

## Haughton Parish Council

### Proposal for Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Strategy - January 2022

Haughton Parish Council through its Public Rights of Way Working Group offers a collaborative and realistic vision for the future of the PRoW network within its boundaries. The network extends to more than 50 Public Rights of Way (Footpaths and Bridleways) with a combined length of many miles.

This Vision in part aims to reflect the results of the 2021 Parish survey, from which the key points on PRoWs are summarised in Appendix 1 of this paper for ease of reference. It is clear from the Parish Survey that the Public Rights of Way are used and valued by over 75% of responding households, using these often or sometimes. In the many comments provided, requests for improvements to signposting, physical accessibility and availability of maps are key messages.

As the highway authority, Staffordshire County Council is responsible for the maintenance of public rights of way. A parish council has the power to maintain footpaths or bridleways in its area, but this does not remove responsibility from the highway authority. Their full responsibilities are described in Appendix 2.

Landowners and occupiers also have responsibilities to ensure access to Public Rights of Way is maintained – these are also described in Appendix 2.

Parish councils have no specific duties for rights of way; however, they are given certain powers which can help the public to enjoy the public path network.

Parish councils can:

- maintain any footpath or bridleway within its area which is maintainable at public expense
- erect lighting on any footpath or bridleway. Although the number of public paths likely to require lighting is small, lighting can be important on paths leading to a village or bus stop for example
- erect notices, with the consent of the landowner, on or near a footpath or bridleway, warning of local dangers
- create new footpaths and bridleways by agreement with the landowner over land in their own and adjoining parishes if satisfied that the creation would be beneficial to all or, any part of, the parish or community
- signpost and waymark public paths on behalf of, and with the consent of the highway authority. A highway authority can give permission for other persons such as parish councils to erect and maintain signposts on its behalf
- provide seats and shelters at the side of public paths

Haughton Parish Council already engages actively in utilising these voluntary powers on several local footpaths (see Appendix 3) and the Public Rights of Way vision in part seeks to formalise how the Parish Council manages this process in the future, and to extend its influence in supporting improved access to all Rights of Way across the Parish.

The vision statement is as follows:

***“Public Rights of Way in Haughton Parish are a well-used, cared for and widely appreciated amenity that can be found, freely accessed and safely enjoyed by residents and visitors to the Parish.”***

This vision supports residents and visitors being able to utilise Public Rights of Way as an asset in enjoying the countryside and achieving better health and wellbeing, whilst recognising the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders in maintaining a safe and accessible PRoW network. The following are the expected outcomes of this vision:

- That members of the public use Public Rights of Way well and as intended, in accordance with the Countryside Code (see Appendix 4) so that animals are kept safe and private land is kept as it should be.
- That the Parish Council through its PRow working group will work alongside all stakeholders – including landowners and occupiers, public and County Council - to ensure a safe and accessible Public Rights of Way network
- That the Parish Council will seek to work with neighbouring Parish Councils to ensure safe and unhindered access onto linked PRow networks
- The PRows are known about, publicised, easily located and navigated by all members of the public, including (as far as practically possible) individuals with mobility / sensory challenges.
- The Parish Council will seek to continually review outcomes and seek further improvements so that they and SCC receive more and increasingly positive feedback on the PRows across the Parish from all stakeholders.

Expected Outcome	Evidence to demonstrate outcomes (not exhaustive)
That members of the public use Public Rights of Way well and as intended, in accordance with the Countryside Code so that animals are kept safe and private land is kept as it should be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments by public on PRow use</li> <li>• Inspection/survey by PRow Group/volunteers</li> <li>• Positive feedback from landowners/farmers</li> </ul>
That the Parish Council through its PRow working group will work alongside all stakeholders – including landowners and occupiers, local businesses, public and County Council - to ensure a safe and accessible Public Rights of Way network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of PRow Volunteer Group</li> <li>• Repairs/maintenance by landowners/farmers and other stakeholders</li> <li>• Feedback from landowners/farmers</li> <li>• Regular updates to and from SCC PRow team on management of identified PRow issues</li> </ul>
That the Parish Council will seek to work with neighbouring Parish Councils to ensure safe and unhindered access onto linked PRow networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial contact/communications between HPC and neighbouring PCs to establish links</li> <li>• Information and resources shared</li> </ul>
The PRows are known about, publicised, easily located and navigated by all members of the public, including (as far as practically possible) individuals with mobility / sensory challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public information freely available – “guided” walk leaflets, HPC website, village website, social media pages, Bugle etc</li> <li>• Increased visibility of waymarkers/signs</li> <li>• Comments by public on PRow use</li> <li>• Inspection/survey by PRow Group/volunteers</li> <li>• Feedback from groups representing people with mobility/sensory challenges</li> </ul>
The Parish Council will seek to continually review outcomes and seek further improvements so that they and SCC receive more and increasingly positive feedback on the PRows across the Parish from all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular meetings of PRow Working Group</li> <li>• Standing item on HPC meeting agendas and publishing of minutes</li> <li>• Seeking good practice examples from neighbouring PCs</li> </ul>

In discharging the voluntary duties, the PRow Working Group will aim to prioritise actions according to the following proposed hierarchy of needs:

1. Health and Safety Issues
2. Volume and degree of usage and potential usage
3. Ways that are suitable for those who are less agile or have mobility or sensory issues
4. Locally published waymarked trails
5. PRows linking to the Way for the Millennium (Greenway)
6. PRows linking to Dale Common and Allimore Green Nature Reserve
7. PRows linking directly to neighbouring PC PRow networks
8. All other PRows

## Appendix 1: Parish Survey Outcomes – May 2021

### Key points:

Usage of respondents completing the Parish Survey:

- Greenway – 65% often – 25% sometimes – 10% never
- Public footpaths – 48% sometimes – 39% often – 13% never
- Bridleways – 37.5% sometimes – 35% never – 27.5% often
  
- 67% of respondents would like better signposting
- 50% of respondents would like easier access through boundaries
- 47% of respondents would like accessible maps
- 47% of respondents would like additional published guided walk leaflets
- 26% of respondents would like guided group walks

### Comments Made by Respondents

Responses mentioning physical accessibility and maintenance concerns:

- Footpaths around Haughton are not disability friendly. If you cannot climb a stile you cannot access the spaces.
- Need kissing gates
- Instead of stiles there are more kissing gates
- Stiles need changing to gates – stiles discriminate against disabled and some older people
- Replace stiles with gates
- A number of stiles need repair
- Kissing gates where space allows would be good; replace stiles with kissing gates
- Fix the stiles and more kissing gates; Better upkeep of stiles and clearer signage across farmland
- Stiles need regular inspection e.g. broken or overgrown. Greenway needs barrier repairing at Station Road and benches repairing towards Derrington.
- Maintenance of stiles please if possible; A number of stiles need repair; Some of the stiles are poorly maintained especially down Brazenhill Lane
- A lot of the stiles and footpaths are in disorder and can only be accessed by fit, healthy individuals. Some landowners seem to positively discourage people from using the footpaths but they could be made much more of to encourage people to access the countryside.
- Some have been blocked off or are impassable. e.g. Park Lane to Church Eaton Road.
- Arrange 'permissive access to Route 55 Greenway to connect with other paths
- Better access via stile/gates with less mud!
- We feel that some "farmers" are obstructive. It's particularly awkward walking from Dale Lane towards Bury Ring and from the railway line at Upper Reule barns to walk towards Church Eaton/Allimore Green

Responses mentioning publicity, maps and signage:

- Leaflets and maps advertised at local post office and available both there and at the Farm Shop
- Some signs are in a poor state and on certain land walkers don't feel particularly welcome (in ice cream farm)
- Signs indicating the correct route round/across fields
- Village residents already aware – or should be!
- Some paths are not inviting. E.g. the one opposite bus stop by church gate to open into garden of Church Farm – needs diverting

## Appendix 2: Public Rights of Way Responsibilities

### Staffordshire County Council (SCC)

As the highway authority, SCC is responsible for the maintenance of public rights of way. The County Council should:

- keep the surface of the public path network in good repair and control vegetation (other than crops) growing from it
- maintain bridges over natural water courses, including farm ditches
- signpost rights of way from metalled roads and provide additional signs and waymarks as necessary along the route
- protect the public's right to use and enjoy rights of way
- secure the removal of obstructions, including ensuring that paths over cultivated land are reinstated and marked out after they have been disturbed
- ensure that there are no intimidating notices that would deter the public from any paths
- provide a minimum 25% contribution towards any costs incurred by a landowner in maintaining stiles or gates on public rights of way

### The landowner or occupier

The landowner or occupier of land must:

- keep rights of way clear of obstructions
- cut back vegetation encroaching from the sides and overhanging the path, so that it does not inconvenience the public or prevent the line of the path from being apparent on the ground. (On bridleways, horse riders should be allowed 3 metres [10 feet] of headroom)
- ensure that all field-edge public paths are never cultivated
- ensure that cross-field footpaths and bridleways are cultivated (i.e. ploughed or disturbed) only when it is not convenient to avoid them and are properly reinstated after disturbance
- keep paths clear of crops to ensure that they do not inconvenience users
- maintain any stiles or gates on a public path in a safe condition
- ensure that bulls are not kept in a field crossed by a path unless they do not exceed 10 months old or are both not of a recognised dairy breed and are accompanied by cows or heifers
- ensure that any warning notices are displayed only when a bull is present in a field
- never keep any animal which is known to be aggressive in a field to which the public has access
- ensure that no misleading signs are placed near rights of way that might discourage access.

### Appendix 3: Footpaths Maintained by Haughton Parish Council



#### PRoW References:

- Haughton 5
- Haughton 6a
- Haughton 6b
- Haughton 7
- Haughton 14
- Haughton 15
- Haughton 16
- Haughton 18
- Haughton 19
- Haughton 20
- Haughton 22
- Haughton 36
- Haughton 37
- Haughton 38
- Haughton 39
- Haughton 47



# The Countryside Code

## **Respect** other people

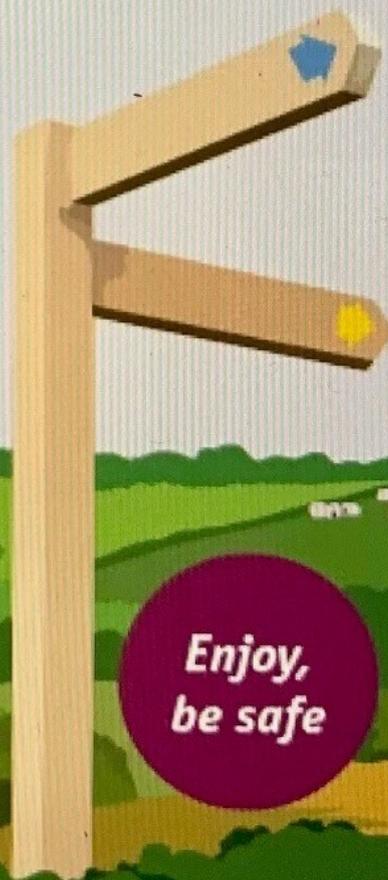
- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Park carefully so access to gateways and driveways is clear
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Follow paths but give way to others where it's narrow

## **Protect** the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit, take all your litter home
- Don't have BBQs or fires
- Keep dogs under effective control
- Dog poo - bag it and bin it

## **Enjoy** the outdoors

- Plan ahead, check what facilities are open, be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs and obey social distancing measures



**Enjoy,  
be safe**