**Parish Footpath Officers Report March 2025**

1. New Gates

* There has been very little progress with the installation of the new gates; Bob Mason has been unable to make any progress because of the wet conditions. He is also awaiting the delivery of two 12 foot gates from the council, but unfortunately Steve Organ, who was organising the delivery has damaged some ligaments in his foot and is now unable to drive. Prior to Steve’s injury he had been able to deliver six gates to the Duchy, these will be installed as part of a training course that Steve will be running, three to go in around Athelstan‘s wood and three to be installed in Aconbury.
* Further to our conversation last month about some gates being installed on LB 19 the Herefordshire Trail; I was contacted by a group called “Walker Are Welcome”. This is a charity based in Ross that are doing amazing work in making some of the long distance paths in the area fully accessible. They have already installed 40+ gates on the Wye Valley Walk and are now turning their attention to the Herefordshire Way. They contacted me to enquire about the stiles on LB 19 to the east of Ruff Lane. They pointed out that the stile on the lane that we had previously discussed did not meet the council specifications as it was too narrow and the step up is too high. They suggested that it would be an advantage to install a gate. I have subsequently spoken to Mr Gillespie of Lower House Farm, who does not have any objections.
* In my conversations about this path an observation was made that the path does not follow the Council‘s Definitive Map. The path on the council map goes right through Mr Gillespie garage, on discussion I was told that the garage had been built prior to them purchasing the property. This is not an issue as the path is still walkable through the field. This is the second case of the line of the definitive map being built over that I’m aware of in Little Birch and it makes me question whose responsibility it is when planning permission is given to ensure that the footpaths are maintained or the line changed on the definitive map, maybe a question for Toni. (See attached maps)

1. Noticeboard

* We are still waiting for a reply to our grant application for the noticeboard. This is disappointing as Much Birch have now installed theirs at my suggestion; they funded theirs from parish funds.
* We have made some progress on the map of the three parishes; that will be displayed inside the noticeboard. Peter Rymill has produced a map showing three parishes highlighting the footpaths in Aconbury, Little and Much Birch. I have produced a list of places of interest in the parishes that will be incorporated into the map. We will be discussing this further with representative from Much Birch in the coming weeks.

1. Footpath Conditions

* I have been out inspecting for paths and apart from a few trees small trees down that I will endeavour to clear in the next week, all the paths are clear. Only problem being that everywhere is so muddy hopefully the good weather recently will dry things up.

1. Countryside Code

* Further to our conversation at the last meeting regarding irresponsible dog owners, and in the light of yet further attacks having taken place in the last few weeks I have been considering writing something for the Newsletter highlighting the Countryside Code about the responsibility that dog owners have while walking in fields where there are sheep and cattle. Is this something you’re happy for me to do or would it carry more weight if it came directly from the Parish Council?

(See sample countryside code)

1. Parish Walks

* Our next Parish walk is going to be on the 16th March at 2.00pm from Much Birch Community Hall.
* This year’s Dawn Chorus Walk will take place on the 6th of April starting and finishing at Merrivale Farm.

Chris Fowler

Little Birch Footpath Officer



