

Footpath Warden report for the Heritage and Open Spaces Committee meeting 25 May 2021



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; DTC - Dereham Town Council; PRoW - Public Rights of Way; WaW - Walkers are Welcome

Footpaths update and specific path issues

1 General report - led walks

As covid restrictions have eased, we have been able to restart our walks programme, beginning with a walk on 18 April, followed by the first of our short (under 4 miles) walks on 7 May. Unfortunately, although we are confident that as an organised walking club (so far as the government's definition is concerned), we are able to lead walks of more than 6 people (provided we meet the various conditions set), Breckland District Council refused to accept this (taking 3 weeks and several reminders before announcing this conclusion) and declined to add our advert to their *What's on* page.

We maintain an emailing list (currently over 100 people) of those wishing to be kept informed of our walks: all are welcome to join it.

2 Path issues

Current issues of concern are listed. Town Council support is requested on items 2, 7, 8 and 9.

- 1 **FP2** - the repeated failure to establish the path along the headland of the northern part of this field edge path **remains**.
- 2 **RB3** - the long standing unavailability of this route, which was ploughed out many years ago; the NCC Countryside Access Officer for the area has advised that this is **not being given priority** while they are responding to flooding issues. I have argued that the very longstanding nature of this issue warrants greater priority.
- 3 **FP14a** - the boardwalk is damaged and dangerous; NCC is aware and says it plans to repair it. It also says it is considering my request that the boardwalk be extended a few metres south to cover a patch that gets very muddy in wet weather. There has been **no progress** on either of these.
- 4 **FP26** - the drier weather has allowed this problem to recede, though it will recur if any quantity of rain falls; the underlying **problem remains** (of deep ruts that fill with water, created by tractors or 4 wheel drive vehicles).
- 5 **RB32/3** - No restorative action has been taken, but again, the better weather has enabled some natural recovery.
- 6 **FP34** - NCC's **closure notices** remain at the sewage works, and at the junction with the unregistered path that runs along below the edge of the Humbletoft estate. It is nevertheless still possible to walk the closed route - the flooding has reduced to muddiness, and the boardwalk can be navigated with care. There is an alternative informal route turning up the hill and along the unregistered path.
- 7 **RB36** Cherry Lane - at the last meeting, the Town Clerk was awaiting drier times before contacting a contractor to level this.
- 8 **RB37** - previously reported: the issues are the heavy littering (see below) and the need to widen and clear this path to Restricted Byway dimensions; there has been **no change**.
- 9 **New path** to be dedicated to link RB39 with Hurn Road - a planning application here was granted with the condition that a path around the edge was to be

dedicated as a bridleway. Tony tells me that Breckland District Council then documented it to the developer as a footpath. I wonder if there is anything that can be done to resolve this. I believe there is some urgency, as a new fence has recently been erected at the site, which leaves little space for the path, on ground that currently has no legal right of passage; now would be the time to establish the path, both physically and legally, before options are closed off. It is unlikely that horse riders will wish to use the route, but cyclists may well do so (a right conferred by bridleway status).

10 Paths at The Neatherd - I have provided advice from Norfolk County Council to Tony on surfacing issues to enable work towards improving them to all weather (and wider usage) condition. Walkers are Welcome would be pleased to assist with this where possible.

3 Specific work

3.1 **A litter pick** was conducted in April, covering FPs 1, 11 and 14, when we were joined by Cllr Morton (thank you!).

Litter by FP12/13 The Diocese tells me that they undertook an inspection on 13 April and have obtained a quote for rubbish removal from the wooded area. They do not propose to erect fencing because of “the open nature of the boundary and land without fencing the whole area which is not going to be feasible.” I have questioned that, and suggested ‘unfriendly’ hedging instead. They also proposed putting up signage to discourage littering and asked whether the Town Council would be able to offer assistance in this regard: I forwarded that to Tony for response. (I also suggested they explore having cctv on site, even for a short period, to break the pattern of dumping.)

Litter by RB37 I have made **no progress** in seeking to establish a joint clearance effort from Highways England, Norfolk County Council and Breckland District Council.

Litter by FP24 (Safari Way) I would be interested to hear of any progress made by the Town Council on this.

3.2 Maintenance

During April, clearance has been made along FPs 1, 6, 8, 11 and 14, and RBs 28, 30 and 31.

Cumulative time spent in monitoring and clearance is summarised below. The conversion to monetary value is based on Norfolk County Council’s rate of £5 per hour value of volunteer time.

year	hours				£value			
	work	monitoring	total	cum	work	monitoring	total	cum
2016-17	81.30	31.45	113.15	113.15	1630.00	635.00	2265.00	2265.00
2017-18	111.55	43.40	155.35	268.50	2238.33	873.33	3111.67	5376.67
2018-19	74.15	45.30	119.45	388.35	1485.00	910.00	2395.00	7771.67
2019-20	17.50	12.45	30.35	419.10	356.67	255.00	611.67	8383.33
2020-21	3.30	48.45	52.15	471.25	70.00	975.00	1045.00	9428.33
2021-22	18.00	10.00	28.00	499.25	360.00	200.00	560.00	9988.33
total	307.00	192.25			6140.00	3848.33		

4 Walk packs

The updated set of 14 walks has now been uploaded to our website (<http://www.DerehamWaW.org.uk/walks.html>). A leaflet promoting these has been produced and will be distributed in the town in the near future, now that covid restrictions are being eased.

We have also produced a new set of 7 short (mostly under 4 miles) walks; these are also, thanks to funding from the Co-op Community Fund, available in hard copy, and we plan to start distribution of these too in the town (including the Assembly Rooms when open).



Walks in and around Dereham



Dereham has 41 public rights of way, the wonderful Neatherd Moor and several other open spaces: our walks will show them off to you.



Dereham Walkers are Welcome has prepared 14 full length walks, seven of them starting and ending in the town, the other seven using either the bus or the train (the Mid-Norfolk Railway) to travel out, then walk back. The walks are generally 6 to 8 miles (2 to 3 hours), though many also have the option of shorter routes for those wanting a little less. For a sample, see inside.

We have also prepared a booklet of 7 shorter walks, mostly 4 miles or less.

All of these walks can be downloaded free of charge from our website - see them at www.DerehamWaW.org.uk/walks.html. Download one to your smartphone and take it with you!

Our website also features our public led walks
- come and join us on our next one!

Short Walks in Dereham

from Dereham Walkers are Welcome

Walkers are welcome in Dereham with many beautiful walks in and around the town, through woodlands and water meadows, over fields and across Neatherd Moor. Welcome to your walks.



Ken Hawkins, Footpath Warden, Dereham Town Council

16 May 2021