

Parish Paths Partnership Winter Newsletter 2018

Thank you to everyone for all your valued help and support with rights of way this year. It has been great to see so many varied and interesting projects completed for the benefit of locals and parish visitors alike. As a county we have over 90% of our 5000 km plus network achieving the standard of 'easy to use' and naturally as a member of the P3 scheme you are very much a part of our success story.



You will be aware from the media that as an authority, like so many others across the country, we are faced with rising social care costs and consequently, a reduction in finance available to other services provided by the local authority. Public Rights of Way, like so many other teams, are delivering with reduced funding and there will be a need for significant 'belt tightening'

as we move into the new financial year. Anything you can do to lower costs would be greatly appreciated.

I know that a great many parishes are already working hard to reduce costs but here are a few pointers that you might like to consider:

- Reminding farmers to undertake their responsibility for their hedges, reinstatement of paths after ploughing and cropping and keeping routes clear through crops during the summer months. These measures reduce the costs of contractors and warden time spent inspecting and taking enforcement action.
- Encouraging volunteers to trim round gates and stiles whilst walking paths and reminding others in the parish to do likewise to keep routes in tip top condition. Why not add an article to your local newsletter on this topic?
- Recruiting additional volunteers who might like to be trained in how to use a strimmer.
- Taking a brush to those parts of urban paths that might become slippery at times of high leaf fall instead of calling in a contractor.
- Talking to landowners and gaining agreement for small improvements/maintenance of rights of way.

- Contacting contractors directly to organise simple projects such as the repair of steps, gates, stiles and replacement of roadside signs. Do get in touch if you don't have a local contractor and would like to receive details of one or two names from our DCC tender list that might be able to help you.

Annual Parish Paths Partnership Surveys

The annual Parish Paths Partnership surveys have been emailed to co-ordinators together with the finance summary and grant application. I know some Co-ordinators fill in all the paper work so, as in previous years, I have circulated the details to clerks and co-ordinators to enable you to decide just who will be doing what at a parish level. If for any reason you have not received the survey or forms please do get in touch by email ros.davies@devon.gov.uk so I can adjust our circulation lists and make sure we have all the correct details for you. The closing date for all the survey completion and grant application forms is **11th February 2019**. If you think you might be significantly late in submitting your parish information please do get in touch. As in previous years **we are unable to award any funding unless both the survey and financial information is completed**. Thank you for all your assistance in this matter.

The new Agricultural Bill and potential for public access

For those of you who follow environment and farming related legislation you might be interested in the following link:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2018/october/agriculture-bill-commons-stages/>



As you might have guessed much of the information relates to Brexit and farming after March 2019 but there is mention of “better air and water quality”, “improved soil health”, “flood prevention”, and “public access to the countryside”. The proposed Bill is still working its way through Parliament at present and we shall have to wait and see just what provision will be made for public access. We all wonder whether there will be any schemes

like Countryside Stewardship and tiered payments to landowners in exchange for greater access in the countryside. I guess all will be revealed in 2019. Don't worry – there will be no further mention of Brexit in this newsletter!

Parish Paths Partnership Walk and Talk events



Delegates enjoying a break on Peak Hill, Sidmouth

It was great to see so many P3 parish representatives joining us on our four 'Walk and Talk' events throughout November. There were some great opportunities to catch up with wardens and fellow P3 volunteers whilst looking at parish projects and brushing up on legal aspects regarding mapping and rights of way law.

We received some very positive feedback from those present saying how much they enjoyed the informal approach and the chance to share thoughts with others – the buffet lunches seemed to go down very well!



Delegates nearing the end of the Shobrooke Walk and Talk event

After listening to those who attended we feel this new format is the way we would like to continue in the future. We shall make the notes that accompanied the walks downloadable to you digitally shortly

Strimmer Courses

This year we have held four strimmer courses and seen a total of 32 people trained. Our courses remain very popular and well attended by parish representatives.

Please do get in touch if you have any volunteers who would like to learn to use a brushcutter in 2019. Courses run throughout the year and are free of charge. If you have certified volunteers in your community there may be the opportunity to purchase a strimmer using your P3 grant. Do get in touch if you would like further details.



Rob, Stover Country Park's Apprentice demonstrates his new strimming skills



December 2018 - Strimmer Course delegates gather at the end of the day – thumbs up from Jerry the trainer!

Parish Paths Partnership Projects

This year we have seen some great rights of way projects and events organised by P3 volunteers. Work continues across the county, despite the weather, to keep routes open and maintained and indeed projects for future months keep rolling in for consideration in the coming year. In Ringmore we have a joint project with the landowner, The National Trust, to improve a route leading from the Coast Path – the route is greatly valued for the income it generates for local businesses. In Membury there is a signing project whilst over the border in Dalwood there are preparations in place to reinstate the surface on a route leading from an ancient Roman road. In Bratton Clovelly we are working with a landowner to improve the surface of a bridleway whilst in Upottery we are supporting a funding bid for a community path to ensure a safer route for the community to reach their cricket field and recreational space. On the next couple of pages there is a selection of activities that have taken place in P3 parishes across the county over the last few months, have a read

through and don't forget to contact us if you wish to discuss improvements in your parish.

Stile to gate project in Doddiscombesleigh



Having joined the scheme just over a year ago it has been great to see the work that has been achieved by Sara Hewitt, P3 Co-ordinator and Agnes Miller, the Parish Clerk with their local contractor, Elliot Fairs. The parish decided to focus their energy on two paths in the parish and chose to replace stiles for gates in several places along the routes. Local landowners gave their approval and the gates were installed. In November the parish celebrated their achievements by holding a walk to help publicise the new improved access. Congratulations to Doddiscombesleigh for all their hard work and fingers crossed for more improvements next year!

Two of several new gates that replaced stiles on the Batts Brook path in Doddiscombsleigh

Bridge at Beer



When a stone slab bridge at Starre Bank on Fp13 started to show signs of wear it was the parish representatives of Beer that came to the rescue. With Chapter 8 signing in place and regular inspections from the Parish Road Warden the local contractor was able to remove the stone and undertake the necessary repairs to ensure it was firm and safe for everyone to use once more. A great project that ensures the safety and enjoyment of a popular route in the town. Thank you to

the Parish council for all their input in making this project such a success.



Electric cable problems overcome and volunteer recruitment in Modbury

When concerns were voiced locally about an electricity cable on a path it was the combined forces of P3 Co-ordinator Brian Weeks, Western Power Distribution and Paul McFadden, Rights of Way Warden that enabled swift and appropriate action to



be taken. The conditions were not ideal given the steepness of the path but with a co-ordinated approach and landowner permission the cable was buried and the aged stile replaced with a self-closing gate following some careful CAT scanning of the area. Shortly after a fence was repaired and the P3 team installed a wooden step – fantastic work!

Recruitment of volunteers can sometimes be a challenge for parish councils but Brian Weeks shared with us his use of social media and the

site known as <https://nextdoor.co.uk/> as a way of advertising for help from the surrounding parishes for various community based projects. There are 900 households in and around the surrounding area who have signed up to the service and when a request is made there is lots of support that comes forward. Why not have a look in your area to see if you can use the network to help benefit your community?

Interparish Walks programme

Evelyn Sharman, P3 Co-ordinator from Holsworthy Hamlets, has been busy



organising a series of interparish walks for the local community. As you can see from the pictures these are popular events that always attract a following from the local neighbouring parishes. There are several other parishes across the county that organise similar events throughout the year. Please feel free to send pictures of your events or get in touch if you are thinking of organising a walk and want to have a chat through your ideas.

Evelyn's September walk attracted 17 walkers from the parish of Clawton.

Sidmouth volunteers



Each week Ian Collins and his keen volunteers work hard to keep down vegetation, mend gates, steps and stiles, deal with drainage issues and address surface problems to ensure the rights of way in the parish remain clear and easy to use. We held our East Devon workshop in the parish this autumn and looked at various projects that the group had undertaken. A huge thank you to Ian and his team for all the work that has been achieved over the years.

Ash Die Back

You may well be aware from the local news that Devon County Council arranged for the removal of diseased roadside Ash trees in the Bickleigh area, between Exeter and Tiverton earlier this year. The prevalence of the disease continues to increase and we would like to draw your attention to information on the Devon Local Nature Partnership website:



Image from the Forestry Commission website

<https://www.naturaldevon.org.uk/devons-natural-environment/devons-wildlife/devon-ash-dieback-action-plan/> do have a read through – you might also like to alert your parish Tree Warden to the section regarding action points.

From a P3 perspective please remember to keep an eye out for trees that might be showing signs of acute die back near a highway or public right of way and get in touch via the Devon County Council's Report a Problem page, a link to which follows here: https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/map/map_src/prow/ click on the 'Hazardous or Dangerous trees' section and you will be able to locate the area with a tree that is considered to pose a safety issue. Remember, if you have a right of way problem that cannot be resolved at a parish level then please do get in touch via the 'Rights of Way' section on the same website.

Devon Countryside Access Forum Needs you!



The Devon Countryside Access Forum is seeking new members to join the Forum from April 2019. The Forum is a statutory local access forum, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, with a remit to advise on the improvement and enjoyment of public access. For more information and application

forms go to www.devongov.uk/dcaf There's plenty of time to apply as the closing date is Friday, 22nd February.

Finally.....thank you to everyone who has supported the rights of way team and the P3 scheme across the county of Devon over the years. We are very grateful as always for all your time and commitment to keeping the network improved and maintained for the enjoyment of all.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful 2019 from all in Devon County Council's Rights of Way team

