

Footpath improvements - who pays?

Recent improvements by the Bleadon Rights of Way (BROW) team of volunteers to the Allotments-Purn footpath has raised some questions from local resident Chris Butler.

Chris wrote to the Parish Clerk querying the cost of the recent footpath work and who is responsible for paying for it.

With the help of Cllr. Ian Findlay BVN takes this opportunity to try and clarify the situation and answer Chris's other questions.

Who will be recharged for this work?

The surfacing of the footpath from the allotments towards Purn was done because we had scalplings left over from doing the drove and allotments access. Ian took the common sense decision to go as far as the BROW team could with the left over scalplings on the footpath.

The footpath itself was not in a brilliant state and has been subject to flooding in heavy rain. But was walkable and as such would not have attracted any funding to resurface it (in Ian's opinion). It is, therefore, not appropriate to try and invoice any other parties for the work done because:

1 We cannot quantify the amount of scalplings used accurately or the workforce costs.

2 The majority of work was done by volunteers, apart from the digger driver who had to be suitably qualified to operate in a public area.

3 The work was done to enhance the footpath as per previous Parish Council resolutions. Had we run out of scalplings repairing the drove then it would not have happened.

4 The work done in that area has brought nothing but praise and thanks from those parishioners who use the path regularly. To quote one dog walker "Thank you so much for the work done. I love that walk and it has made it an absolute joy to walk now".



The section of newly surfaced footpath from the allotments towards Purn

Who is responsible for the various aspects of this work?

Although, rarely, some paths are entirely privately maintainable, maintenance responsibilities are generally divided between highway authorities, landowners and occupiers as follows:

Highway authorities (NSC): surfaces including natural ground vegetation, steps, handrails; some barriers, drains, most bridges and culverts; stepping stones, fords, signposts and waymarks.

Landowners: stiles and gates (25% of reasonable costs to be contributed by highway authorities for authorised structures).

Occupiers: restoration after ploughing, control of crops, and repair of damage caused by their vehicles on footpaths and bridleways.

Landowners or occupiers: control of overhanging vegetation, maintenance of some drains, bridges and culverts.

A path I use is very overgrown.

What can be done about it?

Councils are generally responsible for vegetation growing on the surfaces of paths, although not that overhanging from the sides. Most have an annual cutting programme for countryside paths, but sometimes have missed out

the odd path. Report it to the North Somerset Council Public Rights of Way Officer, preferably giving a grid reference.

We at BROW have a very good relationship with the Council we have an awful lot of assistance from them both in fixtures fittings and maintenance because of the work Andy and his team does.

What is the parish council's proposed Public Right of Way maintenance schedule?

We cannot provide a regular schedule of work because it does not exist. Work is done on an ad-hoc basis with a phone around for BROW volunteers as and when work is required. If there is no requirement for any footpath work then no meeting takes place

This is a voluntary group of parishioners who undertake work as and when required not a weekly meeting as per say the Mendip Volunteer force who do issue schedules. Any one is welcome to join us but must understand that it is not regular. In fact it is quite the opposite.

We have had contributions from landowners when making repairs, for example the repair to the gate leading onto Terry Trapnell's land where he supplied the gate posts and mini digger to get the work done (far more than 25%)

A risk assessment is completed for all work undertaken by BROW and relevant training has now been undertaken and signage warning of such work printed and laminated at no charge to the parish.

If it has cost £1,000 for this small part of one Public Right of Way how much will fall on the Parish Precept, Budget and Reserves for all 20 Bleadon PROWs?

The work on the allotments to Purn path was agreed by the Parish Council and in fact, due to volunteers, came in well under budget at £700 and no where near

the £1000 budget allocated from Reserve Funds.

This footpath is something of an exception in Bleadon in that it provides a fairly direct and traffic free route between the centre of the village and the amenities at Purn.

Because of the paths popularity with villagers and the poor state of the surface during wet periods the parish council took the decision to treat it as an exception and lay down surplus surface scalplings. There is no intention to treat all 20 parish paths in this manner. It would urbanise the countryside that we cherish so dearly and the parish council does not have the financial or human resources to undertake such an enterprise.



The newly surfaced footpath through the allotments is a welcome all-weather improvement for walkers and allotment holders.

100 years on - let's not forget the 18 villagers who gave their lives in the War to end all wars



Regular Coronation Hall events

Mondays

Bleadon Bridge Club 2-5pm

Exercise Classes** 7-8pm + 8-9pm

Bleadon Parish Council 2nd Mon 7.30pm

Tuesdays

Short Mat Bowls 2.30-4.30pm Sept-May

Bleadon Brownies** 6-7.30 pm

Bleadon Photographic Group 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th Tues 7.30 pm (Sept-May)

Bleadon Horticultural Soc 3rd Tues 7.30 pm (Oct-June)

Wednesdays

Toddler Group 9.30-11.30

Bleadon Players/Rehearsals 7.30pm

Bleadon Pilates** 7pm

Thursdays

Bleadon Art Group** 10-noon

Bleadon WI 7.30 2nd Thurs

Bleadon Folk Dancing Group 8pm 3rd Thurs (Sept-June)

Bleadon Sugarcraft Club 7.30pm 4th Thurs

Fridays

Bleadon Friendship Club 2-4pm

Short Mat Bowls Club** 7pm

Saturdays

Village Market 9-12.30 3rd Saturday

Sundays

Short Mat Bowls Club** 2.30 (Sept-May)

**in the Jubilee Room

See notice board for contact details

The Halls are available for hire.

There's a reduced rate for Bleadon residents. Call Joanne Jones on **812 370**.

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Bleadon Village Monthly Market & community cafe

**SAT
16
AUG**

**SAT
20
SEPT**

**SAT
18
OCT**

**SAT
15
NOV**

**SAT
6
DEC**

**in the Coronation Halls
from 9 to 12.30**

Call Joanne on 01934 812 370 for more info