

LONG STRATTON FOOTPATH WARDEN'S REPORT JULY 2022

It's that time of year again, when summer is here, you long to be out and about in shorts - but have farmers replaced footpaths through their crop? If the farmer had simply driven a vehicle over the track to mark direction, it is likely that it will be difficult to see now, let alone push through a tall crop of wheat or barley. If it's rape, forget it. Even a metre wide path will prove too stressful as these tall plants lean inwards and weave themselves together in the middle. The recommendation agreed with the CLA and NFU is 2 metres for rape but few seem to know this. Farmers are supposed to mark the direction of a path with "wheelings" after ploughing etc, and remove crops from the surface before it gets 6 inches high. Some are actually very good; others - less so, shall we say?

The positive news is that after intervention by the Town Council, including a site visit by our own Tom, who heroically made a video of the plank on FP18 giving beneath his weight, Highways have now made an urgent recommendation for a replacement after 3 years waiting.

I wanted to send in a report in July as no meeting in August but had a double whammy of my partner getting Covid followed by me getting common-or-garden flu. Am now on holiday so no chance for 2 weeks, hence a few inspections not carried out recently. I'll sort them when I get back. I don't anticipate any problems.

FP1 (Hempnall Rd to A140).

FP2 North from Hempnall Rd. *Not checked*

FP3 (between Church Lane and Hempnall Rd) All well

FP 4 (east from FP3) All well. Growth on plank bridge not too bad but cleared anyway.

FP5 (A short length between Church Lane and Norwich Road cutting off the corner. *Not checked*

FP6 (from FP7 to St Michael's Church) The stile is holding up. Lots of nettles had shot up almost overnight it seemed and I gave them a thorough cut back

FP7 (Churchfields estate to Rhees Green) All well.

FP8 (A140 towards Picton Rd. All well; cut back growth at junction with Tharston FP

FP12 Tarmac between A140 and St Michael's Rd next to car park.

FP13 (From Edge's Lane to Rhees Green) Well marked path BUT, extraordinarily, the fingerpost at Rhees Green has been removed and planted 50 yards north pointing into an inoffensive field full of crop. A headland has been put across the ditch. This is obviously with regard to the Bypass but surely premature. Has the council been notified of this action? Wot's goin' on??

FP14 (Rhees Green eastwards towards Morningthorpe) . Good field edge path.

FP15 (Star Lane to Hall Rd) end. Pleasant path into open countryside. The farmer has replaced footpath through rape crop to an excellent 2 metres, the recommended width for this tall crop. Not many farmers comply with this, so my thanks. It is usable. The finger post at the Hall Road end has not yet been replaced.

FP16 (from FP15 to Mill Rd) Good field edge path. The awkward stile is beginning to lean. It's always been difficult because the upright has long mouldered away and if I did not periodically cut back the over-hanging blackthorn it would be impassable. The lean gave me a good opportunity to report it. I sent pictures.

FP17 (from Mill Lane going east) Good grass path along field edge, then rolled path through crop.

FP18 (right turn from FP17 to Mill Road) Nice path. Re plank bridge, see preamble. Trimmed some growth at access to bridge and at Mill Rd end.

FP19 (Hall Rd to Wood Green) This path through rape was replaced with a metre wide path which was fine until the rape grew to be 6 foot. It is now virtually impossible to use it. Reported

FP20 (A140 opp. Parker's Lane to Haynton Lane) Good field edge path.

FP21 (Parker's Lane to Wood Green) The path has been replaced and rolled. It is now a pleasure to use. Thanks, farmer. However, the section to Wood Green is rape, now grown tall and virtually impassable. Reported problem albeit reluctantly as this farmer is clearly trying.

FP22 (Mill Rd to RB23 at Wood Green) Wheat crop field but path not replaced except – bizarrely – a 10 yard section at Mill Road End which ends in thick crop.. The uprooted finger post at Mill Rd still held up by the hedgerow where I balanced it.

RB23 (Wood Green to Mill Road past Mayfields Farm). Good path

FP24 (Wood Green to Morningthorpe). A very wide stretch had been left uncultivated at the field edge so I thought there should be no problems this year. How wrong I was. Although the first 20 or 30 yards are passable nettles are now growing tall beyond that. It's quite a long section and I haven't the energy to manually beat them down. For some reason (money) NCC does not include this path in its cutting schedule so have not reported it. This is why I wanted some machinery and a working party a couple of years ago.

FP25 (part of Boudicca's Way from Parker's Lane through Tyrrel's Wood). Good path throughout and I have trimmed the blackthorn growth round the exit onto Pulham FP1 so no one puts their eye out.

FP 26 (Parker's Lane winding through nearly to A140) . *Not inspected*

FP27 This path is in 3 sections. The field edge grassy path from Hayton's Lane is a grass field edge which has been cut this year and is good. I had had hopes the middle section would be better this year as the farmer marked the direction with wheels but unfortunately the crop was rape which became impassable.. I reported this to Highways in May, a letter was sent and a path cut. This is good news as the section from the A140 to meet this section is exemplary, a pleasure to walk and the field edge section to Haynton's Lane is nicely cut so the whole length now useable.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN

1. Missing fingerpost at Hall Road end of FP15 reported in March but still not replaced
2. Crop impeding FP27: reported and a letter sent to landowner. Path replaced. Makes my life worthwhile
3. FP18: rotting plank bridge. Submitted June 2019, Resubmitted by town clerk June 2022. Immediate action promised
4. FP22 reported crop obstruction
5. FP21 reported crop problem
6. FP16: difficult stile reported with pictures of lean, broken post and barbed wire
7. FP 19 crop obstruction. Reported

4 -7 relatively recent submissions, no response yet (apart from acknowledgement)

Bonnie Wade, Long Stratton Footpath Warden