

9 May 2018

Dear Member

## **Please help us to realise a 50-year-old vision**

Fifty years ago the Countryside Act 1968 became law. It was definitely good news, and we played a major role in its genesis.

The Countryside Act was about the countryside close to where people lived and it also improved the law on public paths. Thanks to lobbying from the society and other user groups before and during its passage through parliament it ended up being a useful measure. For instance:

- it empowered local authorities to create country parks, securing accessible countryside close to people's homes;
- it gave highway authorities a legal duty to put up signposts where public paths leave a metalled road and to waymark a path if needed to help people find their way;
- it required landowners to:
  - maintain stiles, gates and other structures in a safe condition;
  - make good the surface of a path within three weeks of ploughing (later amended to 14 days).

Yet 50 years on, many highway authorities and landowners are failing in their responsibilities. Hundreds of paths still lack signposts and waymarks, dodgy stiles and gates are common, and many paths are ploughed and not reinstated, as any walker or rider can testify.

Continued ...../2

These continuing problems are our bread and butter. I know that our indefatigable local correspondents from all over the country have to deal with the broken or awkward stiles and gates, the missing or never-existent signposts and waymarks, and the cropped-over paths that come up time and again.

The local correspondents report these things to the councils responsible for resolving such matters, and press for action. But in these times of austerity it is harder than ever to get the authorities to respond. Sometimes our correspondents run into a problem which is not straightforward, or is outside their knowledge, and therefore they need technical advice from our staff—or even legal action. And, of course, such tricky problems are even more likely to be raised with us by less experienced members of the society including local groups. We give them help too.

Please will you help our campaign to deliver the aspirations of the Countryside Act, by enhancing local expertise, and encouraging authorities to fulfil their obligations? Training our local correspondents, maintaining an office capable of delivering swift and accurate technical advice, helping a novice path-worker through the thickets of highway law—all these things must be paid for. But in the end these activities add up to a realisation of the vision which lay behind the 1968 act.

Anything you can give to this appeal will bring us nearer the ideal of clear paths and the joy of walking and riding them.

Many thanks,



Graham Bathe  
Chairman

***PS Please send your cheque in the envelope provided to:  
Open Spaces Society, FREEPOST (RG1344), Henley-on-Thames RG9 1BR  
or visit our website <http://www.oss.org.uk/how-you-can-help/appeals/>.***

***Thank you.***