

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF:

Louise Taylor

Title of Order:

S53 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way for Gloucestershire
(Additional Length of Footpath at Witcombe Farm)
(Parish of Great Witcombe) Order 2009

Planning Inspectorate Reference:

ROW/3354782
Public Inquiry: 6 October 2026

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Louise Taylor.
2. [REDACTED]
3. I have known the route in question since I moved with my family to [REDACTED] in the summer of 1975 at the age of ten years.
4. I am not related to the landowner and have never been in their employment.

I wish to state to this Public Inquiry that...

5. I first submitted evidence regarding my use of this path in 2005, over twenty years ago. It is surprising to be submitting evidence again for a hearing that has taken so long to be held. Nevertheless, my recollection of the years I spent using this path are still a very clear and enjoyable memory.
6. [REDACTED]. The path provided a direct route to Witcombe reservoir, which is a well-known beauty spot. The path

was a well-made road with no obstacles to negotiate. As a family we walked to the reservoir regularly, especially at the weekend. [REDACTED] and I also rode our horses along that route to access Cranham woods safely.

7. As the years passed, I would stroll up the path to sit in the peace and quiet of the reservoir to revise for school exams. As the youngest in our family, I found myself alone during term times when both my [REDACTED]. As a reflective teenager, in my formative years, I derived a great deal of pleasure from spending time at the reservoir. The value of access to such a peaceful, mindful space, for people of all ages, should not be underestimated. On many occasions school friends and visiting family and friends would accompany me and many remember using the path in question.
8. Since leaving home and having a family of my own, I returned regularly to visit my parents and brother, who continued to live in the area. I have pushed my children in a pram and slowly walked them as toddlers up the path to enjoy watching the wildlife around the reservoir.
9. On no occasion was I in a hurry, or anxious that I would be seen and turned away.
10. There were numerous occasions when I saw people also walking and, in some cases, working around the landowner's property. I was never asked to stop using the path. As far as I was aware it was an accepted public footpath.
11. It is worth noting at this point that the landowner, [REDACTED], has made a claim that I was repeatedly asked by her husband not to use the path to gain access to the reservoir. I strongly refute this claim and am equally surprised that they know who I am by name. As previously stated, I have seen, and been seen walking this path by other people; however, I have never spoken to, or been introduced to any of the landowners, or remember stopping at any point to have a conversation with anyone working at the landowner's property. How, or why they would name me in their evidence is of interest to me.
12. Since the closure of the route to the general public in 2005, I have used the alternative route offered, however, I find it to be a much longer, less direct route. Additionally, there are stiles which were tricky if I was walking with my parents as they became older. The presence of horses in the field and on occasions around the stile could be unnerving for those not used to horses, or people with small children and dogs. During the winter the route becomes very muddy and boggy due to local flooding. As a result, my use of the route over the years has ceased.

13. So much time has passed since my initial statement that I now have grandchildren. I would very much like to think that I could, at some point, take them to the reservoir along the route I used for many years as a child and young adult. It seems to me that this area, which is a wildlife haven and a bird sanctuary associated with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, should be available for the enjoyment of everyone, not just those of us who are able to overcome the many obstacles on the new route.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the facts I have stated are true and correct.

Signed:

A black rectangular box redacting the signature.

Date: 13.08.2026

NB: You should keep a copy of the completed Statement