

Footpath Report 2016

The Brighton & Hove Council's plan was to cut expenditure for the 2016/17 year, which included reducing the 9 Park Rangers to 3. This would have left 1 Ranger to work with Friends Groups, 1 to manage major projects, and 1 to manage rights of ways. This plan was opposed mainly by Friends Groups and protest events occurred which resulted in 1 Ranger leaving and another transferred to Rights of Way Officer, the remaining 7 Rangers continuing to work with volunteers to manage parks and open spaces.

Having lost the Rights of Way Officer in 2011 due to the creation of the SDNP who took control of much of the outer City Countryside, this has now been reversed by the appointment of Chantelle Hoppe in that post. Chantelle has been unofficially heading up the involvement on path maintenance since the Council took back footpath work within the City boundaries and is now the official appointee.

B & H Council has apparently chosen to dedicate paths which are claimed as rights of way by the DMMO procedure, providing that the claim meets the DMMO requirements. This involves at least 10 people to have used the route for 20 years, also the land must be owned by the Council and not tenanted by Farmers. The result of this allowed the Friends of Hollingbury & Burstead Woods to claim 2 footpaths and 2 bridleways in the Hollingbury Woods complex. This was achieved by using information gained from the failed claim in Stanmer Park, i.e. making the path achieve a route from a community to Schools and the National Park using a green safe path. This was achieved against a senior Council Officer stating we could not claim paths in woodlands. Similarly another claim at Meadowview has received a dedication order.

Improvements have been carried out on the Saddlescombe Road to connect the paths which are not directly opposite, this relates to the path from Varncombe Hill from the Sussex Border Path in the East travelling to Dyke Road in the West. The section along the road now has a surfaced path constructed on the verge.

All of the Urban paths within the City, previously never shown on OS maps (close on 500) have now been added to the definitive map, but as yet are not available since the legal work is still required to complete the procedure. The deregulation act came in to effect in October which enables the Council to announce the total path issue in one advertisement rather than a separate advert for each path which prevailed previously. This deregulation act also gives the responsibility for any claimant who appeals against a failed DMMO claim to pay for the expenses of the Secretary of State and the opposing authority.

We have reported 6 problems in West Sussex, 2 in East Sussex and 1 in Brighton & Hove. Acknowledgements are received but no further information is given by either East or West Sussex. However in Brighton, due to attendance at the Local Access Forum, we have direct contact with the Rights of Way Officer. David intends to carry out follow up visits to see if our reports are receiving due care.