

Footpath Warden report for meeting 22 November 2016

1 Footpaths update and specific path issues

1.1 Work undertaken

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

- general trimming of nettles and brambles, and pruning back bush and tree growth - the hedge trimmer bought by the Council has now been brought back into action after its repair (effected by replacement)
- FP2 - I have contacted the landholder, who has agreed to put in a low post (to which I will add a waymark) at the southern end of the path where it leaves Cherry Lane
- RB3 - currently awaiting sending a letter from DTC to the landowner to request reinstatement of the byway. Following my report to NCC of the unavailability of the route, I met Malcolm Steward from NCC, and he is to discuss action with Paul Sellick. As part of Anglia TV's response to The Ramblers' Big Pathwatch report on 14 November, and publicity by The Ramblers and the Open Spaces Society in the EDP, I was filmed (though never broadcast) on site at RB3; we were joined by the farmer asserting that there was no path there
- FP6 and FP7 - currently awaiting sending letters from DTC, one to the occupant of 2 School Cottages to agree a route through his garden, the other to the landowner to have the route through his field waymarked before a new crop is planted. I have also mentioned this to Malcolm Steward NCC
- FP12/12a - Following further flooding, Highways England were observed clearing the drain and a report in Dereham Times seems to indicate that agreement has been reached between HE and NCC for the future
- FP14a - I see that a temporary repair to the bridge across the brook has now been made permanent, removing the tripping hazard created by the first repair. The Ramblers is shortly to renew two lengths (20 and 50m) of damaged mesh on the boardwalk, but plans to install 15m of new boardwalk at the south end of the path have been delayed as this work will be on the SSSI and requires Natural England permission
- RB27 - currently awaiting sending a letter from DTC 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 have been invisibly buried in the grass
- RB28 - two trees across this byway were removed in September by Tim Birt, with my support (largely as observer!)
- FP34 - Norfolk Wildlife Trust has fulfilled its agreement to improve the ground at the ends of the sleeper bridge on Rushmeadow
- FP34 - a cut by the NCC contractor seemed to have gone only as far as the gate, but was extended after I raised this with NCC
- unnamed track - a Ramblers' group used our Walk 2 and reported that a tree had fallen across the track east of Mattishall Road: we cleared this a few days later, gaining publicity on The Ramblers' blog!

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

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footpath issues

		current number and %		September 2016	
1	legal minimum not met	8	12.1%	8	11.0%
2	significant improvement needed	10	15.2%	12	16.4%
3	improvement welcome	17	25.8%	20	27.4%
4	for future action	5	7.6%	5	6.8%
5	no action needed	26	39.4%	28	38.4%
	total	66	100.0%	73	100.0%

Using the NCC formula for assessing the value of work undertaken by volunteers (£20 per hour), the value of work done from 21 September to 15 November 2016 was £323 to which monitoring contributed £147. This brings the total value from 14 June to £1612.67, to which monitoring contributed £237.

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, and will aim to present this to a future meeting.

Signage

	current number	Sep 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 NCC 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

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FP2 - at the last time of walking (2 November), 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 15 November, there was no sign of any cutting.

BR21 - as with FP11, this path has very little surface growth.

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 4 November.

Following contact with NCC about the apparent lack of results from this programme, I have been given the contact details of the contractor, but have not yet followed this up.

3 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).

4 Badley Moor

Natural England duly met the landowner in October, with both Tony and I present. This meeting resulted in agreement in principle to replace the stile with a gate. I believe Tony will be bringing this matter separately to the Committee.

5 Walkers are Welcome

Kate Millbank remains your 'official' representative here, so I will mention only a couple of items.

- There was a walk and garden party on 2 October, followed by three walks as part of the NCC Walking Festival (23, 26 and 28 October). All were successful and also gave a boost to WaW's funds.
- Plans are in hand for a New Year's Day walk, to which all are warmly invited.
- WaW would like to ensure that if any signs are replaced or added to the A47, there is opportunity to include a Walkers are Welcome message in them, whether integral or as an extra sign.
- Full information about WaW is on the developing website <http://www.DerehamWaW.org.uk>.

6 Dereham Walks guides

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Nearly all of the 3000 packs printed have been distributed to a range of locations around the town, and most have now been taken. Dereham Walkers are Welcome is planning to revise these and seek funding for a further print run, also including the two current MNR walks and some new ones being developed. It is hoped that these can be produced on the same basis as before, with Dereham Town Council holding copyright.

7 Longer term projects

Tony and I 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 as these develop.

8 DTC website

Thanks to Dawn and Tony, the web page dealing with footpath activity has been retitled Public Rights of Way and includes additional material - see <http://derehamtc.norfolkparishes.gov.uk/2016/11/15/public-rights-of-way/>.

9 Equipment

As reported above, the hedge trimmer supplied has proved invaluable, and has been given plenty of work. It would be helpful if consideration could be given to supplementing this with a battery powered strimmer for cutting back short lengths of verges and paths where grasses grow which the hedge trimmer cannot effectively tackle. I can promise it plenty of use!

**Ken Hawkins, Footpath Warden, Dereham Town Council
17 November 2016**