunteer programme and monitors along the length of the Thames have been invaluable this year and are the beating heart of the Trail. The monitors up and down the Thames gave up 296.45 hrs of their time reporting issues and helping us improve our dataset. This figure is not recorded in the volunteer form as there is no way of doing so. Our practical volunteers provided a further 284 semi-skilled hours and 21 hours of unskilled hours over 57 different tasks. The volunteers carry out a significant summer vegetation programme as well as routing, assembling and installing our beautiful fingerposts.

We have also created a fantastic working relationship with the Port of London Authority and their Active Thames Partnership to fund various projects and interesting outreach programmes, as well as mapping and making available accessible family friendly walks free to all on GoJauntly.

## Experience

### What we are looking for are:

- NE KPI (*Natural England Key Performance Indicator*) - Informative website. This is primarily the KPI for NE but also for individual TP's to illustrate the contribution their Trail content has made either generally and/or more particularly e.g. the sort of thing Rob Dingle mentioned at the TP workshop where engaging through social media has enabled him to make contact with someone who has walked the trail barefoot to raise awareness of the number of people who have no shoes etc – great story!!
- NE KI (*Natural England Key Indicator*) - Visitor Satisfaction. i.e. Give evidence of feedback from users – testimonials are great here but if you look at the current Annual Report you will see that we have used other proxy measures e.g. the awards Trails have received.
- NE KI - Level and type of use of the Trail and awareness of brand and degree of engagement. We can and will add in some detail from the Visitor Survey, but you could add some local detail especially if there have been any local surveys and/or anecdotal examples of awareness of the trail etc. Testimonials may be useful here too.
- Conclusions and forward look – We will draw these together

### Informative website

#### National Trails website

The website was continuously monitored with pages being regularly edited and improved where necessary. With the recruitment of Clare Jarratt our new Engagement officer we have been able to provide more news articles and keep everything up to date, including the events calendar.

We also have a Duke of Edinburgh student who for their volunteer hours is reviewing all our listings on the map to see whether they are up to date following the impacts of Covid.

We have also created additional links and added information on the Q and A section about the Thames Path Passport which we promote. The Thames Path passport has been created by a 'Walk the Thames' who are a private travel company. At various places along the Thames walkers can get stamps in their passport which encourages people to visit those businesses and potential generate income for them. For every passport sold the Thames Path National Trail gets a donation.

### Visitor Satisfaction

#### Trip advisor reviews

#### May 2022

When thinking of London and The Thames, it's hard not to imagine all of the monuments in the center of the city. Following the Thames Path west or east will provide another view - at times picturesque - of London Town. The buildings diminish in size and number and the green spaces grow increasingly large, while the sounds of the city fade into the distance. In a surprisingly short amount of time, the crowded, noisy, polluted city feels like it is a world away and the natural beauty - yes, it does exist in London! - embraces all who visit.

Note: The section we walked was from Hammersmith Bridge to Chelsea Harbour

**Aug 2022 • Couples**

Walked from Waterloo Bridge all the way to the O2 along the path! Really enjoyed and recommend. Obviously lovely views from Waterloo to Tower Bridge with lots of tourists. We really enjoyed the next couple of miles view, looking back at the London view from the other side of Tower Bridge. After the Mayflower pub, a long time walking past residential areas and away from river through Lewisham. Lovely pub called Dog and Bell at Lewisham just as path goes back along river into Greenwich. Met virtually no one along the way on a sunny Monday 1st August. Would have liked to have gone onto Thames barrier and beyond but this was enough for one day. We plan to start Waterloo and head west towards Chiswick next time. If you have the time, do this! Can always catch a bus back easily.

**Aug 2022**

We walked along to the lock and also in the other direction to the pub, The Flowerpot. Always fascinating for a variety of birds (gulls, ducks, swans, geese, cormorants to name but a few) plus the different boats and houses along the river

**Level and type of use of the Trail and awareness of brand and degree of engagement**

All social media campaigns continue to provide teaser information which link users back to the website to learn/gain more information about the Thames Path.

We continue to grow the number of followers on Twitter, currently 5,223 today and more people including @ThamesPathNT or #ThamesPath in their posts.

Popular tweets in January around the opening of the Dukes Meadows Walkway at Barnes railway bridge. Avg 5.1k impressions p/d. 139 new followers

Variety of popular tweets in February including the new announcements on GWR trains, litter-picking in London, and views of the Thames in London. Avg 4.6 impressions p/d. 78 new followers

Popular tweets in March were about the Thames Path in London including the opening of Globe View Walkway. Avg 4.6 impressions p/d. 82 new followers

Facebook now has 2.1k followers. Top post in recent months the guided walk at the Reading Walking Festival which had 9.2k reach, and Vale of White Horse Ramblers guided walks on the Thames Path in the Abingdon Walking Festival on 22 April, which had 6.6k reach and 1.5k engagement.

Instagram has 1.3k followers.

**VisitThames Website-** <https://www.visitthames.co.uk/>

The Thames Path National Trail sit on the steering group of Visit Thames and have numerous links to the site. Walks advertised on the website include general trail information pages, specific routes and walks for all. Visit Thames Analytics show there were 312,006 visits to the website up 6% from 2021 with the Thames Path National Trail page receiving an increase of 12%.

**GWR Campaign**

Working with GWR we now have the train tannoy saying 'alight here for the Thames Path' at various stations along the Thames Path and we co designed a bus stop poster advertising the Thames Path.

**Publicity**

Articles about the Thames Path National Trail in the Thames Guardian magazine of the River Thames Society.

Articles in the South East Walker a popular Ramblers magazine about the new Barnes Bridge and the Active Thames grant.



Jill Mead, Guardian photo-journalist, featured the National Trail in her Year on the River Thames photo essays published in May and October.

Part One here <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/23/a-year-on-the-river-thames-part-one-in-pictures>

Part Two here <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/oct/17/a-year-on-the-river-thames-part-two-in-pictures>

Part three here [Tower Bridge steam-cleaned and a Kentish Serengeti: the River Thames, part three | Rivers | The Guardian](#)

## Enhancement

What we are looking for is:

- NE KPI -Trail condition.  
Most of this we will draw from the Trail condition monitoring info'. But given that you will know what you've entered into this, are there any high level comments you want to make to support the data? Any major improvements?
- NE KI- Quality of the Trail corridor.  
This is your opportunity to talk about any wider improvements and crucially (if possible) wider links with other strategic projects through which your Trail passes.
- NE KI - Improvement to accessibility.  
YWW becoming the first stile free Trail will go in here.

## Trail condition

The Thames Path came out of the very dry winter of 21/22 in relatively good condition having only suffered from a couple of collapsed revetments. However, the winter of 22/23 has been unkind to the Thames path, exacerbated by the continual high volumes of people using the path has resulted in sections significantly deteriorating. We now have numerous sections of the Thames Path that have either slipped into the Thames or are on their way. The wet spring has also churned up the surface and we now have wallows in places we had not previously. We will continue to monitor the deteriorating sections and prioritise which need surfacing, working with our partners.

In partnership with Buckinghamshire County Council we surfaced a section of Thames Path towards Bourne End which has been on the priority list for a while and now provides a new all-weather accessible path. In the opposite direction we also surfaced and improved the Thames Path towards Hurley a popular summer destination from Marlow.

Surrey County Council also carried out significant surfacing and revetment works in Hurst Park another very popular and heavily used area.

Reading Borough Council carried out £100,000 worth of path widening and surfacing in Reading which is a significant improvement to the area.

The EA surfaced the Thames Path through Goring and created wheelchair and pram friendly spaces next to benches for people to rest, the surfacing has improved a slippery yet popular area.

Then most notably, the National Trust surfaced a wide accessible sealed surfaced through their magna carta site which takes you to the commemorative statue of the Queen, which was unveiled in 2015 beside the river Thames in Surrey, as part of events marking the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Magna Carta (Photo 4). The work costs over half a million but will no doubt make a popular area even more popular and accessible in all weathers.

## Quality of the Trail corridor

This year we have worked closely with the Arcadia Landscape Strategy who are rewilding the Thames through Richmond, this will ultimately impact on the Thames Path when the Thames Barrier is used less frequently, and the Richmond floodplain regained. As such we have started looking at alternative flood routes during high tides and how we are going to sign it.

We have also been designing a surfacing project with the 'The Anne Carpmael Charitable Trust' in Goring on their Little Meadow site. It is a floodplain wildflower meadow and an area of coppiced woodland that lies on the banks of the Thames south of Goring, next to Gatehampton railway bridge. Approximately 2 acres in size, it is managed to protect and enhance the wide variety of native wildflowers. Management of the site includes coppicing of the hazel and the meadow is mown in late summer. The Thames Path dissects right through the site and when muddy the path extends in size and people walk through the Meadow. We have worked together to get a specification that is suitable for the area and will reduce the encroachment of the path on the meadow. The works will be carried out in the summer of 2023.

#### Improvement to accessibility

We surfaced a brand-new section of Thames Path in Marlow towards Bourne End, that historically went through a wet muddy parkland in winter and became a point where people had to turn back. The Parkland is a short distance from Marlow, easily accessible for all. With open space to play and benches to picnic and rest on, we have created a lovely destination for people exploring from Marlow (Photo 3).

The National Trust have surfaced the Thames Path through their site using tar and chip and surfacing to a significant width, so it is fully accessible all year round (Photo 4).

The EA have also made improvements to the Towpath through their Goring site, building in places next to benches to store prams or park up a mobility vehicle.

A historic archway under Kew bridge has been opened by the 'Strand of the Green Association'. This means Thames Path users avoid two flights of steps up and over the bridge or an at level diversion to the nearest safe pedestrian crossing of the busy A205 (Photo 2).

## Engagement

What we are looking for is:

- NE KPI - Effective partnership.  
All the TPs are now in place so this year it would be helpful to set out the varied/breadth of membership – e.g. Where you are engaging with local members of national stakeholder groups (Ramblers/LAFs/CLA etc) either directly on the TP or in wider consultative groups etc.
- NE KI - Level and type of engagement/voluntary participation.  
This may be illustrated either through wider membership of the TP, and/or active engagement with /by specific users e.g. health walks and /or directly through the practical works of the volunteers. We know that we need to agree how best to measure volunteer contribution but in the first instance it would actually be useful to know about the different ways in which volunteers support the trails e.g. doing practical works, taking responsibility for sections of the trail, etc
- NE KI - Land manager satisfaction with the management of the route.  
This was mentioned at the National Stakeholder meeting as it was weak in the last report. Please can you give examples of any relationships with landowners (good ones preferably) e.g. where you have done a particular project in consultation and/or have evidence of helpful feedback?

#### Effective partnership

The Thames Path Partnership (TPP) has a significant membership, and we are now working towards establishing the London working group and other working parties as the full Partnership is too large and ineffective with so many partners.

Through the TPP we were invited to sit on the Active Thames partnership and working with the PLA, and Canal and River trust we have for the first time created a walking element to the partnership. Active Thames, led by the Port of London Authority (PLA), has awarded £150,000 in grants to 26 successful applicants. The increase in funding from over £90,000 last year to nearly £150,000 this year demonstrates the continuing commitment Active Thames partners have made to promoting activity on the tidal Thames and inland waterways in London, Kent, and Essex.

Active Thames aims to encourage groups that are less likely to engage in physical activity on the river, including individuals from ethnically diverse communities, lower socio-economic groups, and people with disabilities.

The specific walking grants went to the following:

Laburnum Boat Club will be able to continue their Inclusive Waters project for a second year. It will also mean they can expand the project to include walking trips and introduce young people to the Thames Path. Disadvantaged youths will benefit from kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddleboarding and walking. The grant of £4,956 will also help to upskill the coaches at the charity and support their development too.

The Proper Blokes Club is a community project for men's mental health. £5,000 will support more walk and talks along the Thames Path national trail, and the club hopes to double their membership over the coming year. They run regular walks in several areas along the Thames in South London, including Greenwich, Woolwich and Southwark.

The Ramblers will receive over £8,000 to develop two projects; guided walks along the Thames Path and the England Coast Path, as well as walk-leader training days for community groups and leaders who wish to organise walking sessions. It is hoped that this grant, managed by the Ramblers, will be helpful to other applicants who wanted to develop walk leaders.

Re-Instate is a charity working to improve employment opportunities, quality of life and well-being for disadvantaged people in the London Borough of Bexley including people experiencing mental ill-health, people with learning disabilities, autistic adults and young people. £5,000 will support the 215 Smiles project to run two weekly walking groups on the Thames Path: one for people with learning disabilities and another for people experiencing mental ill-health.

SilverFit, founded by the UK's oldest female Ironman triathlete, aims to promote happier, healthier aging through physical activity and, at the same time, combat social isolation. £5,860 will support the charity through developing new Nordic walking leaders, who will run sessions along the Thames Path in Kingston. SilverFit will source new members through targeted outreach into deprived communities, and through GP referrals (social prescribing). A grant of £2,000 will launch a series of Cool Walks and support the Rewilding Arcadia project run by Thames Landscape Strategy. As well as exercise, the walks will boost mental well-being and provide companionship. They hope to increase the activity levels of people who might normally find walking challenging.

#### Level and type of engagement/voluntary participation

See Active Thames above.

We continue to engage with 65+ monitors to ensure they are feeling the benefit of volunteering and ensuring their feedback is actioned which they can review through CAMS our online mapping and data management system. We ask for twice yearly reports but many of our monitors report far more than that.

We also have our wonderful practical volunteers who last year carried out 144 different task days ranging from sign making, vegetation clearance and machine maintenance.

#### Land manager satisfaction with the management of the route

See work with the Anne Carpmael Charitable Trust in section- Quality of the Trail corridor

We also work extensively with the PLA and EA and I am building relationships with both those partners as they are significant landowners. The PLA have invited me to a Parliamentary reception to mark progress and set out future intent across the themes of the river development plan, of which the Thames Path is a key element.

We have also worked closely with Henley Town Council who have been very supportive of our project to sign the local bus shelter which is under their jurisdiction. The bus shelter is in a key location between the station and Thames Path and was need of some TLC. The new posters fill the whole of the bus shelter with an attractive artwork and direction sign to the Thames as well as the railway station. We are continuing further projects with them this year subject to GWR funding for a sculpture trail.

## Economy

What we are looking for is:

- Investment in National Trails 2018/19.  
This is where we need evidence of at least the 3:1 match. However having established in the first report that this has worked, then so long as it still works we don't necessarily want to make annual comparisons. However demonstrating hopefully increasing breadth of where some of these matching resources are coming from would be useful. In addition it would also be helpful to know what the extra £ is buying – i.e. in theory at least, our £ + your match maintains the trail (so should be covered under 'Enhancement'. However where there is extra £ over and above the match we need to demonstrate that this isn't just paying for more 'maintenance', but is buying more e.g. additional improvement works, interpretation/promotion/working with local community/health benefits etc.
- NE KI - Benefit to the local economy.  
In the absence of an agreed way of measuring this we will (as last year) draw on any individual trail examples. Preferably a mix of at least some actual figures (e.g. has the payback scheme on the SDW delivered?) and also anecdotal evidence from e.g. local businesses which may have benefitted from the Trail either through tourism or directly contracting for some of the practical works.
- NE KI - Service providers' satisfaction with the management of the route.  
As above, anecdotal evidence of service providers satisfaction – especially if you are able to link to the website at all?

### Investment in National Trails 2022/23

This year has seen the usual match from the Local authorities outside London which covers surfacing and vegetation clearance. However, we also saw Reading BC, Buckinghamshire and Surrey carrying out significant surface improvement works. As well as the Environment Agency and National Trust as Landowners. We have worked on an interesting partnership project where the PLA and River and Canal Trust matched funded the Active Thames Grants. These grants as previously described have funded groups that will promote the Thames Path but also provide health benefits and wider engagement.

The PLA also 50% matched funded our accessibility GoJauntly walks aimed at deprived communities in London particularly aimed at children. Following a survey carried out by the PLA, 20% of primary school children have never seen the Thames. These walks will be the first step in engaging with those communities.

GWR also partner funded Trail to Rail signage for Henley and Marlow

### Benefit to the local economy

We worked on a project with Great Western Rail, as their customer base is moving away from commuter and there has been a shift to weekend Travel. The Thames Path is a tourist destination for much of the GWR corridor. Working on a project in Henley, GWR have filmed an advert for families visiting Henley and walking the Thames Path as well as the local River and Rowing Museum and local chocolate café aimed at families. The advert will promote local businesses and will be released as soon as the strikes have finished as they can not put out a positive story with the negativity the strikes are creating.

### Service providers satisfaction with the management of the route

The Visit Thames Steering Group of which Thames Path National Trail sit regularly holds meeting and sends out newsletters and other social media activities to a comprehensive list of tourist businesses along the Thames.

The Thames Path Passport also engages 31 businesses along the length of the Thames, creating opportunities for customers as well as raising their profile to Thames Path users.

## Photographs

Please include at least 4 photographs that give evidence of the 4 E's. For each photo in your report, please ensure you provide the following information and send us separately a high resolution version:

- The photographer's name/organisation for the credits
- Permission from people in the photo, if they are recognisable
- Details of where it is and what it shows

Photo 1

Photographer: Hannah Gutteridge

Permission: Yes

Details: Globe View Walkway

Photo 2

Photographer: Hannah Gutteridge

Permission: Yes

Details: Strand of the Green Association archway under Kew Bridge

Photo 3

Photographer: Hannah Gutteridge

Permission: Yes

Details: Marlow surfacing- accessible path

Photo 4

Photographer: Hannah Gutteridge

Permission: Yes

Details: National Trust Surfacing- Runnymede Magna Carta site

## Annex 1 – Out of Condition Categories

Five rather than three categories of out of condition should be monitored, with only the last 3 reportable in the year end monitoring returns to Natural England. Dangerous features should be separated, where actions are urgent.

NTOs as part of route surveys are encouraged to use the ranking system below to aid analysis.

**Category 1** Perfect condition (not reported)

**Category 2** Not perfect, although no need to replace at current time. May aspire to replace or improve at some time in future (not reportable)

**Category 3** Useable, functional but not up to Trail Quality Standards and log as need to improve/replace at some time. (reported)

**Category 4** Unusable, broken or misleading. Need to replace as soon as possible. (reported)

**Category 5** Dangerous urgent need to close path and/or replace immediately. (reported).

Further examples are included below.

### 1. *Perfect condition – not reportable*

Examples include:

- All lengths and furniture that meet Quality Standards

### 2. *Not in a perfect condition/ aspire to replace or improve – not reportable*

Examples include:

- Plans to change a stile to a gap/gate
- A sections identified for surfacing improvements for greater accessibility
- A section identified to change steps to a ramp for greater accessibility
- A Short section of path with exposed terram
- A faded fingerpost/waymark.

### 3. *Useable, functional but not up to Trail Quality Standards – reportable*

Examples include:

- Where people can skirt round obstructions with ease, such as a fallen tree
- moderate pot holing that is not a real inconvenience
- Gates not latching properly
- Up to 25% steps damaged/missing within a flight
  
- standing water across whole path width (recorded only if NTO regards this as a long term issue)
- A missing or damaged fingerpost/waymark
- Scouring (this is trail dependant according to expected user type and location of issue)

#### **4. Unusable, broken or misleading – reportable**

Examples include:

- Gate hanging off hinge
- Overgrown or tree fallen persisting for longer than 2 weeks
- Unuseable sections of trail even if diversion in place, because official line of NT isn't available
- Unpassable surface length – where the user cannot pass around width of the PROW with ease
- A fingerpost/waymark, pointing in the wrong direction
- A missing fingerpost/waymark, where it is vital for route direction
- Deep scouring (this is trail dependant according to expected user type and location of issue)
- Potholing that causes real inconvenience
- 25% or more steps missing/damaged within a flight

#### **5. Dangerous – reportable**

Item or section of trail identified by the NTO and/or Trail management as dangerous

Examples include:

- Very close path to cliff edge/riverbank following erosion and slippage
- A collapsing gate or stile
- A road length where a traffic/walker/cyclist incidents has occurred and highway survey suggests there is high risk of this occurring again.
- 100% steps missing/damaged within a flight

**Note:** Steps should be recorded as a furniture item in relation to an individual flight. For NE annual reporting purposes a flight is considered to consist of 10 steps or more.