

Please see the request below from Les Stather, Ramblers Somerset Area Footpath Officer.

Thanks, **Susan Jones**, Ramblers, DLYW Project volunteer

Dear Clerk to the Parish Council

I am writing on behalf of **Brian Lucas**, (dlywsomerset@gmail.com) coordinator of the **Ramblers Don't Lose Your Way Project** across Somerset.

We are trying to identify unrecorded public rights of way for inclusion in the Definitive Map before the 2031 legislative deadline. Although the Labour Government promised, on the 26th Of December 2024 to abolish the cut-off date for adding paths to the Definitive Map, this has not happened and therefore we must do all we can to ensure these paths are identified and applications submitted before January 1st 2031.

I am **Les Stather**, the volunteer researcher for **Brompton Regis**, I have completed your parish's assessment using the Ramblers **Don't Lose Your Way (DLYW)** methodology and wish to share our findings with you.

DLYW Methodology: Rigorous Historical Analysis

The DLYW process involves a systematic 3-stage approach:

1. Comparative Map Analysis:

- Overlaying **historical Ordnance Survey maps** (c. 1880s-1940s) with current Definitive Maps to identify paths on the old maps that are not on the OS map today
- Omitting paths that have already been legally closed or diverted

2. Archival Cross-Referencing:

- Validating map findings against **primary sources**, including:
 - **Inclosure Awards and Maps** (pre-1845): Paths explicitly designated for public access in Awards carry irrefutable legal weight.
 - **1910 Finance Act Maps & Field Books**: Entries noting "public right of way" allowances or monetary deductions for path access provide compelling evidence.

3. Evidence Grading:

- Paths are categorised by evidence strength;
 - Strong - e.g., named in Inclosure Acts and or 1901 Finance Act map and Field Books = "Category 1";
 - Weak - no historical evidence apart from the path being on a map = "Category 2".

This process has been uniformly applied across all **285 Somerset parishes** to ensure consistency.

Findings for Brompton Regis

Below are maps highlighting paths identified in your parish, split into categories:

- **Category 1 Coloured Green:** Paths with **sufficient historical evidence** (e.g., named in Inclosure Awards, Tithe Maps or 1910 records) ready for Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) submission.
- **Category 2 Coloured Red:** Paths with insufficient historical evidence requiring further corroboration (e.g., user testimony).

How the Parish Council Can Assist

Your unique historical role in drafting the first Definitive Maps (via the 1949 Act) makes your input invaluable. We kindly request that you do the following:

1. Review Category 1 and 2 paths:

- Does the path exist?
- Is it currently walked?
- Has it been walked **without let or hindrance for 20+ years?** - user evidence could support a DMMO application. NB - See additional note below regarding qualifying dates for routes which have a Deposit lodged.

2. Identify omissions:

- Let us know of additional paths not on our list **or** the Definitive Map, but are actively used by the community.

NOTE re DEPOSIT A Deposit is a formal statement and map filed with the local authority, under Section 31(6) of the Highways Act 1980. It shows which public paths the landowner accepts as existing, while explicitly stating that they have no intention of dedicating any new ones. Legally, the exact date this Deposit was lodged serves as the moment the public's right to use the path was officially challenged. Therefore, the Deposit date is the crucial deadline up to which the required 20 years of uninterrupted public use must be proven.

The following potential path in your parish is in a Deposit area. We have identified the Deposit date before which you would need to provide evidence of 20 years usage.

- Route 34281 Deposit was lodged on 19/08/1994, therefore public usage evidence would need to be for at least the 20 years prior to this date.

Next Steps

Where historical evidence is robust (**Category 1**), DMMO applications can be prepared to be sent to Somerset Council.

- Does your parish want to submit these applications or do you want The Ramblers to submit them?
- Can you provide any additional information for the DMMO submissions?

Where historical evidence is insufficient (**Category 2**), we seek your partnership to gather additional proof, as above 'How the PC can assist' point one.

For additional paths (**omissions**) that have been identified by yourselves, we will add them to our records and look for historical evidence.

Thank you for reviewing my work. Please share your feedback by **1st November 2026**. If you are unable to make that deadline, then please advise me of a date you can work to.

I am available at lesj_stather@hotmail.co.uk and can share much more information about these potential paths.

I am also the Somerset Ramblers Area Footpath Officer and am available for consultation on any Rights of Way issues you may have in your parish.

Sincerely,

Les Stather

Ramblers 2026 Project Volunteer

Somerset

lesj_stather@hotmail.co.uk

Maps of Paths Found

Category 1 (green) We have already found historical evidence - local usage evidence for 20 years will assist a DMMO to proceed.

Category 2 (red) There is no historical evidence - local usage evidence for 20 years will therefore be required for a DMMO to proceed.



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