

Community Access Warden report for the Heritage and Open Spaces Committee meeting on 28 April 2026



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

	Suggested action
1 <u>General report</u> - led walks have continued 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.	<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 hope to check this before the meeting</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. At present the crop is oil seed rape - walkers would end up with yellow clothing if using this path. I have not recently checked the waymark post at RB38, which was broken and lying in the undergrowth.	<i>monitor - await further NCC action; I hope to check this before the meeting</i>
3 RB3 - Not recently checked. RB3 crosses the field and although a restricted byway cannot lawfully be ploughed out (even with subsequent replacement), no path had been made through the crop when last visited. At the far end, where it joins FP26, there is a gap in the hedge, though there was no signage. I have reported all of this (again). The entry to RB3 from RB38 is via a steep (if short) slope down to the field - ok for walkers, not for cyclists etc.	<i>monitor - await further NCC action; I hope to check this before the meeting</i>
4 FP10 - A notice has been published stating that this path is closed from 1 to 28 April (and possibly longer) for surface repair work.	<i>to note</i>
5 FP14 - Following substantial clearance and widening by NCC (via its contractor), significant amounts of litter were exposed, so DWaW conducted a litter pick early in April. Since then, the Countryside Access Officer has also advised that they have arranged for stump grinding to be carried out on the path, hopefully in the next couple of months. Further, "we will also clear the vegetation on the short section just north of the A47 through to the open space at Waples Way during winter clearance at the end of this year. Contact	<i>monitor - await further NCC action</i>

	is being made with the landowner regarding the old stile in the fence where you should access from the open space.”	
6	FP14a - I am not aware of any action taken or plans made to extend the boardwalk on this path	<i>monitor - await further NCC action</i>
7	FP25 - Although recent dry weather has allowed the path to become more usable, the underlying problem remains.	<i>reported (again) to NCC for action; I hope to check this before the meeting</i>
8	FP26 (Dumpling Green) - NCC's Countryside Access Officer has informed me (19 March) that the landowner was very helpful and identified the approximate location of a private water pipe (not in their ownership) in the vicinity of the junction of the footpaths. They provided some history of the drainage network and the location of natural springs and ponds in the land adjacent to the footpaths. I advised that we would like to create grips through to the ditch to try to alleviate the standing water and they advised that they would do this for us once the weather had improved sufficiently to carry out the work. The landowner advised that they had cut some grips in sections previously, but these had been subsequently squashed by vehicles which was evident on site.	<i>monitor - await further NCC action</i>
9	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.)	<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.	<i>monitor, especially during winter</i>
11	RB36 (Cherry Lane) - Work has been undertaken to fill the many small potholes which had developed; how this will work long term remains to be seen.	<i>to note and monitor</i>
3	<p><u>NCC</u></p> <p>I am still awaiting confirmation that the NCC interactive map correctly indicates the paths in the cutting programme.</p> <p>The Wendling Way information panel near the Museum has been 'spruced up', though in my view remains rather poor when compared with the nearby much older Wayfinding panel put in by about Dereham a few years earlier.</p>	<p><i>to note</i></p> <p><i>to note</i></p>

<p>4</p>	<p><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</p>	<p><u>The Ramblers</u></p> <p>DTC has been sent an email from Norfolk Ramblers, which Tony has forwarded to me for comment. The Ramblers “are proposing that each Parish has a documented audit of their paths and Rights of Way, which can be accessed by any member of the public from the minutes published on the Parish website. Each Parish Council should have either an appointed footpath warden or a Councillor who is responsible for this facility. It would be helpful to both residents and those planning walks from further afield if a detailed audit of the state of the paths could be published as a Report at the Annual Parish Meeting, or more frequently if you wish.” I would be happy to compile a listing, but key questions would be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • would the Council wish to do something along the proposed lines? • where and when would it be published? • how and how often would it be planned to be updated? • how would it be publicised? <p>Depending on the answers to these questions, and subject to any other comments, I could try to prepare an illustration of an approach, to be extended and completed subject to approval of the illustration.</p>	<p><i>DTC to consider</i></p>
<p>6</p>	<p><u>Pride grant</u></p> <p>I personally support the suggestion of DWaW that, if the Council accepts this grant, consideration be given to applying it to one (or both) of two projects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 making an all weather path to, from and/or around the main Neatherd area, so that it can be more easily accessed by people with buggies and those using wheelchairs, and/or 2 creating an all weather path connecting the western end of RB32 to the Neatherd Moor track, thus making a firm route along Shillings Lane to the rear of the school and on towards the town. <p>Although it would be only a small contribution, DWaW has funds of about £850 earmarked for expenditure relating to The Neatherd and would be happy to consider adding it to other project funding if it would help.</p>	<p><i>DTC to consider</i></p>

<p>7 <u>Pathmakers Charity project (Natural Connections)</u></p> <p>Tony has forwarded me information about the approach from Pathmakers. The project aims to “deliver a programme of guided walks co-produced with local communities in North Walsham, Aylsham and Dereham”. It aims to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 walking champions (2 in each area) • 18 trained walk leaders trained (6 in each area) • 6 land owners/land managers supported auditing routes for accessibility (2 in each area) • 90 people taken out on walks (30 in each area) <p>I was also made aware of this for DWaW. I have offered to consider any request made for assistance but at the same time noting that £10k spread over 3 presumably similar locations (Aylsham, Dereham and North Walsham) doesn't leave much money for each.</p>	<p><i>DTC to consider what involvement it might want</i></p>
---	--

Ken Hawkins, Community Access Warden, Dereham Town Council

20 April 2026

