

<p style="text-align: center;">Belchamp Public Rights of Way Group</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report for the Annual Parish Assemblies - April 2025</p>

I am often encouraged by two quite different but basically similar experiences. The first is when I hear (either directly or indirectly) favourable comments about the extensive footpaths in our patch and the second is when I'm out and about, and I see evidence of the footpaths being walked, i.e. where the often soft soil is compressed by people's footfall. If the paths were not walked, what would the point be of the work we undertake?

Since having our brush cutter, the majority of work this last year has concentrated on attempting to tame the most overgrown paths. Given when the undergrowth grows most, this work is frequently undertaken when the weather is warmest, so the work is most tiring. That said, it is a very satisfying job to see the fruits of our labour. There will always be more paths that need cutting than we have hours to give, but we'll do what we can. (I've just noticed I used those last 6 words in last year's report! But it is a fact!!)

We have replaced 2 footbridges in the past year, one in each of the parishes, and reinstated several waymarker posts. My survey walks have identified a number of posts that have either rotted and fallen or been knocked over and, as soon as the weather improves (ground less soggy), I will be submitting the paperwork to Essex for the work to proceed.

On the issue of Essex Highways (the body that oversees the P3 work), I had a meeting recently with representatives from Sudbury Ramblers, the Wool Town Walk people and Clare Walkers to discuss what we did locally for the footpaths and specifically where the WTW route went through our area. It made me realise just how much I take for granted the support Essex provides, in materials, training and equipment.

Finally, as always, I should like to pay tribute to the willing volunteers that always respond so positively when I send out a work proposal. I know I coordinate and do the back-office stuff, but I couldn't do the actual work on my own, so it truly is a joint effort: Essex Highways, the Parish Council and last but not least the volunteers.

Peter Hesketh

Footpath Warden & P3 Representative

20th February 2025