

Love the great outdoors? Now you can adopt-a-path

People who regularly use rights of way in Somerset are invited to help keep routes open and accessible for all under a new adopt-a-path scheme.

Somerset County Council's rights of way team is interested in hearing from anyone willing to adopt a public footpath, bridleway, restricted byway or a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT).

Volunteers are asked to simply walk, cycle or ride their path as often as possible, report any problems to their local adopt-a-path co-ordinator, and help keep signs, gates and stiles clear of overgrown vegetation.

Routes for adoption could range from urban paths of 50m to wooded trails several miles long.

In many parts of Somerset, local Parish Path Liaison Officers and parish councils already carry out a similar role by walking paths and carrying out maintenance. The adopt-a-path scheme looks to build on this.

Cllr David Fothergill, Somerset County Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Rights of Way, said: "Somerset has one of the largest rights of way networks in the country with around 3,800 miles of paths, including 15,000 gates and 11,000 stiles.

"The adopt-a-path scheme is a fantastic opportunity for community-minded residents to help us keep an eye on the network and make sure all paths are accessible.

"We already have some local parishes who do this and they have been a great success. So whether you already use a path regularly or are looking for an excuse to get out more, we would really appreciate your help. Please get in touch if you have questions or want to find out more."

As well as the obvious physical health benefits to regular exercise and carrying out basic maintenance work, volunteering is also good for your mental health.

Cllr Anna Groskop, Somerset County Council's Cabinet Member for HR, Health and Transformation, said: "Adopting a path is a brilliant way to keep fit. By walking, cycling or riding several times a week you will be giving your health a huge boost, whatever your age or ability.

"I would encourage anyone who loves the outdoors and can spare a few hours here and there to join this rewarding scheme and help give something back to their local community."

All adopt-a-path volunteers will be loaned equipment they might need such as hi-vis jackets, gloves and secateurs.

Anyone can get involved in this project. You can check if a route you wish to adopt is a public right of way by checking an Ordnance Survey map or the Interactive Mapping at www.somerset.gov.uk/rightsofway. For more information, please call 0300 123 2224, email ROWVolunteers@somerset.gov.uk or view the leaflet online at <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/get-involved/volunteering/volunteering>.

