

## **Ramblers Trafford Group – Footpath Work Report for Annual General Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**1 The RTG team of Footpath Inspectors** had the end of their winter 2019/20 inspection disrupted by the onset of Coronavirus fears. However, once social distancing and permission to partake in some forms of outdoor exercise emerged, those Inspectors who were able and wanted to walk paths on their own, worked hard to carry out the summer 2020 inspection. All Trafford's ten highway department boroughs saw key paths being checked, faults reported to the Council and in many cases welcome Council action on summer seasonal vegetation cutting back. Under the circumstances, a very commendable effort and I thank all the FP Inspectors for their work.

Our RA FP Inspectors continue to work in cooperation with the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society's (PNFS) Inspector in Trafford to the benefit of both societies.

**2.** As I reported last year, we continue to actively encourage the Council to update its 1985 version of the **Definitive Map and Statement**. So far without success. The RA is not the only voice on this, landowners who have had paths on their property diverted, find that Joe Public does not know about the diversion and repeatedly walks on the "old" line of a path.

**3. The Path Maintenance Team** kept the RA flag flying. They had resumed path clearing after the winter break when Lockdown #1 was imposed. When this was relaxed, under the "rule of six" and with the agreement of Trafford Council, the team resumed path clearing. Lockdown #2 brought work to halt three weeks before the team would normally hang up its trimmers and loppers for the winter. I thank the team members for turning out across the whole of the borough and at times in not so good weather.

**4. Claiming new Rights of Way (ROW)**, the Council disappointingly refused to create the new and upgraded paths on Carrington Moss that had been claimed. The refusal on the new path claimed was based on written evidence that the landowner had turned users off the land. The Council's refusal of the upgrading claim, from footpath to bridleway, was much less robust and their decision has been appealed and the appeal is being progressed by the Secretary of State for the Environment's office. Our PNFS colleague has submitted a claim for part of Brooks Drive, in Hale Barns and we were able to offer practical help with fixing required notices to properties. A second (and may be a third) claim by PNFS for other sections of Brooks Drive is being prepared and one of our RTG committee members has responded to plea for help by PNFS in using social media to contact potential evidence of use path users. Coronavirus restrictions prevent approaching people directly. That leaves one claim for a new path near Timperley Station that the Council continues to "sit on" and has done so since it was lodged in 2015. Hopefully next year's report will be a bit more positive on this one.

**5 Ploughing and Cropping** –being unable to inspect paths during the early spring growing period, prevented us identifying which fields had not had cross field right of way reinstated by rolling or clearing the crop growth (does not apply to grass growth). This was rectified in late summer when fields with obstructing crops were identified and a monthly watch programme put in place. Currently there are 7 fields on the watch list. We will try to act as the Council's eyes on the ground and lodge problem reports as soon as land is ploughed and path not reinstated and/or crops grow and path not reinstated. However, the Council will have to take the necessary action against the landowner and we will be raising formal objections if this is not forthcoming.

I end, as ever, by saying a big thank you to all the members who take part in our various footpath activities and to our RTG Committee for their continuing, much valued support.

Submitted by June Mabon. version 201115  
FP Secretary, Ramblers Trafford Group.