

Otterton Footpath and Rights of Way Report for Mid Winter 2021

General

1. The recent lockdown has seen a dramatic reduction in footfall on our footpaths and rights of way. Quite a relief!
2. Before Christmas we had an unseasonably high number of visitors causing car parking problems. A small but significant number of visitors were not socially distancing and unaware of the countryside code.
3. Devon County Council has been very active in our Parish over the last 2 months and this has made a considerable difference. Many thanks to Sam Jeffcoat and his team. See below for more details.
4. As can be expected at this time of year many of the PROW were very muddy in December but have dried up considerably due to the recent drier weather.

Major Issues

5. Devon County Council recent works;
 - a. Chockenhole Lane (track 305) was badly flooded over last winter. The drainage grip has been re-established resulting in the path being passable even in wet conditions.
 - b. Vegetation has been cut back and low spots filled with granular material along the first half of Chokenhole Lane (track 305), Little Chockenhole Lane (track 306) and Holestone Lane (track 303). Access is now a whole lot easier.
 - c. The steps to Clamour Bridge (5) have been repaired. This has been the single most commented on issue along the Parish footpaths over the past year.
 - d. Vegetation along the River Otter footpath (1) and Colliver Lane (track 3) has been cut back making social distancing a lot easier.
 - e. There may well have been many other repairs carried out – apologies for not listing/spotting them all.
6. River Otter footpath 1
 - a. The Lower Otter Restoration Project has been given planning permission. There will be some short term issues affecting the footpath but in the longer term the footpath's future should be more certain.
 - b. The project is setting up a liaison group.
 - c. There was a cavity found in the river bank just north of White Bridge which the EA filled just before Christmas.
 - d. The river bank just north of Clamour bridge has been breached during flooding, making access difficult during wetter periods.

Minor Issues

7. The broken gate post to Watering Lane has not yet been repaired (DCC). This will be done along with continuation of the works above.
8. The handrail to the short section of steps along the middle of Lower Ladram Lane (track 312) needs attention – DCC has it in hand.

9. More of the new World War 1 footpath waymark and finger posts have been placed. There are 3 left to be positioned. Two new World War 2 finger posts have been ordered (Burnthouse Farm (16) and the Village Green (15)).
10. One of the new WW1 posts was damaged at the top of Watering Lane (permitted footpath) during hedge trimming. CDE have asked Greendale to repair / replace. This has not happened.
11. A short post along the permitted footpath at the bottom of the Mutters Moor plantation was knocked over during maintenance. CDE have re-erected it.
12. The gate post to footpath off Ladram Road (13) leading to Bredon Lane is wobbly, probably rotten. DCC have a repair in hand.
13. There continues to be the occasional cyclists using the Coastal Footpath. I do speak to them when I get the chance but they only walk their bikes until they think I cannot see them.
14. The broken finger post at the top of Bar's Lane has been repaired.

Trees

15. The Parish Council is responsible for Stantyway playing field. There are a considerable number of Ash trees there and some have started to suffer from Ash Dieback which has affected the whole county. It is likely most or all of them will have to be removed or reduced in height in the near future.
16. Five Ash trees were identified as being in a critical state and four of them have been cut down by Toby Taylor. He has done a very tidy job. The smaller brush is left in habitat piles in hedges for the local wildlife. The branches have been cut up into lengths. When the trees are felled Otterton residents can help themselves to any cut wood for personal use only.
17. A cherry tree had also to be removed as it was rotten, leaning badly and considered a danger.

Iain Ure 20th January 2021

Otterton Volunteer Footpath and Tree Warden