

Appendix A

REPORT OF MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
OF LONGDON PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE W. I. HALL, LONGDON, ON
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH, 2010

Present: Cllr. Mrs. G. D. Duckett (Chairman); Cllr. N. J. Bird; Cllr. B. J. Butler;
Cllr. R. A. G. Clarke; Cllr. Mrs. H. A. Meere; and Mr. Will Rose.

Also present was the Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES

All members of the Committee were present.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Thursday, January 7th, 2009, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Clarke and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Duckett, approved and signed.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No member of the public was present.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Footpath No. 73

The Chairman reported that the Clerk had written to John Tradewell, Director of Law and Governance, Staffordshire County, informing him that the Parish Council would make an application to the Secretary of State for the Environment asking him to issue a Direction to the Authority to determine the application for a Definitive Map Modification Order in relation to the above footpath unless the Council heard from Mr. Tradewell that the application would receive priority status from the County Council.

(ii) Ditches in Stockings Lane

It was noted that work on re-instating these ditches seemed to have been suspended, and there was a fear that continued delay would result in a further deterioration.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Mr. Rayson, asking him to re-activate this work as soon as possible and also to carry out the road improvements promised in School Lane, Gentleshaw.

It was further agreed that Mr. Rayson's attention should also be drawn to a recurring problem of flooding in Horsey Lane, close to the Grand Lodge, where water was flowing from the field onto the road after heavy rain.

5. EXTENSION THROUGH CHURCHYARD OF FOOTPATH ACROSS GLEBE FIELD

The Committee heard that the new footpath had been well received by parishioners attending church services, and there had even been a suggestion that it be blessed.

It was agreed that the Vicar should be asked to carry out such a ceremony.

It was acknowledged that, to complete the project, there was a need for wheelchair-friendly gates at either end of the footpath across the Glebe Field, and Mr. Rose said that he would raise the matter with the County Access Officer, whom he would be meeting shortly.

6. FOOTPATH NO. 73 AND BRIDGE OVER SHROPSHIRE BROOK

Cllr. Mrs. Duckett reported that the contractor expected to commence work, until now delayed by recent heavy snowfall, the following week and had estimated that it would take four or five days to complete.

The Clerk added that he had informed the Environment Agency of the Parish Council's intention to proceed with this work but had received no response.

7. NOTICE-BOARD AT UPPER WAY

Work on erecting this notice-board had begun but had met with opposition from the householder at No. 71 Upper Way, who had objected to its being positioned on the verge eight feet from her hedge.

The Clerk added that he too had received a phone call from Mrs. Tonks, whom he had reminded that the notice-board would be standing on the highway verge, not within the curtilage of her house, and he had cautioned her against getting her husband to remove the posts, as she threatened to do, pointing out that it would mean damaging Parish Council property.

She had subsequently lodged an objection with the Planning Authority, claiming that it would obscure the vision of anyone driving out of the house, a claim which met with some surprise, since the profile of a notice-board was not expected to offer the same obstruction as the two cars presently being park end-to-end on the verge outside.

The Clerk reported that he had exchanged emails with Chris Hibbs, the District Council's Enforcement Officer, and he believed that the complaint was not likely to be upheld.

It had been noted that cars were now being parked on the other side of the notice-board, and it was agreed that further measures needed to be taken to protect the highway verge.

The Chairman reported that the contractor was unable to provide a name-board, so another craftsman would have to be found.

8. RIGHTS OF WAY SURVEY

Mr. Rose gave a report on action taken following the submission of complaints to the County Council's Rights of Way team:

Footpath No. 48 (Borough Lane)

Electric fencing was a potential obstruction but was probably inactive.

Bridleway No.64 (Dark Lane)

The official line of this footpath took walkers up a steep bank which would need steps to scale.

The site had been visited by Paul Rochfort, Principal Rights of Way Officer, Staffordshire County Council, who had suggested that, for safety's sake, it might be best to encourage to follow Footpath 44, which would re-connect them with Footpath 64.

Footpath No. 72 (Brook End)

This footpath had been reported as overgrown, and some clearance had subsequently taken place.

In addition, the stile had been repaired.

However, more clearance work was needed pending spring growth.

Footpath No. 42 (Stonywell Lane)

The Clerk further reported that he had received from Dominic Willmore, Rights of Way Assistant, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated, a letter dated 17th February 2010, informing the Council that the County Works Unit had mended one stile along this footpath and replaced the step on another.

Footpath/Bridleway No.1 (Armitage with Handsacre)

The Clerk further reported that he had received a second letter from Mrs. Willmore dated 19th February 2010, informing the Council that a County Ranger had inspected on 5th January 2010, when he had spoken to the landowner, and again on 19th January 2010, when some effort had been made at clearance.

However, the matter had now been referred to the Enforcement Officer, who would be writing to the landowner in order to get the path cleared properly.

Concluding his report, Mr. Rose paid tribute to the many parishioners who had taken part in the Survey. As the result of their efforts, since 2000, ninety complaints had been raised and forwarded to the County Council, who had generally responded positively.

Cllr. Mrs. Duckett expressed the Council's warm appreciation of Mr. Rose's own effort in organising and co-ordinating the Survey.

Other matters related to the Survey

(i) The Clerk confirmed that he had ordered a copy of the Ramblers' Association's Guide to Footpath Law

(ii) Mr. Rose would write to Paul Rochfort to ask him how much mud was acceptable on footpaths, particularly in the area of stiles, before it amounted to an obstruction.

He would also ask whether it would be possible to obtain way-marking discs inscribed with the number of the footpath.

(iii) Cllr. Mrs. Duckett asked Cllr. Clarke if he would write an article for "Longdon Life" on the activities of the Highways and Footpaths Committee.

She believed that a report should appear in the parish magazine from each of the Council's Committees detailing what it had achieved and what it hoped to achieve.

It should also be pointed out that the Council could only deal with matters which parishioners brought to its attention.

9. FOOTPATH LEAFLETS

Cllr. Mrs. Duckett reported that Bob and Carol Shelley had produced draft leaflets for two extended walks based on local public houses – The Windmill Inn and The Park Gate Inn.

The Clerk reported that he had been contacted by a new parishioner, Mr. Dan Worsley, of Upper Way, Upper Longdon, who had offered to use his professional expertise to re-draw the maps for the Best Kept Village Competition.

He had had to point out that this work had already been taken in hand by one of the Councillors, but it was thought that Mr. Worsley might be asked if he would provide the maps for the re-drafted footpath leaflets.

Cllr. Butler believed that he had met Mr. Worsley and offered to make contact with him.

In the meantime, the Clerk would write to Paul Rochfort, asking if the Parish Council could use the County Council's licence to download and digitalise the Ordnance Survey Map for the parish footpath leaflets.

Mr. Rose suggested that each route could be given its own identity if the way-marking discs were of a different colour.

10. CHURCH HOLLOW

Cllr. Duckett reported that there had been complaints from local residents that local youths had built three ramps across this path to use for skate-boarding.

She had identified those concerned and visited their homes to point out that these ramps were obstructing the free use of a public right of way.

As a result, she had been assured that the ramps would be removed.

While there was sympathy for their complaint that there was nowhere else for them to play, it had to be pointed out that Church Hollow was still highway.

11. ROLLING PROGRAMME

(i) Midsummer Stroll

Cllr. Clarke suggested that the Parish Council might establish a Longdon Way, running from “The Swan with Two Necks” through High Street, Giddywell Lane, Smithy Lane Longdon Green and along Footpaths 32 and 30, passing St. James Church, the Memorial Hall, the Post office and the Village Hall, back to “The Swan with two Necks”. This could be inaugurated with the first of an annual Midsummer Stroll

Similarly, a Gentleshaw Way could be established, connecting Upper Longdon to Gentleshaw by way of Coppice Hills and Windmill Bank. descriptive leaflet and inaugurate it with a Midsummer Stroll.

Descriptive leaflets could be drawn up for each of these walks.

Cllr. Duckett pointed out that similar walk was already being organised by Lynn Marshall in Longdon and Longdon Green in aid of the County Air Ambulance and suggested that she might be interested in setting out such a route.

(ii) Flower Beds

Cllr. Clarke suggested that the Committee might consider laying out hardy, low-maintenance flower beds as a way of enhancing the village environment.

Possible sites for these beds could be both ends of Brook End, in front of the notice board in High Street, at the top of Grange Hill at the corner of Longdon Green and Church Hill and on Gentleshaw Green.

It was agreed that the consent of the Highway Authority would be needed and the problem of ensuring their maintenance needed to be addressed, though it was hoped that this would be done by volunteers.

It was agreed that the first step would be to set up a working group tasked with drawing up a feasibility plan.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN)

(i) House Agents’ Signs

Cllr. Clarke drew the attention of the Committee to the presence of a house agent’s sign attached to a street nameplate at the entrance of Brook End.

The Clerk reported that this was one of two signs, the other being at Cleat Hill, and that he had written to both agents asking them to re-locate them to within the curtilage of the properties which they were advertising.

In addition, the matter had now been taken up by the District Council’s Enforcement Officer.

(ii) Bench at top of Grange Hill, Upper Way

Cllr. Butler asked when the bench which he had requested for the top of Grange Hill would be erected.

He was authorised to speak to Alan Johnson, who had supplied the three benches now sited at the side of the A51.

13. DATES OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, June 1st, 2010, in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 00 p.m.