

Community Access Warden report

for the Heritage and Open Spaces Committee meeting on 25 February 2025

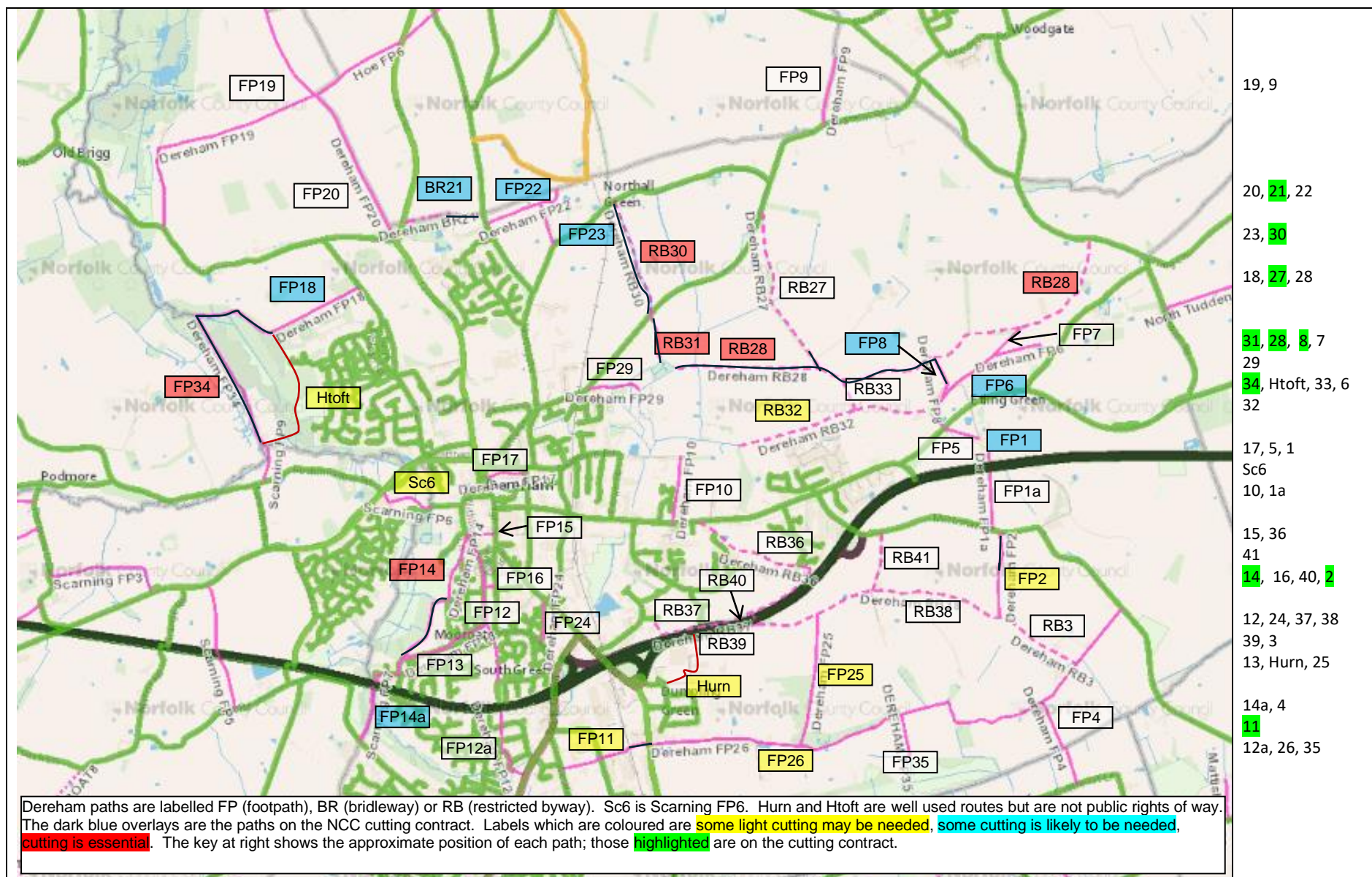


Many of the activities described in this report have drawn extensively on the support of colleagues within Dereham Walkers are Welcome. The following abbreviations are used:
 FP - Footpath; BR - Bridleway; RB - Restricted Byway; NCC - Norfolk County Council; NH - National Highways; BDC - Breckland District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

	<i>Suggested action</i>
1 <u>General report</u> - led walks have continued and will do so for the rest of the year. There is a programme of monthly short (up to 4 miles) and easy (no more than 2 miles on good surfaces) walks, supplemented by additional walks of up to 6 or 7 miles, mainly during the summer months.	
2 <u>Path issues</u>	
1 FP1a - The path across the field has not been established. For most of the route, this isn't too big a problem as the growth is low, though the final 30m at the south (road) end is more difficult going. I have reported this.	
2 FP2 - Whether as a result of natural winter die back or following some action, the going here has been improved, though I doubt this will sustain during spring and summer without further attention. The current crop looks like winter wheat or barley. Going south from Mattishall Road, there are a few metres where the crop has not been planted right up to the field edge, but this is only on a ½m width and this soon tapers to nothing. Part way along, the path moves across the boundary hedge into the adjacent field. A post and waymark disk indicate this, though the surface hasn't been cleared; nor has the field edge surface on the continuing section of path. Halfway along, the hedge ends and the path crosses the field, also planted with winter wheat or barley. The landholder seems to have ploughed a narrow strip along the legal line, leaving a soft surface free of crop which doesn't make easy walking. Close by, a parallel set of tractor tyre tracks has consolidated the surface and provides a good walking path. Both of these paths cease short of the field edge, leaving 3m of crop to cross at both ends. I have reported all of this.	
3 RB3 - RB3 crosses another field currently growing winter wheat or barley. There is a fingerpost marking where the path leaves RB38, but it simply points into the hedge. Although a restricted byway cannot lawfully be ploughed out (even with subsequent replacement), no path has been made across the crop, either from where the fingerpost optimistically directs or from a nearby point where a gap in the hedge gives access to the field. At the far end, where it joins FP26, there is a gap in the hedge, though there is no signage. I have reported all of this.	

4	FP14 - I continue to pursue litter clearance with the Diocese, though with no response to my emails. FP14 is overgrown and still awaits my attention. It is marked as being on the NCC cutting contract, but I see no sign of it having been cut last year.	
5	FP14a - I await progress on this by NCC to repair/replace the damaged boardwalk.	
6	FP17 - I would be concerned at the possibility of this path being gated (presumably at the Market Place end) as a response to the vandalism of the Barwells Court toilets. I consider this would set a bad precedent and would not be tackling the real problem.	<i>DTC to consider its views on this</i>
7	FP25 - After the recent wet weather, the south end of this path (adjoining FP26) is again flooded. There is a ditch to the west of the path, but this was full of water so offered no means of drainage.	
8	FP26 (Dumpling Green) - A recent walk confirmed previous reports - that it doesn't take too much rain for the deep ruts to fill with water and make walking difficult. Along quite a bit of the track, there are narrow 'paths' made along the banks edging the main track, which could serve as useful ways to avoid navigating the flooded track itself, but these suffer two problems. One is that they tend to slope towards the track, so if they're wet, it would be easy to slide into the flooded track (which someone on one of our walks last did). The other is that drivers of the tractors and/or 4x4s which I assume have private rights to use the track sometimes drive up onto the walking routes and degrade or obliterate them. On the same walk, I also noticed that one of the fields well down the track is now receiving large deliveries of horse manure; there are several deep ruts across the track where these vehicles have crossed it to get into the field, leaving a very cut up surface for walkers to try to cross. I would like to see if some sort of plan to improve the usability of this otherwise very pleasant and lengthy path can be formulated.	<i>DTC to consider its views on this</i>
9	RB32 (Shillings Lane) - A recent walk gave the pleasant surprise that the eastern end (towards Etling Green) had been very well trimmed - previously there had been quite a bit of side growth narrowing the path. (It's <u>not</u> on the NCC cutting schedule!) The issue with the westward continuation of the byway onto The Neatherd, which becomes very waterlogged after wet weather, remains. (This is not NCC responsibility as the byway ends where the path emerges onto open ground.)	<i>DTC to consider possible remedial action</i>
10	FP34 - There have been no changes to this path, which means that the section of this path running alongside the stream will again become extremely muddy after wet weather; NCC is aware of this but reported some time ago that it had no resources to take any steps to deal with it (and would require a number of permissions to do so). The section of the path running through the woods has two sections that have become and remain quite boggy, leading people to create new routes to avoid them; these routes are somewhat bendy and involve additional climbing/descending. This path is on the NCC cutting contract, though evidence of cutting is largely absent.	

<p>11 RB36 (Cherry Lane) - The recent work funded by DTC to level the surface has produced an excellent surface - a great improvement. However, a very recent walk shows that potholes are already starting to form again and it seems highly likely that a specification fully adequate for a restricted byway will not long survive the use of vehicles presumably exercising their private rights to access the allotments. I note that there is one short section, east of the recent work and running to the easternmost entrance to the allotments was tarmacked, presumably funded by Orbit. I suspect that in the long term, that will be the only way to maintain the path.</p>	<p><i>DTC to consider its views on this</i></p>
<p>12 Path from Hurn Road to meet RB39 - I have made the suggestion that Breckland District Council might consider establishing a permissive cycling and walking route around the edge of its car park area to link to this path and thereby make cycling access much easier. Combined with improvements to the surface, this could be a viable cycling (and walking) route for residents - both the new ones from the Orbit development and existing ones from nearby housing - to reach Tesco and Lidl without using the main roads.</p>	<p><i>DTC to consider its views on this</i></p>
<p>3 <u>NCC</u></p> <p>It may be evident that many of the issues report here are longstanding; most, but not all, require action from NCC. I wonder if there is any value in seeking a meeting with the appropriate NCC officer(s) to try to agree a plan of priorities to address some of the issues. I am aware of NCC's financial situation and also of the likelihood of major changes in local government but nevertheless offer this as a proposal.</p> <p>NCC appears to have again changed its reporting system and process, in my view for the worse. At one time, those reporting issues could, if they elected to do so by logging into an account, get updates from NCC on how their reports were being processed. Although much of the content was from a limited range of predetermined choices, those responses did also provide useful information. It is not clear whether the new system will do this, but one major backward step is the omission from the NCC responses of a summary of the original report. Although the response still indicates the path about which the report has been made, there is no further text, so if more than one report is made about a particular path, it is not evident which report is concerned. Further, the system used to provide a link which took you to a map showing the location of your report; this is no longer the case - to review the report requires logging back into your account.</p>	<p><i>DTC to consider seeking a meeting with NCC</i></p>



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18, **27**, 28

31, **28**, **8**, 7

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34, Htoft, 33, 6

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17, 5, 1

Sc6

10, 1a

15, 36

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14, 16, 40, **2**

12, 24, 37, 38

39, 3

13, Hurn, 25

14a, 4

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12a, 26, 35