

Survey Guidance Notes

Aims and Objectives

Our Stockport Survey project is aiming to carry out as complete a survey as possible of all Public Rights of Way (PROWs) in Stockport, in order to assist with the Council consolidating its Definitive Map & Statement, identifying problems such as obstructions and damaged stiles or gates, missing signs, dangerous or missing bridges, or routes being seriously out of repair.

Method

With the support of our volunteers we will survey the Public Rights of Way network, checking the line of each route against that recorded on the Definitive Map & Statement and make notes on a simple survey form of what we find.

The Survey Base Data

The survey will be based on the Council's Definitive Map and Statement, accessible online at <https://maps.stockport.gov.uk/myhouse.aspx>

Go for "Search for Public Rights of Way" to access the Map, and for "Definitive maps and statements" to access the documents.

Each Public Right of Way will be surveyed from end to end, and the results noted in the Survey Form, accompanied by photographs where appropriate.

Survey Form Questions

- a) **PROW Status.** You will be asked to compare the line of the route you are surveying with that shown on the Definitive Map. As the Stockport Definitive Map is over 30 years old, a number of paths will have disappeared altogether due to development and others legally diverted. However, the Online version (see above) represents the "Working Copy" and should be reasonably up to date. Surveyors should also be aware that walkers often deviate from the true line of a path due to wet, boggy or difficult conditions and create a "desire line". Such deviations should be noted.
- b) **Access.** You will also be asked if you were able to gain access to the path and if you encountered any "obstructions" either man made or natural such as locked gates, or if a path was so overgrown to such an extent it made access along the path difficult or impossible. These matters will be reported either to Enforcement or the Path Maintenance Teams.

- c) **Direction Signing.** Direction signing can be in the form of roadside footpath signs, ornate carved fingerposts, circular way marker discs, or even homemade or professionally produced signs erected by landowners. Give details of the signage you find and highlight any areas where the direction of the path was confusing and would benefit from additional signage.
- d) **Surface Condition.** Record the type of surface condition eg, meadow grass, tarmac, gravel, or a combination of several types of surface, and whether a section of the path was flooded or excessively muddy or difficult.
- e) **PROW Furniture.** Furniture comes in many forms, wood and stone stiles, bridges, gates and metal barriers, steps and handrails etc. Report in general on what you find and what may need further attention (e.g. broken or difficult stiles, barbed wire on stiles or gates etc). Furniture should, ideally, also be recorded in the Definitive Statement (see below), but often isn't. If, therefore you could list all furniture encountered, preferably with Grid References (see below), also noting the condition of each structure, it would be most helpful.
- f) **Does the line match the Definitive Statement?** The Statement is a sometimes crucial, detailed description of the routes. Not uncommonly, however, it is not updated when routes are modified (diverted or part-extinguished). And sometimes the Statement is inaccurate from the outset (as has been encountered in other Authorities).
- g) **Any indication of regular use of footpaths by horse riders or cyclists?** When the Definitive Maps were first produced, many routes that had been used regularly by horses or vehicles were recorded as footpaths, because that was simplest – even though they should have been bridleways or Restricted Byways. This can be corrected by gathering evidence of equestrian use, which could then lead to upgrading such use to bridleways, providing an improved off-road network for all users.
- h) **Any Other Comments.** This could be anything you wish to bring to our attention such as problems with erosion of the path, fallen trees, problems with barbed wire, landowners having bonfires on or adjacent to public footpaths, animals (specifically bulls or aggressive dogs) or anything not covered in previous sections.

Grid References

These are very useful in pinpointing problems, thus enabling them to be resolved more quickly. Equally, they are invaluable in locating furniture (see above, “e) PROW Furniture”. Smartphone users will find this particularly easy (GPS coordinates), but reading them off a 1:10,000 map, to 8-digit accuracy should not be too difficult.

Photography

The survey does not require you to take any photographs but those of you who wish to send us photographs of what you find – particularly obstructions and damaged stiles etc – should feel free to forward them on to us. Again, this is particularly convenient with smartphones.

Advice is available

There is a great deal of expertise available to us so if you are in any doubt and want advice please ask Edgar Ernstbrunner (edgar.e@uwclub.net, 28 Derby Rd, Stockport SK4 4NE (Tel 0161 4319872).

Return Date. We expect you to do these surveys when it suits you, in your own time and at your convenience.

Thank you for your support