

Boxford Parish Footpaths: Annual update for Parish Council AGM 28.04.26.

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) contractors have repaired a rail on a footpath bridge over the River Box in Stone Street, on Footpath B20, and have replaced sleepers in the drain at the junction of Footpath B23 and the A1071 (Roylands Lane), and updated 2 new way posts on the Bridleway B10. We have recently reported 2 new faults on the SCC highways reporting tool and re reported one from last year that has yet to be fixed. 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 completed by the new SCC contractor in June, with only 3 queries raised where the job was not to our satisfaction. Kevin Verlander, the Area Rights of Way officer for SCC investigated and this resulted in a re cut on Bridleway B10 and on the footpaths B9 and B16. Once again, we didn't find any evidence of a second cut but access to footpaths remained good as the dry weather through late summer didn't promote much growth.

First cut is normally completed by 17^h June but it's the contractor who decides the order of cuts around the parishes so we will monitor every 2 weeks or so starting in May. We have also confirmed that B18, (above the water works), remains on the cutting list as Boxford Farms have recently fenced off the field beside the footpath.

For information SCC contracts for grass cutting for about 40% of Suffolks footpaths (mainly bridleways and 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.

Once again, we also dealt with complaints about overgrown hedge rows on bridleway B10 (Brook Hall Estate). Every relevant householder has been hand delivered a letter, (in January), reminding them of their responsibilities to maintain their hedges to ensure enough access for walkers and horse and rider on the bridleway. This was delivered by Callum Leslie, who is the new SCC Area Rights of Way Officer, replacing Kevin Verlander after many sterling years of support to local Footpath Volunteers.

There remains an outstanding complaint about access for horse riders on the Bridleway B10 due to low hanging branches. Upon further discussion with Callum Leslie, he has advised that the official nesting season is from the 1st of March to the 1st of September and he will review the situation and take any necessary action in September. Callum has kindly offered to contact the complainant directly and I have forwarded his email address.

Licensed path between Brook Hall Road and Fen Street off Cox Hill

At the end of February Callum Leslie met with members of the Parish Council and I, to discuss the deterioration of the fence on the licenced path off Cox Hill between Brook Hall Road and Fen Street. He agreed to review the maintenance request. Callum recently sent through an update to confirm that he had requested and received quotes for the remedial works required, including separate costings for surface improvements, and is meeting with the licensed landowner shortly to agree fencing options with a view of starting works in May.

Jono West, Richard Gates
Boxford Footpath Volunteer Wardens