

# Rights of Way Volunteer Newsletter

September 2018

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Well, I can't believe it's September already! Time flies when you're having fun. Although there is still a list as long as my arm to learn in regards to rights of way, I've got to the stage where I'm really enjoying every moment!

I had the pleasure of spending the day with the Area Wardens where we visited some of the sites with issues that have been reported on Explore Somerset. It was fantastic to see the other side of what happens and how issues are resolved and closed.

Something I've been working on since the last newsletter is improving the way we communicate with you. With the nature of rights of way and the number of volunteers we have, I only get to talk to a fraction of you on a regular basis and this is often reactively responding to your queries, hence the newsletter is the only time I get a chance to address you all. I've looked into a number of ways of improving this and the obvious one was Facebook so with this newsletter we have launched our Somerset Rights of Way Volunteers page. We will use this to post information about volunteering updates and what's happening in the parishes, and generally stay in touch more than once every 3 months. Check it out at [www.facebook.com/SCCRightsOfWay/](https://www.facebook.com/SCCRightsOfWay/). The newsletter will still be issued three times a year and sent out by email.

Looking forward, I hope to use our Facebook page and other resources to ensure that you all have everything you need to carry out your role confidently.

In the current economic climate, resources are stretched and are likely to become even more stretched, which emphasises the importance of working together and working smart.

I recently got in touch with Parish Path Liaison Officers to inform them that they will soon be receiving emails when an issue is reported on Explore Somerset. So for example if there's a report of an overgrown stile they can validate or deal with the issue locally and then inform their Area Warden if it has been resolved.

All volunteers have access to Explore Somerset and can view issues that are currently open in their local areas and if they can help, with the tools and PPE provided, it will help considerably in keeping the network clear and allowing Area Wardens to concentrate their resources on other issues. If you have any queries or questions as always get in touch!

You will see throughout this Newsletter, examples of Adopt a Path Volunteers uncovering Signposts lost in overgrowth and PPOs tackling overgrowth issues locally, which is exactly the kind of practice we want to encourage

I hope you enjoy the read and, as always, we are looking for your stories, so please feel free to get in touch with your news and experiences from across the County if you would like to share with fellow volunteers.

I look forward to hearing your news and stories!



# The Ramblers



The Ramblers' three work parties have been busy over the past months helping out with a variety of works for us. Each group is unique and works within its own patch. We have the Mendip Ramblers (run by Bob Berry), South Somerset Ramblers (run by Roger Cripps) and the Sedgemoor Ramblers (run by Tony Fawle).

## Mendip Ramblers

The Mendip Ramblers have been busy assisting Area Wardens with a number of tasks including the improvement of access on SM 12/20 in Holcombe where a broken stile was removed and replaced with a kissing gate.

Looks as if they caught the interest of the local livestock!



## Sedgemoor Ramblers

The Sedgemoor team, amongst some clearance tasks, have also been improving access on BW 9/14 in Chilton Polden a stile which had seen better days and a sleeper crossing was removed and replaced with a Stratford gate and an extra sleeper to make the crossing easier.

A number of local dog walkers expressed their joy and welcomed the upgrade.



## South Somerset Ramblers

The South Somerset Ramblers battled with some seriously solid rocks whilst replacing a pair of gate posts on L 5/14 in Beercrocombe,

The sun shining and the solid ground made for tiring work but was well worth the final product

And it was smiles all round when the waymarkers went back on.



## Furniture Running Totals 18/19

- 13 Stratford Gates installed
- 9 Kissing Gates installed
- 1 Marlow Gate installed
- 5 Signposts repaired
- 10 Other Repairs

Running Total Hours 18/19

# 577

18/19 Access Improvements

# 21

# Waymarking: Design and Installation

## Responsibilities

The County Council has a power to erect and maintain signs along any Footpath, Bridleway, Restricted Byway or Byway where it is considered necessary to have a signpost or waymark to assist persons unfamiliar with the locality. Routes are waymarked using standardised discs (in Exmoor timber waymarkers are generally used instead). The standardised discs highlight the status of the path, its direction and sometimes include our website address.

## Waymark design and installation

- Landowners or occupiers should be consulted about any new waymarking;
- Waymarks must not be attached to private property such as fences and walls without consent;
- Old waymarks should be fully removed before new discs are attached;
- Waymarks should be located away from any encroaching vegetation;
- Waymarks must not be attached to trees;
- Waymarks should be routed on all new posts and on furniture where appropriate;
- The number of waymarks should be kept to the minimum necessary to make the route clear.
- The Route description and arrow colour should be correct in accordance to the classification of the route. See picture to the right

## Generally, waymarks are displayed in the following locations:-

- Where a public right of way changes direction;
- Where one public right of way joins another;
- Where a public right of way joins a private track or road;
- Where a public right of way leaves a more obvious track or route;
- At a point along a route where a member of the public using a public right of Way is faced by a choice of gates;
- Where a public right of way weaves its way through buildings; and
- Where it is unclear which side of a field boundary a public right of way follows.

## What not to do:

Generally waymarkers should be attached either to gate hanging posts or the timber upright either side of a stile. It is not considered appropriate to attach waymarkers to:-

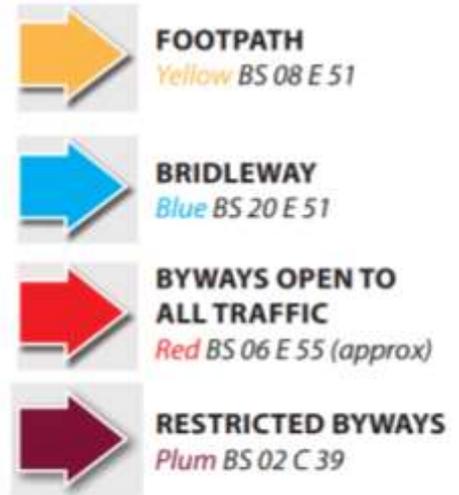
Location	Reason
<b>Trees</b>	The fixings will harm a tree and could even cause it to die, as well causing a risk to anyone needing to carry out works on the tree down the line
<b>Telegraph/Service Poles</b>	Utility companies do not generally permit signs to be attached to their property including service and telegraph poles
<b>Gates</b>	Although it's perfectly acceptable to attach a waymarker to a hanging post, they shouldn't be attached to a gate. If the gate is left open then the waymarker is no longer visible or could point people in the wrong direction.
<b>Hedgerows</b>	The waymarker could eventually be overgrown.

## There are three important things to remember:-

1. A path should only be waymarked after you have spoken and agreed the works with your local Rights of Way Area Warden. They will need to discuss the works with the landowner(s)/farmer(s) concerned before they can agree the works.
2. Only the route shown on the definitive route should be waymarked. Any deviations or alternative routes not shown on the Definitive Map must not be waymarked.
3. To use the right waymarkers for the path you're waymarking i.e. only footpath waymarkers should be used to waymark a footpath etc.

If you are interested in waymarking and would like more information please feel free to email me, I can point you in the right direction and provide training and waymarkers.

The correct signposting and waymarking colours are



# Path Category Consultation - 2018

In 2006 we carried out the biggest consultation exercise we had ever undertaken as a team. We sent out a consultation pack and asked all our Parish and Town Councils to gather some information to help us improve how we manage Somerset's rights of way network. We asked every Parish and Town Council to identify the most regularly used public rights of way in their area. In the coming months I will be in touch with Parish and Town Councils and their PPLOs to refresh these categories and ensure our records reflect how paths are being used.

The Categories are as follows:-

Route Category	Description
1*	National and regional promoted trails
1	District and parish level promoted routes. Well used local routes.
2	Occasionally used routes
3	All other paths

All faults and problems along Somerset's rights of way network will be ranked as either a high, medium or low priority. Your Local Rights of Way Area Warden will determine their priority ranking having considered them against a number of criteria including the path's category. Other criteria include:-

1. The level of danger to the public caused by the fault or problem;
2. The degree of obstruction, encroachment or inconvenience caused by the fault and problem; and
3. How long the fault or problem is likely to exist.

## How are your Tools?

**The tools and kit that you have been issued will vary by the volunteer role that you carry out with the Rights of Way Team. Hand tools are the most frequently neglected items of kit and if damaged can cause a nasty injury. You should all keep your hand tools in good working order. Take a moment to look at your tools, check them over and if any need replacing, please contact me.**

**Jake Taylor - Jtaylor@somerset.gov.uk or 01823 358250**

## Strimmer Annual Service - 2018

I will shortly be getting in touch with the Strimmer Scheme volunteers to make the Volunteers Officer's annual pilgrimage to all corners of the County to collect the strimmers for their annual service:

I will be in touch with specific times and days before the end of October but have reserved the following days for collection; **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup>**, **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup>** and **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> of November**. If for any reason you will not be available for me to collect on these days please let me know as soon as possible so other arrangements can be.

Please try to be as flexible as possible to allow for economic routes.



# Who is responsible for what ?

## Signposting and waymarking;

The Council has a duty to signpost public rights of way where they leave a metalled road. Rights of way are also signposted or way marked particularly where the route is not obvious.



### How can I help?

- If the signpost or waymarker is covered by vegetation use the tools provided to cut back.
- Where a signpost is missing report it as so using Explore Somerset.

## Stiles and gates;

It is the landowner's responsibility to maintain stiles or gates on public rights of way on their land. The Council usually assists landowners particularly if improvement to the path furniture results, eg: replacement of a stile with a gate. If there is an issue with a stile or a gate it should be reported via Explore Somerset and your Area Warden will liaise with the landowner to rectify the problem.



### How can I help?

- Whilst using the network report, any issues through Explore Somerset.
- If the gate/stile is overgrown use the tools provided to clear access and allow for easy use.

## Overgrown vegetation;

Landowners are responsible for cutting back hedges, trees or shrubs overhanging a public right of way. Surface vegetation on rights of way i.e. undergrowth such as nettles and brambles, is the responsibility of Somerset County Council.



### How can I help?

- Cut back any overgrowth on signs, waymarks, gates and stiles.
- Consider signing up to our Strimmer Scheme.
- With budgets getting ever tighter we need to make sure that the vegetation contract schedule is value for money. Please let us know if you think there are any paths on the schedule that don't need cutting anymore.
- Report any Overgrowth or Upgrowth issues that you cannot rectify in person on Explore Somerset.

## Surface;

The Council is responsible for the maintenance of the surface of most rights of way according to the status of the path e.g. a footpath will only be maintained to footpath standard even if it carries private vehicular rights. Please report any problems to us.



# News from the Parishes – Wiveliscombe

“The ‘Wiveliscombe Walkers’ commenced in December 2001, meeting the first Wednesday in the month, usually from the ‘Square’ at about 10 a.m. and also on the 3rd Saturday of the month where walks are organised for further afield.

In 2009 Wiveliscombe became the first town in Somerset to join the ‘Walkers are Welcome’ a network of towns away from the usual walking areas, promoting commerce, walking and to keep paths clear. From this volunteers were recruited under the umbrella of the local council, to do minor maintenance work and report to SCC bigger tasks.

In 2006 the ‘Wiveliscombe Circular Walks book’ was published, comprising 11 circular walks and the 23 mile ‘Wivey Way Walk’, The 3rd edition was launched in May 2018, with 14 Circular Walks and a 26 mile ‘Wivey Way Walk’.. In 2018 The ‘Wivey Way’ was added to the OS 1:25000 map for the area. Books available from Wiveliscombe House, 01984 624777”

For more information about Wivey Walkers you can visit their website

<https://www.wiveliscombe.com/wiveywalkers>

## Vegetation and Overgrowth - Call to action



This is a call to all volunteers who are issued with Brushcutters, hand-tools & PPE to carry out as much vegetation clearance, particularly around furniture & fingerposts, as you can.

SCC received over 400 reports of overgrowth in the past 12 months. Responsive vegetation clearance and the seasonal network clearance contracts represent the biggest maintenance cost to the service. Clearances by volunteers can help keep these costs down.

Did you know that across the network there are:-

- 14,888 Gates
- 11,419 Stiles
- 10,385 Signposts
- 4,702 Bridges

That’s a lot of potential furniture to be tackling. Your help in keeping furniture clear and free from overgrowth increase the furniture’s working life and keeps routes easy to access and open. Please do all you can to keep the vegetation at bay!

## News from the Parishes – Burnham and Highbridge

Two of our Adopt a Path Volunteers, Janice and Chris, have been busy around the Burnham area. You can see the amazing difference in the before and after pictures from paths AX 9/3 and AX 9/1

Discovering a somewhat lost fingerpost in the process!

The way marks and crossing below look so much more welcoming and useable in the picture below

Thanks for the great work guys!



## News from the Parishes – North Cadbury

PPLO of North Cadbury, Susan has been encouraging parishioners on walks to pick up their secateurs whilst walking together:

“Please wear suitable footwear and bring secateurs and maps. We had a very successful walk in June, exploring new paths and discovering delightful views of our glorious countryside. If you have not joined us previously, you will be very welcome”

**-PPLO North Cadbury**

Many hands make light work as they say.

## Facebook

We have created a new Volunteers Facebook page to share stories and information real-time with you.

Not on Facebook? You can still view our page and its content you just will not be able to comment on any of the media. We will still be releasing a Newsletter three times a year and will send it out in the usual way

If you are on Facebook, remember to like the page to get regular updates on what volunteers are up to across the county.



# Where can I find more information?

## Volunteer Home Page

The volunteer homepage hosts a number of useful documents that Volunteers may find interesting, the most notable and one I would recommend taking a look at would be the PPLO handbook which is a great guide to laying the foundations of your rights of way knowledge.

## Naturenet.net

Naturenet.net is a great directory for all things countryside and conservation, they have very useful section on rights of way and the link above will take you right there

## Rights of Way Volunteer Facebook

We plan to share a number of video guides through our new Volunteer Facebook page, from how to use all the features on Explore Somerset to waymarking

# News from the Parishes – Middlezoy

“Here are some photos of the carved seats a group of Middlezoy residents, ‘The Middlezoy Masons’, made under my supervision and guidance.

Each seat has low relief animal carvings drawn by local children. The landowners were very happy to have these sited close to public rights of way on their land and the parish council have taken responsibility for public liability cover. The seats were made as part of the 2016 Arts Festival but were started very late and took the better part of 18 months to complete and then to wait for fair weather to site them.

A number of carved wooden gates and signposts were also made. The pictures below include an example but there are still about nine more carvings to be sited with four more gates. Everything is ready and will keep you up to date with progress – watch this space for more!”

-PPLO Middlezoy R Horsham



# Somerset Local Access Forum update

The Local Access Forum welcomed four new members at its meeting in Langport on May 17th. The new members bring a range of different interests to the Forum. Basic rights of way training was provided at the meeting. There was a lively debate following a presentation from the County Council's Highways Asset Improvement Officer around the new Code of Practice for Well Managed Highways, which was followed by discussion on post-Brexit access proposals. The Forum also considered a consultation on Children's Health and Physical Activity. Since the meeting in May a sub-group met in late July to discuss education of children about safe and responsible access to the countryside. Watch this space for further updates on what will hopefully prove to be valuable work. The next meeting is scheduled for October 18th 2018, 2pm to 4pm, at Langport Town Hall.

## England Coast Path Trail Watchers Needed

### England Coast Path



The England Coast Path in Somerset currently stretches from Brean Down to Minehead. This section takes in 58 miles of the beautiful and diverse coast of Somerset. On clear days the fortified promontory of Brean Down offers panoramic views of the whole stretch to Minehead. The path takes you to Burnham on Sea, along the flood banks of the River Parrett to Bridgwater and back to Stert Point then along the open coast to Hinkley Point. From Hinkley Point it heads west, passing through the historic port of Watchet, before continuing to Minehead.

As an England Coast path Trail Watcher you will:

- Regularly (3-4 times per year) walk your adopted path(s)
- Carry out regular light cutting back of vegetation from around gates, stiles, bridges, way mark posts and signposts, etc.
- Promote responsible use of the public rights of way network through observing the Countryside Code
- Via Explore Somerset report to Somerset's Rights of Way Team any problems encountered on local rights of way
- Record the hours you spend volunteering

In addition, you may also wish to:

- Liaise with other volunteers in your local area
- Also become an Adopt a Path volunteer

If you would like to become a Trail Watcher on the England Coast Path, email:

[ROWvolunteers@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:ROWvolunteers@somerset.gov.uk)

Or for more information on the coast path visit:

<https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/england-coast-path-sw>

For more information on volunteering opportunities visit:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/get-involved/volunteering/volunteer-with-the-public-rights-of-way-team/>

