

Dear Local Government Election Candidate,

Our Island Footpaths – A Valuable Asset or a Playground for Ramblers?

Isle of Wight Ramblers want to see our footpath network prosper and develop for the benefit of residents and our local economy. We are supporting our Council officers who are responsible for caring for the 500 mile network. We are the eyes and ears and report problems, and we also assist with repairs.

We are improving the system by obtaining grant funding and have replaced 165 stiles with gates through our Donate a Gate scheme. This means that more people of all abilities, can access our wonderful countryside. And we know that if people regularly walk, then their health and well-being is transformed resulting in less demands on health and social care.

But we are alarmed to see that the current administration has proposed the dramatic reduction in spending on footpaths. This means that there seems to be no funds allocated to maintain inland bridges, stiles and other structures.

With Local Elections being held on 4 May, we want to know how you feel about these proposals, and we will give this information to our members.

A New 10 year Rights of Way Improvement Plan

A new plan is being published this summer. The IOW Ramblers has submitted a short paper (attached) which outlines our ideas to progressively improve how the network is both used and developed.

The English Coastal Path

Our successful campaign for a new truly coastal path is coming to fruition. Natural England has now started their project to establish a complete Coast Path with improved access to the shoreline around the Isle of Wight by the end of 2019. In particular this will provide new footpath opportunities between East Cowes and Wootton, from St Lawrence to St Catherine's, around Newtown Bay and along the Medina. The new route will be set up and maintained to national trail standards and centrally funded.

The IOW Ramblers has led a group of recreational users to survey our coast and provide information and recommendations to Natural England as they commence their project (See attached Walktalk Newsletter)

Council ROW Budget

The current budget is set to be reduced. It is difficult to see how the Council can meet its legal obligations to maintain an unobstructed network.

Your opportunity to Comment

Please let us know what you think about these proposals by Saturday 29th April. We will then email our Members with your comments prior to the election.

Yours sincerely

Michael Slater, IW Ramblers Area Chairman