

Alderbury Countryside Circular Footpath Report: September 2024

Footpath Maintenance Plans for 2025

My comments and recommendations for delivery of footpath maintenance work next year follow:

Background

I've led the team of footpath volunteers for 10 years now and feel it's time to stand back and consider succession planning. My health is also a factor in this decision.

I've managed to get landowners on board so now Witherington Farm cut the path on the far side (DOWN30) and Tim Leech's brother manages the path between the crops over the large field (ALDE13). Rectory Farm have also been helpful with eg removing fallen trees and a stile repair (ALDE17). Consequently, along with the team's ongoing historical cutbacks/tidying, the extent of volunteer circular footpath work has receded.

Volunteers who've left over the last couple of years having offered much long-term support are Robin Wotton, Andrzej Zieleniewski, George Petty and Patricia Dashwood - so the fewer number of volunteers now available is 'timely' and manageable given current demands.

Volunteers for 2025

Mike Sneddon: The main recent positive development is Mike's involvement - an extremely enthusiastic volunteer and able to cut the necessary footpath sections regularly with his own large mulching lawnmower and other PC equipment – listed below.

I propose he becomes the main footpath maintenance person. He'd have relevant equipment owned by the council ie strimmer, helmet and rucksack including secateurs, petrol container, spare strimmer head with wire & first aid kit and two 'Caution: Work in Progress' public warning signs. He'd keep the equipment at his own place. He's also responded to Liz Holland's request – ref 13/9/24 emails - to take personal responsibility for any work he does that's not been formally agreed by the PC (ie anything beyond the formal countryside circular footpath duties).

He always tends to deliver a large amount of maintenance work when it suits him, which is quite regularly and especially so since he's retired, so there remain overall communication issues that would need managing in a team context. Mike has maintained very effective communication links with me, letting me know where he's been working along with a series of 'before and after' photos. His email communications could be sent by him to the rest of the team which would keep everyone informed.

Alistair Johnston – very supportive – he uses his own strimmer equipment and helmet. He'd need a rucksack provided containing contents described above which is already available. He could keep the rucksack equipment at his own house.

Geoff Biggs: always pleased to help when he's available.

New Volunteers: new people are always welcomed eg Robert Eggar, who's recently offered support should we need it. Current volunteers would willingly train any new recruits effectively – it's been suggested it's not necessary for them to attend a training course at PC expense.

I would initially act as mentor/overseer to ensure the changeover worked effectively.

Phil Spooner