

Taunton Deane Ramblers
Annual General Meeting – 22nd November 2021
Footpath Secretary's Report

This is my seventh annual report as Footpath Secretary since taking over the role in January 2015.

As in 2020, there have been very few statutory consultations from Somerset County Council on changes to rights of way. There have also been very few consultations from Somerset West and Taunton Council on planning applications.

There was also no annual meeting of Group Footpath Secretaries in Somerset, owing to continuing Covid-19 restrictions.

The biggest issue locally has been the proposals for the A358, and how these will affect public rights of way. The route lies within Taunton Deane and South Somerset Groups. A response to these has been submitted by the Area Footpath Secretary, Les Stather, with whom I have been liaising. The majority of the issues are at the Taunton end of the road, where several footpaths are proposed to be stopped up without reasonable alternatives being provided. Ramblers have naturally objected to these. We wait to see what changes, if any, are made in response to our concerns.

As in previous years, I have been contacted on a number of occasions by people who had encountered issues with rights of way. I have been taking up these where appropriate with Somerset County Council. At the time of writing, these include an obstructed bridleway in Bickenhall parish, and a bridge over the Hillfarrance Brook which has now been missing for a significant number of years. I intend to ensure that these and other matters are included on the agenda of a future meeting between the County Council and Ramblers' Area Footpath Secretary. Where the local authority has failed to take action to remove obstructions, or secure the repair or renewal of bridges, Ramblers has to consider taking further action at County level in conjunction with Head Office.

Philip Bisatt
Footpath Secretary