

Oxfordshire Ramblers Parish Path Warden

Guidelines

1. Choose a parish near your home that you can walk or cycle to.
2. Contact David Tole davidtole@gmail.com, PPW Area Network Coordinator, who keeps a register of Parish Path Wardens [PPWs], so that parishes are not duplicated.
3. You will be provided with a good quality plan at 1:10,000 scale of the parish you intend to represent by your local PPW coordinator (see Supplementary Information) indicating all the Public Rights of Way [PRoWs] in the area. This should be treated as a reference copy – see below¹
You can also download and print off extracts of the Definitive Statement for your parish. The statement provides a list of all the PRoWs in your parish.
www.Oxfordshire County Council /Definitive Statement.

If you just want to see a hard copy of the Definitive Map of your parish the Parish Clerk may have a copy. The main County Libraries also have a complete set of hardcopy Definitive Maps covering the whole County. However the Definitive map may be out-of-date as it compiled in 2006.

You will also be provided with an outstanding caseload list of ‘unresolved’ reported problems from the OCC Countryside Access Service (CAS) via your coordinator every six months. The list sets out what problems are currently known and their locations in each parish. Each problem has a unique reference number given to it by the CAMSWeb reporting system.

4. To access Oxfordshire Rambler Parish Path Warden material on the internet, click onto the Oxfordshire Ramblers web site at <http://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/PathWardens.htm>
5. Contact your Parish Council, Town Council or Parish Meeting to let them know what you are doing. It could be helpful to set up a meeting to discuss what you intend to do and share what you find.
6. Try and walk your paths at least once or twice a year.
7. When you walk your paths:-
 - a) Take a copied extract of the large scale parish map you have been provided with to use in the field to find and follow your local PRoWs and record grid references/path numbers as required
 - b) Take a copy of the outstanding unresolved list for your parish.
 - c) Take secateurs with you to trim anything that hinders your ability to walk the path, especially around gates, stiles, bridges and waymark posts or signs. An old wallpaper scraper is useful to scrape off debris on bridge footplates.
 - d) A cloth and water is useful to clean waymark discs and signs on Finger Posts.
 - e) Record the problems you observe with a digital camera* - this is especially important as it enables the CAS to assess the matter & take the appropriate action. Focus on the reported caseload list and urgent problems [see Section 11 below]

¹ Duplicate/replacement maps will only be issued where absolutely necessary

- f) Take a small tape measure. This can be used to check for example, the height of a stile step where it is too great, length/width of footbridge planks that may need to be replaced, width of gate[s] etc.

As a guide details of recommended dimensions of PRoWs and stiles are given in the Supplementary Information.

8. Replace any faded or broken waymarkers. Waymark discs are available from your co-ordinator.
9. When you find a problem, check whether it is new, i.e., not on the unresolved list and not previously recorded, so it can be recorded on your report form.
 - a) Find out, if you can, who owns or farms the land.
 - b) Talk to the locals to find out if the landowner is sympathetic about access.
 - c) Liaise with your coordinator or parish council clerk, to establish whether this is something you can deal with yourself to resolve the issue.
 - d) Use the on-line CAMSWeb reporting procedure, see 11 below, having made a detailed note of the problem. Don't forget those photos!! You may want also to note the state of the path and any non-urgent matters e.g. an off line path, and any actions you carry out, e.g. trimming, replacing waymarks, for your own records. This, in time will give you a history of the state of your parish paths.
 - e) There are many reports which are on the CAS's database of path problems.so do not become disheartened if some reports are long-standing.

11 **Reporting problems-**

A To report a **serious** problem

This can be done by using the normal CAMSWeb on-line reporting system. However it is a good idea to contact your Countryside Access Field Officer (CAFO) at the CAS via phone or email straightaway. Their contact details are included in the Supplementary Information. As the matter is urgent they will need the information as soon as possible to take the necessary action to address the situation. Photos greatly help to do a quick assessment and may prevent a site inspection being required and therefore enable the problem to be dealt with more effectively.

Examples of Serious Problems are:

- a damaged bridge, with missing deckboards or handrails
- an obstruction on the route, or work that is underway that will obstruct the route, e.g. new fence line, excavation or encroachment, or a tree has fallen across the path, completely blocking it.
- a 'hung up' tree, a tree that has fallen across a path but its upper branches are held by a tree on the other side of the path. This can be dangerous to users of the path.
- anything that is considered to be a public safety issue e.g. barbed wire or live electric fence across a route [not covered], aggressive dogs/animals, holes, subsidence etc

It is assumed that most, if not all, serious problems will be new reports and therefore not on the list of outstanding reports provided. However it may arise that an existing less serious problem has deteriorated to the point it is now considered to be a serious one.

Please ensure your coordinator is made aware of any serious reports you send to OCC.

B To report a **new less-serious** problem

1. Report directly to the CAS using the on-line CAMSWeb (Countryside Access Management System) website. Type into your search engine <https://publicrightsofway.oxfordshire.gov.uk/web> or more simply 'Oxfordshire County Council Report a Path Issue'. You may want to bookmark the entry on the title bar of your computer. Then click on the Box 'Public Rights of way reporting map'. If it is your first time you will need to complete your registration details including email address and a password in order to create your account, then click on 'Log in'.

The first step is to find the location of the path problem. The quickest way to do this is to use the path number which is shown on your large scale parish PPW map, but you can type in the name of the parish or use a Grid reference instead. If this information is entered into the 'Search Map' menu on the left-hand side of the Inter-active map on the screen you will be taken to the detailed location of the chosen path. You can then complete Step 2 and enter the Details of the Problem by choosing from a drop-down menu and also entering further information in the box. Make sure that in the box you identify yourself as a PPW. Once you are satisfied with the report it can then be submitted to the CAS. Tick the box if you wish to receive status updates and then click onto the Submit problem box.

Recently the CAMSWeb system has been upgraded so that photographs can now be sent as part of the report.

C To report a problem which you consider has been resolved

When walking your paths you may come across a location where a problem on your list has, in fact, been resolved. For example, a stile which had been previously reported as a problem may have been repaired or replaced by the farmer but the CAFO has not been informed. In such cases inform your CAFO again by using the CAMSWeb reporting procedure giving path number, location, and reference number, plus a photo if possible and saying how you think the problem has been resolved. This will enable the CAS to update their records and will ensure that no further action is taken unnecessarily. If there is a query the CAFO will respond to the PPW. It has been agreed with CAS that all reports will be acknowledged.

The CAS gives a priority 1 – 5 to problems that are reported to it. You will find these numbers on your list of footpath problems for your parish. More detail on the priority system can be found in the Supplementary information.

Please remember, that all PRoWs cross private land and that anything you do should be carried out with care and consideration for the occupier's property so as not to cause unnecessary problems. For example: many of the structures you may come across such as stiles and gates are actually owned and maintained by landowners. Bridges crossing natural watercourses, finger posts and waymark posts are the responsibility of the OCC. If you are not sure whether to do something **don't**. Refer the issue back to your coordinator for guidance and advice before proceeding.

12 **Health and Safety Considerations**

1. When using hand tools, check they are in good condition and use them with care.
2. Wear thorn-proof gloves for light trimming and carry some basic first aid.

*For digital imaging please adjust camera settings so each image is at least 500kb but not more than 1.5Mb. Take a photo of each side of the item of furniture (bridge, stile etc.), plus extra photos to show the context of the problem (e.g. a stile is next to a field gate or hedge, or a section of damaged path etc.). Use the tape measure and record measurements of the damaged element which will need to be replaced. Zoom in to show detail of the actual issue (e.g., a close-up shot of the broken stile step or the broken bridge deck).

Thank you very much for taking on this role, however much you do, it will be of value to those who use the countryside.

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