Standard NEWS

Water Park residents' anger at six-year 'temporary' footpath closure

3:02pm Monday 7th October 2013 in News



Residents from the Lechlade and Kempsford area gather where the footpath ends at Lakes by Yoo. Pictured are; Neil Kinch, Parish Cllr Sue Griffin, Teresa Griffin, John Pinnington and Richard Holmes from the Ramblers, Stephen Funnell, Alison Ward, Richard C



RESIDENTS are fighting against the temporary closure of a popular public footpath in fear of it being permanently sealed off.

The footpath at Bowmoor Sailing Club near Lechlade has been closed for six years since Coln Park and Lakes by yoo bought the lake in 2007 to start developing holiday lodges.

Residents of Fairford, Lechlade and Kempsford have expressed their outrage at the constant closure.

Although the footpath is within the privately owned Bowmoor Sailing Club, locals claim they have been walking on it for decades. Only a week before Coln Park put in place its first temporary closure, one resident succeeded in making the path a public right of way.



"We've all been so patient with this temporary closure," said Whelford resident Teresa Griffin. "It's such a shame. We're really lacking footpaths in this area."

Residents are doing everything they can to alert the authorities about the issue. Teresa said she has written to

the Secretary of State multiple times and has corresponded with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) public right of way officer Mike Barton.

"When anything is reviewed or if I notice anything happening on the footpath, I write to the Secretary of State," said Teresa. "It's difficult to notice though when I have no access to the footpath."

Teresa has also been receiving support from Cirencester Ramblers and said they have been a big help to the cause. Ads by Google

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Secretary and footpath officer at Cirencester Ramblers Richard Holmes said he had gone as far as contacting Ramblers Central Office in London and asking the solicitor to send a letter to GCC.

"The reply was not particularly helpful," Richard said. "GCC is still saying the path is closed for public protection."

Principle Public Rights of Way Officer at GCC

John Lane said that at the beginning of the project, the developers closed the path for health and safety due to the amount of building equipment and construction vehicles moving on and off the site.

"We assessed the site and closed the footpath for a period of six months. However, the building work has continued and each year the developer has applied for a continued closure which the Secretary of State has then approved," he said. "We expect to see the footpath reopened once the work is complete and the area becomes safe for walkers once again."

Director for Coln Park Giles Baker said: "We have had extensive, open and ongoing discussions with the three parish councils, Bowmoor Sailing Club and local ramblers' groups.

"As a result we are to shortly hold a public meeting to address the matters of concern that have been highlighted through our discussions with the community."

The meeting is planned for later this October in Lechlade to try and reassure the public.

It will be chaired by deputy leader of GCC and Fairford and Lechlade councillor Ray Theodoulou.

"I have a great deal of sympathy for those who have lost the path," said Cllr Theodoulou. "The development is a slow one and the locals don't feel anyone is helping. The meeting will hopefully provide some assurance that there is a plan which will stick."

The meeting will be held at Lechlade Memorial Hall on Tuesday, October 15 at 7pm. All members of the public are welcome.



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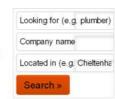
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