

## Footpath update 25.01.2023 by Councillor Lidia Long (LL)

### Summary of the meeting with Heather Waller, KCC East Kent Area Officer – Public Rights of Way & Access Service

On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023, Councillor Lidia Long (LL) met with Heather Waller (HW) our KCC East Kent Area Officer – Public Rights of Way & Access Service to discuss the best way forward of managing any footpath obstructions in the Parish, e.g. falling trees following extreme weather, etc. Although issues like fallen trees have been reported by the Parish to KCC online, KCC has a backlog which is not manageable at the moment. For Goodnestone Parish, there are currently **27 open footpath issues** (see [Appendix A](#) – “Issue Inventory Report”) and KCC is still clearing Storm Eunice backlog. HW confirmed that KCC has no budget for removing trees, which emphasises the need for the Parish to come up with our own process to ensure swift resolution. We also discussed the general management and maintenance of Footpaths and how we can best work together in future. We also agreed that the Modification Orders sent by Mr Craddock on behalf of the British Horse Society are unreasonable and unnecessary and the KCC will fully support our objections. We both thought that the meeting was fruitful and look forward to a close cooperation in future.

### Fallen trees clearance – the way forward

HW reiterated that the responsibility for clearing the footpath lies with the land owner and they should remove the trees in the first place. However, there is currently no consolidated map which combines footpaths and land ownership. So, for footpaths where we are uncertain who the responsible owner is, the only way to check it would be through Land Registry or by contacting HW (not scalable). Trying to manually map the landowners with the footpaths would be too much effort for KCC as it would require someone to physically check each footpath on the Land Registry and would probably take few days for which KCC do not have the resources. This is a UK wide opportunity for innovation though, and perhaps should be raised by KCC senior leadership in the correct forum. HW suggested that the Parish look into opening an account with Land Registry for that. KCC use a business version –

[https://eservices.landregistry.gov.uk/eservices/ECHOM\\_HomepageServices](https://eservices.landregistry.gov.uk/eservices/ECHOM_HomepageServices),

Same should be applicable for the Parish, if we wanted to open an account. The annual cost would be TBC, however from what I’ve gathered we would need a service called SIM (Official search of the index map) which would be £4 for 5 titles and £2 for 10 thereafter, and so £6 for 15 titles. Is the Parish Council in favour of exploring this?

**Action for the Parish Council:** Decide if we want to explore purchasing access to the Land Registry / setting up a Business account.

### The process ([Appendix C](#))

HW and LL agreed that the Parish Footpath Officer will be the “eyes” on the ground, and in first instance the Foot Path Officer will contact the respective land

owner asking for action to remove the obstruction. If the landowner is unknown or unresponsive, LL will contact HW with photos of the obstruction asking to contact the land owner on our behalf. If the land / Footpath is municipal, LL or HW will reach out to the network of volunteers to see if they can help remove it.

We will also continue to report the issues online for overview:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/environment-waste-and-planning/public-rights-of-way/report-a-problem-on-a-right-of-way>

The group of local volunteers are called **The Ramblers**, and HW has passed LL contact details to establish a relationship with them for future jobs required in the Parish. The coordinator of Ramblers is looking to set up a system where the Ramblers can be KCCs eyes and ears, report directly to HW with photos locations etc. which is exactly what we are trying to achieve. HW is confident that between us and them there may be more volunteers to utilise and once the relationship is established we could train some local volunteers as well. In addition to The Ramblers, there is another group of KCC volunteers so if there are any clearance jobs of vegetation and very small trees that have already fallen and obstructing a footpath, LL will pass location maps and details (including pictures) over to HW, and she will check if they can clear outside of the normal clearance contract.

**Action:** LL to set up a meeting with the Ramblers coordinator, awaiting dates from the project leader.

### KCC Vegetation Clearance contracts

Currently, there are **only 2 paths** on the KCC vegetation maintenance/clearance schedule in the Parish: **EE269 is cut for 1550 meters** from Bonnington Road / Love Lane to Cave Lane and **EE271B a very small section of 79 meters** which crosses Station Road through a tree line. LL agreed with HW that if there are any paths that are constantly horrendously overgrown, LL will ask Heather to add them to the summer contract. However, as HW will need to inspect them before they are added to the contract, we should really only ask for “the worst of the worst”.

**Action for KCC:** LL requested EE261A to be added to the maintenance contract as it tends to be overgrown with nettles etc. early spring each year. ([Appendix B](#))

### Actions for the Parish Council:

- 1) LL to ask Parishioners if there are any other footpaths that require urgent attention. Suggested channel: Facebook and Whatsapp Group. - ask the Chair for permission to issue the communication.
- 2) In the same communication LL will ask if anyone would like to become a volunteer locally - Chair to approve

### Issue backlog – the way forward

HW provided the list of all issues that have been raised in the Parish and are still open. LL and HW agreed that LL will take ownership of checking all the open issues and reporting back to HW on the status so they can be closed or actioned accordingly. The oldest open issue is dated 4<sup>th</sup> November 2011, Path Obstruction / Fence on EE268 (Footpath from Goodnestone to Muddy Bush Corner).

## Actions for the Parish Council:

- 1) LL to ask Parishioners if anyone would like to help with the task – ask the Chair for permission to issue the communication on social media and WhatsApp.

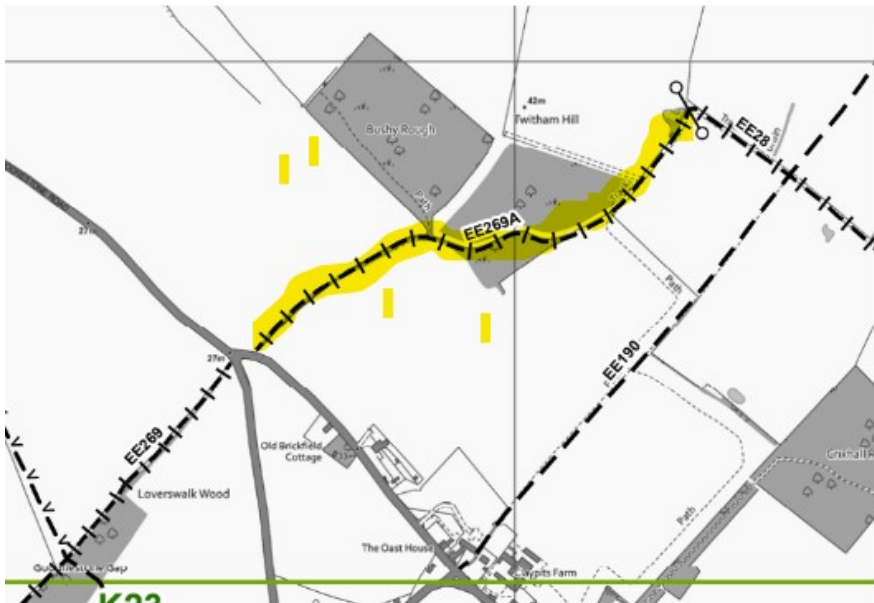
## Appendices

### Appendix A – Issue inventory Report



Goodnestone Open  
Issues.pdf

### Appendix B – LL request to add EE269A to the KCC vegetation maintenance contracts.



### Appendix C – Footpath Clearance Process – Draft

