

Footpath Secretary report 2023/2024

As your new Footpath Secretary I had hoped to have been more proactive in the role but unfortunately life got in the way. I have managed to undertake some of the Ramblers training sessions relating to footpath.

I attended a briefing for Footpath Secretaries organised by the Ramblers nationally as well the South Gloucestershire Rights of Way Liaison Group. Both were online but it was good to touch base with the SG Rights of Way team.

I have kept a eye on South Gloucestershire planning applications for those which affect Rights of Way. Where I felt that the application could affect the enjoyment of walkers I have commented on behalf of the group.

In particular, I commented on an application for a large solar array at Cattybrook Farm near Almondsbury. While this application does not require footpath diversions it could affect Rights of Way around or close to the boundary so I raised an objection asking for the current paths to be properly protected. There were 167 public comments on this application. This application has not yet been decided.

I also commented on the proposal to build a footpath and cycleway up Alveston Hill from near Thornbury Leisure Centre. Here my comments related to connectivity to other paths in the area. This application has been approved.

There have been a number of formal footpath diversion and closure orders circulated for comment. Most have been straightforward but two are worthy of note.

The first related to a footpath closure application near Harts House on the A38 where a new landowner had applied to have the footpath closed as there was an alternative close by. As part of SG's investigation into this application it was identified that there is a third path shown on the definitive map starting at the same location but that there was limited evidence that this third path had had long term use so the application was extended to close the path for which there was limited evidence. Having walked the paths as best I could, I raised no objections to their closure. The third path was recommended for closure. However SG Rights of Way team said that there were no legal reasons to justify the closure of the first path. There are however no signs on the ground that this first path has been walked for some time.

The second application was an informal approach to discuss proposals before the formal application was submitted to SG. This involved the diversion of paths at The Manor, Alveston (previously the Loans / Lawns). Thank you to those who provided me with comments / information. I visited the site and discussed the proposals with the landowner. If he provides what he discussed with me, I believe that this will enhance the path so I do not plan to object to the formal proposal, once submitted, provided it reflects our discussions.