

**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 the course of our work we make contact with 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 act in a professional manner at all times.
- 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 (eg 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 and has responsibility for developing and implementing policy on behalf of the Society. Apart from rare exceptions, 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 agreed by this committee.
- 4.1.2 Exceptions do occur, e.g. The Society is notified of some legal event at the last minute and a response is required. In these exceptional circumstances a Courts & Inquiries Officer (C&IO) may seek the approval of any two trustees of the society. This may be done by email and the matter must be recorded at the next C&IC meeting.

4.1.3 The members of the committee are as follows:

- John Harker – Chairman C&IO and trustee
- Rhoda Barnett – C&IO
- Terry Norris – C&IO
- Harry Scott – C&IO
- Alan Hooley – Consultations and Orders Manager

The Trustees of the Society have delegated authority to the C&IC for the authorisation of all matters that might result in some form of legal action, including s56 and s130A notices, public inquiries etc, in particular where costs may be incurred by the Society.

The committee is also responsible for the formulation and documentation of policy for all footpath-related matters. Final sign-off for all policy documents rests with the officers of the Society.

### **4.2 Courts & Inquiries Officer (C&IO)**

4.2.1 C&IOs represent the Society, as the name suggests, at Court or Public Inquiries. 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 (see annex 1) and offer advice and help to all other field volunteers in their patch.

### **4.3 Area Officer (AO)**

4.3.1 AOs are appointed by the Chairman of the Society and their appointment is confirmed at an management meeting. .

4.3.2 AOs are normally appointed on a per highway authority (HA) basis (see appendix 2).

4.3.3 AOs receive all correspondence from HAs on behalf of the Society.

4.3.4 AOs may have Inspectors reporting to them.

4.3.5 AOs have the delegated responsibility for responding to all consultations and orders on behalf of the Society.

4.3.6 AOs are responsible for informing the relevant C&IO of all representations and objections raised on behalf of the Society.

4.3.7 AOs are the first port of call for an Inspector when a footpath fault remains unresolved for an unacceptable length of time. The length of time that is considered unacceptable for a fault remaining outstanding depends on the severity of the fault. The following timescales are a guide to what the Society considers unacceptable:

- total obstruction on valuable/well-used path = 1 month
- total obstruction on less valuable/well-used path = 3 months.

Inspectors should use their own discretion to decide if a path is valuable/well used.

**4.4 Taylor House Area Office (THAO)**

- 4.4.1 THAO acts as AO for all HAs when a field AO has not been appointed.
- 4.4.2 The responsibilities of AO are split between two separate groups at Taylor House.
- 4.4.3 Consultations and orders are handled by Assessors, who are managed by the Consultation and Orders Manager (Alan Hooley acts as THAO in this instance).
- 4.4.4 For faults the THAO is the Faults Officer (Hilda Bowler).
- 4.4.5 The Faults Officer provides a centralised fault-recording facility, which receives and records all fault reports. It is the Inspectors' responsibility to copy all fault reports to THAO.
- 4.4.6 The Fault Officer also progresses all faults from Inspectors who do not deal directly with the HA.

**4.5 Inspectors**

- 4.5.1 Inspectors are appointed by the Chairman of the Society; their appointments are confirmed at an management meeting.
- 4.5.2 Inspectors are responsible for one or more parishes.
- 4.5.3 Inspectors report to an AO (THAO where no dedicated field AO has been appointed for the HA; ie to Alan Hooley or Hilda Bowler).
- 4.5.4 Inspectors receive copies of consultations and orders for their parish as decided by their AO. At the request of an AO, Inspectors should survey and prepare a report 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 prepare a report for submission to the HA. All fault reports must be copied to the AO Faults Officer at Taylor House.
- 4.5.7 Inspectors may be requested by the THAO to follow up a report received at Taylor House from members of the Society or members of the public.
- 4.5.8 Inspectors should monitor the progress of the fault and report all cleared faults to the THAO. If a fault is not being progressed by the HA to the satisfaction of the Inspector, the report should be escalated to either the field AO or the THAO.

**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 has to 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.
- 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 30p per mile. Where there is adequate and convenient public transport, mileage claims should not exceed the cost of public transport.
- 5.5 Stationery, copying and printing: please give details and provide receipts if possible. Printing on your own computer may be claimed at 5p per sheet
- 5.6 Postage may be claimed. Please keep a record of each letter sent. You only need to submit the total you have spent on postage, but keep your detailed records for at least 15 months in case of any enquiry.
- 5.7 Telephone calls. Please use email if at all possible but, if claiming for telephone calls, indicate briefly the purpose of each call and its duration, and estimate the total cost.
- 5.8 Maps will normally be supplied from Taylor House. Please do not buy them without the prior approval of the Chairman or Treasurer.
- 5.9 Exceptionally you may wish to purchase other items or services with the intention of reclaiming the cost from the Society. You must always obtain the agreement of the Chairman or Treasurer before doing so.

### 6 COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.1 The nature of our work makes it imperative that we keep good records of all communications.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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 volunteer before taking any action yourself.
- 6.4 To keep costs to a minimum, email is the preferred method of communication. The Society has four email addresses and it is important to use the correct one. Responses to mail sent to the wrong address are likely to be delayed by up to seven days whilst they are redirected.
  - All communications relating to consultations and orders: [assessors@peakandnorthern.org.uk](mailto:assessors@peakandnorthern.org.uk)
  - All fault reports: [fauls@peakandnorthern.org.uk](mailto:fauls@peakandnorthern.org.uk)
  - If you come across a damaged signpost or have a suggestion for a new location for one of our signs: [signposts@peakandnorthern.org.uk](mailto:signposts@peakandnorthern.org.uk)
  - All other mail: [mail@peakandnorthern.org.uk](mailto:mail@peakandnorthern.org.uk)
- 6.5 Officer and volunteer email addresses.

Email addresses for officers and volunteers can be found in the annual report. If no email address is published for an individual, you should contact them via one of the four Society email addresses.
- 6.6 Postal address is *Taylor House, 23 Turncroft Lane, Offerton, Stockport SK1 4AB*
- 6.7 Phone number at Taylor House is *0161 480 3565*. The office is only fully staffed on Mondays. Telephone messages may therefore not receive a response for up to seven days.

## 7 MAPS

7.1 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. Volunteers who do not already have this skill will receive training. The majority of 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.

### 7.2 Definitive maps of public rights of way. (DRMs)

7.2.1 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. The Society has copies of the majority of these maps and they can be viewed at Taylor House. They are also available at some public libraries.

7.2.2 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. They are also available for inspection at some public libraries.

7.2.3 Definitive maps show all rights of way which are legally recognized, 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.

7.2.4 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.

### 7.3 Web-based versions of the definitive map

7.3.1 Increasingly, HAs are making their definitive maps available via their websites. Where this is the case it has become the norm that they will not supply paper copies to the Society or individuals.

7.3.2 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 Schools. You must also be aware that these maps are only interpretations of the definitive maps: they are not legal documents.

7.3.3 The Society's website is a useful resource for volunteers, and this link gives details of maps, where known, for each HA: <http://www.peakandnorthern.org.uk/useful-links/highway-authorities.htm>

### 7.4 Ordnance Survey Explorer 1:25,000 series

7.4.1 The 1:25,000 Explorer maps show all rights of way, the information having been transferred from the DRMs held by the local authority. We will supply copies of the relevant maps for your patch.

7.4.2 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.

7.4.3 On first obtaining a map, you should highlight the boundaries of your parish or parishes, and mark in the footpath numbers which, with some exceptions, are on the DRMs kept at Taylor House.

### 7.5 Tracklogs PC version of the Explorer series

7.5.1 The Society has copies of a number of Explorer maps produced by the Tracklogs program. These software versions of the OS maps can be interfaced to GPS units, allowing routes to be transferred between the GPS unit and the on screen map. We mainly use them to record the location of our signposts, but they are also available to volunteers on one of the computers at Taylor House.

### 7.6 Ordnance Survey Landranger 1:50,000 series

7.6.1 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.

### 7.7 Parish maps

7.7.1 Some authorities and parishes are now producing maps on which the footpath numbers are already marked. Where available, these are very useful.

### 7.8 A to Z street maps

7.8.1 These offer street-level maps of urban areas at scales up to 1:10,000 or better. A to Z maps for all the major conurbations in our area are held at Taylor House.

## 8 RISK MANAGEMENT OF ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE SOCIETY OF DEFAMATION

### 8.1 Introduction

A few years ago our legal advisor surveyed the potential risks affecting PNFS and concluded that the most costly of these stemmed from proceedings against us for libel and/or slander it is still his view that our costliest risk derives from defamation.

Whilst the frequency with which this is likely to happen is very small the potential costs could be substantial. Furthermore the time allowed us to respond to an allegation of defamation may be very short. So it is prudent to have a strategy for dealing with that eventuality.

### 8.2 Management of Defamation Risks

8.2.1 No communication from this Society must ever allege the commission of a criminal offence by a named person unless there is clear proof of their guilt.

8.2.2 Although an unprovable allegation of a crime is the gravest defamation, any allegation which encourages hatred, ridicule, contempt, or which causes the victim to be shunned; or which injures or attacks their competence in their occupation, profession or trade is defamatory.

8.2.3 So, any communication on a rights of way matter (oral, in writing or by email) should concentrate on the statutory criteria – enjoyment, convenience etc - and on provable facts; never on personalities. This also has the advantage of persuading the recipient that our objection is sound.

The communication must only contain arguments which the writer would gladly debate at an inquiry. Strong arguments should be clearly and simply propounded; weak ones should be omitted.

8.2.4 If we do get a letter alleging that we have defamed anyone, then the less that we have said about them the harder it will be for their solicitors to justify the assertion that they have been defamed.

### 8.3 Our Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Defamation

8.3.1 We should stand our ground whenever the facts justify doing so. We have a long and proud tradition to maintain. We should only retract our objection and apologise for it if it is mistaken: and in that event the sooner we do so the better for us.

8.3.2 If we receive a letter alleging defamation, it must **immediately** be handed to a Trustee. A key decision will be whether the action to be taken needs the (expensive) support of Counsel or can be dealt with by sending a letter.

8.3.3 Drafts of letter appropriate to various circumstances are held at Taylor House. Such a letter must only be sent with the approval of the Trustees.

8.3.4. If we defeat an attack by defamation lawyers, we will attempt to have meticulously accurate account published in the press. That will enhance our reputation and encourage others to follow suit.