

**SECTION 1: GUIDELINES FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS****1 OVERVIEW OF VOLUNTEER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1.1 PNFS is a charity staffed by volunteers. In our daily work we respond to consultations and orders that affect the rights-of-way network in our patch and report problems on the network to 35 highway authorities (HAs). During our work we contact landowners, formal bodies and other groups with an interest in the network. If the Society is to maintain credibility with the people we deal with, it is paramount that we always act in a professional manner.
- 1.2 Whilst we are a voluntary organisation it is important that we all adhere to the agreed policies of the Society and keep records of all communications with HAs, other groups and individuals we deal with.
- 1.3 We perform a high volume and high diversity of tasks – some of which have intricate legalities – and we aim at high performance standards. Therefore, we operate a hierarchical structure in which we try to make good use of the skills of individual volunteers, all of whom are valued for the contributions they make.

**2 PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL VOLUNTEERS**

- 2.1 The Society recognises that volunteers may be members of other organisations with similar objectives to our own (e.g. the Ramblers). However, the Society expects all volunteers to take responsibility for abiding by the policies and guidelines of the Society when acting in its name.
- 2.2 When a volunteer wishes to express a personal opinion or an opinion based on the policies or guidelines of another organisation, which may be at odds with the Society's view, it is the volunteer's responsibility to make it abundantly clear that the opinion is either their personal opinion or is being made on behalf of another group, so that the Society is disassociated from the opinion given.

**3 INSPECTORS' RESPONSIBILITY WHEN DEALING WITH LANDOWNERS AND OTHER BODIES**

- 3.1 The Society strongly recommends that Inspectors should not initiate contact with landowners, farmers or other organisations with an interest in rights of way. However, there will be occasions where such contact is unavoidable and may in fact serve our best interests.
- 3.2 Inspectors should be mindful not to make statements (in writing or verbally) that might commit the Society to any course of action which could involve the Society in any kind of legal proceedings, such as at a magistrates' court or at a public inquiry or affect its stance in such proceedings.

**4 PNFS HIERARCHY FOR MATTERS RELATED TO RIGHTS OF WAY****4.1 Courts and Inquiries Committee (C&IC)**

- 4.1.1 The C&IC is the highest body in the hierarchy. It has responsibility for developing and implementing Rights of Way policies on behalf of the Society, although final sign off rests with the Trustees. It also has delegated authority for the authorisation of all matters that might result in some form of legal action, including s56 and s130A notices, public inquiries etc, where costs may be incurred by the Society. All actions that might involve the Society in any form of legal or official action that might result in costs being awarded against the Society have to be considered and agreed by this committee when it meets.
- 4.1.2 Exceptions do occur, e.g. The Society is notified of some legal event at the last minute and an urgent response is required that cannot wait until the next C&IC meeting. In these exceptional circumstances a Courts & Inquiries Officer (C&IO) may, via the Chairperson of the C&IC, seek the approval of the Trustees of the Society outside of the C&IC meeting. This request must be made by email to the Chairperson (or Vice Chair in their absence) and be marked as urgent. The Chairperson will contact all Trustees by email, coordinate the process and inform the C&IO of the decision of the Trustees. The matter must be recorded at the next C&IC meeting.
- 4.1.3 The Terms of Reference for this committee may be found on the Constitution and Policies page of our website

**4.2 Courts & Inquiries Officers (C&IOs)**

- 4.2.1 C&IOs are responsible for serving statutory notices on HAs, e.g. under s56 and s130A of the Highways Act 1980 and for responding to proposals to extinguish or to divert rights of way and may represent the Society, as the name suggests, at Court or Public Inquiries in connection with those responsibilities. C&IOs, along with at least two Trustees and the Consultation & Orders Manager, make up the C&IC. Appointment of C&IOs is based on their knowledge, understanding and experience of the law pertaining to rights of way.

4.2.2 C&IOs cover a defined geographical area and offer advice and help to all other field volunteers in their patch.

### **4.3 Area Officers (AOs)**

- 4.3.1 AOs are appointed by the Chairman of the Society and their appointment is confirmed at a management meeting.
- 4.3.2 AOs are normally appointed on a per highway authority (HA) basis.
- 4.3.3 Some AOs receive correspondence from HAs on behalf of the Society.
- 4.3.4 AOs may have Inspectors reporting to them.
- 4.3.5 Some AOs are responsible for responding to specific categories of consultations and orders on behalf of the Society.
- 4.3.6 Where they are so responsible, AOs shall inform the relevant C&IO of all representations and objections raised by them on behalf of the Society.
- 4.3.7 AOs (or in the absence of an AO, the Footpath Inspections Coordinator) are the first port of call for an Inspector when a footpath fault remains unresolved for an unacceptable length of time and is seriously detrimental to the interests of walkers, as set out in Section 4 (Footpath Inspections) of the Volunteers Handbook.

### **4.4 Assessors**

- 4.4.1 Assessors are appointed by the Chairman of the Society; their appointments are confirmed at a management meeting.
- 4.4.2 The Assessors consider and respond on behalf of the Society to consultations and orders for the diversion/stopping up/extinguishment/creation of PROWs, Definitive Map Modification Orders and planning applications affecting PROWs (other than where these are to be dealt with by an AO or C&IO). In most cases the Assessors will send the details to the relevant Inspector or Agent (where applicable) and ask for their comments before responding. Where appropriate (e.g. in the event of a proposed extinguishment or stopping up of a PROW) the details will be passed to a C&IO for consideration.

### **4.5 Inspectors**

- 4.5.1 Inspectors are appointed by the Chairman of the Society; their appointments are confirmed at a management meeting.
- 4.5.2 Inspectors are responsible for one or more parishes.
- 4.5.3 Inspectors report to an AO (or to the Footpath Inspections Coordinator where no dedicated field AO has been appointed for the HA).
- 4.5.4 Inspectors may receive copies of consultations and orders for their parish or notifications of planning applications or other matters affecting PROWs from the Assessors or their AO. At their request, Inspectors should survey and prepare a report thereon in a timely manner.
- 4.5.5 The Society expects that an Inspector will walk all the paths within his/her parish once every two years.
- 4.5.6 When a fault is identified, Inspectors must record this on the Footpath Inspection Database (FID) and report it to the HA, using their online reporting system if available and practicable.
- 4.5.7 Inspectors may be requested to follow up a report received at Taylor House or via the Society's "Pathchecker" App from members of the Society or members of the public.
- 4.5.8 Inspectors should monitor the progress of the fault and record all cleared faults on the FID. If a fault is not being progressed by the HA to the satisfaction of the Inspector, the matter should be escalated to the AO or to the Footpath Inspections Coordinator in accordance with the guidance in Section 4 (Footpath Inspections) of the Volunteers Handbook.

### **4.6 Agents**

- 4.6.1 In 1992 the Society agreed to the appointment of Agents in our "outer areas". Agents differ from Inspectors in that they cover large areas with many parishes. Due to the size of an Agent's patch the Society does not expect that an Agent will carry out the two-yearly survey of all paths within his/her patch. In all other respects, Agents act in the same manner as our Inspectors. As and when suitable volunteers offer their services, the Society reserves the right to appoint Inspectors in the outer areas.

## **5 EXPENSES**

- 5.1 In accordance with Charity Commission guidelines the Society will reimburse any expenses incurred by volunteers carrying out Society business. We encourage all volunteers to claim all expenses incurred. This allows us to demonstrate the amount of charity work we do.
- 5.2 Some volunteers claim the money and donate it to the Society with gift aid. Whilst we greatly appreciate this, it is down to individual choice and we do not expect it.
- 5.3 As a charity the Society must keep proper accounts. You should make all claims using the expenses claim form, a copy of which is available on our web site or from Taylor House. Where possible, please attach receipts to the claim form. If you are unable to provide a receipt, please give your reasons by email to the Treasurer.
- 5.4 Travelling expenses may be claimed. Give brief details of the journey and its purpose on the form. For bus or train travel, please attach receipts or tickets. For journeys by private car, mileage is payable at the HMRC approved rate, (45p per mile as at October 2024). For journeys by motorcycle mileage is payable at 24p per mile and by bicycle, 20p per mile. Where there is adequate and convenient public transport, mileage claims should not exceed the cost of public transport.
- 5.5 In exceptional circumstances the cost of an overnight stay may be claimed. Such circumstances include Courts and Inquiries Officers attending an Inquiry which starts so early that it is not practical to travel on the day. Or an Inspector inspecting a distant parish where the cost of travel exceeds the cost of an overnight stay. If an Inspector you must obtain the agreement of the Inspectors Coordinator. You must obtain the agreement of the Chairman , Treasurer or Secretary before booking accommodation . This agreement must be recorded in the appropriate box on the expense claim form.
- 5.6 Stationery, copying and printing: please give details and provide receipts if possible.
- 5.7 Printing on your own computer may be claimed at 5p per side.
- 5.8 Postage may be claimed. Please keep a record of each letter sent. You only need to submit the total you have spent on postage.
- 5.9 Telephone calls. Please use email if possible but, if claiming for telephone calls, indicate briefly the purpose of each call and its duration, and estimate the total cost.
- 5.10 Exceptionally you may wish to purchase items or services with the intention of reclaiming the cost from the Society. Such purchases, up to a value of £20 may be purchased without reference to Trustees and must be reclaimed in the usual way. For items over £20 but less than £100 you must , if an Inspector obtain the agreement of the Inspectors Coordinator . For other vounteers , agreement from either the Chairman , Treasurer or Secretary , preferably in writing or by email, before doing so. Items over £100 must have prior written approval of two of either the Chairman, Treasurer or Secretary or other Trustees, neither of whom shall be the claimant.
- 5.11 Keep your detailed records for at least 2 years in case of any enquiry.
- 5.12 All expense claims submitted will be checked by the Treasurer and must be approved by two trustees, neither of whom shall be the claimant.
- 5.13 An Authorised cheque signatory must not sign a cheque or approve a BACS payment payable to themselves.

## **6 PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS FOR SERVICES RENDERED**

- 6.1 The Society does not pay members or their connected persons for professional or other services as conflicts of interest may arise. This does not apply:
  - 6.1.1 to the reimbursement of expenses properly incurred in accordance with the Society's expenses policy; or
  - 6.1.2 where the Trustees (excluding a Trustee with a personal interest in the decision who may take no part in the deliberations) have met before any commitment to pay has arisen and have decided that there are exceptional circumstances which justify the making of the payment. "Exceptional circumstances" refers to circumstances where the services would not otherwise be available to the Society or the Society self-evidently secures a distinct, tangible benefit from paying the member (or any connected person) for providing the services.
- 6.2 The constitution and section 185 of the Charities Act 2011 mean that a Trustee cannot received any benefit (other than expenses) from providing services to the Society unless the Charity Commission approves. Section 185 includes an intricate definition of "connected person" which the Trustees will follow in applying the above paragraph to a member. In effect, the phrase refers to a close relative or a business or company in which the member (or his or her spouse or civil partner) has a direct or indirect and non-trivial financial interest.

**7 COMMUNICATIONS**

- 7.1 The nature of our work makes it imperative that we keep good records of all communications.
- 7.2 Your communication may one day be used as evidence at a public inquiry or magistrate court. Therefore, you must make all communications in a professional and courteous manner.
- 7.3 As we all enjoy walking, sooner or later you will come across a problem that is not in your patch. As a matter of courtesy, you should contact the local footpath inspector before taking any action yourself.
- 7.4 To keep costs to a minimum, email is the preferred method of communication. Please visit the PNFS website for up to date contact information for the Society.

**8 MAPS**

- 8.1 For a volunteer, maps are one of the most important tools of the job. An ability to read maps and pinpoint a six-figure grid reference is vital. An introduction to using maps is part of the new inspectors training day. Most of the mapping in the UK is based on maps made by the Ordnance Survey (OS). The following paragraphs detail, in order of importance, the maps you will come across.

**8.2 Definitive maps of public rights of way**

- 8.2.1 Definitive maps were prepared by local authorities following the introduction of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Copies of these maps are mainly at a scale of 6" to 1 mile or 1:10000. Some authorities' maps are at a scale of 2.5" to 1 mile, which is the smallest scale legally acceptable.
- 8.2.2 These maps are quite large and by law you must get a licence from the Ordnance Survey before copying them. However, some HAs will provide copies, and it is well worth approaching the HA for your area to ask for one.
- 8.2.3 Definitive maps show all rights of way which are legally recognised, each path being allocated a number. Numbering systems vary between authorities, but usually a path will have a number which will change at the junction with another path. The map will show the path numbers and where they change.
- 8.2.4 Footpaths are usually known by the name of the parish and the number of the path. For example, footpath number 5 in Grindon parish is known as Grindon FP5. Take care where a footpath crosses a parish boundary, as the parish will obviously change, and the footpath number will almost always change as well. For example, where Grindon FP5 crosses into Butterton parish, it becomes Butterton FP12. It is important to have an accurate footpath number and a six-figure grid reference to pinpoint a path or fault correctly.

**8.3 Web-based versions of the definitive map**

- 8.3.1 The definitive maps may be available via the HA websites. Where this is the case it has become the norm that they will not supply paper copies to the Society or individuals.
- 8.3.2 One of the major drawbacks of web-based maps is that no standard is set for their presentation. It can be a challenge to find the maps on an authority's website, as they may be under such diverse categories as Highways, Transport or Environment. You must also be aware that these maps are only interpretations of the definitive maps: they are not legal documents.
- 8.3.3 The Society's website is a useful resource for volunteers. Please visit the 'for Volunteers' pages of our website. Here you will find links to useful online maps and links to Highway Authority mapping systems.

**8.4 Ordnance Survey Explorer 1:25,000 series**

- 8.4.1 The 1:25,000 Explorer maps show all rights of way, the information having been transferred from the definitive maps held by the local authority.
- 8.4.2 However, as well as having some cartographic omissions and errors awaiting amendment by the Ordnance Survey, these maps also carry errors of path line, usually in respect of headland paths, i.e. paths alongside the edges of fields. Sometimes these appear on the wrong side of a field boundary.
- 8.4.3 These days many inspectors prefer to work with on-line mapping using a phone or gps device. OS maps are available on-line in a variety of formats. You can subscribe to the OS online maps or there are a variety of other commercial apps available which are based on OS maps such as Outdoor Active, Outdoors GPS, Memory-Map. In all these cases you must pay to download the maps you want, but once you have them you can use them on a phone or tablet. Many gps devices allow you to download OS maps, usually at an additional cost.
- 8.4.4 There are also free web mapping apps, such as Bing maps, Google maps, Maps.Me. These do not have path numbers, do not show all public rights of way and sometimes lack enough detail to be useful for an inspector.

**8.5 PNFS digital mapping - The Footpath Inspection Database (FID)**

8.5.1 PNFS provides free online mapping for inspectors in the Footpath Inspection Database. The FID displays a map of each Highway Authority, and of each parish within the HA with the rights of way marked. Rights of way may be shown in purple (where there is no current inspection data), green (indicating a ROW which is clear of any problems), yellow (where there is a 'fault') and red (where the path is impassable or dangerous). By hovering over or by clicking on any path the path number is displayed and a more detailed map is displayed on the left of the screen.

8.5.2 A useful feature of the FID is that when you click on the location of a fault on a footpath the grid reference for the fault is automatically generated. This can be edited if you get it wrong first time.

8.5.3 A word of warning: the ROW data on the FID is that provided by the HAs, but it may not be completely up-to-date in all cases.

**8.6 Ordnance Survey Landranger 1:50,000 series**

8.6.1 The Landranger series of maps do show rights of way, but the smaller scale renders them less useful for our work. Nor do they show field boundaries.

**8.7 Parish maps**

8.7.1 Highway Authorities and parishes may have online maps on which the footpath numbers are already marked. Where available, these are very useful.

**8.8 A to Z street maps**

8.8.1 These offer street-level maps of urban areas at scales up to 1:10,000 or better.