

## Footpath Secretary's Report December 2021



Although 2020/2021 has been a slightly less challenging year, it was not without problems in relation to the footpath committee. The easing of restrictions allowed meetings to recommence in August. However, following the loss of key members, a decision was made to cease the separate footpath committee meetings and incorporate all discussions associated with footpaths into the main committee meetings. This decision was not made lightly, but in the main, it was felt that spending associated with room hire for the independent meetings could not be justified. The new arrangements commenced at the September meeting.

### Footpath Problem Reporting

During the 12 months period 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 to the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021, 319 separate reports of RoW problems were submitted. In the same period 107 problems have been resolved or have remedial actions agreed or have been rejected.

The figure of 319 shows a considerable decrease over the 464 submitted during 2020. This was to be expected, as with walking returning to a more normal phase, less time was spent doing specific individual footpath audits. Unfortunately this does not indicate an improving situation in relation to the state of the path network. The same problems continue to plague our efforts to create improvements, particularly in relation to ploughing and cropping, overgrown hedges, and up-growth. The following table shows comparative submission numbers for the past six years.

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
304	426	333	306	464	319

As a group we have maintained our efforts to reinstate the arrangements for volunteer footpath maintenance. Currently we are holding meetings with a new head, albeit temporarily, of rights of way for Derbyshire County Council.

### Footfall.

Regardless of the improving situation, record keeping for footfall has been patchy for 2021. Between the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and the 31<sup>st</sup> October a figure of 9273 miles were recorded. Basically the figures relate, in the main, to Saturday and Wednesday car walks. It is appreciated that many may fail to see the relevance of this endeavour ; however, it should be appreciated that the argument often used, albeit anecdotally, for not maintaining a path is that if walked regularly it would be kept clear by that activity. This is refuted vigorously, and records of footfall helps with that argument.

### **Diversions Orders and Modifications.**

During the year the group commented on and monitored aspects relating to Modification Orders and Diversions as follows.

Type	2019	2020	2021
Planning and Outline Applications	32	40	69
Consultations and Outline Applications	13	4	13
Confirmations	10		0
Orders Sealed		1	0
Creation Upgrade Orders	2	2	2
Stopping up Orders		2	2
Diversion Orders and consultations		4	8
Appeals	1		0
Tree Preservation Orders			1

We responded to all of the submissions requesting preservation of existing footpaths and the inclusion of new access paths for major building developments. A total of 10 formal objections were raised. Once again significant help in dealing with planning applications was afforded by a number of members and footpath wardens. The footpath committee offer sincere thanks for this help.

### **The Future.**

Due to recent changes, care of footpaths and rights of way now come under the auspices of the Highways Department. Our next big challenge is to ensure that the appropriate attention and commitment is given to footpaths and bridleways regardless of whoever is responsible.

As ever I should like to record my sincere thanks, to all members of the committee for their efforts in supporting the footpath committee.

We wish you all the best for the coming year, and please be assured that the Footpath Group will be doing as much as possible to ensure you enjoy your rambles without let or hindrance.

*Mel Hardy*  
*Footpath Secretary*