

MEETING ON RIGHTS OF WAY
AVEBURY SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2019

An ad hoc group of rights of way enthusiasts met at the invitation of Anne Henshaw (Chair, CPRE North Wiltshire and Swindon) to hear from Becky Jones (Volunteer Coordinator, Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens, Cotswolds Conservation Board) and a colleague. The Board manages the Cotswolds AONB, which extends over 790 square miles, six counties (Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Bath & NE Somerset, Wiltshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire), and a population of 152,000, and has 89 SSSIs. Amongst others present were Stephen Leonard (Wiltshire) and representatives from Ramblers, adjacent parish councils, and others.

Becky talked about the origins and current status of the voluntary warden scheme.

Established in 1968, there are now over 300 volunteer wardens. They are responsible for:

1. **Working Parties** – conserving and enhancing the AONB, taking part in a range of projects from drystone walling, hedge laying, and tree planting to installing kissing gates and pond restoration
2. **Parish wardening** – working with parish councils, farmers and local residents to help keep footpaths open and identify local features in need of restoration
3. **Guided Walks** – leading guided walks, promoting the Cotswolds AONB to a wider audience
4. **Education** – helping with school assemblies and days out exploring the Cotswolds
5. **Shows and talks** - promoting the value of the Cotswolds.

A lively discussion followed as those present considered how this successful scheme might be replicated in an area from the Ridgeway to Yatesbury and from the A4 to Broad Hinton. It was agreed to meet again in January.

Stephen Stacey
24 November