

**REPORT ON BALFOURS MEETING FOR R.O.W. OFFICERS AT THORN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE
HEREFORD ON 27TH JUNE 2018**

More than fifty R.O.W. officers attended a meeting conducted by Balfours staff members Mike Walker, Team leader and Will Steel, Regional Network Manager.

Awkward questions and answers were discussed in a sensible, civilised but very direct manner. Other parish councils have also increased their precept to keep their R.O.W. network open. As individuals, R.O.W. officers feel isolated and Balfours seem far away and we felt heartened by sharing experiences. We soon understood that the size of the operation run by this part of Balfours is very large scale. A better understanding on both sides of the house emerged. As always at such meetings, much information and news can be gathered from talking to people afterwards.

Points of law, legal responsibilities being enforced in some cases, and the resulting atmosphere, were discussed at length. Local knowledge is invaluable and Balfours are fully aware of that.

The legal complications of changing the line of a path were explained.

Halfway into the meeting, it seemed that there were two approaches to all R.O.W. problems. Doing things by the book or applying local knowledge and things been done quietly. E.g. one lady explained how the only way to keep one path open, was to spray the nettles. Promptly another officer provided rules and regs forbidding the use of sprays on R.O.W. Further complications of a path crossing a crop where spraying was essential gave us much to consider.

The Ramblers Association is most helpful in some areas, which led us into a long discussion about liability, insurance and training.

Materials for stiles and gates etc. are available from Balfours. Sometimes funds are available for projects.

I raised the major problem caused by lack of bridges, costs etc. Another supplier and different design of bridge has been found and I have been given a Balfours contact, with whom I can discuss our bridge problems and report further.

A new definitive map is scheduled for 2026. We were informed that any R.O.W. not on the map by then would be removed permanently.

A very informative and worthwhile meeting.

Alan Dowdy, FPO, Wigmore PC, very kindly gave me a lift to the meeting.

Mike Oliver