

PARISH PATH WARDEN – ANNUAL REPORT MARCH 2024

Introduction

This report covers the period from the 2023 Parish Meeting until the 2024 Parish Meeting.

The PPW apologises for the very slow progress with pending activities which was due to unrelated matters.

Remit

The Parish Path Warden (PPW) is asked to:

1. Walk all Public Rights of Way at least once a year if possible
2. Carry out light 'pruning' as required
3. Note any obstructions or problems and report to OCC
4. Liaise and work with parishioners and landowners over any problems that are either noted by the PPW but do not need OCC action or are reported to the PPW
5. Liaise with the Parish Council if appropriate
6. Consider any improvements that could be made to Public Rights of Way and co-ordinate accordingly

General Comments

References are made in this report to Footpath Numbers (FP) numbers e.g. 392/15a. All footpaths in the Warborough and Shillingford parish are prefixed by '392'. The route of a footpath can be found on the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Countryside Access Map¹. Use the map zoom facility to see the identity of the path concerned.

Please can Homeowners and Landowners be reminded that they have a legal responsibility not to obstruct Public Rights Of Way (or, indeed, pavements/footways) due to overhanging or encroaching vegetation, or physical obstructions.

Parishioners are asked to get in touch with their footpath concerns via:

ppw.warbshill@gmail.com

and **not** to telephone the PPW.

Please remember that footways/pavements and Permissive Paths are not within the remit of the PPW. Problems on footways/pavements should be reported via the

¹ <https://publicrightsofway.oxfordshire.gov.uk/standardmap.aspx>

FixMyStreet web site² as usual whilst the landowner should be contacted with Permissive Paths.

It is possible to view the layout of Public Rights Of Way locally via the OCC website Countryside Access Map³. Note that this map can be slow to react interactively, especially when zooming in.

Activities

1. Path improvement projects being investigated:
 - a. FP 392/15a as above
 - b. Quaker Lane (i.e. northern section of FP 392/6) in conjunction with TOE.
 - c. Informal 'pruning', especially along FP392/6
2. Other activity
 - a. Attendance at a PPW Workshop at the end of March 23 put together by the OCC PPW lead. This was a useful day near Abingdon – even if the heavens did open! There was a chance to have a word with OCC Countryside Access about the state of the Thames Path locally with particular reference to the ongoing situation with cyclists.
 - b. Discussion with the Parish Council around the situation with FP7 (running from Quaker Lane along the back of the houses in Green South). This path was reestablished as a Public Right Of Way a few years ago after protracted negotiations with OCC and considerable expense in legal costs. Some of this path has been abandoned as it has not been reopened. In addition, it would seem that the PC have designs to establish a path from the present end of FP7 into Six Acres via the Open Space between Six Acres and edge of the conservation area.
 It has been stressed to the PC that just rerouting FP7 via Six Acres is only permissible *once the necessary and legally required public consultation and Public Right Of Way diversion Orders have been signed off by OCC*⁴. A recent example of this situation was FP5 at Wharf Road/Henley Road which was the result of a historic administrative error within OCC and required public consultation and a footpath diversion order to cure an obvious mistake.
 In the case of FP7, if the PC wish to establish a Permissive Path to extend FP7 after consulting the relevant landowners, rather than an extended/diverted Public Right Of Way, this modification is purely a local matter (and outside the remit of the FPW).
 - c. FP19 (The churchyard path): There are two problems here

² <https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

³ <https://publicrightsofway.oxfordshire.gov.uk/standardmap.aspx>

⁴ https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/countryside/countryside-access/public-rights-way/changing-public-rights-way/modifications-and-diversions?utm_term=nil&utm_content=#:~:text=Diversions%20of%20Public%20Rights%20of,of%20the%20Highways%20Act%201980. 'Diversions of Public Rights of Way'

- i. The path needs edging and a fresh layer of top stone dressing.
- ii. There needs to be an investigation of the culvert where the path crosses the eastern churchyard ditch

Conclusions

Follow-up work will continue *as time permits*. These projects may take a while to come to fruition or may not happen at all but it is hoped that, by using a mix of TOE and CIL receipts (via both OCC and the Parish Council - under ss 43,50), there may be sufficient funds to enable some of this work to be completed within a sensible timescale.

The general situation between the PPW and OCC Countryside Access in terms of general communication could be improved if OCC Countryside Access were not rushed off their feet.

The PPW looks forward both to the co-operation of the PC and OCC Countryside Access together with TOE to obtain funds for these works and to their continuing general support of this role.

Bill Oscroft

PPW – Warborough and Shillingford Parish.

March 2024