Parish Footpath Officers Report October 2024

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1. As you know the grants from the PROW have been agreed. I have since the last meeting had meetings with Ben Anderson from the Duchy who has agreed to install nine self-closing gates. Jack Lilwal from Aconbury Court has agreed to install three gates and the Masons from Merrivale Farm have agreed to install two 12ft gates and five self-closing gates. I managed to arrange a meeting with Ben Anderson from the Duchy and Steve Organ the PROW Volunteer Coordinator where they agreed work together and use the installation of the gates on the Duchy land as a training course for PFO’s. This is a win, win for Little Birch and Aconbury Parishes as it will provide free labour for the Duchy and get the gates installed quicker. It now seems the PROW team are going to order all of the equipment then distribute it to the parishes, who will then need to send pictures of the installed equipment to the council. Steve Organ has told me that they have ordered the first batch of gates that should be delivered mid-October, I have requested as a priority the gates for the Duchy and Merrivale.
2. Steve Organ has now produced a set of documents for PFO’s which include job specifications, standards for volunteers and guidelines for engagement. It’s good to have these that describe and establish the basis of the role that we have as PFO’s but I look forward to the authorisation letter/ID card from the council, the training sessions starting and the volunteers handbook which have been promised.
3. We have another local PFO meeting on this coming Friday where we hope to have a representative from the PROW team who will hopefully be able to explain when they will supply the rest of the gates. It will also be a good opportunity to discuss the documents that have been sent out.
4. Did we have any reply from Enviroability regarding possible work on the footpaths?
5. Last Sunday we had a successful walk to Aconbury Church we had 25 people for the walk down to the church where we were met by another eight people who joined us to look round the inside of the church and listen to a talk that was given by Alison Clarke about the history of the church and the neighbouring Nunnery. The walkers then walked back to the village hall for refreshments. This was a brilliant turnout on what looked like it was going to be a very wet afternoon, fortunately we avoided the heaviest of the rain.

We have another walk in two weeks’ time on the 13th, this will be quite a short walk onto Aconbury Hill, where members of the Herefordshire Fungus Survey Group will point out fungi to us. They have asked us to limit the numbers to 20, since the advert appearing in the newsletter the places are filling up very fast.

Chris Fowler

Little Birch Footpath Officer