

RIPPLE.

Report for Bedfordshire Area AGM 2023.

Over the last 12 months our RIPPLE team of Rambler Volunteers mainly from Ivel Valley and North Beds have been improving paths from Chalgrave and Totternhoe in the south to Biggleswade and Potton in the east to Duloe and Shelton in the north. One of our most recent tasks was virtually on the county boundary between Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire just outside Hargrave in the Parish of Shelton where an old post was replaced.

Our excellent RIPPLE team has been out to 68 locations, doing clearance work on 56 occasions and putting in 54 yellow topped marker posts and adding discs. Sometimes in addition to the clearance work and on other times just erecting posts. Activities have also included tree removal when trees have been obstructing paths, putting in a Bridleway gate, mending a stile and painting the posts. What started as a regular monthly event has now almost become weekly and our team always ask when and where is the next one.

I mentioned earlier that our regular team members are mainly from Ivel Valley and North Beds groups and this is because Central Bedfordshire took a decision last year to resurrect the old P3 groups and have put in a lot of time and money plus a dedicated officer to do this. They have well over 20 P3 groups in operation and we are not needed as much as we were several years ago and when we are it is usually on the fringe. Some of our members living in Central Bedfordshire have joined the group local to them so are continuing to participate but locally rather than travelling across the county. In the early stages we were involved with some of the groups giving advice on putting in posts, cutting back vegetation, using tools and what tools they needed for the work they were likely to do.

Bedford Borough have a few groups doing work in their own parishes and again Ramblers in the form of our RIPPLE Team have been asked for advice and assistance. We are endeavouring to persuade the Borough to hold a "Get together" of these groups in April or May 2024 with our RIPPLE team taking a lead so as to have all involved working on the network working the same way.

Tuesday is our Morning for group tasks, any day can be used for 2 or 3 people tasks. Generally we start between 9-30 and 10-00 and finish by 13-00. Refreshments are provided and members bring their own tools for clearance tasks when working with Bedford Borough and we provide tools for putting in the posts. Central Bedfordshire insisted we use their tools when working for them although just recently that rule has changed providing we register our tools with them and agree to let them do the servicing of them once a year. All our members are registered with Ramblers and many registered with Central Bedfordshire as well. We always welcome new volunteers and encourage people to do what they are able to do and enjoy the experience with us. It is enjoyable, It helps improve your health, you are putting something back by enabling others to enjoy the countryside, and on a walk you can bore the pants off your fellow walkers by saying " we cleared this path" or " we put in this marker".

A BIG THANK YOU to all our volunteers for your valuable and enormous contribution to improving the Rights of Way network this year and look forward to seeing you in 2024.

Barry Ingram Organiser November 2023