

NETWORK OPPORTUNITIES / UNRECORDED WAYS

The Ramblers, the Open Spaces Society and the British Horse Society have recently written to the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, setting out our position that the 2026 cut-off date should be postponed (in England) setting out reasons why including the delay of the Deregulation Act (which is designed to improve the process for claiming historic rights of way) and the lack of time now to review and improve processes associated with the Deregulation Act.

Also mentioned was the lack of local authority resources, especially considering they are processing claims under the unreformed system.

There was a debate in the House of Lords on this subject following a question raised by Lord Greaves and most of the peers who spoke supported postponement and the hard work of volunteers was particularly recognised.

We have been trying now largely reconstructed the files previously managed by Stan Warren and have decoded his markings. The URW sub group has met twice deciding priorities amongst the identified unrecorded and therefore unprotected routes. There are still about 60 of these from which volunteers can pick things of interest or convenient locality.

We have also had another training session at the records office and now have 15 volunteers working in cases to varying extents. We are now to suggest where they can best employ their efforts/ I have now visited most of the volunteers in small groups and this is more fruitful than trying to get them all to one meeting although we have scheduled a full meeting in September.

We have had one of our meetings in the afternoon and the other early evening to allow those working to participate.

It is felt that the buddy system works well as some are more experienced than others and some wanted to study the record where others wanted to walk searching for physical evidence.

It seems that people are happier tackling bite sized chunks of work rather than seeing a claim through, and as such it will be down to me or others of the core team to actually lodge claims. This month we have lodged the claim for Barrow/Cotes and another at Islay Walton.

MG has been working on the master index and we can now share the up to date version with volunteers. I have also pulled together all the other files, eliminating duplications and old versions and can also let volunteers have these sources of information.

The Ramblers nationally have been working with the BHS on a national data base which is still evolving When the end results are in we expect to transfer our data onto this at least for active cases but for the time being we are maintaining our own.

There is nothing else to report on Network Opportunities at this stage.

Roy Denney