

NSC FOOTPATHS (FPs) TEAM MEETING

29 September 2025

Notes of Meeting

Present: Graeme (GB) (Chair), Gail (GM), Diana (DS), Amanda (AW), Ann (AQ), Midge (MK) (Minutes)

Apologies: Liz (LF)

1. NSC Volunteers policy

Graeme circulated paper copies of the Policy, which those present read, signed and returned.

2. Partnership working with DCC

On Thurs 2 Oct, GB will attend a meeting that he has arranged with DCC officers Richard Walton (DCC Head of Footpaths and Bridleways) and John Boyd (P3 Scheme Manager). He will be seeking clarification on the processes for reporting issues that require DCC action and for bidding for grant funding for improvements to paths DCC field queries on the proposed changes in footpath management that DCC is introducing. Also present will be Richard Ward, chair of Sandford PC and the footpath lead for the Crediton Association of Local Councils.

UPDATE 26/10 Meeting with DCC PROW managers was informative and positive. Whether it results in better communication remains to be seen. Information from this meeting is included in updates inserted below. Notes of the meeting will be circulated once DCC agree them as an accurate record.

Action: GB to report back to the Group on outcomes from this meeting.

3. Directional Signage

Action: GB to request supply of signage from DCC for use on several PROWs

4. Bridges

There are several bridges on footpaths in NSC, and all require a structural survey to assess condition. These are:

FP1 (1 bridge over drainage ditch at Station Road access - wooden)

FP4 (3 bridges – 1 concrete, 2 wooden)

FP12 (2 bridges – 1 concrete, 1 wooden)

Although it is believed that DCC regularly carries out structural surveys of Marsh Barton footbridge over the River Creedy on FP12 (or FP4?), this needs to be verified.

Action: GB to ask DCC whether they survey Marsh Barton Bridge, and how often. Also to request surveys by DCC of the other bridges listed above on FPs 1, 4 and 12.

UPDATE 26/10 DCC have confirmed that they routinely survey all bridges. For smaller bridges of less than 6 metres span there is a 3 yearly cycle of checks by DCC officers. Larger (more than 6 metres span) bridges are surveyed every 5 years. Visible damage to bridges should be reported ASAP via the P3 mailbox. prow@devon.gov.uk.

Action:- GB to report damage to footbridge safety railings on PROW1 bridge at Jackbrook OS Grid reference SX 89829 97736

5. Access to FPs 3 and 12 from the A377

Access is difficult and rather hazardous (when considered from the perspective of the recently retired, reasonably fit potential user). In relation to FP12 it was felt that options for improving access were extremely limited and beyond the scope of the group.

FP3 follows an ancient pathway, and comprises part of an attractive circular route.

Action: GB to approach the owners of Hanlons to discuss possible permissive path, highlighting commercial opportunities arising from refreshment stops, parking etc. Similar discussions could follow with the owners of Moonridge Farm.

Where FP3 is accessed from the A377 at its east end near Newbridge Cottages, the group recognised the importance for safety of keeping the entrance to the FP trimmed and kept clear to ensure the widest view of traffic for FP users.

Action: GB to report the pavement opposite Newbridge Cottages for regular clearance. Check with Upton Pyne PC first as this work is located outside the Parish.

UPDATE:- DCC PROW team recognise the potential strategic importance of these two paths in relation to the wider network of local PROW, their proximity to Exeter and their potential for meeting the leisure needs of the people of Exeter. There is scope for an ambitious improvement scheme involving DCC brokering improved access with landowners. Further discussion with DCC required before we talk to Landowners

6. Clearing PROWS of upgrowth

Sections of several FPs (FPs 1, 4, 5 and 9) require regular strimming to keep the paths open and accessible. GB has made FOI request to DCC for details of their maintenance contract.

UPDATE 26/10:- DCC now tell us that the clearing of upgrowth and strimming is done by DCC contractors on the basis of historical need. P3 Parishes can and do report work that needs doing P3 Parishes can make direct contact with approved contractors either to commission work at DCC agreed prices using their own budget or as a precursor to bidding for P3 Grant money.

Jon Boyd (P3 Manager) will provide us with a list of contractors together with contact details. Strimming work should be reported via the P3 Mailbox prow@devon.gov.uk

7. New PROWS and diverting existing PROWS

UPDATE 26/10 The designation of a new PROW or the diversion of an existing requires an application under schedule H of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for a change to the local Definitive Map showing designated PROWS. Such changes require the consent of the landowner which is only rarely given.

If a landowner of a proposed new PROW is not known the process for designation may well be easier and more likely to be successful. However there is a waiting list for Definitive Map changes of this sort. The process for applications is set out on the DCC

Website: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/prow/prow-maps/making-changes-to-the-definitive-map/>

ACTION:- Application to be made ASAP for inclusion in the DCC Definitive Map of the apparently unowned path from A377 to join PROW 4 and 12 .

8. FP1 Riscombe Hill to Sherwood via Venny Cleave (GM and GB)

- (i) **MUD** – 3 long term and serious winter/spring mud areas have been identified. GB thinks that the remedy for the first area, adjacent to the crossing of Crooklake Brook, will require improved field drainage from the 40-50 sq m area from around the gated entrance to the footbridge, taking more rainwater into the brook. It was agreed that the landowner may not agree to carry out the work but he should be asked. The other two winter/spring mud areas involve a tractor crossing point with deep rain water trenching across the path and the third is an area of the path kettled between two gates that is regularly trampled into a deep mire by winter grazing cows. Both areas require a top dressing stone hard core.

Actions: GB to contact JQ about the need for remedial work in these three locations. if need be GB will then negotiate funding opportunities for drainage work with DCC, and to keep the landowner (John Quicke) informed of any approach and subsequent developments.

- (ii) **Steep and hazardous slope** from Sherwood driveway into wooded valley.

Action: GB to discuss issues with landowner (John Quicke) with a view to a DCC grant bid for hand rails and possible steps as PROW improvement.

- a. **Public Footpath signs** – the lettering on two of the main PROW signs has been spray painted green to obscure the lettering leaving only plain green signs. GB has some replacement signs in his barn, but DCC will need to do the actual replacement of the [large and heavy] signs as they require screwing onto the top of 2.5 metre poles.

Action: GB to report to DCC and request signage replacement where needed. Signage post at Venny Cleave needs replacing.

- (iii) upgrowth clearance and hedgerow cutting- Section of path kettled between hedges and barbed wire fence requires upgrowth clearance and hedge cutting at least once each year. This has been done this year at least once. Assume Quicke included the hedges in their Autumn flailing schedule?

Action: GB to ensure this is on DCC list of paths to be kept clear .

8. Bridleway 2a and FP2 Old Whitestone Lane (AW)

- (i) **Shrub and upgrowth** is a big issue on first section of this bridleway that DCC upgraded in 2019. GB has raised with landowner (John Quicke) but has had no response to date.

Action: GB to request clearance of this section of BW 2a by DCC.

- (ii) **Directional signage** obscured or missing.

Action: GB to raise with DCC for clearance and /or replacement.

9. FP3 Oldaway Lane (AW)

- (i) Urgent issue. The overly-friendly stallion was going to be moved to a field away from the FP on 26 Sep.

Action: AW to check whether the stallion has been moved and update GB report before next meeting.

UPDATE 26/10 AW reports Stallion gone. Replaced by friendly ponies

(ii) **Blockage of the FP by rusty gates tied together.** AW has told the landowner (Nick Taylor) that it is an offence to obstruct a FP, but situation complicated by field with gates being leased out. **Action:** Amanda to update GB before next meeting.

UPDATE 26/10 AW reports no action yet. GB/AW to visit Hanlons if no action soon.

(iii) **New cattle grids difficult to cross.** New fencing is lying beside one of the cattle grids, along with new cages and gates. Installation has been paused, apparently because the contractor is out of the country. **Action:** AW to continue discussions with landowner, encouraging prompt action on the first cattle grid (possibly by a more convenient contractor), and keep GB updated.

UPDATE 26/10 AW reports no action. GB/AW to visit Hanlons if no action soon.

A second cattle grid near Moon Ridge has been fully installed. Thank you.

(iv) **Stile at access point** from A377 near Newbridge Cottages is difficult - too high and needs an additional bottom step.

Action: GB/AW to raise issue with Dan and Sam Taylor at Hanlons . A grant bid for a new footpath gate may be the best approach given DCC antipathy to fixing/improving stiles

10 FP4 – Devon Heartland Way (AQ and DS)

(i) **Broken safety railings** on footbridge over Jackmoor Brook near Langford.

Action: GB to report this issue to DCC PROW Team .

(ii) Dense undergrowth in Marsh Lane section needs strimming. DS reported that the Parish Council did one cut this year, and DCC another. DCC cut the FP up to Station Road, as well as the first part of

Action: GB to report this issue to DCC PROW Team .

11 FP5 – Old Norton (MK)

(i) **Ownership of section** at north end of FP (sunken green lane) isn't known, despite chat with landowners nearby

Action: GB to ask DCC if they know who owns

Strimming MK had been told by local resident that a short section at the Newcombes (north) end of FP5 between lane and field corner is strimmed by DCC once a year. It is currently clear and fully accessible

Action: GB to confirm with DCC that it maintains this section of FP5.

12 FP6 – Sweetham/Norton (MK)

(i) **Hazardous steps** from arable field down to east side of Sweetham Water. MK contacted landowner (Richard Browne) to discuss formalising the unofficial diversionary route currently used by locals to avoid the steps (and other problem areas – see below) by making it a permissive path. Landowner not keen on locals using diversion or on

designating it as a permissive path. Solution is probably a combination of more frequent maintenance to refill soil behind wooden risers, and at least one handrail.

Action: GB to include this work as a priority in our bids for improvement grants to DCC. MK to email landowner to keep him informed of this.

- (ii) **Mud** -Stretch of FP leading west from and across Sweetham Water gets very muddy and waterlogged on a seasonal basis.

Action: MK to discuss with landowner (Anita Baker and family) and keep GB updated.

- (iii) **Difficult steps** leading east from arable field down to stream. Need additional top step and cutting back of encroaching vegetation. MK has raised the issue with the landowner (Richard Browne), who said he will 'look' at the steps, though steps fall within the responsibility of DCC.

Action: GB to include this work as a priority in our bids for improvement grants to DCC. MK to email landowner to keep him informed of this.

- (iv) **The post of the Public Footpath sign** at access to path from lane near Willow House is very wobbly and needs replacing/re-anchoring into the ground.

Action: GB to include in list of public footpath signs requiring attention/replacement from DCC, along with those on FP1.

13 FP7 – Sweetham (MK)

- (i) **Barbed wire from collapsed fence** hidden amongst vegetation, posing hazard to walkers and their dogs. MK raised with landowner (Richard Browne, RB) who explained that fence is owned by the owner of adjacent field (Chris Daw?) which RB rents (doesn't know if repairing lease). Landowner intends to cut the strip of vegetation beneath the FP in next month or so ahead of spring drilling and he will 'look into' the fence at the same time.

Action: MK to keep situation under review and update GB before next meeting.

- (ii) **Footpath overgrown** at time of survey so users were walking on adjacent cultivated land, as the crop had been cut. As discussed above, landowner intends to cut the FP in next month or so.

Action: MK to keep an eye on usability of FP over next few months.

14 FP8 – Pathfield from West Town to Tin Pit Hill (GB and LF)

- (i) **Stile in mid-field very difficult to climb** from direction of Tin Pit Hill as the first step is too high. Need an extra bottom step.

Action: GB to raise issue with JQ as landowner then with DCC to seek funding. A grant bid for a new footpath gate may be the best approach given DCC antipathy to fixing stiles

- (ii) **Deep winter/spring mud** is a problem for access in the vicinity of the stile mentioned in (i) above. Walkers are already using an unofficial diversion. Drainage works are probably required.

Action: GB to contact JQ about the need for remedial work . if need be GB will then negotiate funding opportunities for drainage work with DCC, and to keep the landowner (John Quicke) informed of any approach and subsequent developments.

15 FP9 – Smallbrook to Hookway (SC)

- (i) **Steep slippery section** of path down to Hookway needs to be raised with Crediton Hamlets.

Action: GB to raise with Crediton Hamlets.

- (ii) **Undergrowth on narrow uphill section** alongside Quicke's field as path leaves Smallbrook Lane needs cutting back each summer at least once.

Action: GB to check DCC has FP9 on its maintenance schedule.

16 FP10 – Bidwell Lane (DS)

No Signage.

ACTION: Directional signage issue is covered under General Issues (2(ii) above).

17 FP11 – Bidwell Barton (DS)

No issues

18 FP12 – Ashfields (DS)

- (i) **Safety of children and dogs by river.** 50m section runs very close to the river and has no safety fencing, making it hazardous for footpath users. The landowner is John Dean. The issue should be raised with DCC and Ann Dean wants to be kept informed.

Action: GB to bid to DCC for stockproof fencing

- (ii) **Access to path from A377 dangerous.** No obvious mitigating measures.

ACTION See under 5 above

19 Permissive Path 1 – Marsh Lane West Town to Venny Cleave (Shutternbrook Valley)

(i) **Directional signage for Permissive Paths 1 and 2 is broken or missing at various points.** The PC purchased new discs and Liz Ouldrige gave them to John Quicke but these have not yet been installed. **Action:** GB to follow up on Permissive Paths signage with Liz Ouldrige.

UPDATE 26/10 JQ has delivered the PC's permissive path signage discs direct to GB. GB reckons we'll need another half dozen.

Actions:-

a)GB to order and pay for six more permissive path direction signs

b) GB to organise installation of all 12

(ii) **Spring bolt on field gate is very stiff.** GB has asked landowner (John Quicke) to remedy but no action to date.

Action: GB to raise issue of bolt with landowner John Quicke again.

- (iii) **Mud (Winter/Spring) in 2 main areas** – along old Marsh Lane, and higher up in Coombland Wood (in two places). The mud problem affecting both areas could be improved through remedial actions by community volunteers with agreement of

landowner. Some areas would benefit from having river stone spread upon it which could perhaps be brought in by wheelbarrow from the stream bed by local volunteers. Also blocked black plastic corrugated drainage conduits could be cleared relatively easily by volunteers.

Action: GB to discuss application of stone and unblocking of conduits with landowner John Quicke.

20 Permissive Path 2 – Tin Pit Hill to Field Gate W3W

Broken stile at entrance to path on Tin Pit Hill has been repaired by landowner (John Quicke). Thank you.

21 Leased Path – Sand Down Lane to Pump Street

Path needs resurfacing. Mr Jenner, developer of former school site agreed to do this. The PC's lease includes requirement to maintain this path.

Action: GB to raise the issue of resurfacing with Mr Jenner.

Next meeting – 10am on Monday 1st December 2025 at Gail's apartment.