PROOF OF EVIDENCE URIAH GODSELL

Claimed Route B-C in Reservoir

1. Background

I wish to support the evidence offered [redacted] In addition I wish to expand upon the actions which I have personally taken.

I removed the stile at Point B in 2018 to try to discourage walkers from using the route. If I saw them and was close enough I would challenge them, usually if working in that field, or a neighbouring field, and would stop my tractor to have a word. At no point have I allowed walkers to use the route B-C.

2. Fencing/Gates

In July 2018 when Western Power left the site at Point B I put up some sheep netting and barbed wire in the gap. The sheep netting and barbed wire were continuously cut. In 2020 I eventually decided to replace it with a metal gate; I then welded this shut as there is no need for access into the Verney field. See **Attachment 6** from Richard Gardner, Contractor.

3. Improving Official Footpaths

In 2018 I started to improve the official footpaths on our farm. I assisted the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens to install kissing gates and we paid for these from the farm budget. I installed some posts with markers on, to make clear where the definitive rights of way were in order to encourage the use of these routes.

Claimed Route E-F in Sid's

4. Background

I wish to support all the proof of evidence offered by my wife Jane Godsell. In addition I wish to expand upon the actions which I have personally taken.

I have occasionally stopped walkers since we purchased the field and asked them to keep to footpaths although generally I ask my wife to approach them if we are together. At no point have I allowed walkers to use the route E-F.

I attempted to block informal alternative routes within Sid's field, which is inconsistent with permissive or dedicated access.

5. Actions Taken

5.1 Improvements

After we purchased the field, from April 2019, we were aware of walkers straying from the definitive paths so I decided to improve the access to the definitive paths before cutting off any existing routes used by walkers. I spent several days in the summer of 2019 clearing the existing definitive routes (MST64 and MST42); I strimmed the brambles and nettles; I added boards to the edge of parts of the path in the wood and added stone to the path where tree roots were making the path more difficult to walk on to make the paths more level.

I purchased and assisted the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens in replacing 21 existing stiles with kissing gates all over our farm at Far Westrip, including 3 in Sid's field for the 2 definitive routes and 2 in the Reservoir field. I want to make the rights of way more accessible by avoiding the need for people to climb stiles. This I know has enabled more people to walk these routes. I erected posts within the field with footpath arrows, to assist with keeping walkers on the definitive routes. We have 4.5km of Public Footpaths across our 240 acres at Far Westrip and I have personally improved all these paths. I am astonished at how people frequently cut down good fences with total disregard for animal safety and letting livestock in to growing crops, both in Sid's field and the Reservoir field, when they have perfectly good public footpaths in the same fields which can be used.

I have put up fences on routes which were being used by the public, to try to prevent unauthorised access. However we have suffered from repeated vandalism to these fences.

The work I have done to improve and promote the existing definitive routes (MST64 and MST42 in Sid's field demonstrates that, where access is contemplated, it is on a managed/permissive basis, not by dedication.

5.2 Challenges to Walkers

I have stopped walkers and asked them to keep to the footpaths when they were not walking on definitive rights of way.

I set up wildlife cameras to try to identify the people who were cutting down boundary fences in the field but after seeing how angry the fence made one man on the video, I installed gates instead of fences at the critical points such as point B above and made sure they would not open so that determined people could climb them but at least the boundaries were secure. The gate at point B I welded shut so that people could climb it if they were very determined but it remained a stock proof barrier.

I attended a Stonehouse Town Council meeting when I heard that they wanted to create new footpaths. I was very disappointed to hear one councillor declare that he would continue to walk where he wanted to in our field and would not take any notice of requests to keep to definitive rights of way.

6. Summary

I have made many improvements to the definitive routes and blocked access to areas which were not on these routes to try to keep walkers to the definitive rights of way. However there has been a great deal of vandalism of fences which makes the latter difficult. Despite that I have continued to ask walkers to keep to the definitive paths.

'I believe that the facts stated in this Proof of Evidence are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.'

Signed [redacted] Dated 4/11/26 amended