

NATIONAL RIGHTS OF WAY MANAGERS' WORKING GROUP

Minutes Wednesday 9th April 2025 from 10:00 – 12:00 Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Pete Hobley	(PH)	SW Group (Chair)
Edwin McWilliam	(EMW)	E Mids Group (Vice Chair)
Mark Hardie	(MH)	Applied Information Group
Taz Hansford	(TH)	National Trust
Kit Allwinter	(KW)	Active Travel England
Andy Mackintosh	(AM)	Natural England
Adrian Walls	(AW)	Wales Group
Becky Fuller	(BF)	W Mids Group
Graham Rusling	(GR)	SE Group & IPROW
Julia Murch	(JM)	DEFRA
Kylie Russell	(KR)	ADEPT
Mike Ogden	(MO)	Northern Group
Richard Cuthbert	(RC)	Eastern Group
Paul Rochfort	(PR)	Staffordshire County Council
Laura Allenet	(LA)	Staffordshire County Council (minute taker)

Apologies:

Hannah Bartram	(HaB)	ADEPT (Chief Operating Officer)
Paul Ballinger	(PB)	DEFRA

TABLE OF ACTIONS

26 July 2023	
1	DEFRA: <i>to circulate drafts of new SIs once drafted??</i>
25 October 2023	
3	ADEPT/IPROW: Need to work together on producing Deregulation Act guidance to help practitioners.
24 January 2024	
10	<p>PH to raise with OS policies around incorrect/ inconsistent mapping re bodies of water.</p> <p>PH to circulate inquiry letter to OS and the OS response. Kate Noss at the OS is discussing the issue internally – response that OS don't</p>

	<p>realign PROW symbol where there are new bodies of water or buildings, but also don't show symbol across existing water/buildings.</p> <p>PH to respond further.</p> <p>DONE</p>
25 Jan 2025	
4	<p>PH to contact SoS with regard to TCPA s247 apps & orders</p> <p>Contact made 3/4/25. Awaiting a full response</p> <p>PH update in Apr – powers proposed to be devolved down to Mayoral authorities?</p>
	<p>All – volunteer required to attend the PINS Specialist Casework Stakeholder meetings. Let PH know if interested</p> <p>DONE – EMW volunteered</p>
5	<p>PH – Prepare ADEPT response to Integrated Transport Call for ideas consultation DONE</p>
9 April 2025	
2	<p>JM – to share workshop notes with the group</p> <p>All – DEFRA still happy to invite any contributions about 'current state of the rights of way network'</p>

1. Welcome/introductions

- Welcome to MH from Applied information Group and TH from National Trust in Dorset who works as Path and Trails Manager
- KA from Active Travel England is also expected to join for MH presentation.
- Staffordshire Council will continue to take minutes

2. Minutes & Matters Arising

- 22nd January 2025 meeting minutes agreed and arising matters on Agenda.

Item 1: Pathways Project

- MH presented the Pathways Project, a new national wayfinding system for walking, wheeling, and cycling.
 - The project aims to create a consistent, high-quality wayfinding system.
 - Highlighted the importance of integrating public rights of way into the system.

- Challenges include maintenance, sustainability, and ensuring the system is user-friendly.
- Collaboration with various stakeholders, including local authorities, National Trust, and Active Travel England.
- Discussion points
- BF - highlighted how do we define who has got what role when signing routes
- MO – how do we build awareness to how paths connect to the wider world outside of signage
- TH – there are lots of nationwide meetings/initiatives so highlighted the need for consistency

Item 2 – DEFRA update

- JM – not much to update. Rights of way reform not progressed, reviewing policies on access.
- A workshop was held last with the Baroness Hayman for her to gather information on the state of the network.
- BF – asked to share information from workshop. DEFRA putting information together into a note for the Baroness.
- PH – PH&GR decided to put a pause on a survey of LA's and IPROW members in relation to whether there is support for a reforms package in the wake of the intention to repeal the cut-off date provision.

Action – JM to share summary of workshop discussion.

Item 3 – Natural England Updates

AM – no substantive updates since the last meeting.

- Impact of the sustainable farming initiative freeze is unclear. No further information on how that will affect other items including landscape recovery etc

Item 4 – Unitary/Devolution – lessons learnt

- Discussion deferred to July meeting due to time constraints. Will be main topic for the meeting.
- EM – asked are ADEPT interested in whether authorities are split or not?

Item 5 Routine meeting updates as applicable

PINS Specialist Casework Stakeholder Meeting

- No PINS specialist casework meeting since last meeting – invite for someone from ADEPT to attend. EM will attend for ADEPT.

Transport Connectivity Board and Active Travel

- PH attended in March – update from DfT around Planning and Infrastructure Bill - about streamlining NSIPs, DCOS and how they can be improved.
- LA's were consulted in Jan ahead of draft bill but didn't reach ROW colleagues.

Level-Crossing Strategy Group and Network Rail MOU Survey

- RC – Network Rail host but emphasise it is a cross agency meeting to keep everyone safe and up to date
 - o Safe insights – replacement for SMIS which is a near miss database.
 - o ADEPT need to ensure the review of the memorandum of understanding doesn't stall.
 - o MoU revision sat with PH
- AW and EMW highlighted challenges of working with National Rail and the need to treat them the same as any other developers.

National Highways WWCHR Forum

- Need someone to attend from ADEPT
- BF volunteered
- Let BF know if you have any good case studies

Item 6 Feedback from the Regions

- AW
 - o sent meeting minutes from January
 - o Welsh government confirming access improvement grant will continue
- BF
 - o nothing to update not met since last meeting
- GR
 - o habitat regs assessment discussion and desire to have clear guidance
 - o Add agenda item for this next time, suggested to IPROW it might make good webinar series
 - o CON29 searches may simplify, might have implications for PROW
 - o House Builders Federation (or similar) have suggested number of planning applications due to increase significantly
 - o IPROW annual benchmarking exercise will be circulated – encourage everyone to respond. Will be open to ADEPT members and not just IPROW

- MO
 - o face to face meetings are a struggle as some LA's not allowing travel.
 - o Confusion in DMMO case as to who was an interested party at and accompanied site visit. Can anyone be an interested party? Inspector said anyone could be.
- RC
 - o Transport Works Act orders used by Network Rail – have network rail got the process right or not? Orders are 5 years old but they still have many to close.
- PH
 - o no meeting since last national meeting– not much to update
 - o SW Enforcement Group still going.
 - o Interest in restarting SW legal / DMMO subgroup.

Item 7 Horizon scanning

- Baroness Haywood meeting/dereg
- National land use framework consultation
- PH - DTROs – DFT looking to go live in June, consultation on regs around implementation.
- Reminder of the push for rights of way to go into NSG

Item 8 Next meeting

Dates of Next Meetings: 16 July 2025, 13 October 2025

SECRETARY ROTA FOR ROWMG

Date	Secretary	Completed
24 January 2024	East Midlands	Yes
17 April 2024	West Midlands	Yes
17 July 2024	Eastern	Yes
16 October 2024	Northern	Yes
22 January 2025	Wales	Yes
9 April 2025	West Mids	Yes
16 July 2025	West Mids	
13 October 2025	West Mids	