

Rural Village Services Group – Case Studies

Eccleshall Parish Council - Footpaths Maintenance Scheme



Project aim

Eccleshall Parish Council has a large number of public Rights of Way throughout its parish, many of which are well used but suffered from a lack of funding with regards to maintaining access and a lack of signage, due to reduced funding from the County Council, the lead authority responsible for maintaining these Rights of Way. During Covid, residents were restricted to walks within their local area and were keen to explore the rights of way within the parish, many of which were suffering from a lack of maintenance.

Project actions

The Parish Council liaised with Staffordshire County Council who welcomed our proposal to fund a self employed footpaths operative who would undertake works to maintain the most used Rights of Way within the parish. Tasks undertaken include the cutting back of vegetation, repairing and replacing stiles and fingerposts, and installing new signage (with permissions). There have been some larger jobs which require more than one person, and the County Rights of Way team have worked with us to arrange for volunteer support.

Schemes that are linked to this include the provision of additional signage along Rights of Way in Bishop's Wood. The council identified the need for additional signage and produced a proposal to identify the requirements. The County Rights of Way officer was able to deliver this scheme in conjunction with Amey's community volunteer scheme.

The scheme has also led onto the production of a Circular walks booklet, which has been very well received. The footpaths promoted in these walks are those which we prioritise for regular maintenance.

The booklet can be downloaded at <https://eccleshallparishcouncil.co.uk/local-information/footpaths-and-walks/>

Costs and timescale

The Footpaths maintenance scheme started in 2020, and the Council sets aside an annual budget funded by the precept. This years anticipated expenditure is around £1800 (excluding costs for production of the booklet)

Outcomes

There are many keen walkers in the area which find the routes are now much more accessible and clearly signposted. We now also find walking groups from other areas come to the parish to walk. It can be tricky to identify landowners when you are looking for permission to undertake maintenance to paths that are on their land, and there were some instances where landowners do not install electric fences with the correct access points.

Key learning

For a relatively small amount of money, we have been able to greatly improve the rights of way access for our residents, and working with the County Rights of Way team, been able to access additional support to complete larger pieces of work, which would have otherwise remained an issue. Being able to establish collaborative working, and finding a contractor who is capable and enthusiastic has been a great asset to the scheme.

Next steps

We are considering if there are any further walks brochures that would be of benefit, and will continue to work with authorities to improve our rights of way network.