Proof of Evidence – John Callinan:

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
The Definitive Map and Statement of
Public Rights of Way for Gloucestershire

Ref: ROW/3377321 - Additional Public Footpaths across land known as Verney Fields and Surrounding Area, Stonehouse Parish Modification Order 2025

&

Ref: & ROW/3365454 - Additional Public Footpath Connecting Oak Way and MST30, Stonehouse Parish Modification Order 2025

1. I had no knowledge of the existing owner until 2023, when notices were erected stating Keep Out – Private Property. I had not known who owned the land previously.

2. I and many people of my age always refer to the Verney Fields as Doverow Hill and more often drop the "Hill", calling the whole area Doverow. This included Doverow Woods at the top of the hill.

3. I have lived in Stonehouse all my life and at the same address in Laburnum Walk for the last 48 years. Prior to this I lived in three other properties in Stonehouse.

4. It should be appreciated that the hillside looked completely different from the present day. Up until the late 1970s access to Doverow was via a stile in the hedgerow at the top of Verney Road. Fields on the west side of the stile were later to be built on by Stroud District Council and are now known as The Courts. This included Bramble Lane. The other side of the stile accessed directly onto Doverow.

5. The south facing side of Doverow was occupied by The Stonehouse Brick and Tile Company until about 1968. The activities of the company involved quarrying into the hill and removing clay to make bricks. The tops of those quarry faces provided, and still provide, wonderful views of our town. My three brothers all worked there. The housing estate known as Rosedale was built on the demolished brickworks site.

Building started in the late 1970s through the 1980s and completed in the early 1990s.

6. With my siblings and others from the town we continued to use the paths, often meeting others from neighbouring parishes at the woods. Primary school friends and, later, secondary school friends often planned to meet up and enjoy the variety of rope swings in Doverow woods.

7. In my early years of marriage, on visits to Doverow woods, my late father-in-law introduced me to natural history on our visits to the Doverow woods. He pointed out the habitat enjoyed by the wildlife who shared the hill with us. Walking the paths he helped me identify the plants, insects and birds.

10 Bringing up my family of three children in Stonehouse involved frequent walks on Doverow. We walked the paths I had walked as a boy. I was able to pass on the environmental information that I had gained. I continued the family tradition of walks on Doverow with my grandchildren until 2023.

11 It should be appreciated that the use of Doverow footpaths increased significantly with the two new housing estates being built, predominately in the 1980s. Doverow was a very convenient place of leisure. The hill provided an opportunity to exercise, but at same time enjoy the wonderful views of our town.

12 Throughout the whole of my time of living in Stonehouse and using the footpaths on Doverow I have never been stopped or prevented from walking on any of the footpaths claimed. I have never been challenged and questioned by anybody suggesting I should not be on the footpaths. I have never seen or had a conversation with anybody claiming to be farmer. Until 2023 I have never seen a sign prohibiting or restricting access to any of the paths. I have walked the paths that I have used from boyhood.

13 At the end of this document, I have provided examples of people using the footpaths on the hill. Most of the activities mentioned refers to access from Verney Road, later referred to as Bramble Lane. Most of my walks were circular and involved the return

part of the walk via the south facing slope of the hill. Until 2023 footpath access from hill was directly onto MST 27.

14 At different times of the year, I used a path to go into the top part of Cotswold Green. The footpath from Verney Road has an alternative path on the left that takes you to the top of Cotswold Green, over a stile, into a field that joins up with MST42. A first-class route for observing butterflies.

15 Over many years I have observed a wide variety of footpath users. I list some of them below:

16 Groups of young people aiming for Doverow Wood!

17 Large groups of serious walkers probably belonging to walking groups passing through Stonehouse.

18 Couples slowly enjoying the climb up the hill.

19 Runners, probably using the paths as part of some training regime.

20 Amblers ambling only to take the first opportunity to sit on the bench under the oak tree. A pleasure enjoyed by many. A brief rest before continuing the climb to the top. Some stopping for a cup of tea from a flask. Occasionally a picnic would be laid out and enjoyed by those assembled.

21 School organised cross-country runs. All my three brothers and two sons attended Maidenhill Secondary School where the Doverow footpaths were on the specified cross-country route.

22 Bird watchers carefully scanning the hillside especially for Scandinavian winter visitors, fieldfares and redwings.

23 Family groups comprising grandparents, children and grandchildren climbing the hill almost always stopping on the seat before continuing on up to the wood or a visit out to the viewpoint at the top of the quarry.

24 Stonehouse residents who had moved away but were back in Stonehouse visiting relatives. A visit to Doverow was an absolute must, often despite the weather.

25 Dog walkers of all shapes and sizes, as were their dogs.

26 Note: I have observed over the time walking the paths that people show respect for the environment and appreciate the space the footpaths give them access to.

27 I hereby declare that to the best of my knowledge and belief this a true statement.

Signature..... [redacted] ..... **Date**..... 30th Oct 2026