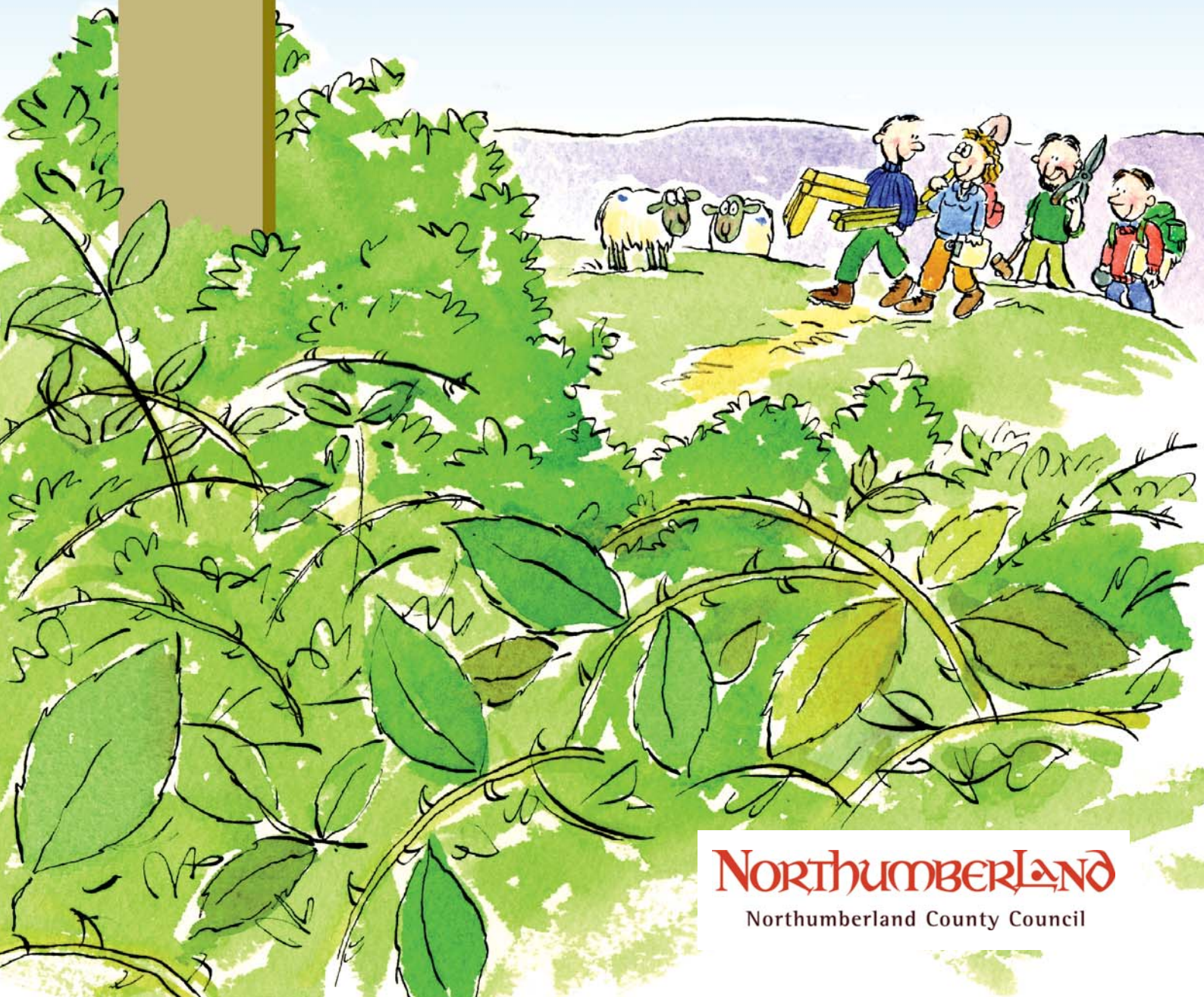


# Public Paths in Northumberland

A practical guide to action on rights of way for local groups



**NORTHUMBERLAND**

Northumberland County Council

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# 1. Introduction

## A National Treasure, A Local Resource

Our rights of way network is unique. Nothing quite like it exists anywhere else in the world. It is an important part of our culture and heritage which, like all our national treasures, needs careful management. Public rights of way provide a very important means of access to the countryside, for local people and visitors alike. Exploring these paths gives an opportunity to find peace and solitude as well as to discover much about our history and landscape. A great many people value this network of public paths and make good use of it. Indeed, one of the most popular forms of outdoor recreation today is walking.

In Northumberland alone there are over 3,100 miles of public rights of way. Northumberland County Council is responsible for maintaining and improving this public path network, but locally organised groups can play an important role in this work.

The aim of this guide is to help people who care about the public rights of way in their area get involved in their management. In the following pages you will find useful information about the rights of way network, as well as practical advice about how you can set up a group to help look after your local paths. Once your group is established, you'll find there is plenty of work for you to do, from surveying the condition of paths to waymarking, and even to building stiles and gates.

Much of the information in this guide is covered in greater detail in the Countryside Agency publication "Out in the Country - where you can go and what you can do". Copies of this are available free of charge from the Natural England website [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)





## 2. The Origins of Rights of Way





Most of the paths which now exist as public rights of way have a long history. In the past they were important routes which enabled people to get to work or to church. In Northumberland, the Border Reivers travelled along them, and miners used them to get to the pits. Trains of pack horses carried their loads along them - lead, stone, cloth and corn. The paths were used by the postman to get to isolated farms, or by local people to visit their neighbours. Children used them to get to school, and tinkers travelled along them selling their wares. In a land without hard roads, these paths were the highways.

Although in most cases their original purpose is gone, many of these old paths still exist today on maps and on the ground. And, in law, they remain highways over which the public have a right to pass.



### Types of public right of way

There are several types of public right of way, over which different kinds of use are permitted:-

-  **Footpath** - open to walkers only. Waymarked with a yellow arrow.
-  **Bridleway** - open to walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Waymarked with a blue arrow.
-  **Restricted byway** - open to walkers, cyclists, horse riders, and horse-drawn vehicles. Waymarked with a plum coloured arrow.
-  **Byway open to all traffic (BOAT)** - open to walkers, cyclists, horse riders, horse-drawn vehicles and motor vehicles. Waymarked with a red arrow.

### Permissive Paths

A landowner may allow use of paths and tracks which are not public rights of way. These are called 'permissive paths' and they are not covered by the normal rights of way legislation.

There are no statutory public rights on permissive routes. The landowner can withdraw access if he or she wishes.

Further information about permissive access can be found on the Natural England website.

## 3. What are public rights of way?

A public right of way is a path, track or road over which the public can pass at any time as part of a journey between two points. In most cases the land over which this right has been established remains in private ownership.

A public right of way is a highway and it is illegal for anyone to obstruct your passage along it. This 'right of passage' has an indisputable legal basis and is not a privilege granted by a landowner or tenant. As long as the path user complies with the conditions which apply to a particular type of path, they should not be prevented from using it.

Although the right is 'to pass and re-pass', you *can* take time to enjoy the view or stop for refreshments, and you *are* allowed to take a pram, a push-chair or a wheelchair where practicable. You are also allowed to take a dog as long as it is under close control.

You can only take a horse on to a public footpath, or a motorised vehicle onto a footpath or bridleway, with the permission of the owner. Without this permission you commit a trespass against the owner (which is a civil wrong, but not a criminal offence).

## 4. Identifying Rights of Way

The quickest way to make sure whether a path is a public right of way or not is to check it on an appropriate map. Most maps which are designed for walkers and riders show information about rights of way, but by far the most widely used and probably the most accurate are those produced by the Ordnance Survey (OS).

The OS Landranger maps [1:50,000 scale] and Explorer series [1:25,000 scale] all give detailed information on rights of way. On Landranger maps the rights of way are shown in red, whereas on the Explorer maps they are marked in green. In all cases the OS maps clearly show the status of a path (i.e. footpath, bridleway, etc.) and, within the limitations of the scale, its route on the ground.

Although the OS regularly revise their maps and the rights of way details contained in them, the information they show may not be completely accurate. Changes to the path network might have taken place since the map was last revised, or the original information recorded by the OS might have been slightly inaccurate. The only way to be certain about the status and route of a particular path is to consult the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way which is held by the local Highway Authority.



## 5. What is the Definitive Map?

The Definitive Map is the document where all public rights of way are legally recorded. It provides conclusive proof of the existence of a public path, its route and its status.

It is the responsibility of the Highway Authority (usually a county or city council) to hold and maintain the Definitive Map for their area. The Definitive Map for Northumberland is held at County Hall in Morpeth and is available for inspection by appointment. A version may also be viewed on the County Council website [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

To view the Definitive Map for Northumberland, contact the Definitive Map Team on 0845 600 6400.

In England and Wales, the definitive maps were compiled in the 1950s as a result of a legal duty placed on Highway Authorities by the National Parks and Countryside Act 1949.

Each path on the Definitive Map has an individual number and is accompanied by a 'Statement' which describes the route of the path. The Statement may give additional information like the width of the path and details of any relevant structures such as stiles and gates.

### Can the Definitive Map be changed?

Changes to the Definitive Map do sometimes occur. Some rights of way were missed off the original map, or may have been recorded with the wrong status. Some have been established by regular use over recent decades, sometimes landowners dedicate new routes over their land, and sometimes paths are legally diverted onto new routes.

In all these cases the County Council must follow a legal process. The Parish Council is consulted about these proposals, along with a number of other organisations such as the Ramblers Association, Cyclists Touring Club and the British Horse Society. In addition, all proposed changes are advertised in the local papers and on site, allowing people to have their say during the statutory period of consultation.



## 6. Responsibility for Public Paths

The Highway Authority (in Northumberland, the County Council), landowners and tenants all have legal duties and responsibilities for public rights of way. In addition, parish councils have special discretionary powers which can be applied to rights of way.

The Highway Authority is responsible for:

- asserting and protecting the public's rights;
- keeping rights of way free from obstructions;
- keeping the surface of the path clear from natural vegetation;
- signposting the paths where they leave metalled roads;
- waymarking the paths where the route is unclear;
- recording the rights of way on the Definitive Map.

The landowner or tenant is responsible for:

- providing and maintaining stiles and gates;
- cutting back overhanging vegetation;
- not obstructing rights of way;
- not ploughing field-edge paths;
- reinstating cross-field paths within 14 days of ploughing or within 24 hours of any subsequent disturbance;
- ensuring that the line of the path is clear on the ground in cultivated fields, and not obstructed by growing crops.



The parish council can:

- maintain any footpath or bridleway in its area;
- draw problems to the attention of the Highway Authority;
- make improvements to rights of way;
- agree new routes with landowners and farmers.

## 7. Problems on Public Rights of Way

The County Council and Northumberland National Park Authority have been very proactive for many years in improving and maintaining the public rights of way in Northumberland. However problems do still occur and groups should be aware of how any such problems can be resolved, either by themselves or if that is not possible by the County Council or National Park.

Problems you may come across include:

- Vegetation overgrowth
- Paths ploughed out or not reinstated after crops are sown
- Wear and tear of gates, stiles and signposts
- Wilful obstruction of paths

The public path network benefits from constant care and maintenance to keep it in a usable condition. If there are problems that occur you can report these to the County Council, either directly to your Area Countryside Officer if you have a contact with them, or through the County Council Contact Centre. It is often useful if you can send a digital photo of any problems too with your report. It will give the Area Countryside Officer an idea of the scale of the problem before they do a site visit.

Telephone: 0845 600 6400

Email : [ask@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:ask@northumberland.gov.uk)

Or use the Rights of Way option on the “Report It” link of the Northumberland County Council website [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)



## 8. What local groups can do

Many people regularly use their local path network. They recognise the importance of our public rights of way and are concerned about keeping paths open and usable. Local path users are very well placed to help look after the network, and some parish councils and local groups already get involved in the management of their local paths.

In Northumberland, the County Council's Countryside Team can help local groups to:-

- conduct surveys of their paths
- assist with the waymarking of paths
- undertake certain repairs or improvements to paths
- promote their local path network through guided walks and leaflets

In some cases a group may be established by the parish council, but this is not essential. However, if you are intending to set up an independent group, we do recommend that you let your parish council know. It is also advisable to report the work that you do to the parish council on a regular basis.

**In all cases it is essential to work in consultation with the County Council's Countryside Team. Many of the problems affecting the public path network can be complicated to resolve, and an understanding of the relevant legislation is important.**

By working alongside the Countryside Team, local groups can make an invaluable contribution to the future care and maintenance of the paths in their area.

## 9. Getting started

If you are considering establishing a local path group you can contact the Countryside Team for advice and assistance. Each area of the county is covered by an Area Countryside Officer whose role is to survey, protect, maintain and improve the rights of way network. The Countryside Team can often supply the materials necessary for improvement works and can advise groups on where to obtain tools and equipment. We can also offer training in how to survey paths, and advise on undertaking basic maintenance and waymarking.

If you do not already have links to your local parish council you should let them know about your plans. They may be able to help financially, or put you in touch with other interested people.

Alternatively you might already know of people in your area who are keen walkers, or who are otherwise interested in public rights of way. You only need two or three people to start a group. Once you begin to publicise your work, new members will generally come forward.

It is important to have clear aims about what you want to achieve, and not to be too ambitious at first. Many of the problems affecting public rights of way have been around for many years and you will not be able to solve them overnight. However, huge improvements can often be achieved by the consistent efforts of local people who 'take ownership' of their path networks.



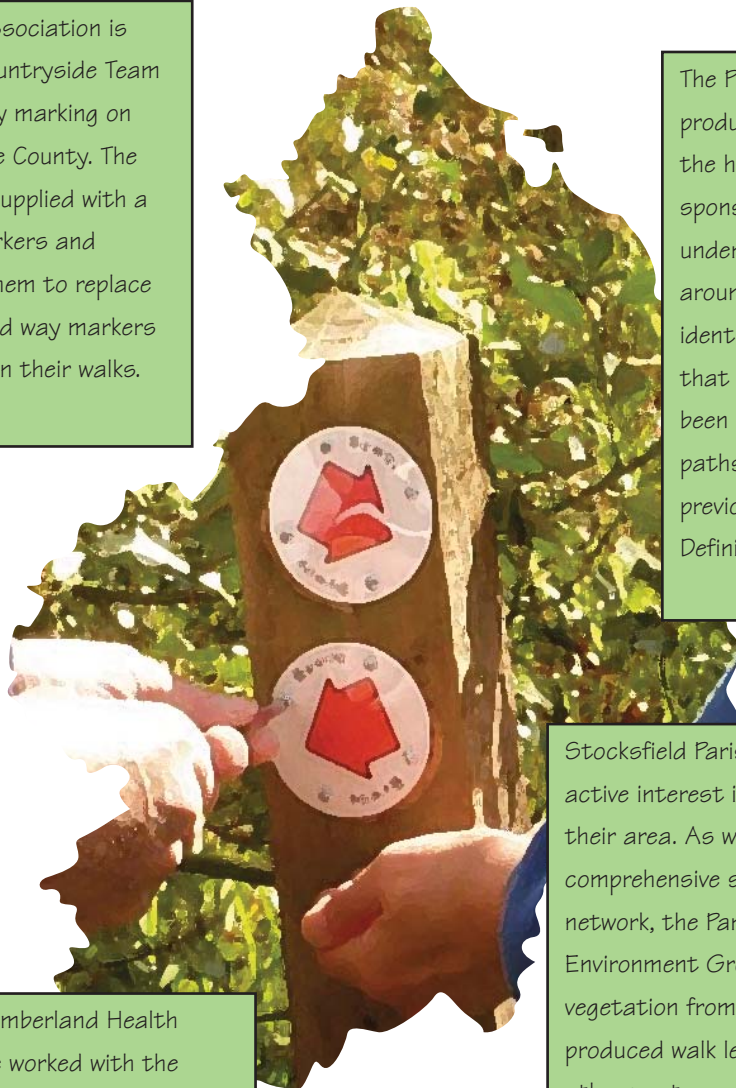
## Examples of Local Path Groups in Northumberland

The Rambler's Association is assisting the Countryside Team with renewing way marking on paths across the County. The group has been supplied with a stock of way markers and volunteers use them to replace faded or damaged way markers they encounter on their walks.

The Prudhoe Pathforce group have produced local walks leaflets with the help of local business sponsorship. The group undertakes regular surveys around the Parish which help to identify any maintenance issues that arise, and they have also been involved in claiming well used paths in their area that were not previously recorded on the Definitive Map.

Stocksfield Parish Council takes an active interest in the paths within their area. As well as carrying out comprehensive surveys of the Parish network, the Parish Council Environment Group has cleared vegetation from overgrown paths and produced walk leaflets to encourage others out around the Parish.

The West Northumberland Health Walks group have worked with the Countryside Team to improve the accessibility of several paths by replacing stiles with gates.



## 10. Path Condition Surveys

One of the easiest things a local group can do is to undertake a regular survey of paths in the parish. This is also a very good way to get to know all your paths.

Path condition surveys provide a good baseline of information for a new group. They are also very valuable to the Countryside Team because they give information on the state of the paths which our Countryside Officers do not have time to visit on a frequent basis.

If paths are walked, cycled or ridden on a regular basis by local people, and their condition noted, the Countryside Team can target resources more effectively to where they are needed.

Ideally these surveys should be carried out at least once a year or, in the case of some problem paths, two or three times a year. A path survey should be recorded on a standard form, available from the Countryside Team. Our Area Countryside Officers will explain how to conduct a survey and what you should be recording.



### Carrying out the Survey

#### Maps

To survey effectively you need maps to 1:10,000 scale. On these maps, 10cm = 1 kilometre and approximately 6 inches = 1 mile.

Generally, the maps used are copies of the Working Copy of the Definitive Map, on which each path within a parish has its own unique reference number. The whole length of the path should be surveyed, even if it runs into an adjoining parish.

The Countryside Team can supply the relevant maps, which should only be used for this purpose. If you need further copies, please get in touch with your contact officer. Unofficial copying of these maps can breach the laws of copyright.

Although these maps show a lot of detail you must be aware that mistakes do occasionally occur in them. If there is any doubt about the exact line of the path you are surveying, make a note of the section in question and your contact officer will check it against the Definitive Map in County Hall.

#### What to Record

You should mark on your **map** the position of any relevant points or features along the route, for example, sign-posts, stiles or more major structures such as bridges. The map is then accompanied by a written description of the path on the **survey form**, which should be attached to the map.

The written description will give more detail about the structures that you encounter, for example, a ladder stile as opposed to a step stile. Path surfaces and condition should also be noted.

The description might record the path as an access track, or a cross-field path (i.e. pasture or arable), or a headland or woodland path. Problems such as muddy sections and overgrowth should be recorded, along with the lengths of path affected.

## Obstructions

Any structure or feature which unreasonably prevents the legal use of a public right of way can be called an obstruction.

Typical obstructions are gates locked or tied shut, fences erected across the line of a path, or a path blocked by dense overgrowth or fallen trees. A temporary electric fence erected across a footpath, even for a day, is an obstruction. A stile is an obstruction on a bridleway if no gate is provided alongside for riders.

When surveying, it is especially important to identify all unlawful obstructions on a path and to make notes about these on the survey forms. Identify all features which prevent access along the path, or make access difficult. Include as much detail as possible, such as the type and height of a fence, or length of the path affected.

## Public Bridleways

When surveying public bridleways please bear the following points in mind:

- Gates should be wide enough for a horse and rider (or a bike with pannier bags) to pass through.
- Bridle gates should be 1.5m (5ft) wide or wider. They should also be easy to open and close, preferably without the need to dismount.
- Overhanging vegetation poses a problem for riders if it is lower than 3m (10ft) above the ground.
- Bridle bridges should be a minimum of 2m (6ft) wide. Remember that a bridleway might cross a river via a ford, with a footbridge provided alongside for walkers.

## When to survey

Popular paths in the parish may initially need to be surveyed 2 or 3 times a year, because different problems can arise at different times of the year. In summer, for example, paths are likely to become overgrown, whereas in winter drainage problems will be more obvious. Less popular paths should be surveyed once a year to check their condition.



## I-Spy blocked paths

These are just some of the ways in which paths can be obstructed. There are many more!

<b>Gates</b>	Locked, wired or tied shut Difficult to open (e.g. broken hinges; rotten posts; etc) Overgrown with vegetation Adorned with barbed wire
<b>Stiles</b>	Dilapidated and/or unsafe Unusable (e.g. missing steps; high steps; etc.) Topped with barbed wire Overgrown with vegetation Wires on or across steps
<b>Fences</b>	Erected across path without stile or gate Erected too close along line of path Temporary electric fence across path Unmarked or unprotected electric fence alongside path
<b>Bridges</b>	Missing Dilapidated and/or unsafe Blocked with wire, rail, etc.
<b>Ploughing</b>	Path not restored following ploughing or cultivation Headland path ploughed out Path not restored to legal minimum width
<b>Cropping</b>	Crops growing on line of path Crops overhanging path Crop residues (e.g. straw bales) on path Crop store (e.g. stack of silage bales) on path
<b>Livestock</b>	All bulls of dairy breeds Non-dairy bulls over 10 months not accompanied by cows or heifers Any animal known by the owner to be a potential danger (e.g. stallions; free-range sows)
<b>Signs</b>	Misleading or threatening signs
<b>Trees</b>	Overhanging branches, especially on bridleways Trees fallen across path Young trees planted on line of path
<b>Other</b>	Rocks and rubble across path Rubbish dumped on path Farm machinery or other vehicles parked on path





### Filling in the survey form

The County Council uses a standard survey form with standard symbols. This allows everyone to understand and to interpret features encountered on the path.

Use of the form and notation are best explained during a training session. You can arrange a survey training session with your contact in the Countryside Team. He or she will select a suitable path to show you the ropes.

On your survey you will need to take with you: -

- the map;
- survey forms and pen or pencil;
- compass;
- tape measure.

Record any other information about the path which you think might be relevant. You might know of the path's origin and history, or maybe a local name which is not recorded on the map. If known, the name and address of the landowner(s) and/or tenant(s) should also be noted for each path.

### What happens next?

The completed survey forms are added to the Parish Files which are held at County Hall. They then become an important part of the management history of the paths in question.

These surveys represent a clear record of the state and condition of a path on a particular date, and thus changes can be monitored over periods of years. In addition, they show up recurrent problems such as a path being regularly ploughed out, and therefore help the Countryside Team to identify those paths which need special targeting each year.

## 11. Carrying out improvement works - how your group can help

### Practical path improvement work

Path condition surveys will often highlight work that is required or improvements that would be beneficial, many of which can be undertaken by a voluntary group in consultation with the Countryside Team. The sort of jobs that can be tackled by a properly trained and equipped group are:-

- Way marking
- Clearance of vegetation
- Drainage
- Path surfacing
- Step building
- Gate and stile repairs or installation
- Bridge repairs

### Safety, Training and Advice

Health and safety is a constant concern, and voluntary path groups must always be aware of the safety implications of any work they are carrying out. Accidents with hand-tools can happen to even the most experienced users, and the risk of back-strain or other injury from lifting heavy objects is ever present. If you are organising voluntary rights of way groups you must be aware of the risks involved, and be equipped to cope with accidents and emergencies if they arise.

The Countryside Team can offer advice to groups on risk assessments and safe working practices. Anyone undertaking work agreed with the County Council as part of a group will be covered by Northumberland County Council for third party public liability but not for personal injury. It is therefore important to let the Countryside Team know what work you intend to carry out and when so that we are aware of it happening.

An excellent guide to safety and all practical aspects of carrying out path work is the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers handbook "Footpaths" by Elizabeth Agate (revised 2011). Other useful BTCV publications aimed at local groups are also available from the BTCV. See the useful contacts page details.

### Waymarking

Once the surveying is completed, your group might want to get involved in practical improvement work. Waymarking can be a good starting point.

Waymarking of rights of way helps path users who are not familiar with the route. The waymarks should be located at places where there is likely to be confusion, for example, at junctions of paths or where there are sudden changes of direction.

As a general rule, structures such as stiles and gates should be waymarked, usually in both directions. Always ensure that the necessary permission has been obtained before any waymarking is carried out.

Waymarking should be visible yet unobtrusive, which is often a difficult compromise to achieve. It takes some skill to do it successfully and waymarking should not be undertaken in a cavalier fashion. Excessive waymarking can be unsightly and might even be confusing and ambiguous.

## The Good Waymarking Guide

- 1) Discuss your plans with your Countryside Team contact officer before you start.
- 2) Ensure that the landowner or tenant has given their consent before any waymarking is carried out.
- 3) Be sure to waymark only the definitive line of the path. Study your map carefully because waymarking the wrong route is misleading for users and can cause problems in the future.
- 4) Make sure that you know the status of the route you are waymarking. Different waymarks are used for footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways.
- 5) Use stainless steel screws to attach waymarks to wooden structures. Discs can be fixed to stonework with epoxy glue.
- 6) Never fix a waymark with a single screw or nail, because it might be rotated and thus point in the wrong direction.
- 7) Never attach waymarks to trees.
- 8) Where no suitable structure is available, discs should be mounted on a 4" x 4" post (supplied by the Countryside Team). Normally these 6' posts are set 3' into the ground to make them as firm as possible, because they make popular rubbing-posts for cattle!
- 9) Attach the waymark loosely at first, then stand back and check its visibility, position and direction before you fix it permanently.
- 10) Don't forget to waymark in both directions (in most cases).
- 11) It is generally useful to fix "Please shut the gate" signs to wicket gates and field gates.
- 12) Don't fix waymarks to other peoples' property without their permission e.g. private gate-posts or fences.
- 13) Don't fix waymarks to telephone or power poles.
- 14) If in doubt, don't waymark. Contact the Countryside Team for advice.



## Jungle busting!

Another job that your group might like to consider is the clearance of vegetation obstructing paths. Even well walked paths can become overgrown and an enjoyable day can be had tackling a vegetation problem with a group of people. Many hands make light work!

Again you must ensure that you have the consent of the landowner or farmer before starting on the job and please discuss the work with your contact officer. He or she will be able to give you valuable advice about how to tackle the job and the equipment you will need. There may also be conservation considerations to be aware of.

The clearance of living trees or substantial branches should only be carried out in the winter or early spring, before the sap is running. Smaller branches and twigs can be cleared at any time.

Remember that birds are nesting in the spring and early summer and so hedges and scrub should not be cut back around this time. Likewise, small mammals often nest in the bottom of hedges or under logs, so try not to disturb them unnecessarily.





## Path structures

Path structures (stiles, gates, etc) should be constructed and maintained to accepted specifications which are designed to make the structure both safe and easy to use.

It is important that voluntary groups are aware of the relevant specifications which relate to path structures and adhere to them, unless a particular location necessitates some design modification.

**It is therefore essential that voluntary groups should undertake the necessary training before attempting such jobs as stile construction or step building.**

In these instances, all training, structure specifications and materials can be provided by the Countryside Team through your contact officer.

## Improving accessibility

In an assessment of the local network of public rights of way it is very easy to forget about people to whom access to the countryside is difficult.

Barriers can be many and varied. For instance, it can be very difficult for a family with a child in a push-chair to use a path which involves stiles or kissing gates, and wheel-chair users will have similar concerns. Likewise older people or walkers with dogs might find certain stiles difficult to negotiate. Rough or steeply sloping surfaces might present a barrier to those with mobility difficulties.

While not every path can be suitable for all potential users, it is essential that the accessibility of a path is considered. When improvement works are being planned and carried out, there might be simple ways in which access can be improved.

For example, on a popular path where people frequently take push-chairs or prams, an old stile could perhaps be replaced with a wicket gate, with the approval of the land-owner. Thus a further stretch of path might be opened up to people who couldn't reach it before.

If your group intends to produce leaflets about walks in your area, you should always aim to give as much detail as possible about the route. Information about stiles, gates, gradients and path surfaces will help people to decide whether a walk is suitable for them or not.

## 12. Publicising your work

Tell the world about the work your group is doing. The more people that know, the more feet will walk the paths and keep them open, and the more eyes there will be to spot problems when they arise.

Your local newspaper will usually be interested in any work that volunteers are doing, and press coverage is often an effective way to recruit more members to the group. They might agree to publish details of self-guided walks in your area.

If your community has its own newsletter or web-site, write an article explaining what the group is doing and what you have achieved so far. Publish "before & after" photos

of improvements, and get quotes from path users who are pleased with the work that has been done.

You may want to contribute a regular column to your parish magazine, or present an illustrated talk in the village hall. Use any means you can to publicise the good work you are doing!



## Guided Walks and Leaflets

Once your group has begun to improve the rights of way in your area, why not organise some guided walks to show local people what has been achieved. You might also encourage them to use the rights of way network more and thus help to keep paths open.

The improvement work might have opened up some circular walks which weren't possible before, or perhaps the work might have stimulated interest in some historical site or feature.

Running a successful guided walk is not easy. It takes a lot of planning and thoughtful management, from beginning to end. Courses in leading guided walks are available, but the most important element is the enthusiasm of the leader.

Summer evening walks are often very popular, but you might find that daytime walks suit some people better. Again, you can use the local press and newsletters to let people know what's on.

The skills you need to lead a guided walk are basically the same as for all public speaking. In the countryside, however, you often have to cope with noisy or awkward environments, and you must take account of this in your planning and presentation.

Most people can acquire the necessary skills quite quickly and, with practice, can become competent leaders of guided walks.

## 13. How to Lead a Successful Guided Walk

### i) Planning

First, decide on a theme.

It might be "Hedgerows in Summer" or "The Historic Buildings of Little Bagthwaite" or "The Geology of Greendale". The theme sets the aim of the walk and tells people what to expect. All your planning starts with this theme.

Within the context of your chosen theme, write down the key aims of the walk and decide roughly what you want to say about them. Keep it simple. Don't try to cover the entire history of Northern Britain in a 2 hour walk!

Walk the route beforehand and note points of interest, key locations, etc. If possible, plan the route so that the key locations are spread evenly along it and are not all concentrated in one section.

Decide on stopping points which fit in with your storyline and which are physically capable of accommodating a group of people.

Decide what you are going to say at each stop. Plan to use props, photos, maps - anything which will help to get across the points you are making.

Time the walk. Remember to allow for the time it takes a group of people to climb over a stile or pass through a kissing gate. You can generally assume that a group will move at about 2 miles per hour.

## ii) The Introduction

Arrive in good time at the start point to get ready and to welcome early arrivals. It may help to have a sign saying 'Guided Walk' or something similar.

Talk to people as they are arriving. When you think everyone is there, introduce yourself to the whole group.

Explain the theme of the walk and what you hope people will get from it.

Explain the length of the walk, the time you think it will take, and the type of terrain likely to be encountered. Someone with angina, for instance, needs to know if they are going to have to climb a steep hill.

Check whether anyone does have a medical condition which might affect them during the walk (e.g. asthma, diabetes). If so, check that they have any necessary medication with them.

Before you set off, check that everyone has suitable clothing and footwear, as well as food and drink if necessary.



## iii) The Walk

Before you set off, explain that you will be stopping at various points along the way. Tell people where the first stop will be. Give them something which is relevant to the theme of the walk to think about along the way (e.g. "Why is the village sited here rather than on the other side of the valley?" "Why is that hill shaped the way it is?") When you reach your first stop, discuss the question you posed. Hear people's ideas.

Wait for people to catch up before speaking at stopping points. Stops and rests start from the moment the last person arrives.

Make sure that everyone can see and hear you. Get out of the wind. Sit them down if possible. Don't turn your back on the group while talking.

Don't lecture. Remember that people are there primarily to enjoy themselves and not necessarily because they want to hear you speaking.

Be friendly and approachable. Chat with people as you walk along. Try to speak to everyone during the course of the walk. Move up and down the group. Don't stay at the front. Don't let yourself be "hogged" by any one individual.

Set a pace which suits the group and stick to it. If someone is determined to stride out ahead, let them get on with it. Don't feel that you have to speed up to catch up with them.

Find out if anyone has any knowledge of the theme or the locality which is of interest. The chances are they might know more than you do. Get them to share their knowledge with the group.

If you can't answer a question, admit it. Ask if anyone else knows the answer. Don't bluff your way, it's not worth it.

Use as many props as you can. Where relevant, have things for people to touch, taste, smell, etc.

If it's a long walk, choose a suitable time and place to stop for lunch. Ask people where and when they would like to stop.

Be prepared to change your planned route if necessary, for instance, if the weather deteriorates or if someone is having difficulties.

Don't forget that it is supposed to be fun!

#### iv) At the End

A guided walk should have a definite ending. Don't let it just fizzle out. Tell the group that you've reached the end of the walk. Re-state the theme and summarise what you've seen along the way. Ask if anyone has any questions or comments to make about the walk.

Thank people for attending. Tell them it has been enjoyable for you too. Mention other guided walks they can attend, or other ways to follow up the topic of your walk.

Don't rush off. Allow time for informal chat.

#### v) Evaluation

If you really want feedback on your technique, ask a friend to give honest comments. You'll learn a lot and will make your future walks even better.

*[this section is based on notes from Yvonne Hosker, a guided walks trainer].*





## 14. Producing your own Leaflets

Leaflets are an excellent way to publicise walks in your area. They do take time, money and effort to produce but, if they are well-designed and properly printed, they should remain usable for years.

Professional design and printing can be expensive, but the quality of the end product should reflect the investment.

More and more home computers have drawing and graphics software, and it is possible these days to produce very presentable leaflets using your own computer in your own home.

You can sell the leaflets through local outlets and thus help to offset any costs involved. If they are designed with the Web in mind, you can also publish them on the Internet for people to download as required.

The basic elements of a self-guided walk leaflet are:-

- A map or notes which describe where the walk is located.
- A map showing the route of the walk.
- A written description of the route (optional).
- Information about the walk, countryside, points of interest, historical features, etc.
- Where relevant, information about start points, parking, toilets, etc.
- Photos and illustrations
- Information about other leaflets in the series and where to obtain them.
- Information about the publishers.

If you want to design your own leaflets, here are a few basic rules:-

- As with guided walks, try to build a theme into your leaflet.
- Check your route very carefully. Make sure that it follows public rights of way. Be very careful about suggesting that people should venture anywhere that isn't on a public right of way.
- If you are basing your maps on the Ordnance Survey, you will need to get permission from the OS and might have to pay a licence fee. Check with the OS Help-line on 08456 050505, or their website [www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk).
- Whether using OS or drawing your own maps, include a map scale in miles and kilometres.
- Make the map(s) as clear as possible. Don't clutter them with unnecessary detail. Show relevant detail such as field boundaries and buildings where adjacent to the route, but otherwise keep it simple.



- Give people as much information as possible about the route before they start (e.g. gradients, structures, surfaces, distance, etc).

For example:-

“This walk has some steep sections and includes several stiles. In winter the path surfaces can be muddy. Distance 4 miles; Grade - Hard”

In this instance, a family with a child in a push-chair, for example, might decide that the walk was not for them, rather than starting it and then getting into difficulties half-way round.

- Don't cram every spare square inch of the leaflet with text. Be sparing with text and use a point size of at least 10 and ideally 12. This will make the leaflet clearer for everyone to read, especially those with less than 20/20 vision!
- Use photos and drawings to illustrate the leaflet. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words! (Well, fifty anyway).
- It is courteous (and also makes practical sense) to inform land-owners that you are promoting a route across their land. It may be that the route will need better way-marking, or that a gate needs to be repaired. In any event, the landowner needs to know.
- It would also be helpful to inform the Countryside Team about any routes you are promoting, because we can advise about all aspects from choice of route to design of leaflets.

## Useful contacts

### Northumberland County Council

Countryside Management Team  
Local Services Directorate  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF  
Telephone: 0845 600 6400  
Email : [ask@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:ask@northumberland.gov.uk)  
Website: <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk>

### Northumberland National Park Authority

Eastburn, South Park, Hexham, Northumberland. NE46 1BS  
Tel 01434 605555  
Email : [enquiries@nnpa.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nnpa.org.uk)  
Website : <http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/>

### Natural England

Head Office	North East Office
Natural England	The Quadrant
Foundry House	Newburn Riverside
3 Millsands	Newcastle upon Tyne
Riverside Exchange	NE15 8NZ
Sheffield	
S3 8NH	

Telephone: 0845 600 3078 (local rate)\*  
Email: [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)  
Website : <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>



### Natural England Publications

Communis Print Management  
Balliol Business Park West  
Benton Lane  
Newcastle Upon Tyne  
NE12 8EW  
Tel : 0800 694 0505  
Email : [natural.England@communis.com](mailto:natural.England@communis.com)

### British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)

Sedum House, Mallard Way, Doncaster, DN4 8DB  
Tel : 01302 388882  
Website : [www.btcv.org](http://www.btcv.org)

### Community Action Northumberland

Tower Buildings. 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, Northumberland. NE61 1 PY  
Tel 01670 517178  
Email : [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk)  
Website : [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk)



## Public Paths in Northumberland

A practical guide for local rights of way groups

©2012 Compiled by the Countryside Management Team  
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