

Wingham Parish Council

Annual Report on the footpaths of Wingham Parish for 2022/2023

From the Wingham Foot Path Group (WFPG) acting as Parish Footpath Warden.

Introduction – This is the sixth annual report since WFPG was appointed as the collective warden for the Parish.

Activities – There are 30 footpaths lying wholly in or crossing the Parish boundaries. All the paths have been walked at least twice during the year and records maintained. We have responded to concerns raised by members of the public and/or passed on by the Parish Clerk. Where necessary, reports have been made to the Kent County Council (KCC) Public Rights of Way (PROW) team. There are several missing ‘finger’ posts for example.

Results – As usual all our footpaths have been much used this year, and KCC PROW teams have slowly increased their remedial work. They respond to health and safety issues, and more contract annual clearances have been carried out than in the previous year. It is very good to report that the coppicing at Wenderton (path EE170) is recovering and has meant that regularly falling trees are no longer a problem and the bluebells are likely to be even more spectacular!

Important Issues still to be dealt with – Path 101 – at the south end where the path emerges on to Goodnestone Road/Crockshard Lane there is a perennial problem with the leaning and wobbly gate which is secured by various twists of rope. As there is (in winter anyway) a quagmire behind the gate, walkers need to make a hazardous choice to attempt to climb the gate or use the private farm drive.

Again, we reported last year what we consider is a safety issue. Path EE48 from the School passes along the side of the Cemetery. It exits onto Adisham Road via steps and behind a hedge with no railing or barrier or warning and there is no pavement on the road here. The ever-increasing number of trucks and cars are only just beginning to slow down as they enter the village at this point. By comparison, the much-used path EE45 from School Lane to Adisham Road has half barriers, exits onto a pavement where there are also pedestrian crossing beacons. Members of the WFPG are concerned that this situation is an accident waiting to happen.

Applications to amend the Definitive Map – The Parish Council was invited by KCC to comment on two applications, based on historical records, for re-opening or upgrading ‘routes’ which border Wingham and Goodnestone Parishes. The Parish Clerk passed the consultation documents to the Wingham Footpath Group which has responded to KCC in favour of the claims.

Comments – Wingham is fortunate to have such an excellent network of generally well-maintained footpaths. It is particularly useful that the Parish Clerk has a good relationship with the East Kent leader of the PROW team and can and does apply extra pressure when urgent.

Members of the Wingham Foot Path Group who have covered the Wingham footpaths: Kevin Fletcher, Marcus and Michelle Benton, Dennis Liman, Cally and Mike Vaile. Denise Lyons and Roger Lawrence have retired after many years’ service. It is good to report that they have been replaced by Mike and Vivien Leeming.

NB. WFPG members might well carry small secateurs with them, and cloths or marker pens to clarify signage, but we do not conduct any other repairs or clearances.