

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; DWaW - Dereham Walkers are Welcome

	<i>Suggested action</i>
<p>1 <u>General report</u> - led walks have continued and will do so through 2026. 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.</p> <p>I am pleased to report that Dereham Walkers are Welcome has again secured accreditation for a further year. The Annual Return, with feedback, is enclosed with this report for information. It has also just received an updated reprint of the <i>Town Trails</i> leaflet, with contributory funding from Dereham Heritage Trust and aboutDereham.</p>	<i>to note</i>
2 <u>Path issues</u>	
1 FP1a - The path across the field has still not been established. For most of the route, this isn't too big a problem as the current crop is winter wheat or similar.	<i>monitor</i>
2 FP2 - Going south from Mattishall Road, the first section is again one without a path as the crop is planted right up to the hedge. Where the path changes to the east side of the hedge, there is an acceptable path (apart from a couple of metres at the end), where the path starts the cross field section. This has been well cleared throughout its full length to RB38. The waymark post at this point is broken and lying in the undergrowth.	<i>monitor - await further NCC action</i>
3 RB3 - RB3 crosses the field currently growing winter wheat or barley. Although a restricted byway cannot lawfully be ploughed out (even with subsequent replacement), no path has been made across the crop. 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 (again). A gap has now been made in the hedge where the path leaves RB38, though entry is via steep (if short) slope down to the field - ok for walkers, not for cyclists etc.	<i>monitor - await further NCC action</i>
4 FP6/7 - Not an 'issue', just worth noting that the landowner here invariably makes and keeps a clear path through their crop, making for obvious and easy walking.	<i>none</i>
5 FP14 - The Countryside Access Officer has arranged for a contractor to visit the site to assess the clearance work required and was waiting on their quote. The works were to be carried out during this Autumn/Winter. I have yet to visit and check on any works.	<i>monitor - await further NCC action</i>

6	<p>FP14a - The new boardwalk has been well installed and makes a good path. However ... It is more than unfortunate that (I presume) when NCC instructed its contractor, it was to replace the previous boardwalk to the exact same extent. This has left a patch of a couple of metres near the south end which were always prone to significant muddiness. This is the more disappointing given that additional boardwalk has been installed (mostly unnecessarily in my view) at the very south end where the gradient of the path has kept it free from muddiness. It's still earlyish days, but my other concern here is whether the water that has previously pooled on Stone Road at this point will still flow down the path and undermine the new boardwalk. I have been in correspondence with Cllr Jamieson about the boardwalk following a representation to him from one of his constituents.</p>	<p><i>monitor - await further NCC action</i></p>
7	<p>FP25 - Following the lengthy dry months of 2025, recent rainfall has again flooded the southern end of this path where it meets FP26. As before, it is clear that many people have found a way through the trees to the side of (but at a higher level than) the path, though this involved crossing a number of roots as well as a couple of short but steep gradients - all of which makes this uncertain walking after wet weather.</p>	<p><i>reported (again) to NCC for action</i></p>
8	<p>FP26 (Dumpling Green) - The return of rain has maintained this path in its usual state - muddy in places and with flooded ruts in some sections. My previous comments are still apposite. At the last meeting, it was reported that NCC had met councillors along the path to explore possible solutions and I would be interested to know if anything further has come of these discussions.</p>	<p><i>awaiting information</i></p>
9	<p>RB32 (Shillings Lane) - 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.)</p>	<p><i>DTC to consider possible remedial action</i></p>
10	<p>FP34 - There have been no changes to this path, which means that the section of this path running alongside the stream has again become extremely muddy after wet weather. NCC was made aware of the issue 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).</p>	<p><i>monitor during winter</i></p>
11	<p>RB36 (Cherry Lane) - Small potholes continue to appear once more. I see that the Town Council has recorded on 10 February that repairs would be attempted 'this week'.</p>	<p><i>to note and monitor</i></p>
3	<p><u>NCC</u> Following my expressions of concern about the user friendliness of the NCC reporting system, I have had a reply, sent indirectly via my NCC contact but not directly from the responsible team, though it was largely advising me that I should change how I make my reports rather than accepting that the system could be improved.</p>	<p><i>to note</i></p>

<p>I am still awaiting confirmation that the NCC interactive map correctly indicates the paths in the cutting programme.</p> <p>When establishing the Wendling Way, NCC erected a number of information panels. One of these was placed near the Museum, where its condition over the two years since it was installed compares unfavourably with the much older Wayfinding panel put in by about Dereham a few years earlier. I have raised this with NCC and some cleaning has been done, with the promise of a bit more. Once this has been done, I will look again at the panel to decide whether it is now adequate or I should press for replacement.</p>	<p><i>to note</i></p> <p><i>to note</i></p>
<p>4 <u>Trods</u></p> <p>I continue to recommend that the Town Council consider requesting NCC to establish trods (1) linking the new cemetery to the point where FP5 and FP6 cross Etling Green, and (2) to continue the newly built footway along Swanton Road from the housing development there to the point where RBs 30 and 31 cross the road.</p>	<p><i>DTC to adopt these proposals</i></p>
<p>5 <u>The Ramblers</u></p> <p>I understand that The Ramblers has been contacting towns and parishes seeking an audit of their rights of way. Should this (as I hope it will) come to Dereham, I would be happy to draft any responses required.</p>	<p><i>DTC to note</i></p>

Ken Hawkins, Community Access Warden, Dereham Town Council

16 February 2026

