

Report on the health of the Worlingworth Footpath Network 2022

Carol Garrett – Vice Chair Worlingworth Parish Council

Summary

- Our village footpaths remain in good condition with many paths regularly walked by members of the community. Virtually all paths are accessible except where they await reinstatement following ploughing.

Parish Walking day Saturday October 1st

- There was a good turnout for our annual walking day, with others submitting reports prior to the day itself. The following walkers have contributed to this report: Janie Wood, Penny and Steve Wright, Marian Gladwell, Chris and Greg Watson, Debbie Scaife, Eugene O’Sullivan, Jo Coghill, Isabella, Megan, Francis and Sandra Muldoon. Many thanks to them all for helping to monitor our footpath network.
- Thanks also go to Jane O’vel, Steve Fugler, Derek Jones, Juliet Pierce, Judith and Brian Smallcombe for their assistance with the event by providing signs/posters, contributing/serving food and for their overall support!

The following issues were identified

Overgrown paths

- Clearing around parts of the footpaths from Stanway Green and East of Cole Street is needed.

Bridges

- Two bridges on the walk from Stanway Green to Mill Road were reported to have netting missing. They were also reported to have missing rails. The rails that were/ are missing from the bridge from Stanway Green to New Road were reported in September to both SCC footpaths Officer and Suffolk Police (Community Engagement Officer) as these were unbolted and removed to form a new structure. Currently the Police along with SCC are progressing their investigations with a potential view to prosecution for criminal damage.
- Two bridges on the walk N from Church Road and to the W of Worlingworth Hall were reported as having netting missing. On further inspection, it was not felt that this was required as the bridges have rails and are level bridges. Therefore the risk to walkers is not deemed sufficient to require netting. However, damage to the planks has been reported.
- A bridge on the footpath W of Water Lane has damaged mesh causing a potential trip hazard.
- A second bridge on a footpath W of Water Lane is becoming obscured by vegetation.

Footpath signs

- There is a sign missing on the footpath going SW from Valley Farm.
- There are no signs on the path around Patrick Lane Farm, off Mill Road
- As reported last year, a way marker is needed to show walkers where to go as they walk from the Church around the perimeter of Worlingworth Hall.
- Three signs on the paths E of Valley Farm are “falling over”. These will be made upright by the report author!

- There is a missing sign in the same footpath area as a result of a recent fire.
- The sign by the bridge on the path S of Shop Street has been damaged and needs replacing.
- A sign on a footpath W of Water Lane is required to indicate the path to Southolt Road.
- **NB. Additional Way marker signs have been requested from SCC and these will be nailed to signposts, where needed, by me!**

Paths affected by cultivation

- Some paths were reported as being obscured by cultivation. Our footpath network is the result of excellent collaboration between walkers, landowners and SCC. We anticipate that paths will be reinstated after cultivation.

Collaboration with Suffolk County Council

- Collaboration with SCC continues to be highly effective although I am not aware of any recent conversations between the Parish and SCC in this regard.

Dogs

- Whilst most dog owners in the Parish are very responsible, we still receive reports of dog owners allowing their pets to foul pavements and footpaths together with occasional complaints from landowners about dogs running loose.
- Dog owners – please keep your dog under control and PICK UP THE POO!. There are plenty of dog poo bins in the village.

The village footpath map

- The Parish is blessed to have such a wonderfully illustrated footpath map. This continues to be distributed to all newcomers to the village and is available on the Parish website.
- As last year, some of our walk inspectors pointed out that the map is not always easy to follow when the way marker signs are not obvious. It was stated last year that Pete Brash had offered to check out the accuracy of the illustrated map in relation to the ordnance survey using a special app on his phone. Pete has carried out this assessment and found the footpath map to be fairly accurate according to his GPS.
- It has also been suggested that we should make the map more visible by displaying it on the Parish Noticeboard and, possibly, having copies available, for example in The Swan, to make it available to visitors to the village. These suggestions will be raised with the Parish Council

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. [Suffolk County Council](#)

Footpath officer

- Juliet Pierce, our excellent footpath officer, has had to step back from this role. We do not currently have anyone willing to take over from her. The Parish Council would love to hear from anyone who might consider taking on this role.
- The footpath officer does not need to keep walking every footpath but would be asked to:
 - Promote the value of the Parish's footpath network in coordination with the Parish Council who will support the footpath officer
 - Be the village's single point of contact for footpath issues
 - Lead and coordinate the annual footpath walking day

- Liaise, as appropriate, with Suffolk County Council on ensuring our footpath network remains appropriately supported and managed
- Liaise with the Parish Council, as and when relevant, on footpath issues
- This is not an onerous role! We just need someone with an interest in ensuring that we retain our wonderful footpath network.
- We would be happy to chat about what it involves so please contact either the Parish Clerk worlingworthparishclerk@gmail.com or Carol Garrett chgarrett53@yahoo.co.uk

Recommendation for next year

- Ask all footpath inspectors to take photos of issues to help the report author with identifying concerns.