

NWPC AGM MAY 2024 – REPORT BY RIGHTS OF WAY OFFICER

Iain James reassumed the role of NWPC RoW officer in Jun 23. He is also currently a Hampshire County Council RoW Volunteer, although he only works in the NWPC area. Throughout his tenure, he has enjoyed a good working relationship with the HCC Access Team

The first months of the period were focused on clearing down problems on HCC “Report a Problem” webpage. Much time was spent investigating and feeding back information to HCC on a multitude of reports, many of which, sadly, proved to be spurious, pedantic, or fundamentally incorrect. These seem to appear in bulk at regular intervals, and whilst HCC is apparently aware of the identity of the reporter, each one has to be separately checked and closed down.

On practical work, the RoW officer has committed between 5 and 15 hours per month improving and maintaining access across our network of twenty three RoW. Much of the effort went on surface strimming and cutting back side growth supported by our Lengthsman, with the focus primarily on the footpaths around the Village. The annual HCC contractor cut took place in early summer and covered mainly four major Restricted Byways between B3084/Hollom Down Road/A30.

Significant improvements have been made to waymarking both through replacement or addition of marker discs and fingerboards across the Parish by both HCC Access Team and the NWPC volunteer. Sadly some newly installed RB markers on a Restricted Byway adjacent to Phipson’s Garage off the A343 were removed by persons unknown with days; it is likely that HCC will now install a more substantial fingerboard and post at this point.

Minor improvements have been made to a number of existing stiles to improve safety and ease of crossing.

Our Lengthsman budget of £1000 was fully expended this year on both RoW clearance, sightline junction clearance, and highway drain clearing tasks on Farley Street, Heathman Street, and Bent Street. Early work on drain clearance, carried out in the autumn, proved effective, as whilst village suffered from groundwater flooding in late winter/spring, surface water on the Village roads was better than in previous years..

The Village volunteer “chainsaw team” rapidly assisted with several fallen trees that had blocked paths this year for which they must be thanked.

An approach to the Justice Department to use “Unpaid Labour” to clear a Restricted Byway near Lopcombe Corner seemed to be gaining traction last year, but has so far not been delivered.

The Village “Womble” group, under the TVBC “Love Where You Live” Scheme has carried out litter sweeps on roads both around the Village and on the road leading out to the A30 and B3084.