

FP Officers Report Jan 25

First some good news. The FP grant scheme deadline has been extended until the end of June. The extra few months are very welcome given what follows later in this report.

It will be recalled that I have previously commented on the Parish FPO documentation distributed by Herefordshire Council (HC), which aimed to put in place a contract between Parish FPO and HC. In essence I said it was nothing to concern ourselves with at this stage as it will likely be revised and re-issued. This has now been confirmed, and it will reappear in amended form in the next FY.

There was no organised walk in December but, in preparation for the first of this year, which is this coming Saturday, I have re-sent the Risk assessment for the event to all those on my mailing list.

I have continued to engage with landowners about PROW improvements, again with varying success.

Two of the smaller landowners, after initially talking with me are now not responding at all to my efforts to engage further. One landowner thinks that the stiles I would like to improve are in good order and do not need upgrading – in my opinion they are not, and they do. I have passed this issue to Herefordshire Council to resolve.

Unfortunately, the lack of any timely response from HC PROW team in general has continued.

In the second week of Oct, I spoke with the Volunteer Development Officer at HC, in connection with the footbridge across blue ditch to the East of Kingsland. I was told that the long-awaited repair may go out to tender. I also requested assistance with identifying those landowners I had been unable to locate despite my best efforts. I followed up this conversation with an email on the 14th Oct. I did not receive a reply.

I sent a further email on the 29th Oct asking for an update on the tender being placed for the downed footbridge so I could update Councillors. I also enquired as to any progress on identifying landowners. I was told I could not be given any landowner contact details due to GDPR, so I asked that my contact details be passed to the relevant landowners in the hope of making progress. At this time, I also enquired what the process was for obtaining the grant funded FP furniture from HC. I received no reply.

I wrote again on the 21st Nov asking the same question. I received no reply.

On 3rd Dec I wrote yet again reprising my previous emails and questions. I received no reply.

On 15th Dec, which was a Sunday, I wrote again expressing my frustration at the lack of any helpful response. I was flabbergasted to get a reply back within 15 minutes. I was told that my, by now very long email chain, had been forward to the relevant person. I have yet to hear from him or anyone else.

Given that HC are the statutory body complete with a paid workforce responsible for FPs, and I am merely an unpaid volunteer, I was going to ask if the PC might write to the head of Highways at HC, to bring this lack of a timely response to his attention or submit a formal complaint.

However, just this evening, our Ward Councillor forwarded to me a copy of an email containing many of the answers I sought. He also informed me that a new position on the PROW team, at a higher level than those I have previously engaged with, has been filled. I have his contact details and will engage with him directly as soon as I am able.