

## **East Cheshire Ramblers Footpaths Committee 2015/16 - Year End Report to the AGM**

The Footpath Committee currently consists of 7 people: Dave Barraclough, David Bates, Tony Battilana, Alan Catherall, Neil Collie, Peter Cummins and Graham Walker. In the absence of an elected Footpath Secretary, the roles of Meeting Chairman and Minutes Secretary are successfully carried out in rotation. However the full work of the Committee involves a much larger number of people with delegated tasks – including 38 Footpath Inspectors and Roger Fielding who manages the database. The original sub-Committee first met in January 1986, becoming the official Footpath Committee in 2001. Our current members have a combined total of over 85 years experience on the Committee.

### **The State of our Footpaths are the best ever.**

Our annual inspection of the paths in East Cheshire has been successfully completed and, apart from one or two Parishes, the results have been entered into the database. This year the database has been expanded by Roger Fielding so that a photograph of a problem can be included. It has also been made more 'user-friendly' so that the vast majority of inspectors now put the results straight into the database. The provisional results show that the number of paths with serious faults has decreased from 10.6% to 8.8% which is excellent. A full summary prepared by David Bates is attached to this report.

Many of our Footpath Inspectors are authorised by Cheshire East to carry minor maintenance work such as trimming back foliage, removing overhanging branches and replacing lost Waymarks. The database also provides a vital source of tasks that can then be carried out by our Maintenance Project Group. We have 38 inspectors, surveying a total of 1276 footpaths in 33 parishes. This activity is ably co-ordinated by Tony Battilana who has also sorted out emergency cover for parishes when an inspector has had to withdraw. **Tony has carried out this role for a number of years and we would like to find a volunteer to take on this role for the 2017 survey.**

### **Our Work with Cheshire East Council**

We are regularly consulted by the Council on proposed footpath diversions. This work can involve site visits and discussions with landowners when we may be able to propose amendments to improve the route. Over the last 12 months there have been six Consultations with 3 Orders being made. We attend the PROW Consultative Group meetings held in Crewe at 6-monthly intervals. Here, we get the chance to voice issues of concern and liaise with cyclist and equestrian groups. We have been actively involved in trying to protect a valuable permissive path between Holgate Farm and the Cat-and-Fiddle where the land has recently been sold.

We have attended meetings of the Vulnerable Road User Group for the Poynton Relief Road and are pleased that a number of our detailed suggestions have been incorporated in the scheme which has now been submitted for Planning Approval by both Cheshire East and Stockport MBC. As reported in previous annual reports the proposals have included, from the outset, two footbridges to carry walkers safely over the bypass, so we are generally in agreement. The needs of non-motorised users have been taken into account to a much greater extent, than was the case with Alderley Edge Bypass, where we fought a long battle to secure a footbridge.

### **Have you seen a Lost Way?**

The topic of Lost Ways will be explained in the presentation to the AGM by ECR member Colin Park, our own expert. The Deregulation Bill, currently coming into force, contains an important section that requires any historic paths that are not yet defined as Public Rights of Way on our OS Maps to be 'claimed' by 2026. After this date, no further new claims can be submitted to the Highway Authority. Ramblers across the UK are playing a leading role in reviewing old data, principally maps, to organise the systematic claiming of any worthwhile routes.

East Cheshire Ramblers are fortunate in having two significant advantages over many other groups. Firstly, Colin Park has a career background in mapping and has been a principal member of a Ramblers Cheshire working group that reviewed the 1900 maps for possible Lost Ways. This yielded 43 possible Lost Ways in the ECR area. Secondly, as a result of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, a pilot study of Lost Ways in Cheshire covering all eras of maps and historic data was completed. These two sources of data should make the further investigation work much easier than in many other areas of the UK.

**The Footpaths Committee are keen that a small group of members who have an interest in mapping or historic records should take this work forward from now until 2026 and possibly beyond. We are currently appealing for volunteers to fill this role.**

### **Your Footpaths Committee Needs YOU**

Peter Cummins has announced his retirement from the Committee after 30 years of continuous service.. We have appreciated his knowledge and wisdom. He has served as Joint Footpaths Secretary and Footpaths Secretary and the improvement of the state of our paths is due, in no small part, to his determination and tenacity over many years. **We hope to find a volunteer who will join our friendly group to replace him.**

Neil Collie - October 2016 - Footpaths Committee Member

## Summary of 2016 Path Survey Results: Time Period: 1st January to 31st October 2016

All parishes were covered in the survey, with an excellent result showing at the time of writing this report; some 1246 paths were inspected out of a total of 1276 paths, which shows a 97.6% achievement.

Of the total of 1246 paths inspected, 42 paths (3%) were classified as D or 'Obstructed' compared with 43 paths in 2015.

The trend 2009 to 2016 is shown in the following table and chart.

| Year        | Total paths actually surveyed | Totals by Classification and Percentages of total paths actually surveyed |                |                            |                |              |              |
|-------------|-------------------------------|---|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
|             |                               | A "Good"  | B "Acceptable" | C "Usable with difficulty" | D "Obstructed" | A+B          | C+D          |
| <b>2009</b> | 1205                          | 834   | 227            | 97                         | 47             | 1061         | 144          |
|             |                               |   |                |                            |                | <b>88%</b>   | <b>12%</b>   |
| <b>2010</b> | 1234                          | 875   | 199            | 105                        | 55             | 1074         | 160          |
|             |                               |   |                |                            |                | <b>87%</b>   | <b>13%</b>   |
| <b>2011</b> | 1233                          | 876   | 209            | 89                         | 59             | 1085         | 148          |
|             |                               |   |                |                            |                | <b>88%</b>   | <b>12%</b>   |
| <b>2012</b> | 1251                          | 874   | 238            | 89                         | 50             | 1112         | 139          |
|             |                               |   |                |                            |                | <b>89%</b>   | <b>11%</b>   |
| <b>2013</b> | 1264                          | 906   | 226            | 83                         | 49             | 1132         | 132          |
|             |                               |   |                |                            |                | <b>89.5%</b> | <b>10.5%</b> |
| <b>2014</b> | 1257                          | 901   | 239            | 76                         | 41             | 1140         | 117          |
|             |                               |   |                |                            |                | <b>90.7%</b> | <b>9.3%</b>  |
| <b>2015</b> | 1272                          | 908   | 229            | 92                         | 43             | 1137         | 135          |
|             |                               |   |                |                            |                | <b>89.4%</b> | <b>10.6%</b> |
| <b>2016</b> | 1246                          | 866   | 271            | 67                         | 42             | 1137         | 109          |
|             |                               |   |                |                            |                | <b>91.2%</b> | <b>8.8%</b>  |

