

## Report on the health of the Worlingworth Footpath Network 2021

Juliet Pierce - Footpath Officer

**HEADLINES:** Our village footpaths remain in great shape and are being walked more often since COVID lockdowns. All paths are accessible except where they await reinstatement as a result of ploughing. The new wider bridge and handrail between Newtown and Paradise Farm is warmly welcomed. The stiles on the edge of Paradise Farm remain potentially dangerous obstacles for older residents

**Our Parish Council Walking Day was held on Saturday 16th October** with a good turn out of volunteer walkers attending on the day and more completing their inspections prior to the day. The following walkers have contributed to this report: Steve and Tracey, Jo and Isabella Coghill, Debbie Scaife, Pete Brash, Peggy Carver, Janie Wood from Worlingworth We were also delighted to have David and Barbara Lee, and Maureen and Bob Whiteman from Bedfield joining us on the day. Maggie Galpin and Jean Richardson, Rita and John Ridgewell and Rosemary Ingate submitted reports on the paths they walked prior to the Walking Day. Warm thanks to all of them for their efforts and community spirit. As a result we have managed to inspect all the paths.

All walkers on the day were treated to a choice of delicious home made soups and fresh crusty bread prepared and served by Judith Smallcombe. Signs and reflective safety jackets were provided by Parish Council Chairman Brian Smallcombe. Many thanks for these back up services!

The following issues have been raised as a result of the recent inspection and will be reported to Suffolk County Council and local residents.

### **Overgrown or misplaced paths**

Clearing of overgrowth is needed at the Newtown end of the path from Newtown to the PC Whiteley Memorial on Fingal Street and along the back of the chicken sheds of the Crown chicken farm site. Some way-markers signs have been obscured and as Footpath Warden I will get out with my secateurs to remedy this over the winter.

### **Bridges**

The bridge off the Green at Stanway Green on the road towards Brundish requires replacement a handrail and a new sign. The old sign has been bashed out of the ground and into the ditch.

The bridge from Paradise Farm across the back of Tuckwells has a missing plank. The stile at the entry to this bridge makes it very difficult for older people to use this pathway.

### **Footpath signs**

The sign on the path North of Cole Street has disappeared.

The post is out of the ground at The Green at Stanway Green and lying in the ditch by the bridge from the road.

The sign in the middle of the large cultivated fields at Stanway Green has disappeared meaning walkers are likely to trample crops looking for the right direction when the path itself has not been reinstated after cultivation. This happens every year so we will try to appeal to the contractors to take more care to remove and replace the posts when cultivating these fields.

A way marker is needed to show walkers where to go as they walk from the Church around the perimeter of Worlingworth Hall.

There are no waymarkers at Paradise Farm to clearly indicate the direction of the public footpath.

On the path North from Shop Street there is a footpath sign at the road but then there are no waymakers to show where the public should go after they have passed the houses.

The sign from the Packway Path towards the Crown Chicken Farm has disappeared

The path South of Shop Street towards the road to Bedfield has a broken sign at the midway bridge.

On the paths from Water Lane the waymarkers and footpath signs are missing, overgrown or knocked into the ditch.

A way marker is needed to show walkers where to go as they walk from the Church around the perimeter of Worlingworth Hall.

Other footpath signs on New Road and Fingal Street have been knocked offline.

It is very frustrating to have to report so many broken sign problems each year when farm machinery looks like the most probable cause of the unnecessary cost of providing new signage and putting it into place.

### **Paths affected by cultivation**

Some paths across fields are currently affected by cultivation and we await their reinstatement when sowing is complete. Our wonderful pathways are the result of a three way collaboration between walkers, farmers and Suffolk County Council.

### **Collaboration with Suffolk County Council**

Thanks are due to Debbie Adams, the Public Rights of Way Officer at Suffolk County Council and her team who have organised the repair or replacement of almost all the damaged and unsafe bridges and signs we reported last year. We all benefit from this excellent support.

### **More collaboration needed from walkers and dogs**

Walkers and their dogs continue to keep our wonderful footpath network open. Dog fouling of paths has improved since last year in spite of the increase in the number of dogs in the village, meaning more people are using the bins provided. However we still have a major problem on the paths going South from Shop Street.

Farmers have also reported cases where dogs have run free amongst crops causing damage.

Dog owners, PLEASE keep dogs under control and pick up the poo!

### **Collaboration with farmers and landowners**

Most farmers and landowners have maintained their hedges well so the pathways are not getting too overgrown to walk whilst wildlife is supported alongside the path. On the whole, cross field paths which are ploughed up and sown are being reinstated effectively within required time limits.

### **The village footpath map**

Our beautifully illustrated map is delivered free to all new residents in the Welcome Pack and is available on the Village Website. Some of our walk inspectors pointed out that the map is not always easy to follow when the way marker signs are not obvious. Pete Brash has offered to check out the accuracy of the illustrated map in relation to the Ordnance Survey using a special app on his phone. We may be able to consider providing an accurate to scale version on the website to help people to find their way better.

### **Reporting problems**

Please report any problems with signs, access, and bridges in need of repair directly on the Suffolk County Council webpage so they can be given a work number and completed promptly in priority order.

Please contact Juliet Pierce the Footpath Officer on the Parish Council if you would like to help maintain the footpaths or take part in next year's Walking Day! Email: [julietpierce1@gmail.com](mailto:julietpierce1@gmail.com)