

Access Improvements to FP30

At its July meeting the clerk reported to the parish council that a local landowner, Mr Graham Simister, was looking into further improvements to Footpath 30 from the end of Duddery across Hole Farm, (excerpt below):

I put sheep fencing up on one side of the stream across the first field a couple of years ago to protect the stream side and will be fencing off the other side late this year. The farm has been in various environmental schemes for decades and there are now records of 107 species of birds and I believe others. The work being undertaken is to keep improving it. I am considering upgrading the footpath by replacing two stiles with pedestrian gates which will allow access for more users who can't get over the stiles. I am also looking at the brick-built bridge crossing the stream near the road. It would be much better with parapets to stop people falling into the stream and further protect the streamside areas.

I am in contact with the rights of way officer, Mark Lennon and with Anna Booth at the Archaeology Service about the bridge and was also hoping to apply for some sort of capital grant assistance from the RPA, (but they have just put off opening their SFI26 Capital grants scheme just before opening it).

Some years ago the parish clerk of the time asked if I needed any help with maintaining the footpath as there was apparently some fund that could be accessed. I wonder if there still is. The work, especially the bridge, may be expensive and, whilst I don't mind contributing to the work, some funding may allow the work to be done to a higher standard rather than at the lowest cost.

A plan of the footpaths in this vicinity is shown below:



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The clerk met with Mr Simister on 17th August to understand more clearly his plans for the improvements. Images are attached at **Appendix A**.

Suffolk County Council Public Rights of Way (PRoW) will be supplying two accessible gates to replace the existing stiles. Mr Simister would ideally like to pull together a pot of grants which would defray some of the cost to installing parapets to the bridge over the stream and improve safety.



The clerk had been looking with PRoW at establishing a circular walk using:

- Byeway 31 (Coltsfoot Green to Australia Farm)
- Bridleway 32
- Footpath 30
- Duddery Lane
- Footpath 23
- Footpath 24 back to Coltsfoot Green

As part of this, the surface and drainage to Byeway 31 was improved this spring with thanks to PRoW and grant funding from SC Cllr Bobby Bennett.

If feasible, ideally the installation of drop down bins in the vicinity of the junction of Byeway 31 and Bridleway 32, and the junction of Footpath 23 and Duddery Lane, may also reduce an ongoing issue with dog fouling and the littering of dog waste bags along the public footpaths and bridleways.

The parish council sets aside funds each year for contributions to the upgrade of footpaths and byeways (£500), which it could consider allocating towards the proposed improvement to the footbridge.

As mentioned by Mr Simister, the farm is active in promoting environmental schemes which protect wildlife and improve biodiversity. The parish council's Neighbourhood Plan sets out a number of Community Actions and policies which this proposal would contribute towards:

Community Action 2 – Wildlife and Conservation

The Parish Council will work with the Wickhambrook Estates Committee and interested members of the community in order to sustain and improve the natural environment in and around the village. Actions to be considered will include:

- conserving trees and hedgerows, initially by carrying out an audit of assets,
- protecting green spaces and woodlands for undisturbed conservation purposes and enhancing their value for wildlife,
- working with landowners to promote take-up of stewardship schemes, including:
 - a) opening up permissive paths where public access is agreed,
 - b) fostering wildflower mixes on field margins, and
 - c) promoting biodiversity by establishing wild areas, wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors around the Parish.

Community Action 3 – Historic Assets

The Parish Council will set up and maintain a sub-group co-ordinate actions to conserve and protect the historic assets of the parish. These should include notable listed and non-listed buildings, the outlying Greens and outlying hamlets and other cherished features of our environment both within and beyond the settlement boundary. Local features noted by village residents in their household survey to be of particular importance to village residents, and therefore in need of protection, include:

- old houses, historic buildings, history and heritage, including the churches and chapels
- Wickhambrook's ancient pattern of outlying village Greens, green spaces and neighbourhoods, both within the settlement area and in the outlying and hamlets.

The Parish Council will ensure that this work involves discussions and consultation with property owners and village residents so that historic assets may be enjoyed for their contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the various neighbourhoods and exist for future generations.

The bridge is old (although it is not known how old)

Community Action 7 – Footpaths and Bridleways

The Parish Council will take actions to maintain, extend and enhance the network of safe and waymarked footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes around Wickhambrook. The Parish Council will also seek to work with Suffolk County Council, the County Highways Department, landowners and neighbouring Parish Councils to extend this network further afield in order to develop safe off-road connections with settlements such as Ousden, Lidgate, Cowlinge, Stradishall, Denston, Depden and Hargrave.

Policy WHB 17 - Public Rights of Way

Measures to improve and extend the existing network of public rights of way will be supported where their value as biodiversity corridors is safeguarded and any public right of way extension is fit for purpose. Where practicable, development proposals should incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity within the improved or extended public right of way.

At this stage, the land owner is asking the parish council to be open to how it might support the proposed improvements.

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Appendix A



Figure.7_ Stile.onto.road.from.FP96



Figure.8_ View.of.bridge



Figure.9_ Edge.of.bridge



Figure.10_ Stile.onto.FP96



Figure.11_ FP96.looking.north