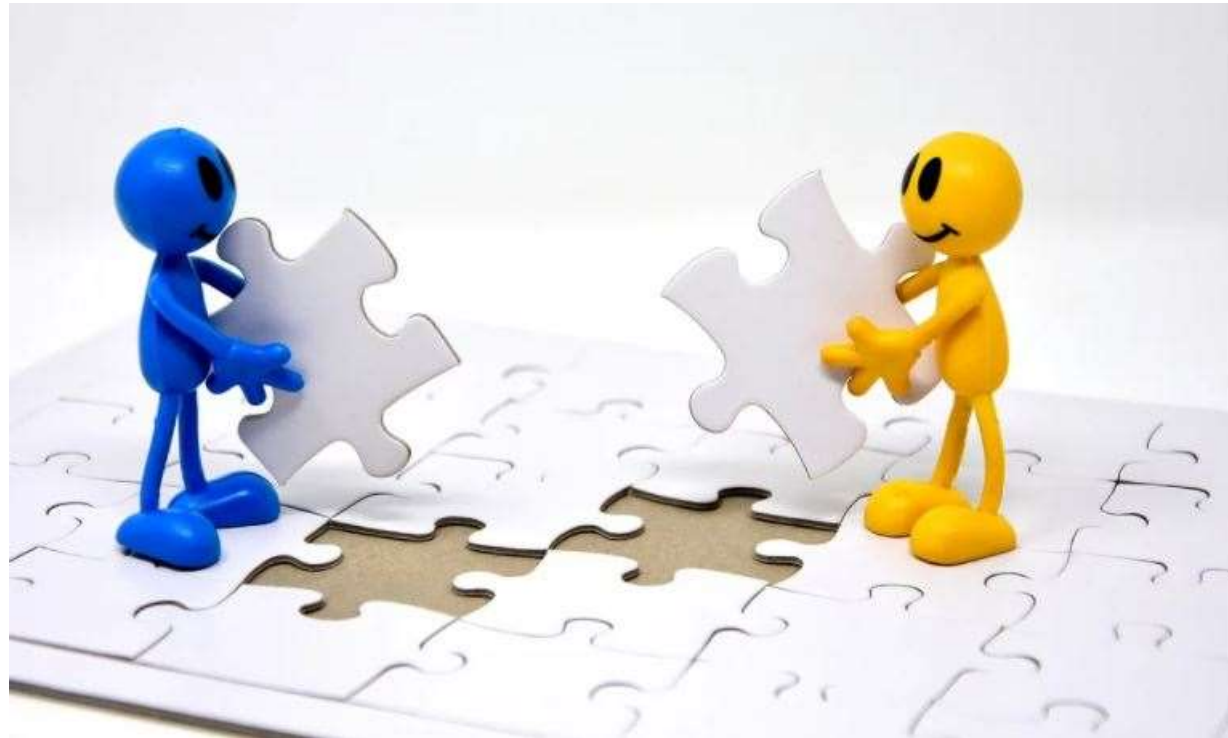


# How you fit into improving your own rider access



*When I hear  
this....*

*There's a  
tree down*

*Why isn't this  
path cleared?*

*This gate is  
dangerous*

*Someone  
should do  
something!*



I say this....



QUESTIONS: **WHAT IS THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM?**  
**HOW MANY MILES OF PROW ARE**  
**THERE IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE?**

# GLOS Public Rights Of Way

**3509 miles**

With six “on the ground” officers working for all user groups - it is bound to leave them overstretched.

2,840 miles of footpaths

533 miles of bridleways

132 miles of restricted byways

4 miles of byways open to all traffic

2,840 miles not available to us **81%**

669 miles theoretically available to us **19%**

This **19%** needs to be in good repair

For us

For cyclists

For disabled ramblers

For walkers/less-able walkers

For joggers

## SECTION 3. BACKGROUND

### 3.1 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE - AN OVERVIEW

3.1.1 Gloucestershire has about 3509 miles of public rights of way. This is one of the longest networks managed by any county. For example, our neighbour Oxfordshire has around 2500 miles while Worcestershire has about 3000 miles.

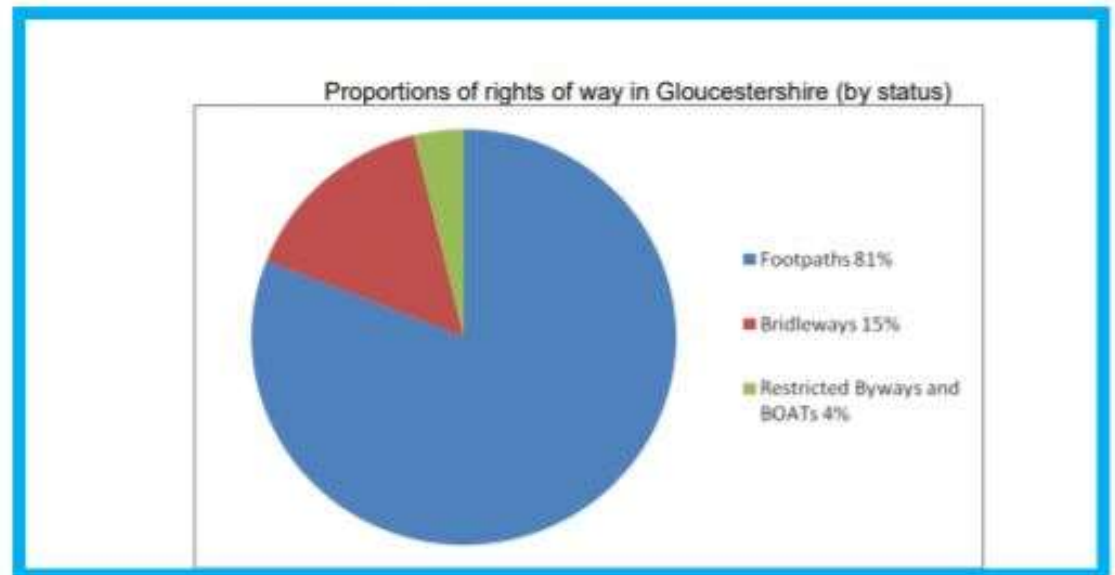


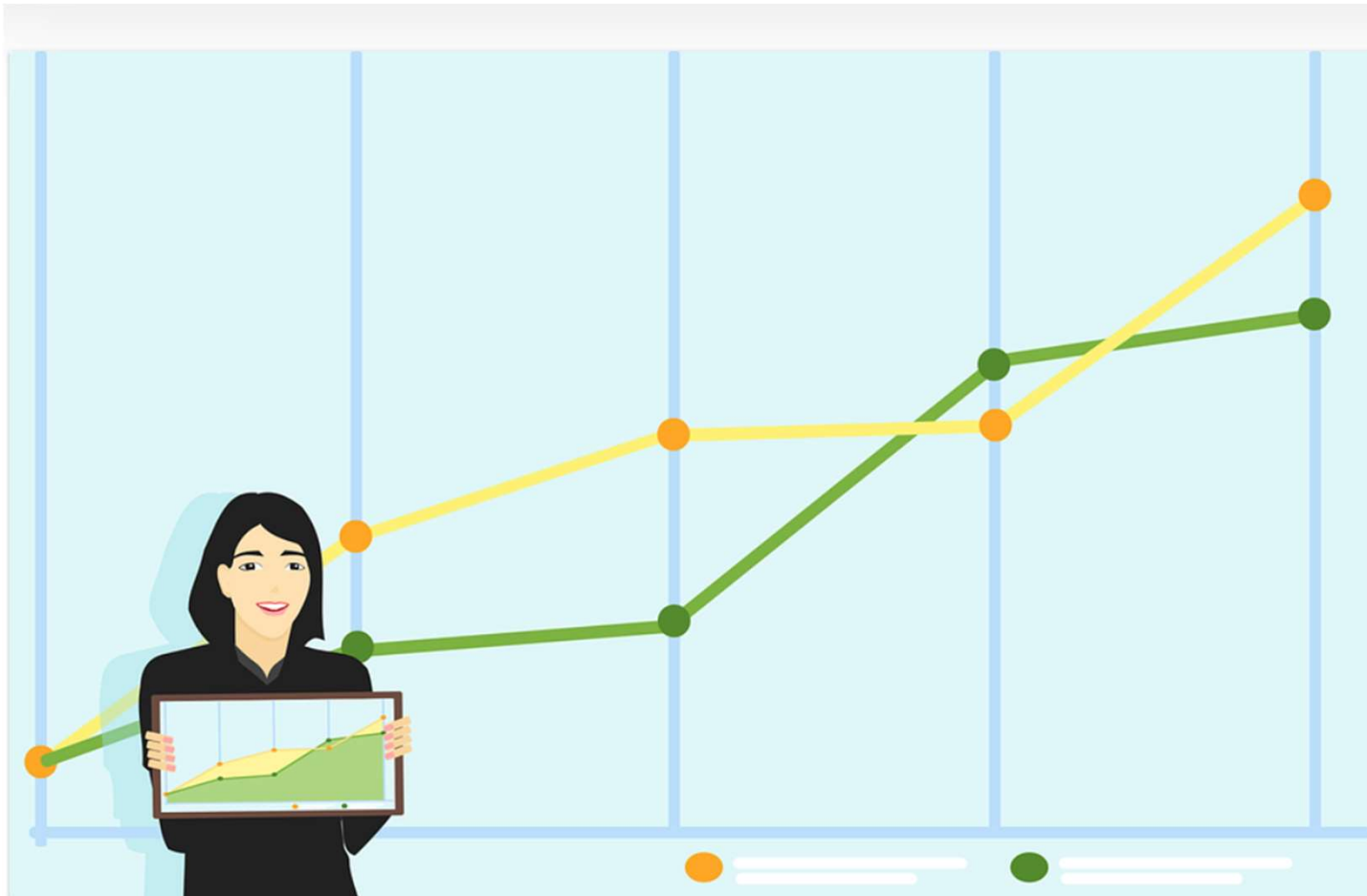
Figure 1. Lawful users of public rights of way

Route type	Lawful Users	Length in Glos
Public Footpaths	 	2840 miles
Public Bridleways	   	533 miles
Restricted Byways	    	132 miles
Byways Open to All Traffic	      	4 miles

# Notify track problems onto GCC PROW site to show in the **COUNTY** statistics

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/prow/report-a-problem/>

1.



*We are only as visible as our data*

Notify dangerous events and near misses etc.  
onto the BHS Accident and Incident web page  
to show in the **National** statistics

2.



<https://www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/safety/report-an-incident/report-an-incident>

*We are only as visible as our data*



# 3. Form a small, local FBook group of three or four parishes - support the riders of your area

Encourage other users to join and work together  
Concentrate on the routes that are most needed

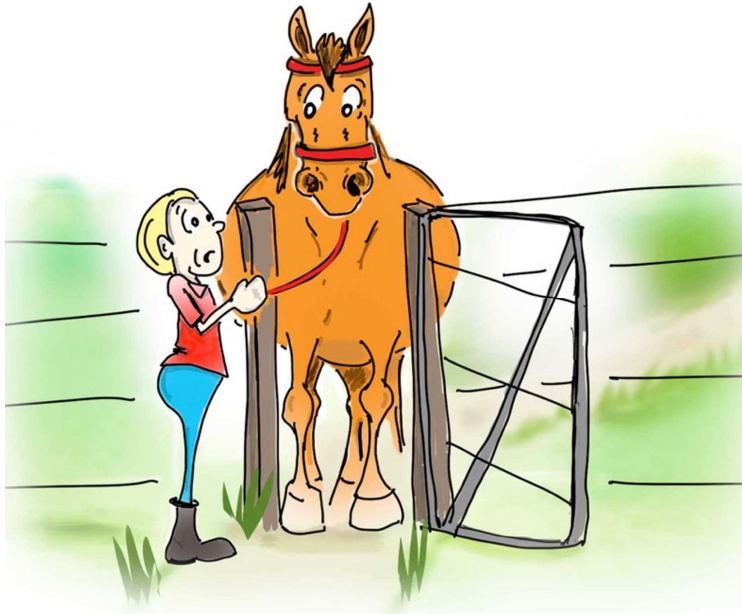
- Walkers
- Cyclists
- Disabled Ramblers
- Parish Councillors
- Uncle Tom Cobley
  - many of the older residents will have memories of how things were and be keen to be included so do take time to talk to them



*Think of it as “Community Sponsored Bridleways”*

**As well as sharing your problems to your new “access” group**  
**- put them on your general village FB sites**  
**- explain your issues - get others on your side**

- a video of negotiating dangerous gates on your local routes, and why they are dangerous



- a video of a rider trying to get through temporary road traffic lights in the time allocated, and asking for patience as it is impossible
- a video of being overtaken dangerously in the village



**Get your voices heard as equals**

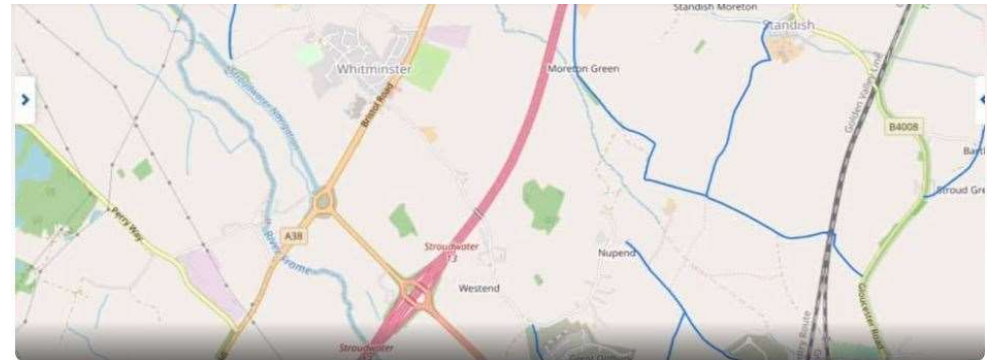


# Four FB groups set up locally in the last year



**Bridleways & Byways**  
(Hamfallow, Hinton & Berkeley  
Parish's)

Nov 2020 – **78**  
**members**



**Eastington, Standish and  
Whitminster Parish Bridleways**

Dec 2020 – **122**  
**members**



**Lypiatt and Toadsmoor rides**  
tracks and trails

July 2021 – **102**  
**members**



**Stroud Path Rights Project**

July 2021 – **48**  
**members**

# 4.

## Educate yourself:

Learn what the British Standards requirements are (and more) and share this information to your groups and to landowners

The  
British  
Horse  
Society

## Free Leaflets and Downloadable Resources

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/free-leaflets-and-advice>

**Over 40 PDFs on every subject to do with Access**

ADVICE ON  
Blocked and difficult to use  
bridleways and byways  
England and Wales

The  
British  
Horse  
Society



ADVICE ON  
Gaps, Gates and Vehicle Barriers

The  
British  
Horse  
Society



ADVICE ON  
Electric Fencing

The  
British  
Horse  
Society





## Know who is responsible for what

In essence, the county are only responsible for what comes out of the surface of the PROW.

Landowners are responsible for structures (gates/stiles etc\*) and for trees, hedges, fences and anything else coming across the path and causing difficulties.

Occupiers' liability law says an occupier can be liable if there is any risk of the public suffering injury on the premises by reason of any danger due to the state of the premises or to things done or omitted to be done on them.

Public liability insurance could be compromised if it can be shown that that the landowner has been informed that something is considered dangerous to the legal users of a path, and they have not acted to put it right. Having all gates etc. to the British Standard, well installed and in safe surroundings is a good way for landowners to help protect themselves. See the BHS leaflets mentioned above for all these standards.

While the county council is willing to help landowners where it can, they cannot force landowners to improve existing structures. Expressed concerns from a wide range of local users, explaining the position and offering to help can sometimes be the best way forward.

\*bridges can be slightly more involved so do chat to PROW on those

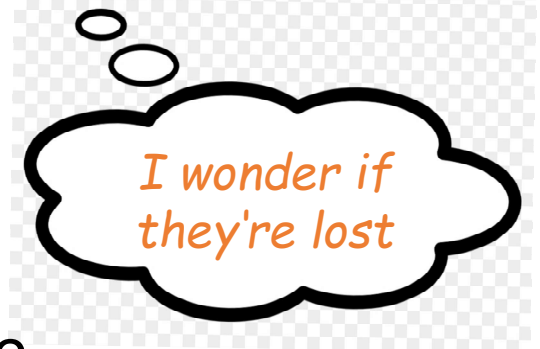
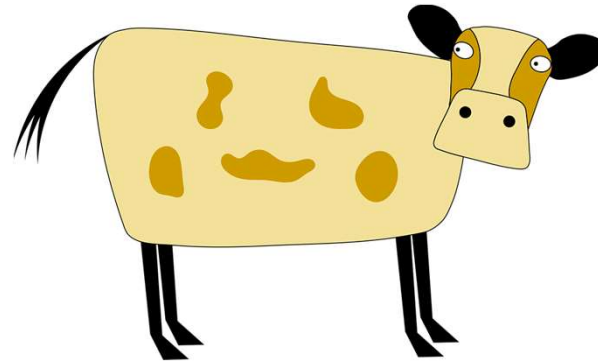
# 5. **Speak to the landowners - Offer to help**

- Understand their problems
- Offer to help
  - Clearance
  - Money for gates etc.
  - Bigger Projects - grants and fundraisers etc



# Respect the landowners – play your part

- Be polite
- Close gates
- Don't upset livestock
- Know where you should and shouldn't ride



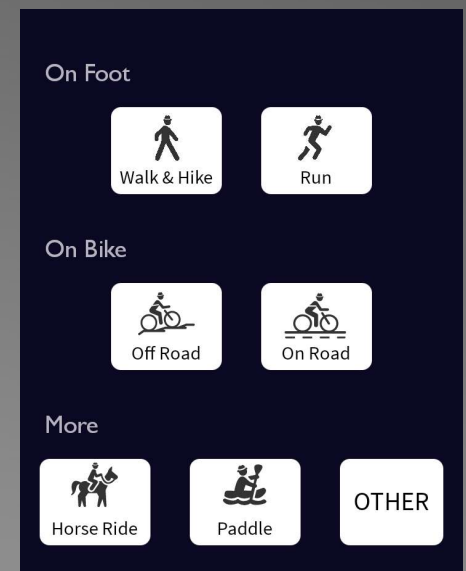
Riders are now included on the OS mapping app, you can upload any circuit you use\* so that others can pick these up to follow.

In the MENU select **Plot a Route** or **Record a Route**,

Select the **nice horsey picture**, create the route, and when you have finished save it and, under Who can see my route? select **“Everyone”**.

When you are in an area you don't know, you will be able to use **Find Routes** to select routes that other riders have uploaded.

*(\*for safety don't include your stable area – start away from home)*



# Speak to the landowners - ask for help



*Eastington, Standish and Whitminster  
Parish Bridleways fb group*

## ***Pro-active Riders Request Pays Off***

*Riders in Nupend approached a Landowner for permission to ride on his field margins.*

*This has been granted and an access licence drawn up in their names which is currently being signed and finalised.*

*The riders clubbed together to pay the landowner's solicitor for drawing up the contract and they are looking forward to getting off the busy roads and accessing some lovely canter spots along the River Frome (ground conditions permitting), for as long as they are able.*

**The worst that can happen is things stay as they are**

***Say a big thank you – maybe with an appreciative gesture***



**New permissive link (no PROW involvement) – official crossing point from a common is on a blind bend so we asked for a new link further down on a straight part of the road**

- MCTTG talked to National Trust and offered a donation
- National Trust put in the new link, cleared the track and installed bollards made from their own trees (no donation required). Huge thanks to Tim.



**Second Permissive Link** National Trust also gave us a 1 mile permissive link in another wood – within an hour of my phone call the lock had been removed from the gate.

# 6.

## Getting More Help

### Your Parish Council may be able to help.

Parish Councils have the ability to do works to PROWs themselves under the Highways Act 1980 Section 43 (Power of parish and community councils to maintain footpaths and bridleways.)

- Raise issues and problems with them
- Get issues included in the minutes as having been discussed – this is useful historically, in being seen as relevant to the whole village and, if you can, recording landowner notification.
- Many villages have “Footpath Wardens” challenge the title and ask for them to be “PROW Wardens” to recognise the value of the higher rights paths for everyone
- Offer to be a village warden yourself

(1)The council of a parish or community may undertake the maintenance of any footpath or bridleway within the parish or community which is, in either case, a highway maintainable at the public expense; but nothing in this subsection affects the duty of any highway authority or other person to maintain any such footpath or bridleway.

It is always best to work with PROW, but Parishes can employ contractors, and can talk to the county about assisting with clearance or improvements. e.g. Marsh Lane, Oakhunger. Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association (MBBA) regularly raise the money and get paths improved. For inspiration look on their website.

### Your County Councillor may also be able to help.

Each councillor has a pot of money which can be used on PROW projects, but many don't know about it – ask them for their help and support to improve the community circuits in your area as these will benefit a wide range of user groups, not just horse riders.



# Be aware of new building Developments

- Try to speak to the planners and developers as early as you can
- Raise issues and problems with them
- Ensure they understand how the community will be affected
- Suggest routes and new links that the community will benefit from

Many, eg. Robert Hitchins, are really pro-active and want to help.  
They are dedicating two new bridleways on their West of Stonehouse site and have also given a permissive path ... which has the potential to be dedicated, too.
- Even companies creating smaller developments can be a source of donations – here Banner Homes gave a donation of £500 (all they were asked for) towards the Marsh Lane upgrade. Colburn Homes later donated the £300+ shortfall for topping stone on receipt of one phone call.



When I say “encourage other users” to help *I mean everyone*.

This “year one” class held a cake bake to raise funds for a local path.

They raised over £80 and learnt that Rights of Way are theirs to use and help care for.

They also learnt about rain falling in the woods and running downhill to the lane which is why we needed a pipe to save the surface ... and then the pipe went under a field and down to the local river ... and the river went to the Severn and the Severn took it all the way to the sea and you might even see our woodland rainwater at Weston!

Involve your Scouts

Involve your older residents

Run a sponsor-a-metre raffle and you will be surprised who supports you.

(for more ideas see the Marsh Lane pdf)



## Year One Inspect Their Lane

I couldn't do this  
on my own but  
**“Lots of People  
Together Can  
Mend The Lane”**





# CROWDFUNDING – it can work!

A great example of Crowdfunding – might it be worth trying in your area?

 Crowdfunder

Explore +Extra Funding Stories About

Start crowdfunding Sign in

## The Greenway Project A Multi-Use Pathway

by [The Greenway Project](#) in [Chagford, England, United Kingdom](#)



The Greenway Project Crowdfunder Video

Watch later Share

Watch on YouTube

The Greenway Project is a new Moretonhampstead - Chagford Pathway, creating a traffic-free multi-use route for leisure, health and work.

 **£4,058**  
raised in 1 day  
+ est. £458.25 *giftaid*

**56**  
supporters

Donate

[Project Facebook](#) [GreenwayDevon](#) [greenwaydevon](#) [Environment, Sports](#)

£4,058 raised in the first day from 56 donations

# 7 Working with PROW

- The PROW budget is really tiny, so the officers rely on their volunteers.



- Join the Cotswold Volunteer Wardens or set up a local working group.
- PROW department can train up volunteers to help. They try to hold a session each year – get yourself on the list for this. Training Courses for strimmer or chain saw use can be organised.
- Local farmers/contractors may help – help liaise.
- Work to H&S rules and have insurance.
- Problematic paths that have excessive yearly growth can be put on the PROW cyclical list.
- Don't report every little bit of vegetation overgrowth – a little bit of self-help can save officers a lot of time. Just a few small hand tools are all you need.

*The law permits you to remove enough of an obstruction for you to pass if you can reasonably do so (although you should ensure the safety of livestock) and to go round the obstruction on land in the same ownership.*

*Every little helps – start small and see how you go*



## GCC's Big Community Offer

includes assistance from the public for Public Rights of Ways.

*"Volunteers who keep an eye on the Public Rights of Way and inform us of any issues and organise minor works where needed."*

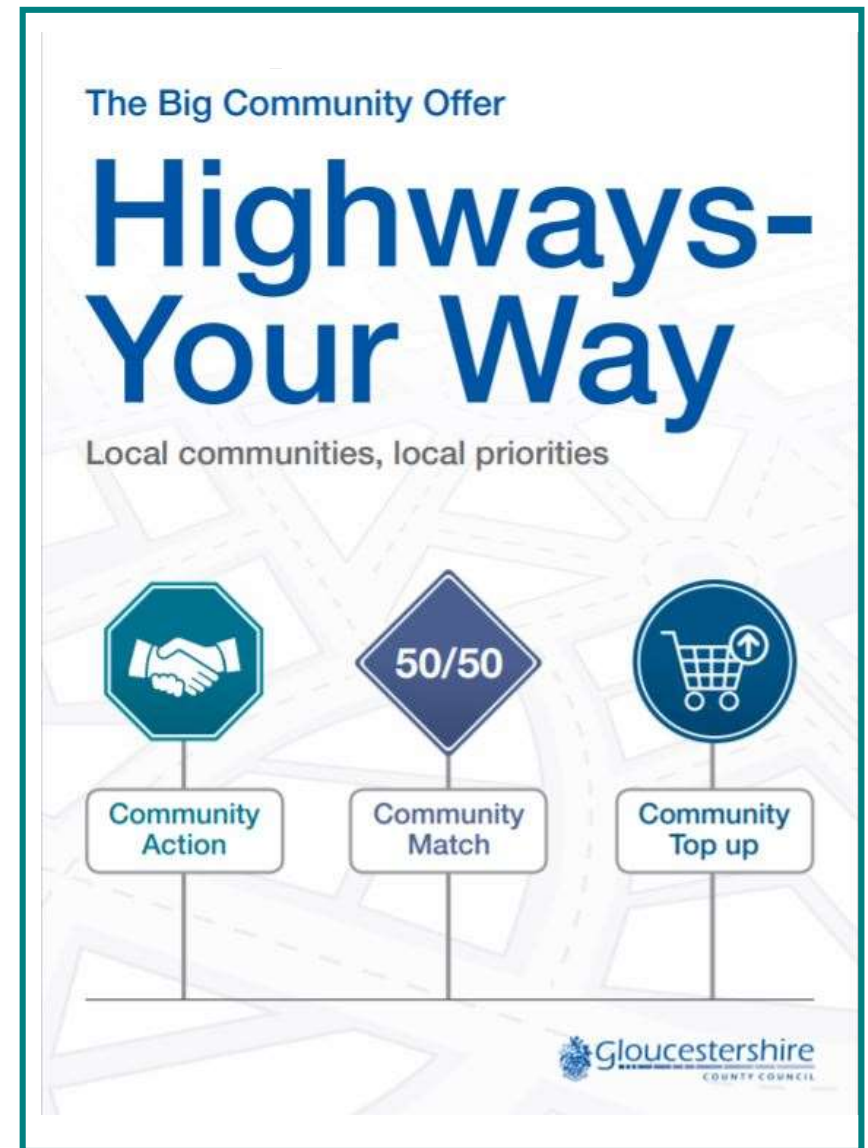
### Community Action

For many years, parish and town councils and community groups across the county have been successfully working with us to manage their local highways.

Community Action is building on that success by giving you the support and tools to carry out work within your community.

### How to get involved

[www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/extra/highways-yourway](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/extra/highways-yourway) for more details about Community Action and talk to your Gloucestershire County Council Local Highways Manager.

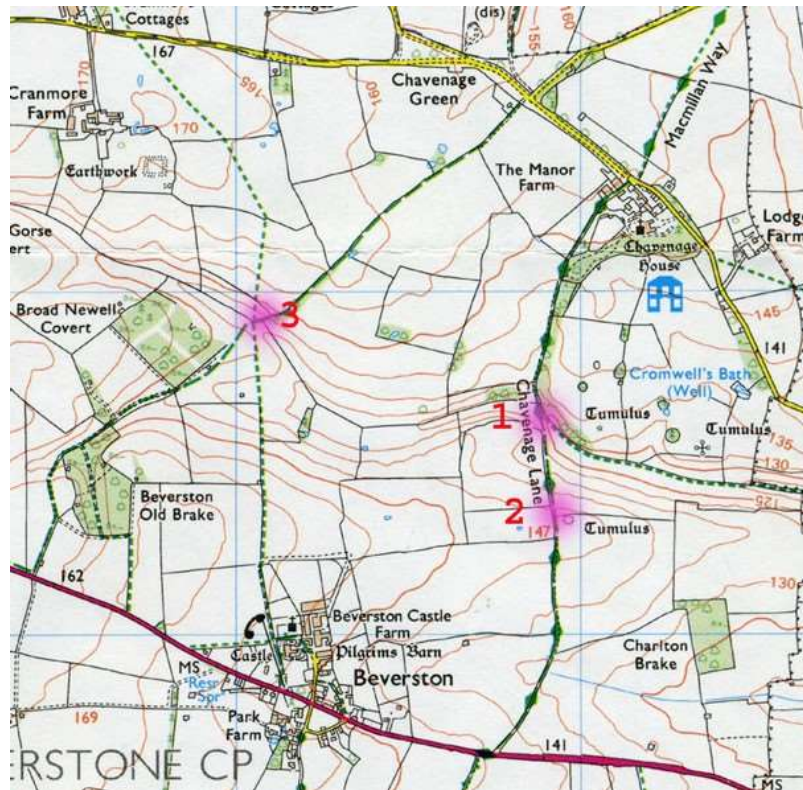


# 8.

## How else can we help our PROW officers ?

If your group can't sort a local problem by yourselves  
Try to save your PROW officer as much time as you can by supplying:

- A map picture or reference showing where the problems are
- Photos of the problems
- The name and contact details of the landowner(s)
- Information on what help you can offer, or have already offered



## How to stop your sheep escaping



- MCTTG talked to landowner and offered a donation
- PROW then project managed and assisted with provision of gate etc.
- Sometimes the landowner prefers to do installation themselves
- Sometimes Cotswold Wardens or your new local help groups could do the work



## Gate exiting directly onto a fast road



- MCTTG talked to Woodland Trust, PROW and Highways
- Highways agreed sight line clearance, tarmac bund, and some stone for the gully
- PROW and Cotswold Wardens moved the existing gate and installed fencing paid for by WT. CWs also picked up the stone from Highways to save a lorry being allocated etc.
- MCTTG provided the teabreak doughnuts!





**Rusty, broken gate, broken hinges, heavy to lift off latch, dangerous footing,**



- MCTTG talked to landowner and offered a donation towards the gate.
- PROW then project managed and assisted with provision of gate etc.
- Cotswold Wardens hung the new gate.
- **BONUS POINTS** : CW members, having recently been on a dry stone walling course and being keen, offered to clear the fallen stone and rebuild it back into a lovely wall.
- Landowner was so pleased they then inspected and improved another gate themselves, and spoke to a neighbour who also made improvements to another gate on the route.



**Rusty, broken gate, broken hinges, impossible to lift out of hedge, dangerous exit onto a fast sweeping bend.**



- MCTTG talked to landowner and offered a donation.
- Landowner had forgotten the gate was there as he takes his machinery in the other end of the field
- PROW then project managed and assisted with provision of gate etc.
- **BONUS POINT** : Landowner agreed to give some standing space to keep us off the road



# 9.

If all else fails .... (part 1)

## **Cross Compliance under the Basic Payment Scheme – “Public monies for public good”**



Landowners must meet all legal obligations regarding maintaining and clearing public rights of way in order to claim their Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). The public should never be at risk whilst using a public right of way.

Try to resolve any issues through co-operation and negotiation by making Cross Compliance

Landowners/occupiers aware that if they breach the legislation relating to public rights of way they can be reported to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) which can affect their Basic Payment Scheme (BPS).

Individuals, Parishes or County Councils can report cross compliance safety issues to the RPA if discussions fail.

If all else fails .... (part 2)

## The Equality Act 2010 and The Countryside Act 2000



The Equality Act 2010 and Countryside Act 2000 section 69 advocate the least restrictive option so as to inconvenience the fewest users.

The least restrictive option is a gap. Where a gate is necessary, it should comply with the British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles (see BHS Leaflets referenced above)

Regard should also be given to the site, as hazards such as uneven or sloping ground, holes, deep mud, overgrowth, barbed wire etc. may still make the site an obstruction.

Equestrian users may have impaired mobility and a horse provides them with many health benefits of exercise and access to the countryside. Gates can be limiting factors on the distance people can travel independently.

Other less-able users, particularly those who find footpath stiles an impediment, can also benefit greatly from good, safe bridleway gates.

*Let's try to get the safest access we can for all users*

If all else fails .... (part 3 - worst case scenario)

## Obstruction of a PROW is a criminal offence



**Highways Act 1980 - Section 137** of this Act makes it a criminal offence for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, to wilfully obstruct free passage along a highway. A highway is any way over which the public have a right to pass and re-pass including footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways or byways open to all traffic.

**A person found guilty of an offence under this section of the Act is liable to a fine of up to £1000\*.**

### Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Under amendments made by this Act, a court has the power to order anyone convicted of an offence under Section 137 of the Highways Act to remove the offending obstruction. Failure to comply with such a court order is a second offence punishable by a fine of up to £5000\*. If the obstruction is not removed following conviction for the second offence then a third offence is committed punishable by an additional fine of up to £250\* for each day the obstruction remains in place.

\*fine levels were last reviewed in 2015

There are several processes to go through before a landowner might be fined – notices must be served on them, PROW would then go in, do the work and recharge. More notices are then served etc.

# 10.



## Support this national lobbying campaign.

- Join this FB group and learn what is being done across the country to get our voices heard
- Share information, updates, experiences and ask questions.
- Don't just complain amongst yourselves
- Keep up with the latest legislation
- Where riders are left out of any access issue – add your voice
- Don't leave things to one or two people to represent you – speak up yourself and your friends

*“Nag” until you are included equally*

..... and moving up the scale, here's an example  
from Horse Access Campaign UK (HAC UK)  
from co-founder Rachel Thompson OBE

I recently attended the first of our Mendip Hills AONB FiPL panel meetings. I feel so honoured to be a member of this panel and to represent access, green travel and, like others there, a lifetime of love and passion for this landscape and all it contains.

What an amazing diverse panel the Mendip Hills AONB unit have pulled together, with two new exceptional officers, too. Such diverse interests are represented; food and farming, organic and regenerative, arable and stock, outdoor pursuits, tourism and business, access and (strategic) green travel, habitat, biodiversity and nature recovery, heritage, history and landscape. All of us are pulled together by a strong ambition to make our place better and to think outside the box.

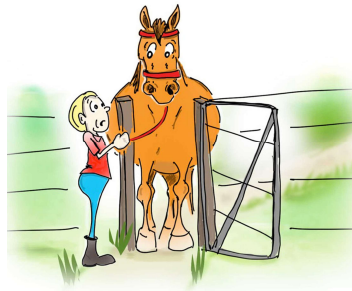
Well done Mendip Hills AONB.

*Work towards a joint-interest county Access group*

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This presentation, put together for a talk by Pat Harris Sept 2021, may be shared to promote safer  
bridleways and an improved network of multi-user  
trails.

I have done my best to be correct at the time of the  
talk, but do please contact me if you find any  
inaccuracies or issues.



The cartoon on page 8 is reproduced by permission of  
Kay Thornton "Funny Horse Cartoons".

Kay is from Australia, but when asked she was keen to  
support rider rights of way here.