

Footpath Warden report for the Heritage and Open Spaces Committee meeting on 23 August 2022



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

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decisions made at HOSC meeting

Requested action

1 General report - led walks

Since April 2022, WaW short walks have continued on the first Friday of every month, and are planned to do so through 2022. We also held longer walks on 18 June (with our Annual Public Meeting) and 27 July (using the Mid-Norfolk Railway train to Thuxton). In addition, we arranged the first of 3 town walks in association with Dereham Heritage Trust on 9 July, with a History theme; the other two are on 20 August (Industrial Heritage) and 17 September (Georgian Dereham), the latter as part of Heritage Open Days week.

to note

2 Path issues

Some progress has been made on some issues, but others remain unchanged. Reference is made where applicable to Frances Salway, the NCC Countryside Access Officer. I am grateful to Tony Needham and Adam Hinchliffe (NCC) for updating some of the information in this report.

- 1 **FP2** - the repeated failure to establish the path along the headland of the northern part of this field edge path remains. Frances Salway had agreed to follow this up with the landowner. It was recently the subject of a report from a member of the public, and remained an issue on a recent walk: the rape crop has been harvested, but leaves 30cm high stubble that caused at least one minor injury to a walker.
- 2 **RB3** - the long standing unavailability of this route, which was ploughed out many years ago, continues with no change. Frances Salway undertook to seek a site meeting with the landowner, but as of 25 July, that had not been arranged.
- 3 **FP14 (Rolling Pin Lane)** - Adam Hinchliffe of NCC had sought assistance from WaW in filling potholes along this path, at the end nearest to St Withburga Lane (in response to a request from a resident). I understand that he arranged a supply of aggregate to the residents, and in recent times, it has seemed that potholes in this section of track had been filled, leaving a fully walkable surface. As this is a public footpath only, with private vehicular rights, I believe that Adam now considers it warrants no further action from NCC.

DTC to support requests to NCC for action to review in autumn (meeting 25 Oct)

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I have nevertheless had a recent contact from a resident asking for assistance in spreading the hard core later in the year.

That part of the path that runs alongside the school fence has become quite overgrown, so was the target for some clearance work by me recently. Unfortunately, there was a high level of wasp activity part way along, with the wasps objecting to the clearance, which had to be abandoned. This has been reported to NCC, and a sign erected at the Sardis Way end of the path; I assume that the overgrowth will serve to deter walkers coming from the other end. I await information as to what action NCC proposes to take. **NCC says not their job, referred to DTC - NCC does not provide a pest control service and therefore we can't send someone out to deal with the nest. We don't have legislation that covers wasps. I don't believe that Breckland Council offers any such service either. A local council (parish or town) have powers to improve paths with the consent of the owner/occupier. This includes; Notice of Danger - they may erect on or near a footpath or bridleway, notice of the existence of a danger.**

none at present, await NCC

Tony agreed to provide 2 notices, Ken to assist in deciding location

4 **FP14a** - the boardwalk is damaged and dangerous; NCC is aware and has plans to repair it. The preferred plan to replace it with a permanent hard surface has been rejected by Natural England; Adam Hinchliffe reports that NCC is again seeking the consents needed to enable the boardwalk to be repaired or replaced. I still hope that my request that the boardwalk be extended a few metres south to cover a patch that gets very muddy in wet weather will be included.

none at present

5 **RB30** - Frances Salway had agreed to contact the landowner, and a very significant clearance has been made of this route, throughout its length, and including widening of the dangerous section between hedge and ditch close to Swanton Road. This work was undertaken by the landowner, after a request from Frances Salway. (Some more limited clearance had also been done on RB31, which I complemented with a little further work.)

none

6 **RB32 (Shillings Lane)** - I understand that Tony has now been able to commission work to improve the surface and deal with flooding at a cost of around £30k, shared equally with NCC. I gather that work should start in 6-8 weeks.

none

I also note recent information concerning the possible impact of drainage water from the development at the Etling Green end of the path, which Tony and Will have taken up with NCC. The developers have put in place a raised bund which would seem to encroach on to the byway, and will result in water being directed on to it, in an area which already gets

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very muddy in wet weather. Adam Hinchliffe has reported that he is already working on this, liaising with the definitive map team to ensure that the boundary features and width are established so that the level of encroachment can be determined. He notes that featherboard fence panels have been installed along the bund, which seem to be within the developer's boundary, though this is yet to be established.

- 7 **FP34** - The previous report that NCC's closure notices had been removed proved to be incorrect, though the notices were in poor condition. Adam Hinchliffe has informed me that full repair is scheduled for this year, with permissions obtained for access for delivery of materials and plant. It is "nearly ready to go".
- 8 **RB36 (Cherry Lane)** - As with FP14, this track suffers from potholing. As a track it is used as access to the allotments, and it is the vehicles using it that cause the damage: the public right of access here is as a footpath only. Tony arranged for this to be scraped flat some time ago, and it appears that some filling has more recently taken place. While the weather remains dry, the path is readily usable; the test will come when there is significant rain.
- 9 **RB37** - I have not been here recently, but Philip Morton told me some time ago that it seemed to have been partly improved, though still limited in width in places. Frances Salway has told me she continues to be in contact with BDC to secure removal of the rubbish but is encountering some reluctance. This is envisaged as a first step towards further action by NCC to clear the vegetation and by National Highways to erect a better fence at the A47 layby.
- 10 **New path to be dedicated to link RB39 with Hurn Road** - The fencing erected which blocked access from the end of RB39 to this path was not in place recently, but use of the path is still difficult:
 - I have seen nothing to indicate that BDC is being asked to enforce the planning condition to have this route dedicated as a right of way
 - the vegetation on the east side is again intruding into the width of the path
 - the ditch down the centre remains, not very visible and hence a tripping hazard, and a clear danger to anyone attempting to cycle; the surface would benefit from scraping and flattening
 - fencing erected at the Hurn Road end makes it awkward (though not impossible) to use a cycle

Requested action

none at present but requires close monitoring

none

none immediate, await wet weather

none immediate, await progress by NCC referred to BDC Councillors

DTC and BDC Councillors to press for enforcement action

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- the uneven stony surface towards the Hurn Road end would benefit from removal and levelling

3 Specific work

3.1 **Litter by FP13/14** Although the landowner (Diocese of Norwich) has arranged removal of litter at this site, it remains open to more being dumped. I was informed that the Diocese would review the suggestion of erecting fencing, but there is no sign of this happening.

3.2 **Wendling Beck Exemplar Project and FP20** Information about this remains limited. I have reported a number of concerns as follows.

- What will be the planned exit at Gressenhall? Initial information showed a new bridge over the Wensum, but apparently ending within Union Farm, which is open seasonally only
- What works are planned to enable the existing public footpath to be used by cycles, as advertised?
- Have the gates which have been erected (but not as yet brought into use) across FP20 been authorised by the due process?
- And on a minor issue, is this a 'Jubilee Walk' or 'Wendling Way'?

Adam has added information as follows. *"I can pin point the crossing point from Gressenhall farm that the bridge is meant to be situated. However, I am not sure about the seasonality issue. This is not part of any trails work however I have latterly been involved as it involves a section of the Wensum Way. The Path of Dereham FP20 is to be surfaced, with a hard aggregate path for cyclists and walkers with permissive access for cyclists agreed with the landowner. The gates are going through a retrospective s147 process after my colleague asked for a design change to include a longer handle to make it easier for cyclists to use. As for your last point it is both - it is a Jubilee Walk that has been named the 'Wendling Way'. Once any more details have been made available to me I can let you know."*

3.3 **Dereham LCWIP (Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan)** Contrary to initial reports that there would be a LCWIP for Dereham, these have been published by NCC for Greater Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth, with Dereham now to be subsumed in a 'rest of the county' plan. I understand that DTC considered requesting Norfolk County Council incorporate the draft Dereham Town Council Cycling and Pedestrian plan into the Norfolk Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans.

Requested action

DTC to take any other possible helpful action Tony to contact owners of storage facility

none immediate

monitor as further information emerges

provide further information if any is available nothing added

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3.4 **Potters Fen** - A wooden plank on the bridge giving access to Potters Fen from Orchid Avenue has broken and been removed. I had had a report that it had been repaired, but a subsequent walk that way revealed that a further wooden plank had been removed: the result was that it was probably less of a tripping hazard, though also looked (paradoxically) as if it was less safe, as the metal mesh providing the bridge was fully evident. I'm not sure who is responsible for maintenance on this, and who would get sued if someone was hurt while using it. Tony has commented that half the bridge sits on land owned by BDC, and the other half on land with no ownership. He believes that responsibility will rest with BDC, particularly if it modified the bridge in any way, as it has management control over the bridge. **DTC - Alison Webb called to let you know that Breckland Council will be replacing the rotten wood on the bridge between Middlemarch and Potters Fen and making everything good again.**

request BDC to take remedial action

request not needed as action is reported to be in hand

3.5 **Maintenance** I have been able to undertake some clearance work recently, notably on FP8 and 12, and RBs 28, 30, 31 and 32. Cumulative time spent in monitoring and clearance is summarised below. The conversion to monetary value is based on Norfolk County Council's rate of £20 per hour value of volunteer time.

to note

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	91.30	60.00	151.30	622.55	1830.00	1200.00	3030.00	12458.33
2022-23	12.00	16.10	28.10	651.05	240.00	323.33	563.33	13021.67
total	392.30	258.35			7850.00	5171.67		

4 **Publicity**

We continue to advertise our work around the town. We have now distributed 2700 of our 5000 Short Walks booklets to the Library, the Partea Hut and the Windmill, and the Co-op (which funded them). We still have plenty to supply the Assembly Rooms as soon as it is once again easily accessed by the public. We have also put out 500 copies of a leaflet advertising walking

to advise plans to open the Assembly Rooms to the public not addressed

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opportunities in and around Dereham, many in the same locations, but also at Poppies in Yaxham (regrettably now closed).

Having bought a supply of WaW window stickers (also funded by the Co-op), we have commenced taking these for display in the town, mostly in refreshment businesses. These are of the newer circular shape, replacing the former square ones which had been displayed previously.

5 Rights of way in Dereham

I appreciate that not everyone will be familiar with the path numbers of rights of way in the town, so am also sending a map which identifies them. These names and numbers also appear on the NCC interactive map at <https://maps.norfolk.gov.uk/highways/> - zoom in to the desired area, when the rights of way will appear. (For some reason, the link won't work when clicked, so has to be pasted into the browser.)

to note

6 Etling Green trod

To renew a past proposal that DTC supports a request to NCC to create a trod along the side of the road from the new cemetery to FP6 (with FP5 on the opposite side of the road), making a safe walking route connecting them.

to agree support Will Richmond to be contacted re cost

7 Job role

It is some years now since the Town Council appointed me as its voluntary Footpath Warden. I wonder if it is time

- to confirm (I hope!) the continuing appointment
- to consider changing the title to Community Access Warden, as recommended by Norfolk Local Access Forum, the better to embrace all categories of rights of way and their users
- to comment on whether the powers available to the Town Council, under which I undertake path maintenance, can be extended to other named people who wish to assist

to consider and decide/agree as appropriate Agreed. Talk of risk assessment, terms of reference. 2-3 named people accepted. ID needs updating. Designation accepted.

Ken Hawkins, Footpath Warden, Dereham Town Council

15 August 2022