

Boxford Parish Footpaths: Annual update for Parish Council AGM 26.04.25.

Footpaths.

Richard and I have walked the footpaths numerous times this year and in the main they are in a good state of repair. Suffolk County Council (SCC) have replaced 1 finger post and introduced a new way post. We have recently reported 3 new faults on the SCC highways reporting tool, and during the year we also cleared vegetation from a number of signs to improve visibility and a number of styles to improve access.

The first cut of the grass last year was erratically completed by the SCC contractor who finally completed 6 weeks late but only following constant monitoring and liaison with Kevin Verlander, the Area Rights of Way officer for SCC, that it was finally cut and recut to our satisfaction. The lateness of the cut was compounded by a wet spring which meant considerable growth which made walking the paths difficult in June and July and rightly resulted in several complaints. The second cut was never completed. Such was the performance of the contractor, not only with Boxford Parish but also with other Parishes in Suffolk, that SCC has terminated the contract and has appointed a new contractor for this year. We are hoping for an improved performance this year but we will be monitoring the first cut performance closely till we are sure all is well. First cut is normally completed by 17th June but it the contractor who decides the order of cuts around the parishes so we will monitor every 2 weeks or so starting in May.

For information SCC contracts for grass cutting for about 40% of Suffolks footpaths (mainly bridleways and the well used footpaths), 20% often don't need cutting and 40% are not cut as they are less used by walkers and are not deemed a priority for cutting. Many of these footpaths are kindly cut by landowners and for that we are grateful.

We also dealt with complaints about overgrown hedge rows on bridleway B10 (Brook Hall Estate) which was quickly resolved when the Parish Council circulated a letter reminding relevant homeowners of their responsibility to maintain their hedges to ensure enough access for a horse and rider on the bridleway.

Richard Gates, Jono West
Boxford Footpath Wardens