**Via email to:**

All City, Town, and Parish Councils

**All enquiries email:**

rightsofway@somerset.gov.uk

**Date:** 26th April 2024

Dear Colleagues

It was lovely to meet so many of you at the fortnightly Council Clerks meeting on 20th March, and my apologies this letter hasn’t reached you as soon as I’d have liked.

Somerset Council is responsible for maintaining around 6,200km of public rights of way across Somerset. We achieve this in partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority and around 400 registered volunteers in our many schemes that we operate under the Community Paths Partnership.  There are many more volunteers that aren’t registered, and a number of Town & Parish Councils undertaking work on the network under their own powers of maintenance.

**Parish Council powers**

Section 43 Highways Act 1980 provides powers forparish and community councils to maintain footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways.

We are aware there are many of you that either already undertake maintenance activity under your own powers, or are keen to get started – eg: signage, gates, steps, surfacing, etc.  We’re keen to put together a guidance toolkit to enable and empower parish and town councils to assist with maintaining the path network.

By completing the following [Microsoft Form](https://forms.office.com/e/ePdmYfULZZ) it will help us identify the level of interest from those that aren’t currently active and what would best help them to become active, and also understand how the active councils are currently using their powers. This information will be invaluable in pulling together a guidance toolkit for public rights of way maintenance.

**Please complete the form as soon as possible - and by no later than Friday 31st May. Thank you.**

Exmoor National Park Authority are also keen to work more closely with Parish Councils so if you are within the National Park area and wish to do more to help or work in partnership then please contact access@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

**Pete**

**Peter Hobley**

Service Manager Rights of Way

rightsofway@somerset.gov.uk