

Whitstone Footpaths

Report for Annual Parish Meeting, 9th April 2014

The overall condition of our footpaths has been improved somewhat over the last year due to selective cutting of surface vegetation on some paths and particularly around some of the stiles and gateways which tend to get overgrown in the summer. This has been possible because the Parish Council have entered into a Local Maintenance Partnership with Cornwall Council whereby the Parish Council contract out the work in return for a payment from Cornwall Council. This means that the Council Tax payers of Whitstone are now getting back something for the Council Tax they pay for this purpose, which hasn't happened for a number of years.

I can only assume that, over the past years, the portion of Council Tax we have been paying for this purpose has been spent in other parishes! We intend to continue with this arrangement and do as much maintenance as the budget will allow.

We still have several issues on some paths which have been reported to Cornwall Council, some of which have been passed to their enforcement team. Some areas of the footpath network are not legally walkable at the moment and these areas cannot be inspected for problems. They say they will progress these issues when resources are available but tell us that that there has been little progress this year due to budget cuts and the recent workload to repair damage to the Southwest Coast Path, which will swallow most of the budget. The Parish Council will continue to press them to resolve these issues, to carry out their legal responsibilities and to share the budget more equally.

I have been given permission to put some waymark signs on the footpaths, especially where the route of the Public Right of Way is not clear. I have completed much of this work but if there are any places where you think a waymark sign would be helpful please contact me.

I have had a meeting with the footpath coordinators for Week St Mary and Jacobstow where we have discussed possibilities for joining up the footpath network a bit more so that there are longer distance, and more circular, walks in the area. As part of that process I have been having discussions with the Forestry Commission with the intention of clearing some of the old overgrown paths in Swannacott Wood to enable a route from Whitstone to Week St Mary. This will require a short distance of new path, which will need to be negotiated, and will also make a couple of short circular routes possible within the woods. The Forestry Commission have been very

cooperative so far and I will be meeting with their manager when he is visiting to discuss what can be done.

A comprehensive survey of our footpaths was carried out in 2012 and is available to read on the village website at <http://www.whitstonevillage.com/footpaths.htm> ,it is intended that a similar survey will be carried out this year.

The Parish Council has received only one report from parishioners of an issue with a footpath in the last year which concerned roadside barriers being abandoned on one of our footpaths by Cornwall Council contractors. This was reported to them and they were quickly removed. If you spot any other problems on the footpaths please inform the Parish Council or contact me directly, we can only try to resolve issues if we know about them.

Mike Sutton (WPC Portfolio Holder – Footpaths)

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