

Lancaster Ramblers' 2025 AGM: Footpath Secretary's Report

In 2025, the status quo was the same as last year with regards to Footpath check walks and local authority meetings - Lancashire Local Access Forum and Public Rights of Way Action Forum were conducted twice per year at County Hall, Preston; the RA Lancashire Footpath and Access Council meetings were conducted via Zoom or in Preston and again there were no meetings of the Yorkshire Dales Access on Foot Advisory Group. The Ramblers Lake District Area Footpath Committee meetings were held three times per year in Kendal. All these meetings collectively deal with area activities, Lancashire, Lakes and YDNP, the ECP, local transport plans, etc. and not just Lancaster region activities.

Footpath problems have continued to be reported to LCC. Report acknowledgments from LCC are now sent very regularly but clearance reports are again only sporadic. The new data system, mentioned the previous two years and based on the LoveCleanStreets app., still does not include paths and so is not used.

This year (Nov'24 to Oct'25), we reported 61 problems (up from 53 last year). In addition, a further 65 issues were noted (up from 44 last year). Reported and noted problems were 57 for Lancashire, 17 from our six Westmorland & Furness/YDNP parishes (includes a check walk) and 7 from 'other' areas, Lancashire south of our area and North Yorkshire. The most common problems were stiles (63%) – broken, difficult or blocked – and missing signs/waymarks (16%), followed by overgrown vegetation and waymarking. The majority of problem reports come from our Footpath Check Walks - there have been nine this year.

Problems for Lancashire as a whole are not likely to have fallen. There is no data for 2024 or 2025, the last value known is almost 13000 from April 2023 obtained from a Freedom of Information request. The existing data system, however, is known to be unreliable. The LCC rota for replacing / repairing of missing/broken roadside sign posts is way behind schedule. Lancaster area should have been done in the second half of 2023 but still hasn't. It is likely that the rota will effectively terminate.

Where several path problem reports have been received for a parish, often after a footpath check walk, the information has been sent to the relevant parish clerk for discussion at their next Parish meeting. It is typically acknowledged but very little feedback is received.

Thanks to those who regularly report path issues and regularly take part in the footpath check walks. The contact for our footpath check-walks is Jean Walker at jeanwalker281@gmail.com. Please report footpath issues to Jean or to the footpath secretary at footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk. As usual, the more details and a photo the better. LCC really appreciates a photo.

Neil Herbert & Jean Walker

Path Maintenance

In 2025 the path maintenance team has been active in Caton and Slyne-with-Hest in collaboration with the parish councils and five of us, along with local parish volunteers, have done work, predominantly vegetation clearance and waymarking. The paths in Scotforth have been re-surveyed and work done as necessary. I should like to thank Gareth Thomas who has taken on the role of Path Warden for this parish. One of our key members, Alan Jones, died earlier this year and this is just one of the areas where he is being sorely missed. LCC and RA central office (Path Improvement Tracker) have been kept up to date with proceedings. LCC's Local Delivery Scheme has been suspended for 2025. The Maintenance Team needs new members so if you would like to volunteer for this, or as a Path Warden, please contact Neil Herbert at footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk .

Neil Herbert

Lost Ways Report

Lancaster Ramblers Lost Ways group continues to work on researching forgotten paths to bring them back into the Public Rights of Way network.

Our small group meetings are mostly by zoom and Neil and Brian are still taking part in the National RA 'DLYW' meetings. The DLYW team at Ramblers Central Office is now severely depleted, and their Zoom meetings are only spasmodic. Neil is still coordinator for the Lancashire Area and Brian for Cumbria. Two new researchers have joined the Lancashire group based in Burnley and Preston areas. Neil also takes part in the 2026.io on-line forum. The Deregulation protocols due in 2015 have still not appeared. Will they ever appear?

We continue to work on routes and submit via the Ramblers Association. Progress has been slow unfortunately. However, one of our routes in Tatham, Tatham Rectory, worked on by Anne Wilson, is currently under investigation by LCC. The Application was submitted in December 2020.

Anyone wishing to join the group is very welcome. Please contact Neil Herbert (nandh@herbert.myzen.co.uk).

As you may well know, I am leaving the committee but will still be involved with the Path Maintenance group, Lost Ways and Slow Ways. Please continue to use the footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk e-mail address as above, it will still be active.

Neil Herbert