Access Team newsletter - August 2026

Hampshire County Council
Countryside

Welcome Everyone

July has treated us to plenty of sunshine and some very warm temperatures.

This month's newsletter welcomes two new members of staff to the team and bids farewell to Kayleigh our East Assistant Ranger who is moving on to pastures new.

The Itchen Navigation Project at Shawford has now come to an end, while the vegetation cutting season is in full swing across Hampshire's Rights of Way.

Happy reading!

Drum roll please! Last month, the number of hours logged by Access team volunteers was...

1161!

Thank you so much to all volunteers who help us keep the Rights of Way network open and accessible - we couldn't do it without you!

Access Team Staff Update and Welcome

Assistant Ranger for the West Alex

Hello! I'm Alex and I have recently joined the Access Team as the Assistant Ranger for the West Team. I was previously a chef but in my free time I completed a degree with the Open University in Natural Sciences.

I've always had a passion for the environment and protecting our local nature spaces so started looking for a role that could offer this. I joined the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust as a conservation trainee last year and learned so much about how we protect nature and the essential practical work that goes along with that.

While my passion was about conservation when I joined, I found myself enjoying the practical work the most and looking forward to the day when I was out working with the estates team and volunteers. I'm really excited to join the ranger team and looking forward to learning so much more!

Access Team Staff Update continued

Definitive Map Officer Grant

Hi all, I'm Grant, and I have recently re-joined the Countryside Access Team as a Definitive Map Officer. Previously I'd spent nearly 4 years working in Spatial Planning for Public Rights of Way and Transport.

My focus was always to ensure that development protected and enhanced our Public Rights of Way and countryside assets while appropriately mitigating any adverse impacts.

Outside of work, I am passionate about exploring Hampshire and beyond on foot, making the most of our wonderful landscapes and countryside. I am also a keen wildlife photographer and enjoy capturing the incredible wildlife we are fortunate to have around us.

I am really looking forward to this new role and the opportunity to put my previous experience to good use while developing a whole new set of skills, particularly around Public Rights of Way legislation and order-making processes.

I really look forward to seeing, meeting, or catching up with many of you in one way or another in the not-too-distant future.

Access Team Highlights
North West
Itchen Navigation works draw to a close.

After 10 weeks, 65 tons of chalk, 75 metres of revetment, 275 chestnut posts, 25 tons of gravel, 30 x 3 metres of coir rolls, and 496 Volunteer hours, our works along the Itchen Navigation have drawn to a close.

With an average of four members of staff on site, four days a week, those volunteer hours really do speak for themselves. We genuinely could not have completed this project without our fantastic volunteers.

You turned up in all conditions, including the rain (yes, it did rain a couple of times during those 10 weeks!), as well as through some incredibly hot weather. Thank you all so much for your hard work, positive attitudes, and sheer determination.

We suspect some of you are in no rush to push another wheelbarrow anytime soon and may shudder at the sight of a pile of chalk! However, if you fancy a lovely walk, and perhaps a refreshing ice cream from Platform 1 Coffeehouse & Gelateria at Shawford Station, we can highly recommend a visit to see the finished result for yourselves.

Thank you again to everyone who helped make this project such a success. We couldn't have done it without you.

Access Team Highlights

North West

Itchen Navigation works draw to a close cont.

Access Team Highlights
North West
Veg Cut Kimpton FP 501

On another beautiful hot day in July, Ali joined Judy Hart, a long-standing North West volunteer and one of the Parish Councillors for Kimpton, to cut back Footpath 501. This popular route links with Footpath 7 to the west and Footpath 8 to the south.

Armed with brushcutters, sunscreen, and plenty of water (which left behind in the van oops), they set off to inspect the route. At first glance, it looked as though the task would be a quick one, as the fields on either side of the path had already been cut.

However, once they reached the top of the hill, they were met by a wall of tall grass. Ali worked down the path from the junction with Footpath 7 Judy worked up the hill. Eventually meeting somewhere in the middle, having successfully cleared the path between them.

Afterwards, Judy kindly invited Ali back to her house for a well-earned cup of tea.

A huge thank you to Judy for the many hours she dedicates to volunteering and helping to keep our local rights of way accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Access Team Highlights
South West
Lepe Loop Improvements

In June Kate spent a morning with Senior Ranger Abi Young at Lepe Country Park looking at improvements along the popular Lepe Loop.

Abi and Kate had previously looked at this route when making a funding application bid last year, but unfortunately that application was unsuccessful. However, we were very fortunate to have a separate application approved by New Forest National Park Authority.

We had to scale down our ambitions, but the funding will cover the cost of 2 new bridges and a boardwalk which are in need of replacement.
The new structures have arrived in kit form and are made of
Re-Life fully recycled plastic. The material is much better suited for wetland environments and areas with high use. The material will not require treatment or preservatives and very little ongoing maintenance.

“Re-Life fully recycled plastic boardwalk systems are built entirely from 100% recycled plastic (and a few steel fixings). Posts, joists and deck boards are all designed to handle constant moisture, ground movement and heavy footfall without rotting, warping or splitting.” builtybybison July 2026.

Working with the staff and volunteers at Lepe Country Park, Kate and Abi will be installing the boardwalk mid-August and the bridges will be installed by contractors later in the year. These structures will be a great improvement to this route which is especially popular in the summer with visitor from the nearby camp sites.

Access Team Highlights
South West
The Confraternity of St James (CSJ)
Step up to Help Out

The St James' Way is a waymarked modern-day Camino in the South of England. It is approximately 68.5 miles/110 kilometres long.

The route, devised by members of the Camino St James follows a probable route taken by medieval pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela from Reading Abbey.

This route includes much of the Itchen Navigation. You may remember that some volunteers from CSJ joined the South West Access volunteers in February to battle through some brambles near Eastleigh.

Well, they've gone a step further now and 2 of their volunteers have completed a LANTRA brushcutter course so they can tackle the vegetation independently. Peter and David spent the day in deepest darkest Wiltshire, getting to grips with the brushcutters under the guidance of their tutor Vicky.

Now they are fully trained and ticketed they have already borrowed brushcutters from the South West team. This month they were joined by a small team of CSJ volunteers, and together they've made a big dent in the vegetation from Bishopstoke to Mans Bridge.

We also been fortunate to welcome CSJ volunteers to our revetment task days, where they've got stuck in helping the rangers repairing and install revetments, coir rolls and faggots along this beautiful stretch of chalk stream. Thank you for all your help and support,

Buen Camino!

Access Team Highlights
North East
Timely Tadley Trimming

Footpath 20

Footpath 11

This month, volunteers joined CER Andy in the parish of Tadley to help open up key routes through the busy urban areas.

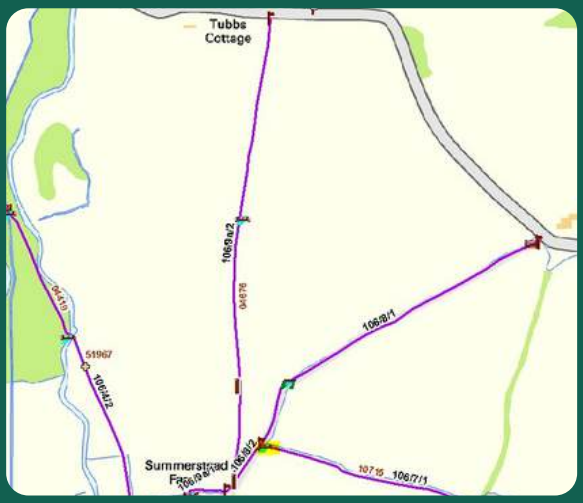
With the schools breaking up for the summer, these routes will undoubtedly see increased footfall. The North East volunteers helped make them safer and free from obstructions.

The first route cleared was Footpath 20, a well-used path connecting Tadley Hill with Fairlawn Road via Swedish Houses. Bordered by a steep embankment, this path supports vigorous vegetation growth, which can quickly encroach onto the route and hang at head height, creating an obstacle for path users.

The second route was Footpath 11. This path had become completely overgrown during the spring and was impassable along much of its length.

Armed with the appropriate machinery, our volunteers set to work and successfully transformed this narrow route. What had been an inaccessible path is now open once again, providing a safe and convenient link for local residents and visitors.

Access Team Highlights
North East
A Day on the Tools: Rangers at Work



Busy. That's one word that best describes the Access Team. Always ridiculously busy.

With roughly 3,000 miles of rights of way stretching across around 267 parishes, the team is constantly on the move throughout the county, maintaining and improving the network for all users.

Every now and then, however, they hold a "Ranger Task Day", setting aside time in their calendars to work together on a specific project while sharing skills, knowledge and tips picked up throughout the year.

This month, CER Andy was joined by Ranger Mitch and Officer Pete to install a new ditch crossing in the parish of Hartley Wespall.

Footpath 7 had a bridge in need of replacement. With split, bowing sleepers and no usable handrail or support, improvements were necessary to ensure the safety of its users.

Refreshing their skills and putting their teamwork to the test, the North East Access Team completed the installation of a new and improved ditch crossing, while also setting a new record for installation time.

Access Team Highlights
South East

Miles without Stiles Continues

ITCHEN VALLEY X1

HAMBLEDON X4

Our favourite stiles to gates project continues in the South East, with a whopping 5 gates installed last month alone!

As always, it's a wonderful show of team effort. Thanks to Winchester Ramblers for replacing the stile on footpath 22 in Itchen Valley, and Access team task day volunteers who replaced 4 stiles in Hambledon across 2 different footpaths.

Digging in soil which has been baked dry after 2 months of no rain and made up of clay and flint is always a tough sell, but thank you everyone who has helped us with this mega ongoing footpath improvement project.

A special thank you goes out to all the landowners who agreed to change their stiles to gates and have also helped with access. This allowed our volunteers and teams to get as close to site as possible - making the work much easier and more efficient!

Access Team Highlights
South East
Volunteer Groups versus Vegetation

HMG

Overgrown vegetation is the issue that never sleeps!

Thanks to a wet spring and hot summer, the PROW network across Hampshire has been overgrown with the usual suspects of bracken, brambles, nettles and long grass. It's a never ending job to keep on top of, and we couldn't do it without help from our incredible volunteer groups.

The Hampshire Monday Group (HMG) have cleared the Hangers Way route in Buriton as well as a long bridleway in Bishops Waltham. Alton Ramblers have been busy across the entirety of their area keeping the paths in check, and Friends of Horndean Parish Footpaths have been working hard to make sure the local PROW network is open for all to use.

A big round of applause for all the groups out there keeping your Rights of Way open!

ALTON RAMBLERS

FRIENDS OF HORNDEAN

Annual Volunteer Thank You Events

Our annual volunteer thank you events are a bit later than usual due to scheduling conflicts and difficulties finding a venue - but we've got the dates locked in for sure this time and you are all invited!

It's impossible to organise a single day and single location that works for everyone, so we have created two identical events in the hope that one of them works for you.

Monday 19th October - in the Casson Room at Queen Elizabeth Country Park (QECP) 1pm – 3pm

Tuesday 20th October - in the Barn at Old Basing 1pm – 3pm

Whether you're a Path Warden, task day volunteer or independent group, we want to express our appreciation in the best way we know how - cake! If you've been to one of our Thank You events before then you know the legendary amount of baked goods on offer 🙂

Everyone who has helped the Public Right of Way network across Hampshire is invited, so please pass this on to other members of your volunteer group who might not be on our direct mailing list 🙂
For more information or to book a space at one of the events, please use the Eventbrite link below:
Volunteer Thank You Event

We look forward to seeing you there!

Your CER Team

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Thank you for your continued support