

Footpath Warden report for meeting 27 September 2016

1 Footpaths update and specific path issues

1.1 Work undertaken

Since the July 2016 meeting, I have again walked all of the rights of way in the town on several occasions, on many occasions with Catherine Hawkins. The major actions we have undertaken are:

- general trimming of nettles and brambles along several paths (FPs 1, 1a, 2, 4, 6, 8, 14, 14a, 18, 22, 25, 26 and 34; BR21; RBs 27, 28, 30 and 31) - the hedge trimmer bought by the Council has proved useful (though was out of action for repair for a few weeks)
- RB3 - in addition to the letters that Tony is sending to the landowner at each Committee cycle, I have reported the non-availability of this byway to NCC. The Open Spaces Society has also taken an interest
- FP6 - a letter has been drafted to the occupant of 2 School Cottages to agree a route through his garden: the legal route is currently obstructed, though a nearby alternative is available, but we also wish to deter walkers from using the main driveway as access, as this is owned by a neighbour
- FP6 and FP7 - Tony and I are still looking to erect posts and waymarks ourselves to mark the route of the path across the field behind Etling Green, and a letter has been drafted for sending to the landholder to advise him of this
- FP10 - a disk I had fixed to the fence at the north of this path, which had been removed a couple of times previously, had again been removed in July: I have refixed it, more securely and (I hope) less accessibly
- FP12 - Tony is seeking to discuss with Highways England their responsibility where this route passes under the A47 and is prone to flooding
- FP12a - although NCC had advised me that they had gained permission to erect a waymarking finger on the fence of number 35 Shipdham Road, nothing has happened for 2 years, so I have now gained permission from number 37 to put 2 disks on their fence to indicate the route of the path
- FP12a - I have also gained permission from 19 Old Hall Road and put up a disk on the fence at the rear of the house to direct people through to Old Hall Road
- FP14a - The Ramblers has agreed to renew two lengths (20 and 50m) of damaged mesh on the boardwalk, and to install 15m of new boardwalk across a section of path which gets very muddy at times; this work is planned shortly
- FP19/FP20 - The post carrying waymark disks at the junction of these paths which I had erected had again been knocked over; after further requests, NCC has since put it more firmly into place
- BR21 - we have removed a small tree which had fallen across the bridleway
- FP24 - I have cleared ivy which was obscuring the waymarking disk at the north end of this path
- FP24 - the disk I had placed at the south end had been removed, and I have replaced it, more firmly
- FP25 - the manual cut made to clear this path in preparation for the Dereham Walkers are Welcome launch walk was followed up in July by a machine cut, with the assistance of The Ramblers

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- RB27 - as agreed by Tony with the landowner, I have placed a further waymarking disk alongside their somewhat off-putting notice near the north end of this byway, to confirm how people can use the route
- RB27 - Tony is also writing to the landowner who has agreed to put up a post at the south end where the byway diverges from his access track, and I will then fix waymarking disks to it
- RB28 - no further work has been possible to dig out the stumps that present a tripping hazard in the byway, as they are now invisibly buried in the grass
- RB28 - with the agreement of the farmer, I have placed an additional waymarking disk on their fence at Rookery Farm to confirm the route of the byway across the concrete apron at that point
- RB28 - two trees remain across this byway and I am arranging with Tim Birt for him to use his chain saw to clear them
- FP34 - Norfolk Wildlife Trust had agreed to improve the ground at the ends of the sleeper bridge on Rushmeadow, but has been delayed first awaiting dry weather and later for volunteer time (I volunteered, but would have needed their health and safety induction before I could be deployed)
- FP34 - after the gate at the start of the boardwalk was twice removed, Adam Hinchliffe from NCC has fixed it more securely to the adjacent bridgework

A summary of outstanding issues is given below (my classifications).

		current		July 2016	
1	legal minimum not met	8	11.0%	8	10.7%
2	significant improvement needed	12	16.4%	15	20.0%
3	improvement welcome	20	27.4%	21	28.0%
4	for future action	5	6.8%	5	6.7%
5	no action needed	28	38.4%	26	34.7%
	total	73	100.0%	75	100.0%

Using the NCC formula for assessing the value of work undertaken by volunteers (£20 per hour), I have estimated that work done by me, with regular assistance from Catherine Hawkins and occasional involvement from Peter James of The Ramblers, has had the following value.

- Value of work done from 14 June 2016 to 15 July 2016 @ NCC rate of £20 per hour = £616.67
- The value of work done from 22 July 2016 to 5 September 2016 @ NCC rate of £20 per hour = £673, of which monitoring contributed £90

In both cases, time travelling to work sites has not been included, but time walking footpaths to monitor for problems has been.

1.2 Fingerposts and waymarkers

I still plan to prepare a full report on the state of signage on all of our paths, with a view to seeking discussion with NCC on action needed, but have deferred this in view of the shortness of time available for this meeting. I will aim to present this report to the next meeting.

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	current	Jul 16
fingerpost absent	2	2
disk needed	3	3
fingerpost dislodged or obscured	1	1
disk, should be fingerpost	5	5
disk on tree, needs post	0	0
disk would be helpful	3	3
fingerpost ok	25	25
disk(s) ok	15	15
path obstructed	3	3
no signage needed	19	19
total	76	76

2 Claims for paths not currently recognised as rights of way

There has been no change in the claims for Cherry Lane, Hall Lane and connecting tracks (nor would that be expected for some time yet).

I remain in touch with the group comprising The Ramblers, the British Horse Society and Open Spaces Society, which is co-ordinating a county wide approach to claims to beat the 2026 cut off, but I have done no further work on other claims.

Once the process for confirming/reviewing byelaws regarding Neatherd Moor and Etling Green is agreed with/by Breckland District Council and being implemented, there will be need to consider whether RBs 28, 32 and 33 should be promoted as restricted byways (they are currently suitable only for walkers, cyclists and horse riders).

3 Badley Moor

After a lengthy period during which no external progress has been made, Natural England has contacted both Tony and I to arrange a meeting with the landowner, NE and ourselves.

I am aware that the fingerpost erected by the Town Council at the top of FP35, pointing to Badley Moor, which had been removed, has been replaced, this time set in concrete.

4 InterACTIVE Walking in Dereham - *Dereham Walks guides*

Some 2700 (of the 3000 printed) Dereham Walks guides have now been placed, including 750 at the Library. Walkers are Welcome may well take these on in the future, as 2 further walks, linked to the Mid-Norfolk Railway, have been produced for the group by Jean Stratford. Dereham Town Council will retain copyright.

5 Walkers are Welcome

Kate Millbank remains your 'official' representative here, so I will mention only that Dereham Walkers are Welcome is holding a walk and garden party on 2 October (invitations available to all), and has entered 3 walks into the NCC Walking Festival. The Festival runs from 22 to 30 October, including the launch of section 2 of the England Coast Path (Hopton on Sea to Sea Palling) on 24 October; WaW walks are on 23, 26 and 28 October, the first two including a ride on the Mid-Norfolk Railway to reach the starting point. Tickets are available for all!

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6 Path cutting and clearance

I reported last time about NCC's cutting programme for Dereham, shown below.

	Cut length (m)	Width, other details and instructions
FP2	201.3	1.5m. Headland access from N end
FP11	73.6	1.5m. Access from east end (Rashs Green NR19 1SX)
FP14	503.2	1.5m. Path alongside school. Access from south end Johnson Close NR19 1PL or north end Sardis Way NR19 1BN
BR21	183.7	2.0m. Track. Access east end Back Lane NR19 2DG
RB30	668.5	2.0m. Track. Access from south end
RB31	250.4	2.0m. Track Access from north end

Sadly, I have to report there has been little discernible action: I have contacted NCC seeking information about this lack of action but have not yet had a reply.

FP2 - at the last time of walking (18 September), there was no sign of any cutting having been done.

FP11 - this path has very little surface growth (all at the west end), and there is usually little side growth

FP14 alongside school - the legal route as specified is wholly overgrown, so I imagine the contractors would instead cut the route of the path as walked across the water meadows; as of 30 August, there was no sign of any cutting

BR21 - as with FP11, this path has very little surface growth, but there has been no sign of cutting as of 30 August

RB30, 31 - these paths, especially RB31, become overgrown quite easily and would benefit from cutting: they have been cut with The Ramblers' brush cutter and trimmed 3 times by Catherine and I, but with no sign of NCC cutting as of 2 September

7 Longer term projects

Tony and I have reviewed my original suggestions for possible projects and agreed initial actions on some of them. A fuller report will be made at a future meeting.

8 Parish Paths Seminar

The full report of responses to the questions and comments made has now been circulated to all attendees - copies can be sent out to you on request to Tony or me.

9 Countryside Access Improvement Plan

Work is going ahead on this, now provisionally retitled the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan. The Town Council may wish to offer some comments: the current Plan and the Strategic Review can be found at <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/policies-and-strategies/countryside-access-and-prow>. As a member of the NAIP subgroup working on this, I would be pleased to receive any comments on any aspect of what the new Plan should be trying to achieve, or how it should go about it.

**Ken Hawkins, Footpath Warden, Dereham Town Council
19 September 2016**