

The Ramblers Big Pathwatch

Frequently asked questions published by the Ramblers.

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The Big Pathwatch is coming! This summer the Ramblers is launching an ambitious new project, to coincide with our 80th year. More information will be coming to the website very soon, but in the meantime here are the answers to some frequently asked questions:

What is the Big Pathwatch?

The Big Pathwatch is an exciting new project funded by the Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust. This summer we will carry out a survey of all the paths (rights of way) in England and Wales, and next spring we'll be publishing our findings. We want to celebrate paths and the things that make walking great, as well as highlighting the problems walkers encounter.

Why are you running this project?

There is currently no national picture of the path network. Using a consistent approach to collect data across England and Wales will allow us to compare highway authorities with one another and identify patterns, for example, whether there is a correlation between the areas with the greatest problems, and the areas with the greatest funding cuts. The survey will provide reliable data on the most frequently occurring path problems in England and Wales, which will help to inform future Ramblers campaigns. We also want to use this project to engage a wider audience with our work and encourage more people to care about their local paths.

Where is the project running?

We're surveying all the paths in England and Wales, but anyone in the UK will be able to take part. We investigated the possibility of running the project in Scotland but due to different rights of way and access law there it would not have been possible to run the project using the same methodology and technology.

When will the survey be open?

The survey will open in Summer 2015.

Do I need to have experience of path surveying to take part?

No! We'll provide guidance to help participants complete the survey and know what to look out for. All participants will be able to download a free smart phone app which will make it easy for them to upload their responses during the walk. Alternatively you can take part using a paper survey, and upload your responses to the website later.

Can we rely on data collected by non-trained volunteers?

To achieve our ambition for this project - surveying every path, over a relatively short period of time- it would not be possible to use trained volunteers alone. We have given careful consideration to the wording of the survey questions, and guidance for participants, so that responses are as consistent and reliable as possible.

How does this relate to the surveys my Ramblers group or area already does?

We know that many areas and groups conduct their own surveys, and these provide valuable evidence to help improve paths in those respective areas. What is needed, however, is a picture of the entire path network. This will allow us compare one authority with another and give us an overview of the condition of paths on a national scale. We hope that the Big Pathwatch data will reinforce and corroborate the information gathered in local surveys and we'd be interested to hear from you if this is the case (or not!)

Why are you only surveying rights of way that feature on the OS map?

There's no national data set of all the paths in England and Wales – this is recorded at local authority level (sometimes on paper only), and it would have been a near-impossible task to consolidate all these records into one database, for the purposes of this project. Rights of way that don't feature on the definitive map are an even greater 'unknown' and we are addressing the need for these paths to be added to the definite map through a separate campaign ("Don't Lose Your Way").

How does this project relate to other Ramblers campaigns?

We hope that the publicity the Big Pathwatch will attract will allow us to highlight other relevant Ramblers campaigns, such as Paths in Crisis, and Don't Lose Your Way.

How did you decide which survey methodology to use?

We looked at previous rights of way surveys conducted by Ramblers volunteers, Local Authorities and the Countryside Commission and asked for input from a range of stakeholders on how to carry out a survey on this scale. When deciding the methodology to use we have striven to achieve a balance between gathering robust, useful data, and keeping the survey straightforward and enjoyable, so that many people are encouraged to take part.

Will the survey consider usability from a horse rider or cyclist's point of view?

No. Though we will be checking all rights of way, it will be from a walker's perspective only. However, improving the condition of the paths for walkers will inevitably improve usability for all users in many cases.

How are you informing Authorities about the project?

We are communicating with Rights of Way staff via organisations such as IPROW (Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management), ADEPT (Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport) and the LGiU (Local Government Information Unit). At a local level we'd encourage all areas to ensure that their authority is aware of the project.

Who has given input into the development and planning of the project?

A steering group of advisers, including someone who led previous Countryside Agency and Countryside Commission rights of way surveys, a DEFRA Director, and a Ramblers Board Member. We have also consulted with a number of volunteers and other key stakeholders.

I'd like to get involved - how can I find out more?

You can sign up to a Big Pathwatch workshop at one of our Volunteer Development Days over the coming months, see www.ramblersvolunteerdays.eventbrite.com to book your place. For other enquiries please email bigpathwatch@ramblersweb.zendesk.com

- See more at: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/news/2015/january/the-big-pathwatch.aspx#sthash.xD43OHeX.dpuf>

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The Big Pathwatch





Guidance

We're delighted that you've decided to take part in the Big Pathwatch!

Before you get started please take some time to read the following information.

WHERE TO WALK

The paths we're interested in are **public rights of way**, which are maintainable by Highway Authorities (in most cases the County Council). These are shown in green on the Ordnance Survey (OS) map provided:

-  Footpath
-  Bridleway
-  Byway open to all traffic
-  Restricted byway

It's important that you walk all rights of way within your chosen 1km x 1km grid square and that you try to follow the exact route on the map. It may be waymarked in yellow, blue, plum or red as below (but often the waymarks are missing or worn so don't rely on these):



Footpath: Open to walkers only.



Bridleway: Open to walkers, horse-riders and cyclists.



Restricted byway: Open to walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and horse-drawn vehicles.



Byway open to all traffic: Open to walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, horse-drawn vehicles and motor vehicles.

NB The OS map is not the same as the definitive map of rights of way, which is held by every Highway Authority. This means that occasionally the path shown on the OS map in fact no

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longer exists as a right of way. If you **know** this is the case for a path shown in your square, there is no need to include it in the survey, otherwise please survey all paths in the square as they appear on the OS map.

TIP: To brush up your map reading skills visit:
www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/navigation/map-reading.aspx

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

We want to know about what you encounter while you're walking the paths, and you'll be able to select from a list of highlights and a list problems, grouped into categories (see below). If you can't find what you're looking for, choose the most appropriate category and select 'other'.

When you report a problem you will also be asked to tell us what effect this had on your walk – whether it was an inconvenience or a serious problem. This will help us to understand which issues have the greatest impact on walkers. When you're considering the effect of a problem it may be helpful to think about the location of the path – for example a muddy path in a field might be an inconvenience, but not a serious problem as you'll probably be wearing boots. But a very muddy path in a town or village that prevents access to local amenities will present more of a serious problem.

If you're using the app, you'll be able to take a photograph of the things you record (please do, it's really helpful). If you're not using the app you can still take a photograph using your phone or another camera and upload it to the website when you submit your survey.

If you're surveying a path you know well, be sure to report only on what you encounter that day (even if it's different to the norm).

Positive features

Welcoming...	People
	Signs and information
	Other
Attractive view / landscape	Coastal
	Woodland
	Open country
	Towns / city
	Other
Wildlife (flora)	Trees
	Flowers
	Fungi

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	Other plants
Wildlife (fauna)	Deer
	Small mammals
	Birds
	Butterflies
	Insects
	Other animals
Interesting / useful features	Buildings, statues and monuments
	Natural features
	Lakes or other bodies of water
	A good pub or tea shop
	Toilets
	Bench
	Other

Problems

Intimidating....	Person or people
	Bull(s)
	Cow(s)
	Horse(s)
	Dog(s)
	Other
Bridges, Gates & Stiles	Bridge - unsafe or otherwise in need of repair
	Gate - locked
	Gate - unsafe or otherwise in need of repair
	Stile - unsafe or otherwise in need of repair
	Furniture missing - no means of crossing field boundary, river etc
	Other
Signs	Missing, incorrect or unclear at a junction with a road
	Missing, incorrect or unclear along the route (so that the way is unclear)
	Intimidating or off putting signs relating to use of the path
	Other
Path surface	Muddy (coming over top of footwear)
	Flooded (water coming over top of footwear)
	Potholed
	Ploughed

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	Other
Road crossings	No safe means of crossing a road
	Other
Obstructions	Barbed wire across path
	Barbed wire very close to path edge or crossing
	Electric fencing across path
	Electric fencing very close to path edge or crossing
	Fallen tree blocking path (see guidance)
	Overhanging vegetation obstructing path
	Undergrowth obstructing path
	Crops growing on path
Other	

BEFORE YOU SET OUT

- Look carefully at the map and identify the best route to take in order to walk all the paths in your square. You may find that the easiest route takes you outside of your square and back in again, or you may find it easiest to double back on yourself. (**TIP: If you'd like to break up the survey into shorter routes, you don't have to complete it over one day**).
- Work out how many kilometres you'll walk (there's a handy tool on the website to help you) to give you an idea of how long the survey will take to complete. As a rough guide, the average adult can walk about 4km per hour, but this can vary according to many factors, including your fitness level. If you're walking in hilly or mountainous areas, you'll need to allow more time to cover the same distance. When you submit your survey we'll ask you to tell us how many km of path you surveyed.
- Check the weather forecast and wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Paths can be muddy, so boots or sturdy footwear are recommended, unless you're going to be walking only in urban areas.
- It's a good idea to take a charged mobile phone with you (but don't rely on having 3G/4G or phone signal!) **TIP: You can still use the Big Pathwatch app to record your survey responses without internet.**
- If you're walking on your own, tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back.

WHILE YOU'RE ON YOUR WALK

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We know you'll be paying attention to the survey but don't forget to keep your eyes and ears open, especially at level crossings or road junctions! On some paths you may encounter cyclists, horse riders or horse drawn carriages. Wild animals, farm animals and horses can behave unpredictably if you get too close, especially if they're with their young – so give them plenty of space.

Follow the [Countryside Code](#):

- Respect other people
- Protect the natural environment
- Enjoy the outdoors

If there's something blocking the way of the path

If it's safe to do so you can walk around the obstacle, but you must return to the path as quickly as possible.

If someone asks you what you are doing

Be polite and tell them about the project. As a member of the public it's your right to use the path, however please don't wander off the path as it may run through private property.

AFTER THE SURVEY

If you used the paper survey don't forget to go back to the website and upload your responses. Why not survey another square!

Whether you're exploring somewhere new or stepping out on well-loved paths, we hope that by taking part in the Big Pathwatch you'll have a great time, and discover things you may never have noticed before! You'll also be making an important contribution to our campaign to protect and improve our vital path network.

The Big Pathwatch - Draft survey questions

Problems

Type	Detail	Effect (inconvenient OR unusable)
Intimidating / off putting....	Person or people	
	Bull(s)	
	Cow(s)	
	Horse(s)	
	Dog(s)	
	Other	
Bridges, Gates & Stiles	Bridge - unsafe or otherwise in need of repair	
	Gate - locked	
	Gate - unsafe or otherwise in need of repair	
	Stile - unsafe or otherwise in need of repair	
	Furniture missing - no means of crossing field boundary, river etc	
	Other	
Signs	Missing, incorrect or unclear at a junction with a road	
	Missing, incorrect or unclear along the route (so that the way is unclear)	
	Intimidating or off putting signs relating to use of the path	
	Other	
Path surface	Muddy (coming over top of footwear)	
	Flooded (water coming over top of footwear)	
	Potholed	
	Ploughed	
	Other	
Road crossings	No safe means of crossing a road	
	Other	
Obstructions	Barbed wire across path	
	Barbed wire very close to path edge or crossing	
	Electric fencing across path	
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	Fallen tree blocking path (see guidance)	
	Overhanging vegetation obstructing path	
	Undergrowth obstructing path	
	Crops growing on path	
	Other	

Positive Features / Highlights

Type	Detail
Welcoming...	People
	Signs and information
	Other
Attractive view / landscape	Coastal
	Woodland
	Open country
	Towns / city
	Other
Wildlife (flora)	Trees
	Flowers
	Fungi
	Other plants
Wildlife (fauna)	Deer
	Small mammals
	Birds
	Butterflies
	Insects
	Other animals
Interesting / useful features	Buildings, statues and monuments
	Natural features
	Lakes or other bodies of water
	A good pub or tea shop
	Toilets
	Bench
	Other

Questions at the end of the survey:

What date did you complete the survey?	
How many kilometres of path did you walk in the square?	
Did anyone else take part with you?	(scrolling list from 'none' - '10 or more')
(If answer to above is 1 or more), Were they.... (choose best fit)	Friends
	Family members
	Part of a Ramblers walking group
	Part of another organised walking group
	With a DofE or other youth group
	Other
Overall the paths in this square were....	Well maintained and signposted throughout
	Adequately maintained but with some improvements or repairs needed
	Poorly maintained and difficult / impossible to use
How much did you enjoy your walk today?	Not at all
	Not much
	Somewhat
	Quite a lot
	Very much
Please tick here if you're taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award	