

SECTION 53 of the WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981

DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDER TO ADD 52 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IN ODD DOWN, BATH

(Ward Division: **Odd Down Ward**)

1. The Issue

- 1.1 This report deals with the evidence relating to 55 alleged public rights of way in the Odd Down Ward, Bath and seeks the Team Manager - Highways Maintenance & Drainage's approval to make Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO), to record 54 paths on the Definitive Map and Statement for the City of Bath ("DM&S") with 52 separate path numbers (as described in the Background Information at Appendix 1, point 1.9).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that Bath and North East Somerset Council ("the Authority") makes DMMOs on the grounds that the routes as shown by a broken black line and labelled Parts 1 to 52 on the plans ("the Decision Plans") contained at Appendix 2 have been dedicated as public rights of way, and to confirm the Order if no duly made objections are received and sustained against the Orders.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Financial implications are not a relevant consideration which may be taken into account under the provision of the 1981 Act. The costs associated with making a DMMO and any subsequent public inquiry or hearing would be met from the existing public rights of way budget.

4. Human Rights

- 4.1 The Human Rights Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") incorporates the rights and freedoms set out in the European Convention on Human Rights ("the Convention") into UK law. So far as it is possible all legislation must be interpreted so as to be compatible with the Convention.
- 4.2 The 1981 Act does not permit personal considerations to be taken into account. A decision relating to a DMMO would be lawful without taking account of personal considerations, as provided by section 6(2) of the 1998 Act, as it would be impossible to interpret the legislation in such a way that it is compatible with section 3 of the Convention. Further details of Human Rights considerations can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's Public Rights of Way Advice Note No. 19.

5. Legal Framework

- 5.1 The Surveying Authority must make an Order on its own initiative if it discovers evidence which shows that a right of way which is not shown on the map and statement subsists or is reasonably alleged to subsist.
- 5.2 Bath and North East Somerset Council, as Surveying Authority, is under a statutory duty, imposed by Section 53(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to keep the DM&S under continuous review. Section 53(2)(b) states:

“As regards every definitive map and statement, the surveying authority shall...keep the map and statement under continuous review and as soon as reasonably practicable after the occurrence...of any of those events, by order make such modifications to the map and statement as appear to them to be requisite in consequence of the occurrence of that event”.

- 5.3 The “events” referred to above are set out in section 53(3). The event relevant to this report is set out in section 53(3)(c)(i) as follows:

“The discovery by the authority of evidence which (when considered with all other relevant evidence available to them) shows “that a right of way which is not shown in the map and statement subsists or is reasonably alleged to subsist over land in the area to which the map relates...”

- 5.4 The meaning of “reasonably alleged” was considered in *Bagshaw and Norton* [1994]¹ where Owen J. stated that:

“Whether an allegation is reasonable or not will, no doubt, depend on a number of circumstances and I am certainly not seeking to declare as law any decisions of fact. However, if the evidence from witnesses as to uses is conflicting but, reasonably accepting one side and reasonably rejecting the other, the right would be shown to exist then, it would seem to me, to be reasonable to allege such right.”

- 5.5 The Authority must make an Order on its own initiative if it discovers evidence which justifies the making of an Order and such applications must be determined in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 15 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 5.6 Evidence of use by the public can be sufficient to raise a presumption of dedication under section 31 of the Highways Act 1980 (“the 1980 Act”) or at common law. Section 31(1) of the 1980 Act state that:

“Where a way over any land, other than a way of such a character that use of it by the public could not give rise at common law to any presumption of dedication, has been actually enjoyed by the

¹ R v SSE ex parte Bagshaw and Norton [1994] 68P & CR402

public as of right and without interruption for a full period of 20 years, the way is to be deemed to have been dedicated as a highway unless there is sufficient evidence that there was no intention during that period to dedicate it."

- 5.7 For a way to be deemed to have been dedicated as a public right of way at common law it must have been used by the public for a period which is sufficient to constitute evidence of an intention by the landowner to dedicate the way as public. The facts, taken as whole, must be such that the rightful inference to be drawn from them was that there was an intention to dedicate the way as public. Use must be without force, secrecy or permission (i.e. 'as of right') and each case turns on whether the facts indicate an intention to dedicate.
- 5.8 Documentary evidence is often considered in determining applications for DMMOs. Section 32 of the 1980 Act states:

"A court or other tribunal, before determining whether a way has or has not been dedicated as a highway, or the date on which such dedication, if any, took place, shall take into consideration any map, plan or history of the locality or other relevant document which is tendered in evidence, and shall give such weight thereto as the court or tribunal considers justified by the circumstances, including the antiquity of the tendered document, the status of the person by whom and the purpose for which it was made or compiled, and the custody in which it has been kept and from which it is produced."

6. Consultations

- 6.1 Research began with the 73 possible paths already acknowledged in PROW records; an additional three paths were added during desk-based research (Paths A, B and C) and another six were added following site visits (Paths D, E, F, G, H and I). Prior to the initial consultation, 27 paths were removed from the project in line with the Definitive Map Plan Working Document, outlined at Point 1.8 in Appendix 1. Of the possible paths removed from the consultation list, 16 were found to be footways or access to properties, seven were blocked, two were not in existence on the ground, one was a cul-de-sac route and one is included in a scheme outside of the project.
- 6.2 The following groups were consulted - Ward Councillors, local and national user groups, other B&NES Services, land owners and adjoining property holders.
- 6.3 The Ward Councillors for Odd Down, Combe Down, Moorlands, Southdown, Widcombe & Lyncombe and Bathavon South were sent a map and list of the 55 paths included in the consultation in December 2024. They were invited to comment on the list and to add any paths they considered to be missing.

- 6.4 Local and national user groups and other B&NES Services were consulted on the list of 55 paths in February 2025 by email. A response was received from the Bloomfield Residents Association. The response can be found in Appendix 4 – Path Summary.
- 6.5 Attempts were made to contact all owners or occupiers of the paths being considered for addition to the DM&S in this report. Land Registry searches were undertaken for all paths not completely on Authority owned land. Landowners and adjoining landowners were consulted by letter or email between January and March 2025.
- 6.6 Documentary and user evidence was gathered for each of the paths included in the consultation and summarised. The following documents were consulted:
- Cotterell's 1852 Map of Bath
 - Historic Maps available on the Authority's GIS Mapping:
 - Bath Town Plan, 1885
 - OS Mapping 1887 – 1891
 - OS Mapping 1901 – 1905
 - OS Mapping 1920 – 1933
 - OS Mapping 1933 – 1936
 - Historic Maps published by Ordnance Survey and related bodies, including the War Office (ca. 1840s-1960s), available online from the National Library of Scotland.
 - Bath City Engineer's Survey, 1957
 - The Authority's List of Streets
 - Previous Legal Orders

7. Officer Comments

- 7.1 Documentary and limited user evidence was gathered for each of the paths included in the consultation. The information is presented in full at Appendix 4. A recommendation for each path is summarised below in paragraphs 7.2 and 7.3.
- 7.2 Officers are satisfied that the evidence gathered for the following paths is sufficient to make and confirm, if no objections are received, Orders under section 53(3)(c)(i) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The recommendation for these 54 paths is to record them as 52² public footpaths and add them to the DM&S:

Path Numbers

AQ80; AQ80a; AQ82a; AQ82b; AQ82c; AQ82d; AQ83a; AQ83b; AQ84, BQ30 & Path J; AQ85; AQ85a; AQ87a; AQ87b; AQ89; AQ90; AQ162 & BQ16; AQ179a; AQ179b; AQ507; AQ516a; AQ516b; AQ517; AQ520; AQ522a; AQ522b; AQ524a; AQ524c; AQ525; AQ528; AQ544; AQ585; AQ586; AQ587; AQ588; AQ589;

² Paths AQ84, BQ30 and Path J are segments of a longer footpath and will be recorded as one continuous public footpath.

BQ11; BQ12; BQ13; BQ17; BQ21; BQ29; BQ53; BQ9; CQ60;
Path B; Path C; Path D; Path E; Path F; Path G; Path H; Path I.

- 7.3 Officers will not include Path K in Orders made at this time for Odd Down Ward. Path F and Path K cross Rush Hill Open Space in a similar alignment and were included in the consultation with the understanding that only one of the paths would be recommended for inclusion in a legal order. Both paths will remain available to the public at all times. This does not prejudice any public rights which may have been accrued over time on Path K.
- 7.4 After analysis of the submitted evidence, Officers are satisfied that the relevant legislation (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 53(3)(c)(i)) has been met and that Orders should be made for 52 public rights of way in Odd Down Ward, Bath.

8. Risk Management

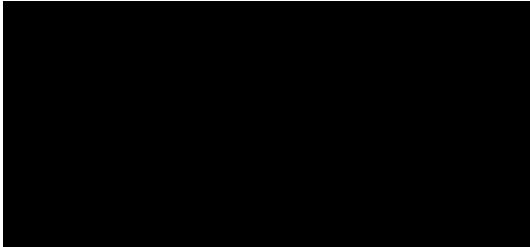
- 8.1 There are no significant risks associated with making of an Order.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The Authority has collected both user and documentary evidence concerning each of the paths. Taken together, it is possible to make Orders under section 53(3)(c)(i) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provided the relevant tests are met.
- 9.2 The Team Manager - Highways Maintenance & Drainage has to decide what are the correct facts and, on the basis of those facts, whether a right of way is reasonably alleged to exist along the paths recommended for inclusion in a DMMO.
- 9.3 Officers are satisfied that, there is both a reasonable allegation and that on the balance of probabilities, the documentary and / or user evidence gathered for AQ80; AQ80a; AQ82a; AQ82b; AQ82c; AQ82d; AQ83a; AQ83b; AQ84, BQ30 & Path J; AQ85; AQ85a; AQ87a; AQ87b; AQ89; AQ90; AQ162 & BQ16; AQ179a; AQ179b; AQ507; AQ516a; AQ516b; AQ517; AQ520; AQ522a; AQ522b; AQ524a; AQ524c; AQ525; AQ528; AQ544; AQ585; AQ586; AQ587; AQ588; AQ589; BQ11; BQ12; BQ13; BQ17; BQ21; BQ29; BQ53; BQ9; CQ60; Path B; Path C; Path D; Path E; Path F; Path G; Path H and Path I is sufficient to conclude that they should be recorded as public footpaths and that a DMMO should be made to that effect. It may be that higher rights exist, but these have not been proven at this time. The Team Manager - Highways Maintenance & Drainage is asked to authorise the making of DMMOs for the paths listed above. Plans identifying the proposed routes can be found in Appendix 2, labelled as Parts 1 to 52.
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AUTHORISATION

Under the authorisation granted by the Council on 21st July 2022, the Team Leader: Place (Legal & Democratic Services) is hereby requested to seal Definitive Map Modification Orders to record public rights of way as detailed in the Decision Plans (Appendix 2) and Decision Schedules (Appendix 3).



Dated: 17th November 2025

Craig Jackson
Team Manager - Highway Maintenance & Drainage