

Ramblers Trafford Group – Footpath Work
Report for Group Annual Report year ended 30.09.2022

In the last 12 months, footpath (and bridleway) inspecting and path maintenance has returned to near normal. A slight end of year reduction in path maintenance due to team leader unavailability. This is a prompt to try to recruit a second path maintenance team leader.

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 and the volunteers are registered with the RA. Our path maintenance team includes members of the British Horse Society (BHS)

Trafford Council's highways department (a team of a combined Trafford Council and Amey company), has been very cooperative over signage requests (green, man walking signs) but less so over obstructed paths that require the Council to approach landowners.

Our exercise about cross field definitive paths which are regularly not reinstated after ploughing and cropping (edible crops) has taken an interesting but disappointing turn. Farmers do not reinstate one year and the next leave the field fallow with grass growing. This makes it difficult to claim "repeated" non reinstatement. We have had a few successes though where one of our inspectors approached the farmer and the line of the path was cleared very quickly. If we do actually get to a position where we have evidence of repeated not reinstatement, 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 have helped that society lodge claims for several new bridleways along Brooks Drive in Hale.

My own two outstanding claims for new ROWs (footpaths) in Trafford, one on Carrington Moss the other on the offside of the Bridgewater Canal, continue to languish in the Secretary of State's back log, having been referred to him by the council when objections were not withdrawn.

Area's offer to provide finance for replacing stiles with kissing gates eventually resulted in two replacement kissing gates. Trafford Council was cooperative but the other proposed two kissing gates on National Trust (NT) land proved too much for the NT administration to manage! NT wanted the kissing gates to be on new permissive paths where no stiles had been! We had proposed replacing two stiles on definitive paths on NT land. NT gave no reason for not accepting our suggestion. I will be reluctant to work with the NT again but may have to since it owns a lot of land in Trafford and the council works closely with the NT.

end

Submitted by June Mabon. version 13 November 2022
FP Secretary, Ramblers Trafford Group.