

# A toolkit for improving your local paths

Developing active and resilient  
communities...

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# Introduction...

Wiltshire's public rights of way network is a vital asset for the county and extends over 3,800 miles. The network is used by people of all ages for things like exercise, getting to schools, shops and other facilities or exploring Wiltshire's countryside. It is impossible for Wiltshire Council to keep up with everything that needs doing so urgent or high value tasks are prioritised. We have many volunteers who generously offer their time to take on tasks the council can't, sorting problems and looking after their local paths for the enjoyment of local residents and visitors. The rights of way team can provide support, inspiration and advice to these volunteer groups. Some of Wiltshire Council's Area Boards also support the rights of way network by providing funding for upgrades.

This toolkit sets out how people with an interest in their local paths can get involved, including:

- How to gather support from like-minded residents and community groups.
- Practical advice to start a local group and keep the momentum going.
- Key contacts that can help with advice, funding and local information.

There are lots local communities can do to help improve and maintain Wiltshire's rights of way. We hope this guide will inspire and equip you to work with us in our beautiful countryside.



# The benefits...

The health benefits of staying active are well known and the rights of way network across the county offers the perfect opportunity to do this. As well as using the network, there are plenty of good reasons to start a voluntary group and get involved with maintaining and improving the network.



## **Community in control**

Choose your own local priorities



## **Paths for all**

Make improvements that allow more people to enjoy the paths



## **Connect your village**

Develop links to local facilities such as schools, shops and neighbouring communities



## **Encourage visitors to walk, cycle and horse ride**

Boost local trade in pubs and B&Bs



## **Build community spirit**

Meet like-minded people and a sense of neighbourliness



## **Explore your surroundings**

Enjoy the beautiful Wiltshire countryside



## **Get healthy and stay healthy**

A sociable physical activity with heavy and light tasks



## **Learn new skills**

Build confidence and learn practical skills





# Volunteer tasks...

The Rights of Way team can offer advice on completing the tasks below. 'How to' guides for specific tasks will be added to the [Footpath toolkit area](#) and updated regularly.



**Clearance**



**Kissing gates**



**Foot bridge**



**Waymarking**



**Surfacing**



**Circular walks**



**Audits**



**Signage**



**Walking groups**



# Getting started...

Every community is different meaning projects will develop in different ways. There is a full step by step guide to forming your group in the [Footpath toolkit area](#).

**Where to start:** Talk to your parish council, let the rights of way team know that you are interested and request a definitive map from them

**Set up a group:** form a small group of interested residents, audit your paths, agree a list of tasks that meet local needs, set a work programme with dates and rights of way team input, consider applying to your area board for tools and a first aid kit

**Doing a task:** Identify a solution to the problem, consult the rights of way team, seek landowner consent, set a date and publicise to recruit local volunteers, arrange materials/equipment for the day, risk assess the location and take plenty of photos

**Keeping it going:** Communicate good news and successes, Keep in touch with volunteers, report back to the parish council, promote future sessions and continue undertaking footpath audits

## Appendices:

A – Launch event poster  
B – Volunteer footpath audit form  
C – Landowner consent request  
D – Risk assessment

E – Tick awareness  
F – Activity day poster  
G – Activity day sign in form  
H – Volunteer health declaration





# Case studies...

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## **Footpath group independent of parish council**

A village with a long history of self-help. They formed a footpath committee many years ago, separate from the parish council but with a good working relationship. A planned programme of light clearing and waymarking is undertaken annually as well as some improvement work. Problems that they cannot deal with, such as fallen trees, are reported to the rights of way team. A clearly marked and accessible network of paths is the result.

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## **Large village or town**

A large village has formed a paths group comprising of both parish councillors and independent members. Initially they surveyed all their paths utilising the public rights of way maps issued by Wiltshire Council. Many small repairs to stiles and gates have been undertaken by members of the group, contacting landowners directly for consents and permissions. A list of priorities and aspirations has been drawn up. Funding was sought from the respective Area Board to upgrade a popular path to facilitate disabled access. Leaflets of local walks are being produced and sold. As a consequence local people and the many visitors to the area are able to enjoy a well maintained network of paths.

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## **Small village**

A small group of volunteers, with the blessing of the parish council, got together to review all their paths. They identified a substantial amount of work to be done. With the support of the rights of way team and the local area board, the group have the materials and practical assistance they need to complete the work. Encouraged by their progress, more projects and possibilities have been identified and links to neighbouring parishes have been improved. These accessibility works are vital as this small village with no pub or shop of its own. A parish circular walk is planned which will be clearly signed from the centre of the village and waymarked.

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## **Walking club**

This parish has had a long established walking club. They are now involved in clearance, repairs and improvements to their rights of way network. A good dialogue with local land owners has been established, contributing to this parish having one of the best maintained paths networks in the county.

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# Useful contacts across Wiltshire...

	Roles
<p><b>Rights of way team</b></p> <p>Wiltshire Council Rights of Way Wardens:            Nick Cowen (South)            Stephen Leonard (North)            Paul Millard (Central)  <a href="mailto:rightsofway@wiltshire.gov.uk">rightsofway@wiltshire.gov.uk</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling &amp; encouraging volunteer activity on the rights of way network</li> <li>• Making sure that rights of way are free from obstructions</li> <li>• Clearance of vegetation growing from the surface of the path</li> <li>• Signposting rights of way where they leave a road and waymarking the route where appropriate</li> <li>• Maintaining bridges over natural watercourses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wiltshire Council Community Engagement Managers</b></p> <p><a href="#">Find your CEM</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help and facilitate communities to tackle local issues</li> <li>• Help and advice with applying for grant funding from area boards</li> <li>• Work with councillors at area board meetings to solve local issues</li> <li>• Sharing good practice</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wiltshire Councillor</b></p> <p><a href="#">Find your councillor</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leader, championing local projects</li> <li>• Effective liaison between community and council</li> </ul>
<p><b>Parish Council</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with local groups to identify tasks required</li> <li>• Assisting with obtaining landowner consent</li> <li>• Assisting with volunteer recruitment</li> <li>• Local communications</li> </ul>
<p><b>Useful stakeholders</b></p>	<p>There is lots of support out there. For other useful contacts and potential sources of funding and advice please view the 'Useful stakeholders' document in <a href="#">Footpath toolkit area</a>.</p>

