

LONG STRATTON FOOTPATH WARDEN'S REPORT MARCH 2026

Since the by-pass opened I have been trying to ascertain how far Long Stratton's footpaths have been affected since no fewer than 7 were crossed by it. It has not been an easy task as although I had the expected new directions, neither the Definitive Map nor the Norfolk interactional map have been updated on-line. Apparently, the hold-up is in the Legal Orders and Regulations Team department and information is not available for the foreseeable future.

I am actually very disappointed at the condition of most of the new paths. It seems they have just stuck up a footpath sign and left walkers to tramp out the line themselves, often on ground left gloopy by heavy machinery. As always, walkers are the poor relations left with the bare legal necessities, despite the known health benefits of walking. An unavoidable negative for footpaths since the bypass is the increase in noise at the north-east end of the town. Previously, the fields to the east of Stratton were shielded from noise by the houses; now the heavy vehicles taken out of the centre are hurtling through the previously tranquil countryside. The bunds do mitigate this, and perhaps noise will be further softened when the trees have grown over the years but meanwhile there is a constant background roar.

Many of the old paths have not been replaced after ploughing. I know the farmers are having a hard time because of the weather but some farmers have managed to do it (e.g. on FP 13 and 17) so it is basically lack of will. Multiple boot marks on the more accessible paths have been really noticeable showing how very well used our paths are and what an asset to the community. They should be cherished. I have travelled along every path, carrying out routine care work with my secateurs where necessary, if possible.

FP1 (Hempnall Rd to A140) As before.

FP2 (North from Hempnall Rd) This path heads north before swinging round on grass to the right to cross a small bridge into the parish of Morningthorpe. The gate/stile situation remains as reported in July 2025 i.e. all well at present but I shall continue to monitor.

FP3 (between Church Lane and Hempnall Rd) With all the rain the path requires a lot of negotiating the numerous huge and quite deep puddles but is still accessible. The fingerpost at the Hempnall Road end is still holding firm. I trimmed the hedge round it to keep it visible.

FP 4 (east from FP3) Nice well-used grassy path leading over plank bridge to field path to Morningthorpe. Plank bridge in good condition; nettles and brambles already growing through so trimmed them right down.

FP5 (A short length between Church Lane and Norwich Road cutting off the corner). Nice and grassy; short but still used – a car was parked there last time of inspection.

FP6 (from FP7 to St Michael's Church. This is back in action. The stile is far from ideal but is negotiable. I trimmed the tree back so at least no-one will have their eye put out as they cross.

FP7 (Now Churchfields estate to Church Lane crossing new footbridge). Very nice although of course the section from the edge of the estate to the bridge is a morass. You would have expected that to have been firmly rolled as it was new track. Very sloppy in my opinion.

FP8 (A140 towards Picton Rd) Good grass path although muddy, especially with the use it obviously has. It now crosses what will be new housing. I trimmed back the blackthorn and brambles at the plank bridge.

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

FP13 (This now runs down Edge's Lane to the roundabout then across bypass to new gate, turn left then right across field to Rhees Green.) This is all nice and clear until final stretch to Rees Green. Where saplings have been planted it is an impassable quagmire. It is not the rain – although obviously that hasn't helped – as when the path leads into the established one, it becomes nice and firm. It's the condition Octavius has left the ground in. It should have been firmly rolled. The fingerpost at Rhees Green has disappeared.

FP14 (Rhees Green east towards Morningthorpe) . Good grassy field edge path with lots of use.

FP15 (Star Lane to Hall Rd). Star Lane tends to be muddy anyway so no worse than usual. Not very clearly signed when emerges onto field. I only found the way by trial and error heading for the fingerpost on Hall Road. Horrible section of slippery gloop towards Hall Road.

FP16 (Hall Lane to Mill Rd) There is now a pleasant new section through saplings to join the old path near the stile. This stile is quite hard to get over. I asked for a new upright to be put in ages but nothing has been done. There used to be one as the bottom half can still be seen on the right. The exit onto Mill Lane used to be over a stile but the field is presently without a gate and wide open to the road. The stile is completely overgrown so I shall monitor the situation in case a new barrier is put up.

FP17 (from Mill Lane going east) Good path. Farmer has replaced path in section through crop (my thanks) and it is nice and firm.

FP18 (right turn from FP17 to Mill Rd) Nice walking long grassy field edge path, then our new footbridge. The chicken wire is still loose and now folded over. It should be tacked down or pulled off. The cross-piece of the stile beyond has continued to slowly deteriorate. I will request that the stile be removed rather than repaired as it serves no purpose. The footpath between here and Mill Rd has been bunded off from the mill and is now only a 2 or 3 metres wide so no animals will ever be put here to graze. The far stile also now serves no purpose.

FP19 (Hall Rd to Wood Green. Despite reporting this problem last June, there is still no indication as to where to change direction mid-field. The path has not been replaced and difficult to see where to go. I have reported this and the Footpath team tell me they have written to the farmer to replace path as they cannot put a post in the middle of an arable field.

FP20 (A140 opp. old Parker's Lane to Haynton's Lane). Excellent wide path, well used.

FP21 (Wood Green to Parker's Lane roundabout). The pointer on FP at Wood Green is at a downward angle but is clear enough. The path has not been replaced so hard going. The section of grass alongside the hedge is delightful, as always and a new direction post has been put in. You then cross the plank bridge which at present is obstructed by a large branch too thick for my

secateurs and come to a smart new gate where a fingerpost ahead points left beside a fence leading through a quagmire to exit on the old Parkers Lane. There is also a beautifully laid tarmac road wide enough for 2 vehicles running almost parallel. I walked down this instead.

FP22 (Mill Rd to RB23 at Wood Green) The path is indicated by Fingerpost but again has not been replaced. I did not have the strength to attempt to cross despite wanting to go to Wood Green. I heard a rumour that the farmer does not replace the path because nobody uses it; this of course becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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

FP24 (Wood Green to join Morningthorpe FP28): This path runs alongside a field edge and is OK at present though it gets blocked by nettles etc as the year goes on. I am asking Highways if it can be added to the cutting schedule now FP7 will have been removed. The farmer has put a thin line through the crop to indicate where the path turns diagonally left though it would be good to have a repeater post with roundel to aim for.

FP25 (part of Boudicca's Way from Parker's Lane through Tyrrel's Wood). All OK though very muddy. Previous remarks hold

FP 26 (Parker's Lane near Tyrrel's Wood, now winding tortuously to A140) The fingerpost on Parker's Lane has disappeared but the repeater posts are there OK.

There is a nice new grassy path to join the route to Parker's Lane roundabout, but the replacement route from there to the exit on A140 is an absolute disgrace. Finger posts have been put up at each end -but none to tell you where to turn and no attempt to actually make a path. It's like walking through a marsh. It is particularly bad at A140 end where the path, which now runs along a field edge beside a ditch is rough, full of tall weeds including nettles which will become a problem and not even a metre wide. At one place a telegraph pole blocks the path and you have to walk into the crop. Then you pick your way through rough country until you reach a fence. On the far side of the fence a new fingerpost and a little stretch of tarmac tauntingly points towards you. I got out by walking beside the fence until I reached old Parker's Lane. If walking from Parker's Lane end there is no direction sign. Either the fingerpost or the fence is wrong.

FP27 (from A140 opposite the kennels to Hayton's Lane 200 yards short of Wacton Common) To my surprise, the farmer of the western half of this path has actually replaced it or at any rate has marked out the line from the bridge to the oak tree. The roundel has broken off the repeater sign at the ditch and I shall fix a new one when I am next there.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN Reported to Highways

1. FP 13: Missing Fingerpost
2. FP 18: Stile
3. FP 19: path not replaced; no direction indicator at turn in line of path.
4. FP 21: Branch of tree hampering bridge
5. FP 24: Cutting schedule request
6. FP 26: Condition at A140 end; obstruction with fence/confusion with signs
7. FP 26: Missing Fingerpost Parker's Lane end

Bonnie Wade, Long Stratton Voluntary Footpath Warden