

Community Access Warden report for the Heritage and Open Spaces Committee meeting on 27 February 2024



Many of the activities described in this report have drawn extensively on the support of colleagues within Dereham Walkers are Welcome. The following abbreviations are used:
 FP - Footpath; BR - Bridleway; RB - Restricted Byway; NCC - Norfolk County Council; NH - National Highways
 BDC - Breckland District Council; DTC - Dereham Town Council; PRoW - Public Rights of Way; WaW - Walkers are Welcome

Notes in red my account of events at the meeting

Requested action

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| <p>1 <u>General report</u> - led walks</p> <p>Since November, WaW short walks have continued on the first Friday of every month and are planned to do so through 2024. Our 'Easy Tuesday' walks have also continued and seem to be meeting a growing demand. Longer walks were arranged in December and January (the traditional New Year's Day walk) and most recently we used the Konect bus out to Mattishall before walking back.</p> | <p><i>to note</i></p> |
| <p>2 <u>Path issues</u></p> <p>1 FP2 - I have yet to check on the work which NCC had promised to establish a satisfactory field edge path on the correct legal line. I added that we had inspected the path on 26 Feb: the N end was unsatisfactory and there was no indication of where the path moves to the other side of hedge. I have reported to NCC.</p> <p>2 RB3 - I was informed by the NCC Countryside Access Officer (CAO) in January that "I met with the landowner regarding installation of the culvert on Dereham RB3. I will be visiting the site again shortly with our Bridges Team to finalise the specification and access arrangements etc, and will update you further as the matter progresses." If this is done, the route of the byway would be re-established, though on its present line would still divide the field to the inconvenience of the landowner as in law, a restricted byway cannot be ploughed out. The usability of the path would then depend on the level of adherence to this requirement, including allowing a sufficient width of path through whatever crops are grown. This was inspected on 26 Feb: there was no sign of work having started as yet.</p> <p>3 FP12/12a - Awaiting the work that National Highways is stated to be carrying out on the underpass between December and February to try and establish why it continues to flood. NH apparently inspected in December, but to what effect was not know. It is the Town Clerk's view that all that is needed is for the gullies to be cleared once a year.</p> <p>4 FP14 - A final visit was made to clear undergrowth and the permission of the school was obtained to enter its grounds when the school was closed, to cut back a number of trees which had fallen across the path and were overhanging the school field. I am still pursuing litter clearance with the Diocese, which has now come round (4 years after it was suggested) to the view that erecting a fence may be needed, though this</p> | <p><i>to note</i></p> <p><i>to note</i></p> <p><i>to ascertain if DTC has any further information on this</i></p> <p><i>to note</i></p> |

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process may have stalled because the staff member with whom I was in contact has now left.

- 5 **FP14a** - I await progress on this by NCC to repair/replace the damaged boardwalk. *await NCC*
- 6 **FP25** - The southern end of this path has again been subject to significant flooding; determined walkers without wellingtons could make their way through the adjoining trees and bushes, though not without some difficulty. **I have reported this to NCC.** *to note*
- 7 **FP26 (Dumpling Green)** - This path remains difficult in places as water lies on the path even after prolonged dry weather and there are (I assume) private rights to drive tractors and 4x4s which create water filled ruts in the mud. The CAO has said that, even though NCC “would look to the person exercising their private right to carry out remedial works to restore the surface ... [it] would need to have evidence as to who was responsible for the damage and this could prove very difficult if there is either more than one landowner with private vehicular rights, or if the path is accessible by the public using a vehicle, albeit unauthorised.” There appears to be little chance of obliging those exercising their private vehicular rights in a way detrimental to the public exercising *their* rights, to make good the damage, without being able to provide evidence of exactly who causes exactly what damage. **The problem was noted, but there was no offer of action.** *DTC to support finding a solution*
- 8 **RB31** - The ditch adjacent to this path is filled with water which isn't draining away but is overflowing onto the byway making usage more difficult. **I have reported to NCC. Philip Morton thought the issue was that the ditch was blocked and could be checked in drier weather.** *to note*
- 9 **RB32 (Shillings Lane)** - Is there any update on getting the surface of the remainder of this byway improved and extended to crossing The Neatherd? **The Town Clerk indicated that moves continued to provide funding for this; work would run only to the W end of the byway and not onto The Neatherd itself, even though there is a section 100m or so on that gets very wet at times.** *update if available*
- 10 **FP34** - One section of this path running alongside the stream is prone to extreme muddiness in wet weather; NCC is aware of this but has no resources as yet to take any steps to deal with it (and would require a number of permissions to do so). **There is no further progress on this.** I have asked for the part of this path that leaves the boardwalk to run through the woods to meet FP18 to be added to NCC's contract for cutting as parts of it can easily get overgrown. Contracts are to be relet this year and I am told it will be considered then. **Contracts are still under discussion.** *to note*
- 11 **RB36 (Cherry Lane)** - The extensive potholes along this byway, from Norwich Road to the windmill, have reappeared with a vengeance; I assume that it is the vehicles which access the allotments which cause and exacerbate the damage which then create a nuisance to walkers and cyclists (and any horse riders or *DTC to support finding a solution*

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carriage drivers seeking to use this restricted byway.) **Although I referred to the past scraping of this byway by the Town Council, there was no offer to repeat this.**

- 12 **RB37** - Soon after the last meeting, the CAO told me that National Highways had advised “that the fence doesn’t belong to National Highways and actually is the responsibility of the adjacent land owner. This is totally unexpected as we discussed the matter on site and subsequently exchanged emails, with National Highways advising that they did not have funding currently to do the work, but at no time did they say that it wasn’t their responsibility until now. Whether this is a recent change or not, I am unaware, but they previously advised that ownership of the boundary fencing once the road construction was completed was passed to the adjacent landowner with the exception of the sections alongside laybys.” Previously, Tony had told me that he had had some communication with NH which seemed to indicate it was planning to do the work. I would propose that this is not allowed to rest and suggest that DTC identify the landowner and consider the possibility of getting some of the work done by Dereham Walkers are Welcome and/or The Ramblers and seeking additional funding sources. **There was no proposed action, though I asked if DTC could identify the landowner concerned.**

DTC to consider any action it can take

- 13 **New path linking RB39 with Hurn Road** - Breckland District Council has informed me (and Tony Needham and Alison Webb) that “the land owner has cleared the footpath and has given an undertaking to twice a year, to coincide when vegetation is beginning to grow heavily (early summer), and at the end of the main growing season (early autumn) for winter use, to cut back any over growing or over hanging vegetation and to level the soil/dirt/grass/hardcore pathway.”

to monitor action

- 14 **Proposed trod along Etling Green** - I have previously suggested that a trod be constructed to continue the footway from the entrance to the new cemetery on Etling Green to FP6, preferably on the north verge of the road. I believe it has been inspected already and considered fully suitable. I am awaiting confirmation of the timescale in which to repeat this proposal. **I am pursuing this.**

to note and advise

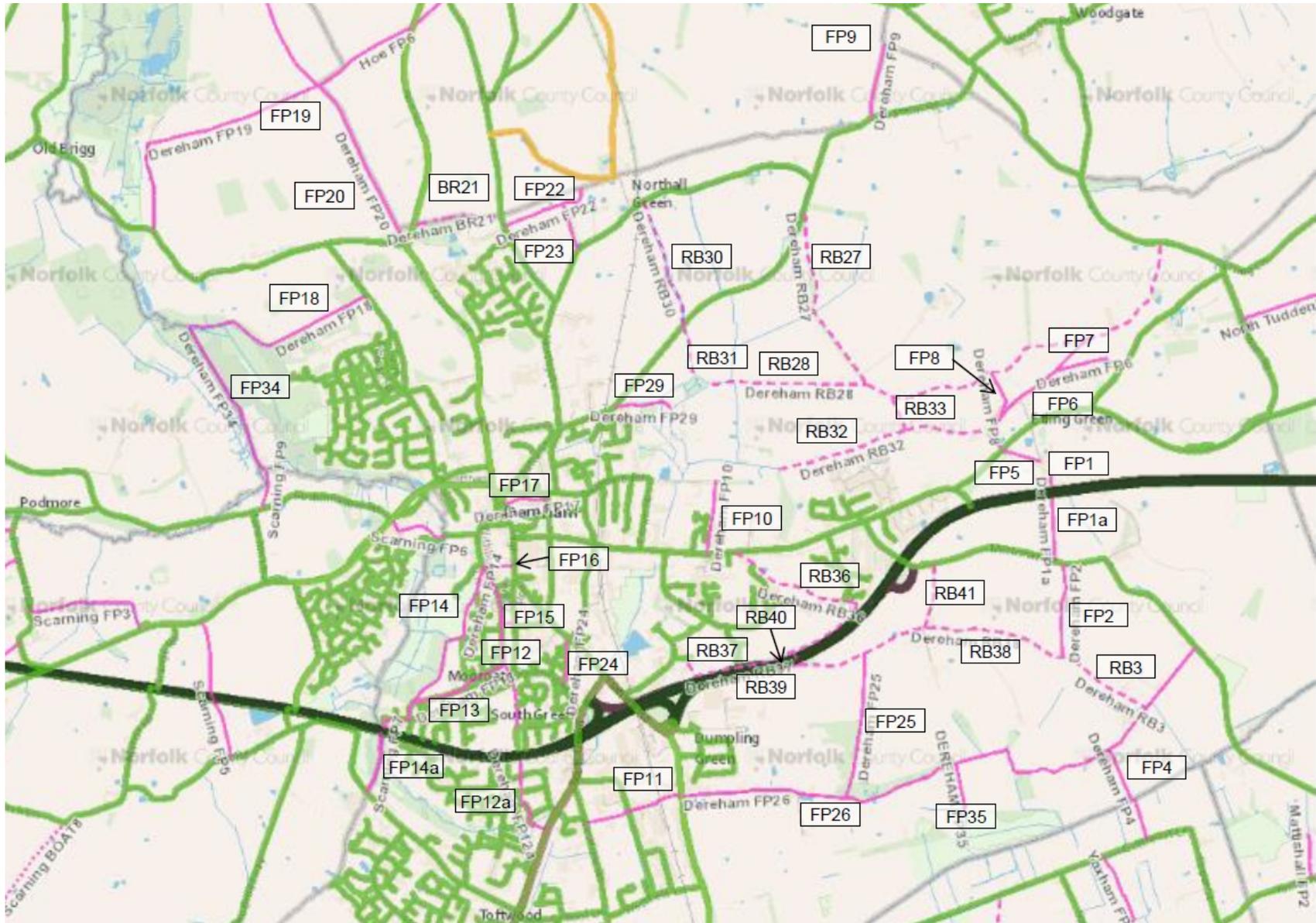
3 Other work

Continuing the past involvement of Dereham Walkers are Welcome in Heritage Open Days, it is planned to arrange a town walk in September, on two occasions, following the 2024 theme of *Routes, networks and communications*.

to note

Ken Hawkins, Community Access Warden, Dereham Town Council

18 February 2024



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- 17, 5, 1
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- 14, 15, 40, 2
- 12, 24, 37, 38
- 39, 3
- 13, 25
- 14a, 11, 4
- 12a, 26, 35