

15th May 2016

Dear Mr Pushman,

I am contacting you as the chairman of our Local Access Forum. I am a member of the Forum representing equestrians or rather the British Horse Society. I have been the BHS Bucks County Access and Bridleways Officer for the last three years and have been particularly interested in research into historical records to ensure rights of way are recorded at the correct status on the Definitive Map. I am a retired librarian (I was a curator in the British Library) and since my retirement have been doing research in the National Archives in connection with a biography which has now been published as a research monograph. With some time to spare I turned my attention to researching rights of way and have already submitted five DMMOs.

I attended the Restoring the Record training day on May and it appeared to be a great success judging from the numbers attending. However it did make it quite clear to me that research into rights of way along the lines of 'restoring the record' is not much use for those who are interested in putting lost footpaths on to the Definitive Map. Research along the lines recommended by our trainers on the day, Phil Wadey and Sarah Bucks, mainly relates to ensuring that rights of way with higher rights than footpaths - bridleways and restricted byways - are correctly recorded on the Definitive Map. A lot of the evidence used in this type of research is not very relevant to research into lost footpaths. In view of this those attendees at the training course who were more interested in footpath research may have found the day did not meet their expectations.

I do feel that we have not thought through our project 'Restoring the Record'. To me it appears trying to combine research into lost footpaths with work along the lines of 'restoring the record' work will not work. We cannot ask our volunteers to do both.

As for me I am very happy working to use historical evidence to ensure that all rights of way are recorded at their correct status but, even after the training day, I am still completely lost when it comes to footpaths. This is not to say that I am not interested in footpaths. I think the project should be put on the agenda for the next forum. It was a mistake to ask for volunteers to come forward in the way we have done and then go on to ask them which parishes they were interested in. Some volunteers are really only interested in footpaths while others want to work along the lines of 'restoring the record' research. In short we should have had two projects not one.

I hope we can find a way forward but I think much more thought and planning needs to be put into the project or possibly projects. I am copying this message to Ross Osborne, our co-ordinator. I feel he has been given an extremely difficult job and I am sure he also has concerns about the project as it stands.

Kind regards,

Alison Heath

LAF member and BHS County Access and Bridleways Officer for Bucks

(By email)