



**PLYMOUTH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

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16 January 2013

Anthony Payne  
Director for Place  
Plymouth City Council  
Floor 8  
Civic Centre  
Plymouth  
PL1 2AA

**This letter constitutes formal advice from the Plymouth Local Access Forum. Plymouth City Council is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.**

When calling or telephoning please ask for: **Mr Ross Johnston**

Dear Sir,

At the last meeting of the Plymouth Local Access Forum I was instructed to write to you regarding the insufficient resourcing of the Public Rights of Way team.

At a recent public inquiry the Rights of Way Officer was unable to attend because of ill-health having been signed off work with pneumonia. As such the Council failed to provide any suitably qualified lead officer at this inquiry which was of a deeply serious nature involving the promotion of the safeguarding of some of this city's most vulnerable children. It was stated that it was not possible to find any qualified officer in the Council having knowledge of public rights of way or able to respond to public rights of way matters and so the inquiry was not attended by the Council.

For a long time now we have been concerned about the level of resourcing allocated to Public Rights of Way which is an area of work which is subject to some rather unique legislative pressures. The short version of these pressures is that in 2020 any footpath, bridleway or byeway not properly recorded will be extinguished and lost to the City forever. This could potentially result in the loss of around 800 potential rights of way. The main issue as we see it is that the legal processes your officers are obliged to follow are both extremely long and very expensive making progress slow. They quite rightly prioritise their work where they can make the most improvements and they do so very effectively.

Our request to you is that we feel under the council wide reorganisation that an assistant to the Public Rights of Way Officer be found. We are well aware of the views of your officers and their managers but would be grateful to hear your opinions on this matter.

Yours Sincerely

R.G.Fairchild  
Chair of the Plymouth Local Access Forum