

FP Officers Report June 24

Our recent bid for PROW improvement funding from Herefordshire Council is now in their hands. The closing date for applications is 1st July and thereafter successful applicants will be notified as to what funding will be available. Given that any monies granted must be spent before the end of this financial year, and it will by then be well into July, we will need to act quickly thereafter.

As part of my efforts to raise awareness of our PROW I will attend the Families Event on the Millenium Green on Saturday, 29th June with an information board. I also intend to install a leaflet holder in the telephone box, along with the books, which I will keep stocked with maps of our footpaths for those who wish to take one.

The walk I organised this month was a five-mile stroll to Ledicot and back, outwards along the unclassified roads and back via the orchards and KL28 through Luctonians to our start point at the 'phone box. It was very easy going until, sadly, we got back to the parish boundary at Hereford Lane and then it was a fight across overgrown damaged stiles and waist deep growth across fields. Hopefully the aforementioned grant will improve the deplorable state of the stiles which will in turn motivate the landowners to play their part, and meet their legal obligations, in keeping the paths clear.

Apart from clearing growth denying access around several of our stiles on this walk, I have also cleared brambles and nettles, from around kissing gates on some of our most walked paths, making access easier. I also cleared a substantial branch that had fallen across the path to Pinsley Bridge, which itself has recently had a missing plank replaced.

This brings me to my request that the Parish Council purchase a suitable strimmer to keep our more central paths clear. As mentioned in my last report, our busy contractor has struggled to clear paths as quickly as we would have liked; having easy access to strimmer would help to alleviate this problem when our contractor is unable to do so. A few cuts in quick succession, a service our contractor is unfortunately unable to provide, will have a far greater effect than one cut every couple of months, particularly during peak growing season.

Having researched various models, I would recommend the Cobra BC350KB as being suitably robust, sufficiently powerful, acceptably economical and which comes with both the standard strimming cord and a cutting blade. The cost would be £380 which includes accessories, delivery, a tank of fuel and one on one usage instruction. Delivery time is 3-4 days. As previously mentioned, I already have suitable items of protective clothing and am an experienced user. Should purchase be approved, in keeping with best practice, a risk assessment will be produced.