

WEST LONDON RAMBLERS – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 7TH DECEMBER 2021

FOOTPATH SECRETARY'S REPORT

PATH CHECKING

There was an excellent response to the email sent to all members in November 2020 seeking more volunteers for path checking.

We now have 20 volunteer path checkers, with two positions vacant (to cover paths in Northolt and Southall). On average, each checker is covering 12 paths. The current position is:

- London Borough of Ealing: 146 paths have been checked, out of a total of 186 (that is 79%).
- London Borough of Hounslow: all 77 paths have been checked.

The main problems identified are litter, fly tipping and inadequate signage.

Litter and fly tipping can be really serious where a path is divided between two boroughs. Two such paths have been cleared so far thanks to the efforts of the Ealing based volunteer group LAGER Can (Local Action Group – Ealing Residents Can), in Northolt and Norwood Green, with participation of one or two WLG members.

Further litter picking experience was gained when 5 WLG members supported the Friends of the Grand Union Canal in clearing litter from a towpath on part of the London Loop. There are some photos of this on the Group's facebook page.

We were able to borrow litter picking sticks and hoops (for holding bags open), and bags were supplied.

LITTER PICKING

Litter tends to discourage people from using a path, and attracts the dumping of yet more litter, leading to the path eventually becoming disused. This is the exact opposite of what the Ramblers as an organization exists for.

There are lots of paths within the boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow, and I think as Ramblers it is reasonable to confine our attention to the 260 of them which are official Public Rights of Way.

At the last committee meeting it was decided that we, as a Group, should purchase initially 2 sets of picking sticks and hoops, and work either independently or together with other organisations to tackle litter on paths which are PRow's.

We could for example, consider tackling Borough of Hounslow footpaths 55, 56 and 57 in Cranford, which have been identified by our path checkers as having a serious litter problem. This location straddles the border between 2 London boroughs. To do this it will be necessary to have the support of the local councils, and this is being sought.

LOST PATHS

According to the Ramblers website over 49,000 miles of “potentially” lost paths have been identified in England and Wales and marked up on the current OS map, which is on the website.

This work was done by volunteers comparing historical and current maps. The next stages in this process are:

- Prioritise those paths which add the most benefit for people.
- Research individual paths to find out if they can be saved.
- Build applications based on historical evidence.
- Submit applications by 1st January 2026.

Ramblers central office recognise this will require volunteers to have an appropriate skill-set, and they are working on providing guidance and on-line training. Members who are interested are invited to sign up to their mailing list.

Howard Densley
(Footpath Secretary)