

Rights of Way Review Committee: (RWRC)

The Rights of Way Review Committee came into existence in 1979 prior to the passing of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and, although the Committee has usually been chaired by an active parliamentarian, it was not set up by the Government, or any Government related body, and thus retains an independent status.

It was formed initially by the Ramblers (then the Ramblers Association), the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union) but later expanded to include representatives of other recreational user groups, local and national authorities.

The Committee retains a rights of way focus but over the years it has broadened its scope to most aspects of public access. Its current terms of reference reflect this change:

Terms of reference:

"To review matters relating to public rights of way in England and Wales with a view to the improvement of law and policy, the promotion of good practice and the fostering of positive attitudes amongst all concerned with the use and protection of public rights of way, and with the aim of agreeing, by consensus, proposals for action."

Current Chair: The RWRC is currently chaired by crossbench peer Lord (John) Lytton who was invited to the position in early 2012 and has a keen interest in public access issues.

Current secretary: George Keeping, who also acts as secretary for the ADEPT Rights of Way Managers Working Group.

Membership:

Groups include:

Interest groups: Ramblers, BHS, CTC (National Cycle Charity) , Byways and Bridleways Trust, British Driving Society, LARA (Land Access Recreation) Sport and Recreation Alliance, Assc) Open Spaces Society

Local Government: ADEPT, Local Government Assc. IPROW, Assc. of National Park Authorities, Wales Local Govt Assc., National Assc. of Local Councils

Land management /land owners: CLA, NFU,

Government representation: Defra Natural England and Natural Resources Wales attend to give updates and respond to action points directed to them.

Over the years the Committee has produced a series of ‘*Practice Guidance Notes*’ aimed primarily at the rights of way profession. This published guidance has subsequently been widely used as a definitive reference and information source both for the profession and the wider public.

http://www.iprow.co.uk/gpg/index.php/RWRC_Practice_Guidance_Notes

Current activity: Topical discussion re: rights of way and access issues e.g.: the Deregulation Bill, representations to national bodies re: specific access issues, responding to national consultations and the production of a ‘Legislative Shopping List’ of potential reforms/amendments to existing right of way legislation.

Highway Records Working Group

<http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/comm/landing-home.do?id=2747932>

The Definitive Map and Statement are an official record of the public’s legal rights but there is no equivalent record for rights of way for motor vehicles. Local Authorities must keep a List of Streets and a Local Street gazetteer but they are not a definitive record. There is inconsistency around the way routes are recorded on these registers and there is also overlap with the definitive map and statement. (See *Stepping Forward* 6.12 – 6.15)

The Highway Records Working Group (HRWG) was set up by group local authority highways officers to try to identify and address some of the issues associated with Highway Records - specifically the existing legislation relating to the List of Streets and its often confusing relationship with other highways/rights of way records. Their terms of reference include a commitment to delivering a nationally recognised policy main aim (and a series of guidelines) to ensure a consistency of approach to this area amongst highways authorities.

The group was cited in the *Stepping Forward* proposal 30

“Defra and DfT should jointly work with stakeholders to review the possible long-term benefits of greater integration of the management and administration of the highways network”.

Defra already engages with the Highways Records Working Group, which was formed by local authority practitioners with a view to promoting best practice guidance on better integrating the definitive map and statement with other highways records. Defra will continue to support the Highways Records Working Group in developing its own approach

Stakeholder Working Group on Unrecorded Rights of Way:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/rightsofway/unrecorded/default.aspx>

This Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) was set up in the wake of Natural England's decision to discontinue the 'Discovering Lost Ways' project which had been intended to capture evidence about historical rights of way, not yet shown on the definitive map, and to ensure they were recorded before the 2026 cut-off date introduced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The SWG's 32 recommendations – which were intended to make the process for adding unrecorded rights of way simpler and less confrontational – were published and presented to government in March 2010.

The recommendations went to a public consultation in 2012, and, following this feedback the SWG's proposals were taken forward, in part, as clauses in the draft Deregulation Bill which was published on 1 August 2013. *(As of August 2014 the Bill is currently about to enter the House of Lords committee stage following its second reading in the Lords.)*

A consensus approach was fundamental to the SWG's proposals and this approach will continue to be vital to the discussions surrounding the Bill's passage through Parliament and its subsequent practical application.