

Parish Footpath Officers Report July 2024

1. This month I've been out clearing paths and lanes. I have managed to clear all the way along Ruff Lane which has meant it is now walked without being stung or scratched, it is being used by horse riders and occasional motorbike and 4 wheel drive, which all helps to keep it open. I'm grateful to Nick Deacon for stimming the footpath LB 3 which is near his house and was very overgrown. We do still have some paths that are in desperate need of cutting back, there is a 100m section of the Herefordshire Trail that has 7ft high Hogweed blocking the path so this needs to be a priority this month.
2. We have now submitted the PROW grant applications for the work on the footpaths in Little Birch and Aconbury. I did make changes to the application following our discussion at the last Parish Council meeting. As you will recall this has been split into urgent works £1472.20 and work to improve the accessibility £3560.00 and for Aconbury urgent works £1821.20 and improved accessibility £2724.00. Council the will be looking at these applications from the 1st of July so hopefully we will hear in the not too distant future whether we have been awarded any money to do this work. I'm not sure when this money will become available who will be expected to install the stiles and gates, but I have written to the Ramblers Association to ask if they could train up some of our volunteers so that we might be able to install them if needs be.
3. Council footpath inspector has now met with the landowner to discuss the damage that his land drain has caused to LB 21, (Coniger Lane or Sunken path). He has offered to smooth out some of the large steps in the path to make it easier to walk and is therefore has accepted some responsibility for the damage that has been done to the path. The meeting took place three weeks ago and as of Sunday he hadn't done any of this work. I will report this back to the footpath inspector for her to take it up with him, as and when she's feels he's had a reasonable time to have done the work.
4. A couple of weeks ago it was brought to my attention that a group of young men had started constructing a downhill mountain bike course parallel to one of the main footpath on Aconbury Hill. I reported this to the Ben Anderson The Duchy's Forester he will be making enquiries and will get his team to reinstate the footpath back to its original condition in due course.
5. Further to the conversation we had last month regarding the Parish Council noticeboard, Chris Atkinson has now replaced the Perspex and it now looks much better.
6. I'm afraid as yet I haven't followed up on the idea of a leaflet including which would include a map of the parish footpaths and local history information, but I will endeavour to do this the next few months.
7. Steve Organ the PROW Volunteers Development Officer seems to have been snowed under by the amount of work that he has been given to him. Which has meant that the support that had been offered has not yet materialised. So myself and the Much Birch PFO will be doing our best to reach out to even more Footpath Officers in neighbouring Parishes to join us for our next meeting on 9th August where we offer mutual support to each other.

Chris Fowler

Little Birch Footpath Officer