

FP Officers Report Jul 25

Councillors will not need reminding that a theme I return to fairly often is that 'everything' takes longer to achieve than I would personally like. Perhaps I'm just far too impatient for my own good!

Having reported at our last meeting that we had taken delivery of eight new gates for our PROW, and that the intent was to install them as soon as practicable, after another month only two have been installed – both on KL27 going East from Lugg Green Road.

As always, despite my wish to get everything done 'yesterday', there are real life reasons as to why the others have yet to be placed. One such issue is a sunken path at one of the gate sites; during periods of heavy rain it floods quite badly, making it pointless to install a gate at this location until a remedy can be found. I have engaged with all those concerned, such as the landowner, our Lengthsman and Herefordshire Council, and hope to come up with a workable solution soon.

I rarely mention the fact that each month, given that I publish my FPO email address widely, I get a number of posts from those interested in our PROW. As one would expect, they range in nature from *'thank you for strimming'*, through *'the new gates are great when are we getting more'* and on to *'the public rights of way are in a despicable state, the parish council are a waste of time and money'* which, by implication, probably means me.

Obviously we cannot take credit for the good points without taking it on the chin for the bad, but I am reluctant to take all the blame for issues beyond our control. By far the greatest number of negative observations that come my way concern the fact that many paths are impassable due to crops; and the fact that in many cases there is not an alternative route around the edge of the field.

I would never tar all landowners with the same brush; it would be unfair and counterproductive to do so. But farmers should all know that, after planting, public rights of way should be reinstated within 14 days by law. A number of those responsible for doing so consistently do not.

I am though, happy to point the finger more vigorously at Herefordshire Council for a consistent lack of action when it comes to reminding transgressors of their responsibilities. Next year, whenever I get a complaint of this nature, verbally or in writing, and I certainly will, I will forward the complaints to them for further action.

Finally, along with a volunteer parishioner armed with a pair of sheers, I recently stunted several hundred metres of head high nettles and associated wild growth, from Waterloo Mill towards Cholstrey. We also tidied a few of the less overgrown paths in the parish. I will not be facilitating a footpath officers walk in August; the next will be in September.