

# **TARPORLEY FOOTPATHS IN JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019**

## **REPORT BY DAVID PRESS, PARISH COUNCIL FOOTPATH WARDEN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In January and February this year I have walked all the Tarporley paths to audit the condition of our rights of way and identify changes since my last audit in January/February 2018.

This report:

- summarises the overall condition of paths and notes developments since my last annual report in January/February 2018
- records my findings for each path
- Makes recommendations for decisions and actions

### **SUMMARY OF OVERALL CONDITION AND ACTION DURING THE LAST YEAR**

Most of our paths are signposted. However, the path from Cobblers Cross past Garden Cottage towards the Macdonalds Hotel needs a sign. Several signs are rotting, leaning and overgrown and would benefit from renewal.

In the past year one more of the Parish Council gates has been installed, meaning that nine of the ten metal gates and the one wooden kissing gate which the Parish Council purchased have now been accounted for. There are two redundant kissing gates which are available for re-use. Therefore we have the opportunity to install three more kissing gates. This is in addition to the two we hope to relocate from FP17.

Last year the Parish Council agreed to ask the landowner's permission to divert footpath 17 onto the route most people use to skirt the area that gets regularly flooded. He has agreed and CWAC has been asked to consider a diversion in the public interest. The Parish may wish to write formally requesting that this is expedited and may wish to offer some financial support.

The only paths currently overgrown are FP 8 and FP23 – not so as they are impassable, but it may deter someone uncertain of the route. Yet again, during the year FP3 had a crop without any reinstatement. The route from the A51/A49 roundabout following RB9/Delamere Loop/RB20 to Forest Road is often overgrown each year. It is on the CWAC maintenance programme, but work is normally carried out so late in the year that it spends most of the summer overgrown. Once again I suggest that CWAC be asked to carry out maintenance early.

The PROW Officer and I repeated our efforts to improve drainage on FP18 and it does appear to have maintained the improvement, although it would probably benefit

from another effort this spring. It may be more efficient to use a trenching hoe and the Parish Council may wish to consider having one.

Two years ago the Parish Council resolved to distinguish between paths that lead out to the countryside and paths that link between different parts of the village with the aim of maintaining the surface of the latter to be less muddy. On that basis, FP11 has been improved this year. Once the DWH development is complete, then FP1 will become a path needing surface improvement. Once the Jones Homes development on Daffodil field is complete then the parallel length of FP4 from High Street to the Silver band hut may also be considered more “urban”.

Last year the Parish Council resolved to write to the landowner to ask her to allow a route through the A49 underpass. I am unaware of what, if anything, happened, but I suggest keeping this request on the agenda.

This report highlights several issues which have remained unresolved since my report last year. The Parish Council might like to consider discussing with CWAC how the PC could directly manage that proportion of the footpath maintenance budget which relates to Tarporley. The PC could then directly employ it's contractors to erect signs and gates and maintain undergrowth.

During the year CWAC commissioned a project whereby a team (not the PROW team) identified PROW assets accessible from the highway and which were in a state of disrepair and replaced them. I have identified three examples where money has been wasted installing stiles/gates which would have been better left alone (identified in my report below).

Recently I created more walking routes on my Tarporley Walks Facebook page. The Parish Council website might be a good place to offer these walks, or at the very least offer a link to the Facebook page. Ideally, I could probably benefit from more expertise in how to manage the page so that the routes are listed and presented in a better way.

## **REPORT ON EACH PATH**

**FP 1** from Captains Walk to junction with Tiverton FP21 (south of Birch Heath and west of by-pass)

This path is in reasonably good order from Nantwich Road to the David Wilson Homes site, but the diversion continues and at times the diverted route has been blocked and/or inadequately signed. The PROW Officer at CWAC has spoken to DWH representatives on a number of occasions to try and achieve compliance.

On the far side of the by-pass the path continues in good order.

I suggested in the last two year's reports that David Wilson Homes could be asked to surface the path from the new development into the village before they finish the development. As the development draws toward a conclusion it would be timely to formally approach them to make this request.

**FP 2** from St Helen's churchyard to Birch Heath Road/Redhill (between Redhill cottages and Redhill farm)

The path is in good condition. The finger post on the wooden sign beside the lych gate has entirely rotted away.

As reported for the last two years at the junction with Redhill the sign is badly leaning.

The landowner of most of this route remains unpersuaded to replace stiles with gates. The ivy has been cut back from where it was overgrowing the double stile where the route heads toward Birch Heath and drops down from the hill with the telephone mast.

The landowner of the route from the Churchyard to the second stile headed away from the village has agreed to replace the stiles with gates (see comments on FP17).

**FP 3** from car park behind Rising Sun to west of the Sandstone trail and junction with Iddinshall FP1/FP2

Most of the path is in good condition.

We now have kissing gates on nearly the entire route. The stile on the far side of Moss Lane has been replaced with a gate. Stiles remain either side of the by-pass and there are two stiles on the last 20 metres to the Iddenshall boundary.

As always, the section of the path to the east of the Sandstone Trail was extremely wet and muddy across the gateway used by cattle in January.

As is frequently the case, during the year the path headed north west beyond the Sandstone Trail toward Iddinshall was planted without any reinstatement, but in January the crop was long harvested and ground perfectly ok to walk, although indistinct on the ground

**FP 4** from High Street next to The Close to the junction with the branch of restricted bridleway 5 which loops around cottages on Back Lanes west of by pass.

This path is in good condition and the short length on the west of the bypass seems to have been kept clear of vegetation once again this year.

The wooden sign by The Close was badly rotten and has now been replaced with a standard metal finger post at the edge of the road on the north west side of the bypass.

Now that Jones Homes are developing the Daffodil field, I suggest the Parish Council formally ask them to look at how they can create access from the field onto the footpath and also upgrade the surface of the path from the Silver band hut to High Street.

**RB 5** Moss Lane from south east of roundabout on A51/A49 on SE side of by-pass to North of Moss Cottage and junction with FP3 (and also semi-circular loop of Back lanes NW side of by-pass)

This restricted bridleway has two routes: one directly from the roundabout to Moss Cottage and the other following back lanes and looping around Cromwell cottage on the north west side of the by-pass.

The 5 bar metal gate leading from Moss Lane to cross the bypass has been off its hinges most of the year as it was the previous year. Otherwise the route is good.

Ironically, where the route crosses the bypass just south of the roundabout a new gate has been installed where it could more happily been left as a gap. This is another example of the project to identify assets in disrepair and replace them.

**FP 6** A51 opposite Rode Street Farm following the Sandstone Trail route south to junction with Tiverton FP 13 (a few fields north of Crib Lane/Pudding Lane junction)

The route is generally in good condition.

Over a year ago I obtained permission from the landowner, and asked CWAC, to put a litter bin beside the track near the A51. It has not yet been done

There has been no progress since I reported last year that only three of the four stiles between the A51 and FP18 have been replaced with Parish Council kissing gates and that the fourth (also a Parish Council gate) was awaiting the return of the contractors to complete the work. It has still not been done.

The PROW Officer had proposed removing the redundant gate where the path emerges from the edge of the wood a hundred metres north of FP3 and using it elsewhere on our network. This remains to be done.

**FP 7** from A51 next to Rode Street Farm following the Sandstone Trail route north to junction with Utkinton FP11

The route is in good order.

**FP 8** from A51 NW of roundabout to Utkinton Road between bridge over By-pass and Heath Green

I am pleased to report that once again the path was reinstated after planting earlier this year, but the current low growing grass which has been planted has left the route indistinct.

At the A51/Rode Street the hedge has been cut back to provide adequate access to the path.

**RB 9** From SE of roundabout on A51 following south side of By-pass to Utkinton Road

The path is currently in good order and has been maintained in terms of vegetation during the year. As reported last year, the sign at the A51 is leaning over.

**FP 10** from Utkinton Road between Rose Mount Farm and Newlands to Oswalds way, junction with FP 11 and on to Heath Green

Some maintenance has taken place on the hedge on the section of path from The Blythings to Utkinton Road, but it is still very narrow. Last year I recommended removal of the redundant concrete posts, but this has not happened. If the landowner was asked last year but has not taken action, then I suggest that the Parish Council uses its contractor to remove the posts.

**FP 11** from Forest Road opposite Woodlands Way to junction with FP 10 at north east end of Oswalds Way

The laying of stone this year at Parish Council expense has considerably improved the path.

**FP 12** from Forest Road (south of Forest House) to Park Road

In winter this gets quite muddy and it's a little while since its grit surface was renewed. If the Parish Council were to follow its policy on paths linking through the village then it's time to improve the surface.

**FP13** from Park Road to Cobblers Cross

This is a very well used path and in good order, although it gets very muddy after rain.

**FP 14** from High Street beside entrance to British Legion to Oathills Close and then following roads (Oathill Drive/Churchill Drive) to Eaton Road

This path is OK, but in summer it gets very narrow in several places and the hedges on either side need regular early season trimming.

**FP 15** from Tilstone Lane ( the lane between Eaton Road and the A51) to Wettenhall brook where it becomes a Tilstone Fearnal path

Although muddy the path is distinct and unobstructed.

**FP 16** from Birch Heath by Birch Heath Farm north to FP2

The route is very muddy near the farm yard.

**FP 17** from junction with FP 2 behind St Helens to junction with FP 3/RB5 N of Moss Cottage

I have secured the landowner's permission to divert the route so that it follows the line most people currently use and avoids the area that floods most winters. He has agreed that we can then use the gates to replace the first couple of stiles on FP2 walking away from the Church.

At the kissing gate next to Moss Cottage a permissive path sign has mysteriously appeared and I am trying to find out how it got there. The PROW Officer was unable to enlighten me.

**FP 18** from RB5 on Back Lane at west of By-pass to FP6 (Sandstone Trail)

The path is in good condition after the PROW Officer and I did some more drainage work earlier this year. This probably needs repeating this spring and may be much easier and more effective with a trenching hoe.

Just beyond Cromwell Cottage is an example of the project to identify assets in disrepair and replace them. In this case a fence boundary which is not part of the right of way but looked like a dilapidated stile has been replaced with a new stile and misleads people into using a non-existent route.

**FP 19** from FP3 behind the Rising Sun to FP4 behind the Silver Band

This path is in good order.

### **Footway Utkinton Road to Heath Green**

This is signposted for the Delamere loop but its status is as part of the highway rather than a right of way.

It is in good condition but it would benefit from early season maintenance to prevent it getting overgrown.

**RB 20/Utkinton RB 10** from Heath Green to top of Forest Road /A49

In good order, but would benefit from early season maintenance to prevent it getting overgrown.

**FP 21/ Rushton 30/32** from north end of Cobblers Cross through Portal Golf to Eaton Lane

The path is in good order. Whilst the Greenkeeper had granted permission to replace the stile by Eaton Lane with a gate, the PROW Officer and I agreed to leave it in its state of disrepair since it barely created a barrier, thus making the path more accessible. However, it has been replaced, without the involvement of the PROW team, by with a new stile.

**FP 22/Rushton FP31** from Cobblers Cross west of the hotel to the golf course and across the course past the 18<sup>th</sup> hole and then to Saplings Lane

A sign needs to be installed on Cobblers cross indicating the route up the track up to Garden cottage.

As previously reported the path that everyone uses across the golf course is not actually the right of way. For the time being, I've given up trying to get the hotel to regularise the situation.

The path we all use is in good order.

The route is now signposted from Saplings Lane (not actually within our Parish boundary).

**FP 23 & Tiverton FP14** from junction of FP1 (south of Birch Heath)/Tiverton FP24/26 to Nantwich Road south of the By-pass and north of Tiresford Farm

This route crosses two fields: one alongside the bypass (Tiverton FP14) and with a pond in its northerly corner; the second (Tarporley FP 23) beyond the pond up to the junction with FP1. In the second field, it's clear from the ground that most people walk around the perimeter of the field, whilst the right of way crosses the field. The right of way has been overplanted without reinstatement.

One of the Parish Council gates has been installed alongside the stile to the north of the pond at the boundary of the second field.

We should not forget our long term aspiration to gain the landowner's permission to allow a route from Nantwich road around the bottom of the DWH development and under the bypass.

**FP 26 Tiverton** from Birch Heath toward FP1 to Captains Walk.

The path has been well maintained.

I have made no progress on claiming the rights of way linking this route with Birch Heath road.

**Utkinton FP9** A49 Luddington Hill onto golf course.

In good order and now signed from the A49

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Parish Council:

1. Ask CWAC to rectify all the missing, leaning and rotten signs as detailed in this report.
2. Write to the landowner reminding her to consider dedicating a route through the underpass at the south of the DWH development.

3. Formally approach David Wilson Homes asking them to surface Captain's Walk on completion of that part of the development which links with the footpath.
4. Formally ask Jones Homes to help improve the surface of FP4 alongside The Close and Silver band hut and consider access from the Daffodil field to the path.
5. Improve the surface of FP12.
6. Ask the landowner to remove the leaning concrete post on FP10 where the path enters the narrow section between hedges leading to Utkinton Road or use the Parish Council's contractor to remove them.
7. Ask CWAC to undertake early season maintenance on the route from the A51/A49 roundabout to the top of Forest Road.
8. Write to CWAC formally requesting diversion of FP17 and also consider offering to contribute to the costs.
9. Investigate the possibility of directly managing the CWAC footpath maintenance budget for Tarporley.
10. Consider buying a trenching hoe if the Parish does not already own one.
11. Incorporate the Tarporley Walks Facebook page routes onto the Parish Council website.

David Press, Tarporley Parish Council Footpath Warden, February 2019