

Ramblers Trafford Group – Footpath Work
Report for RTG Annual Report year ended 30.09.2021

The last 12 months have adversely impacted on our Path Maintenance work by limiting the months we have been allowed to work as a team but our footpath inspection work has been carried out more or less as usual with inspectors acting as individuals taking daily exercise.

We have 9 active members of the FP inspection team and we have increased our Path Maintenance Team to 10 (different people in each team). We inspect some 250 Definitive Rights of Way based on a 1985 Definitive Map and Statement supplemented with DMMOs confirmed since then. On the path maintenance side, we have a regular selection of paths which we revisit to deal with seasonal vegetation and these are supplemented by occasional requests by local Councillors. All our path work is both authorised and signed off by a Trafford Council representative.

Our project to have blocked definitive ROWs reopened or formally diverted has fallen by the way side somewhat. Trafford Council's highways department (a team of a combined Trafford Council and Amey company), has been affected by staff absences, working from home and other limitation attributed to the pandemic. This has reduced the effort the Council has given to our requests about blocked paths. We are starting a similar project on cross field paths that are obstructed by ploughing and cropping. RACO has advised a course of action which involved keeping detailed records of obstructions, of letters to local Councillors and formal complaints to the Council. If necessary, after we compile our records, RACO will approach Trafford Council and discuss legal action. The appropriate legal action would involve magistrate's court action and risk of appropriate costs having to be met. More than individual RA members are expected to bear.

We continue to work in collaboration with the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society (PNFS) and we also have contact with the British Horse Society (BHS) and some BHS members are part of our Path Maintenance Team

Area's offer to provide finance for replacing stiles with kissing gates has been warmly received by Trafford Council and we are progressing the agreed work. It involves stiles on definitive ROWs on land owned by the National Trust.

There are two outstanding claims for new ROWs in Trafford with which Ramblers has been closely associated and another which is being progressed by PNFS. We escalate the claims to the Planning Inspectorate where Trafford Council appears reluctant to progress the claim. Even with this escalation, many months can pass without decisions being made.

We continue to benefit from the support of the Ramblers Trafford Group Committee which through its website and weekly walks, encourage walkers to become aware of the behind the scenes work the Group's footpath team and path maintenance team does.

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Submitted by June Mabon. version 13 October 2021
FP Secretary, Ramblers Trafford Group.