

# The Acklington Parish Footpath Survey

Published on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2019



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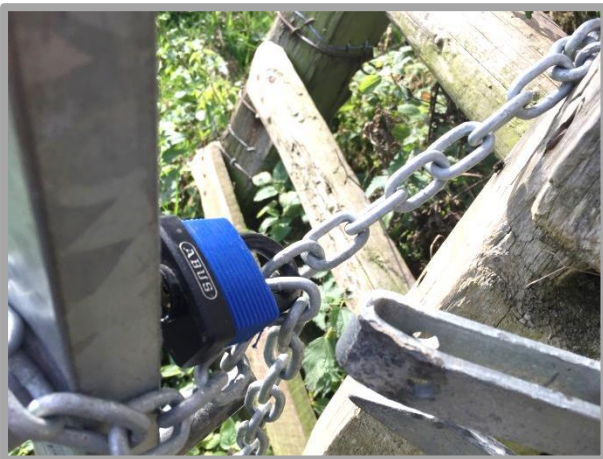
## 1. Executive summary

Britain's network of public footpaths are one of our greatest assets: nothing quite like them exists anywhere else in the world. 19 footpaths skirt and criss-cross Acklington Parish: one of them has been in constant use since King Oswald travelled it more than 1,300 years ago.

Walking the footpaths of Acklington can take you on a journey past rolling farmland, broadleaf woodland and the banks of the beautiful Coquet River.

But the 19 public footpaths in the parish are in a poor state of repair and need urgent help to bring them back up to scratch.

Our survey of all 19 footpaths conducted on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2018 found that 57% (11 out of 19) were rated difficult, or impossible to walk along. Some footpaths are badly overgrown and clearly haven't been walked in years. One footpath has disappeared altogether.



The survey found footpaths in the parish blocked by bolted gates, some had broken stiles others had whole sections ploughed-out. But the biggest, single issue of all (and the one that's the easiest to fix) is overgrown vegetation on the surface of footpaths, and obstructions caused by hedges overgrowing horizontally across footpaths - 5 footpaths suffer this fate.

Where two issues or more were observed (example: field-edge footpath partially ploughed out, and the pathway surface overgrown with vegetation) the footpath was difficult, or impossible to walk along.

Most of the damaged gates and stiles observed in the survey might have been saved (and the cost of replacing them saved) by early, minimal maintenance on the part of the landowner.

All of the ploughed-out footpaths and partially ploughed-out headland footpaths could have been protected if the tractor driver, farmer, or landowner had been more aware of the route of the footpath - and their legal responsibilities.



The Highway Authority has a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 to keep the surface of footpaths in a safe condition, and fit for the type of traffic which is ordinarily expected to use it. But, due to lack of available funding, recent case law has established a rebuttal. The Highway Authority is only required to

have in place a system for monitoring and prioritising public highway repairs (a footpath is classed as a public highway) - which means that NCC can't, and won't cut overgrown vegetation on the surface of the 19 footpaths.

In certain cases NCC must take action if a parish council complains [section 130 (6) Highways Act 1980].

The poor state of our footpaths has not been caused by malice, malevolence or vandalism, but by neglect. Acklington's footpaths have been very quietly falling into disrepair. We have neglected to look after them.

The big message of this footpath survey is: **we must walk them, look after them, or be prepared to lose them.**

This report recommends that we put in place an Acklington Parish Council Footpath Restoration Plan; a simple, transparent, effective plan to bring all 19 footpaths back up to scratch.

## **Acklington Parish Council Footpath Restoration Plan**

The Parish Council should consider setting itself **the goal of ensuring that every footpath in Acklington Parish is well maintained, easy to access and free of obstruction.** No single person, or organisation can do this on their own: it requires teamwork of the highest calibre. Everyone has a part to play. We should commit to collaboration, rather than coercion, and recognise the responsibilities and rights of landowners, the Highway Authority and the general public whom we serve.

The stakeholders of the plan could include the Highway Authority (Northumberland County Council), Acklington Parish Council, landowners, tenants, managing agents, and the women and men of the Parish.

The plan could include the recruitment of a small team of voluntary Acklington Parish Footpath Wardens, the keeping of a register of landowners, and a simple process for the reporting, monitoring and removal of overhanging trees, broken gates and obstructions.

The overall aim of the restoration plan must be to bring all 19 footpaths back up to scratch, so that every footpath is at least a metre wide, free of overhanging trees, invasive hedging and overgrown vegetation. **Note:** unless there is clear evidence that the path is legally narrower than a metre.



*St Oswald's Way at Footpath 18.*

## **2. Background information**

Acklington Parish includes the villages of Acklington and Guyzance. The London to Edinburgh East Coast Main Line, St Oswald's Way and the Coquet River pass through the Parish.

### **2.1 The Northumberland County Council Definitive Map**

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Maps/Public-rights-of-way.aspx>

19 footpaths skirt and criss-cross the parish. Each footpath is marked on the NCC Definitive Map. Every footpath on the Definitive Map has a written description

associated with it (the Statement). Older statements often contain little information.

## **2.2 The footpath numbering system**

Each footpath on the Definitive Map is allotted a unique number. As an example: footpath number 101/010 is made up of 6 digits. The first 3 digits (101) refer to the parish name: "Acklington". The last 3 digits tell us the number of the path: Footpath 10. For ease of understanding we have used this abbreviated form of numbering throughout this survey. Therefore Footpath 101/010, becomes Footpath No 10.

NOTE: In this survey report we make no distinction between footpaths and Public Rights of Way – we're calling them all "Footpaths" merely for ease of explanation..

## **2.3 The law**

A public highway is a piece of land over which the public has a right to pass and repass over a fixed route. A "footpath" is a public highway, where the public have a right of way on foot only. A member of the public has the right to take "usual accompaniment" with them (example: a pushchair), and they are allowed to walk a dog as long as it is under close control.

- Minimum width of a cross-field footpath = 1 metre
- Minimum width of field-edge footpath path = 1.5 metres

## **2.4 Who is responsible for maintaining the 19 footpaths?**

The Highway Authority (Northumberland County Council), landowners and tenants all have legal duties, prohibitions and responsibilities for footpaths. In addition, the Parish Council has special discretionary powers which can be applied to rights of way.

### **The Highway Authority is responsible for:-**

- Asserting and protecting the public's rights.
- Keeping rights of way free from obstruction.
- Keeping the surface of the path clear from natural vegetation\*.
- Signposting the paths where they leave a metal road.
- Recording the rights of way on the Definitive Map.

\* The Highway Authority has a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 to keep the surface of footpaths in a safe condition, and fit for the type of traffic which is ordinarily expected to use it.

### **The landowner or tenant is responsible for:-**

- Providing and maintaining stiles and gates.\*
- Cutting back overhanging vegetation.
- Clipping hedges which obstruct the right of way.
- Not obstructing the right of way.
- Not ploughing field-edge paths.
- Reinstating cross-field paths within 14 days of ploughing.
- Ensuring that the line of the footpath is clear on the ground in cultivated fields, and not obstructed by growing crops.

\*In general if they are new gates or stiles, but long established ones may be the responsibility of the Highway Authority.

### **The Parish Council can:-**

- Maintain any footpath in the parish.
- Draw problems to the attention of the Highway Authority.
- Make improvements to rights of way.
- Agree new routes with landowners and farmers.

## **2.5 Pavement paths, permissive paths and coal roads**

Pavement paths (footways running along the side of the road), closed permissive paths and disused coal roads were not included in the survey. NOTE: we acknowledge that hedges have overgrown parts of the footway between the Acklington Village Hall and the Acklington Auction Mart.

Bringing closed permissive paths and disused coal roads back into use deserves to be the focus of a future project.



## **2.6 Footpaths Nos 6 & 8 and the RAF**

The aerodrome was operational from 1916, being used by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). From April 1918 the Royal Air Force (RAF) took over operations, before being closed in 1920. It was reopened in 1938 being used by the RAF until 1975. After 1975 the site was turned over to Her Majesty's Prison Service for the creation of two new prisons.

In 1972 open cast coal mine operations were started by the National Coal Board on a 500 acre site situated south of Acklington village and North West of the prison. Operations closed down in the 1980s. The land was restored to farmland - but not the lost sections of Footpath No 8.

Prior to the construction of the 1916 aerodrome, there were 2 important footpaths which criss-crossed the land: Footpaths Nos 8 & 6.

Footpath No 8 followed a north/south direction from Acklington Village to a point 200 meters west of Woodside Farm. What remains of this long footpath can be seen as the entrance road to Dairy Court, and the short Footpath No 8, which stops abruptly at the old coal road.

Footpath No 6 followed a north west/south east direction from South Park Wood to converge with Footpath No 8 at a point 200 meters west of Woodside Farm. All that remains of this long footpath is shown on NCC Definitive Map as a short length of footpath, stopping at the East Coast Main Line. Our survey found no trace of this footpath on the ground.



## **2.7 St Oswald's Way**

St Oswald's Way is a long-distance walking route which runs from Holy Island in the north, to Heavenfield and Hadrian's Wall in the south, a distance of 97 miles. This important public right of way is formed by, and connects with several footpaths in the parish. St Oswald's Way enables walkers from Acklington Village

to walk to Felton in the West, Warkworth in the North, and Amble in the North East.

## 2.8 Guyzance

The footpaths around Guyzance give us access to some of the most beautiful countryside in Northumberland: the Coquet River valley, Acton Dean and Mere Burn. But Footpaths Nos 1,2 and 4 are almost impossible to access on foot from the road; the roads are simply too narrow and dangerous to walk along.

## 3. Survey methodology

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2018 a group of volunteers assembled in Acklington Village Hall to take part in a parish-wide Footpath Survey. Teams of two were each assigned a walking route covering one or more footpaths. Each team were issued with a map, clipboard and survey forms. Every team carried a digital camera phone.

As the teams walked their allotted footpaths they were asked to record their observations on the survey forms. Each survey form asked for observations to be made on four subject headings:-

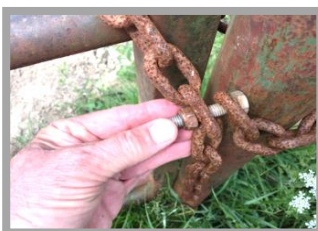
- 1) Footpath surface.
- 2) Bridges, gates and stiles.
- 3) Signs and waymarks.
- 4) Obstructions.

A simple rating system was applied:-

- Well maintained.
- Difficult to navigate.
- Impossible to navigate.

Survey teams were asked to take digital photographs to accompany their written observations.

## 4. Key findings



### 4.1 Half of the footpaths in Acklington Parish are rated difficult, or impossible to walk along.

57% of the 19 Acklington Parish footpaths were rated difficult or impossible to use (on at least two measurement criteria). Example: Footpath 2 is blocked by a padlocked gate, and the pathway is further obstructed by waist-high thistles.



#### **4.2 Five footpaths are obstructed by surface vegetation**

Footpaths Nos 2, 8, 10, 15 and 20 have surface vegetation growth up to waist height, making it difficult, or impossible to navigate. Example:

Footpath 8 is blocked by waist high nettles and thistles.



#### **4.3 Nine footpaths have locked, jammed, or broken gates.**

Footpath Nos 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 15 & 16 have broken, or damaged gates. Example: mid-way along Footpath 16 a 5-bar metal gate has broken off one of its hinges. Opening and closing this gate requires the

footpath user to lift the dead weight of the gate off the ground. Every time the gate is opened and closed it puts enormous strain on the one remaining hinge and the fencepost.



#### **4.4 Six cross-field footpaths, or headland footpaths have been fully ploughed over, or partially ploughed out.**

Footpaths Nos 6,9,10 & 20 have had sections of the footpath fully ploughed over and cultivated, but not restored. NOTE: the landowner is responsible for reinstating cross-field paths within 14 days of ploughing.

Field-edge Footpaths Nos 10 & 15 have been partially ploughed out: in places, this has reduced the width of the footpath to approximately 300 centimetres. NOTE: minimum width of a field-edge footpath is 1.5 metres.



#### **4.5 Five footpaths have overgrown hedges**

Footpaths Nos 2, 8, 10, 15, 20 are partially or fully obstructed by hedges growing horizontally across the footpath. In every case where the footpath hedge was overgrown, the footpath surface was also overgrown – making it doubly difficult to walk

the footpath. The combination of overgrown surface vegetation and overgrown hedging is the biggest problem facing the Acklington Parish Footpath network.



#### **4.6 Three footpaths have rotted, or decayed stiles.**

Footpaths Nos 3, 15 & 20 have rotted stile steps. Footpath 15 has two stiles, so badly rotten and decayed as to make them unusable.



#### **4.7 Three footpaths are blocked by a wooden fence.**

Footpaths Nos 8, 15 and 20 are blocked by a wooden fence. NOTE: it is an offence to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a footpath, or highway without lawful authority or excuse.

## **5. Recommended strategy**



### **Acklington Parish Council Footpath Restoration Plan**

**5.1 Form an Acklington Parish Council Footpath Sub-committee** The main purpose of the sub-committee would be to launch, manage and champion the Acklington Parish Council Footpath Restoration Plan.

#### **5.2 Establish a minimum standard for every footpath**

The aim of the Restoration Plan is to bring all 19 footpaths in the parish up to the following minimum standard:-

- **1 metre wide footpaths**, free of overhanging trees, invasive hedging and overgrown vegetation.
- **Well maintained** stiles, gates and footbridges.
- **Easy to access**, with clear footpath signs and waymarkers.

### 5.3 The Acklington Parish Footpath Covenant

Underpin the plan with an Acklington Parish Footpath Covenant: a simple statement of intent, which everyone can buy into.

#### **EXAMPLE**

*Our goal is to ensure that every footpath in Acklington Parish is well maintained, easy to access and free of obstruction. No single person, or organisation can do this on their own, it requires teamwork of the highest calibre; everyone has a part to play. We believe in collaboration, rather than coercion, and recognise the responsibilities and rights of landowners, the Highway Authority and the general public whom we serve.*

### 5.4 Inspire stakeholders to buy into the plan

The problems highlighted in this survey are relatively simple to fix, evenly spread and of manageable proportions. But no single person, or organisation on their own can bring the Acklington footpaths back up to scratch. It requires a team approach – all stakeholders working together in a planned, transparent, effective way.

The stakeholders to include:-

- 1) Acklington Parish Council.
- 2) Highway Authority (Northumberland County Council).
- 3) Landowners, tenants and managing agents.
- 4) And the women and men of the Parish.

### 5.5 Regularly walk all the footpaths

We must start using all the footpaths, or risk losing them. Establish a rota of people to regularly walk every footpath in the village; this is the bedrock of any plan, because it immediately achieves three things:-

- 1) Keeps an eye on the important issues.
- 2) Enables us to measure progress.
- 3) Sends a powerful message to all the stakeholders that the footpath is a public highway, regularly monitored and in constant use.

## 5.6 Acklington Parish Footpath Wardens

Regularly walking the 19 footpaths in the parish will require volunteers; people who have the time, enthusiasm and confidence to do it. Ideally, they will be able to undertake some basic “footpath gardening” and interact with other walkers (and dogs) along the way.



*Alfie the dog at Footpath 10*

A team of up to 6 voluntary Acklington Parish Footpath Wardens is recommended. Each Footpath Warden to carry a copy of the Acklington Parish Footpath Covenant, and a letter of authority from the Chairman of Acklington Parish Council: asserting the Parish Council’s power to maintain public footpaths and bridleways (s34 Highways Act 1980). Each Footpath Warden to be issued with a high-visibility waistcoat emblazoned with the words: “Acklington Parish Council”.

### **Duties of a Footpath Warden could include:-**

- Regularly walking a designated number of footpaths.
- Carrying out simple “footpath gardening” duties.
- Reporting any issues, obstructions and problems.
- Taking part in occasional weekend working parties.

### **Footpath Gardening**

The biggest single difference a Footpath Warden can make is to regularly walk footpaths; carrying a sharp pair of secateurs in their pocket.

Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, dog rose, nettles and thistles can all be found obstructing the footpaths of Acklington Parish. When a bramble bush grows into a giant patch it becomes almost indestructible. But when a bramble is a tiny, short whip it can easily be cut down to size with hand secateurs.

## **Hand tools**

It is recommended that a set of hand tools be purchased by the Parish Council and issued to the Footpath Wardens as required. The list of hand tools might include:-

- Hand secateurs
- Hedge clippers
- Branch cutter
- Large weed slasher
- Plus appropriate safety equipment and insurance

## **Power tools**

The list of power tools might include:-

- Petrol hedge cutter
- Petrol powered brush cutter
- Plus appropriate safety equipment and insurance

## **Training the Footpath Wardens**

Consider leveraging the resources of Tony Derbyshire and his team, to help train the newly recruited Footpath Wardens on how to undertake simple “footpath gardening” using safe, easy to manage hand tools.

Consider hiring an expert consultant to brief Footpath Wardens on the law as it relates to footpaths and public rights of way. Those attending could include everyone on the Footpath Sub-committee, Footpath Wardens and members of the Parish Council.

## **Funding of the 6 Footpath Wardens**

It is assumed that the cost of maintaining gates and stiles will be funded by landowners. Cost of training, insurance and ongoing tool maintenance extra.

### **Hand tools budget = £350**

6 X hand secateurs, 2 X hedge clippers, 2 X branch cutter, 2 X weed slasher, 6 X High-visibility branded waistcoats, 6 X safety gloves, 6 X hard hats and 6 X safety glasses.

### **Power tools budget = £394**

1 X Einhell GE-PH 2555 A 2-Stroke 25 cc petrol hedge cutter = £204

1 X Einhell GC-BC 52 I AS 52 cc petrol brush cutter = £190

## **5.7 Assemble a register of landowners\***

*\*Must comply with all relevant data protection regulations.*

Assemble a register of landowners, tenants and managing agents responsible for managing the land on (or immediately adjacent to) the 19 footpaths in the parish. The register to include name, email address and telephone number. The

purpose of the register is to enable the Parish Clerk to alert the relevant person if any of the following issues arise:-

- Badly maintained gates and stiles.
- Overhanging vegetation.
- Hedging invading the footpath from the side.
- Obstructions to the right of way.
- Ploughing of the surface of field-edge footpath.
- Reinstating ploughed cross-field footpath (within 14 days).
- Unclear line of cross-field footpath in a growing crop.

## **5.8 The communication plan could include the following**

- Communicate and work with the footpath team and Northumberland County Council to help formulate the Acklington Parish Footpath Restoration Plan. Get to individual members of the team and draw on their wisdom, knowledge and experience.
- Set a launch date for the Acklington Parish Footpath Restoration Plan. Invite members of the public and landowners to a public presentation of the plan in the Village Hall.
- Send a launch letter from the Chairman of the Parish Council to all landowners, tenants and managing agents. Expand on the Footpath Covenant, emphasising our commitment to respect the rights of landowners and tenants. The big message is: properly planned, well managed access to the countryside is in everybody's interest. Give fair notice that Acklington Parish Footpath Wardens will be regularly walking the footpaths, taking note of any obstructions and alerting landowners and tenants to issues that fall within landowners' areas of responsibility.
- Set in place a regular reporting mechanism between the Footpath Sub-committee and the full Parish Council. The purpose is to monitor progress and keep the plan on track.

### **Obstruction Reporting System**

A process for reporting problems and obstructions might work like this: a Footpath Warden reports a footpath issue/obstruction and sends a digital picture to the Footpath Sub-committee. A member of the Sub-committee identifies which stakeholder is responsible for removing, or resolving the obstruction. A friendly, polite email is sent to the stakeholder calling for reasonable action to be taken.

In the case of landowners, or tenants failing to resolve a previously highlighted issue, then a stronger email or letter should be sent from the Clerk of the Parish Council.

In the case of landowners, or tenants doing a “good job”, we should send a letter from the Chairman of the Parish Council (copy to the NCC) thanking them for their efforts.

In the case of the Highway Authority failing to resolve a previously highlighted issue, then (depending on the scale of the issue) consideration should be given to resolving the issue using resources of the Parish Council, or other village organisations.

## **7. Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance in the completion of this report: **John Davison, Tony Derbyshire, Jeff Newton, Stephen Rickitt, Sharon Thorpe** and the many women and men of the parish who took part in the survey on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2018.



# APPENDIX 1

## Footpath No 1

101/001



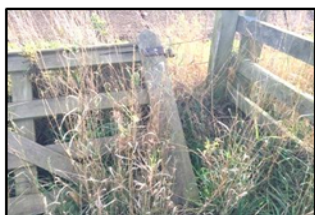
### Route

From Newton on the Moor-Acklington road, west of Guyzance Lee in a south-westerly direction to join Bridleway No1 at the Felton Parish boundary at the bridge over the Mere Burn.

### Current condition

Well-maintained field edge path. Broken gate at the mid point. Lack of waymarks in wood.

### Immediate priorities



#### Broken gate

At the midway point a footpath gate has broken from its hinges and is lying on the ground.



#### Footpath sign unreadable

A south-facing footpath sign has bleached in the sun, and is unreadable.



#### Unclear pathway in Acton Dean

The pathway in Acton Dean is very difficult to follow and needs some waymark signs.

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	X
Bridges, gates and stiles	X	Obstructions	✓

## Footpath No 2

101/002



### Route

From the Newton on the Moor-Acklington road west of Brainshaugh in a south westerly direction to join footpath No 3 at the Felton Parish boundary at the Mere Burn.

### Current condition

Locked gate and badly maintained pathway.

### Immediate priorities



#### Gate locked

The 5 bar metal field gate is padlocked; forcing walkers to climb over the metal gate.



#### Footpath overgrown with vegetation

The headland path along the field edge is overgrown with waist-high nettles.



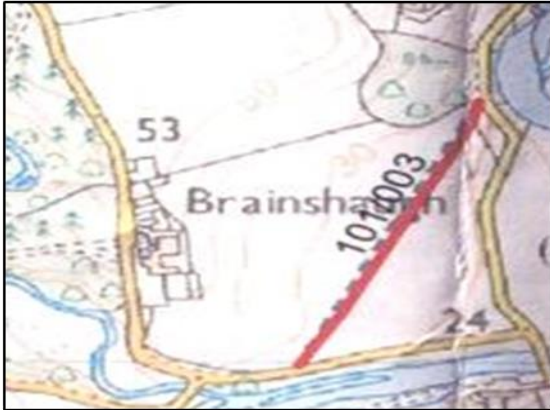
#### Fallen tree obstructing the pathway

A fallen tree near the Mere Burn ford is blocking the pathway.

Path surface	<b>X</b>	Signs and waymarks	✓
Bridges, gates and stiles	<b>X</b>	Obstructions	<b>X</b>

## Footpath No 3

101/003



### Route

From the Acklington-Guyzance road south east of Bank Top in a south westerly direction to join the Acklington-Newton on the Moor road south east of Brainshaugh.

### Current condition

An easy to navigate footpath which has some signage issues.

### Immediate priorities



#### Footpath sign obscured by vegetation

Extreme vegetation growth around the footpath sign needs to be cleared.



#### Rotten stile step

Stile step is weak and potentially dangerous to stand on. It needs to be replaced.



#### Waymark unreadable

This south-facing waymark has been bleached by the sun and needs to be replaced.

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	✗
Bridges, gates and stiles	✗	Obstructions	✓

## Footpath No 4

101/004



### Route

From the Old Felton-Brainshaugh road near the Felton Parish boundary in a south easterly and south westerly direction by the Old Quarry to join footpath No 6 at the Felton Parish boundary.

### Current condition

Footpath in excellent condition, but has a waymark issue.

### Immediate priorities



### Unreadable waymarks

A gate has collapsed at the mid-way point (with attached waymarks). The fence needs to be repaired and reinstated.

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	⊘
Bridges, gates and stiles	✗	Obstructions	✓

## Footpath No 5

101/005



### Route

From the Acklington Park – Cheeveley road, 325 metres south of High Park farmhouse, in a general south-westerly direction to join Footpath No 6 in the Parish of Thirston at the former Morpeth Rural District boundary.

### Current condition

A well managed, easy to navigate path.

### Immediate priorities



### A well managed path

Very well signposted, easy to navigate footpath.

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	✓
Bridges, gates and stiles	✓	Obstructions	✓

**Footpath No 6**

101/006

**Route**

From the Acklington-Cheeveley road at the Sandy Burn in a south easterly direction to the Acklington Aerodrome boundary of the North Eastern Railway .

**Current condition**

This footpath has disappeared completely from the landscape. No physical trace of this footpath could be found.

Path surface	<b>X</b>	Signs and waymarks	<b>X</b>
Bridges, gates and stiles	<b>X</b>	Obstructions	<b>X</b>

## Footpath No 7

101/007



### Route

From the Acklington to West Thirston Road, south west of Acklington Station, in a south westerly direction through Station Wood to join footpath 101/016 (St Oswald's Way) at the north side of South park Wood.

### Current condition

A very well used, easy to access footpath which connects to St Oswald's Way.

### Immediate priorities



#### Gate post rotted and split

Rotted and split gatepost has made it impossible to properly operate the footpath gate.



#### Footpath sign and gate overgrown

The footpath sign and footpath gate opposite the auction mart is overgrown with vegetation.



#### Waymarks obscured by vegetation

The waymarks where footpath 101/007 meets footpath 101/016 are overgrown with vegetation .

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	✗
Bridges, gates and stiles	✗	Obstructions	✓

## Footpath No 8

101/008



### Route

From the Acklington Road to a point 20 metres north of Field House Farm, then in an easterly direction for 15 metres, then in a southerly direction following the edge of the field to the Acklington Aerodrome boundary.

### Current condition

A badly overgrown footpath, with significant obstructions.

### Immediate priorities



#### Heavily overgrown pathway

Waist high nettles, briars and thistles make walking the path almost impossible.



#### Path blocked by a makeshift fence

To secure the field boundary, the land owner has blocked off the pathway with a wooden fence.



#### Broken gate secured by plastic cable

A broken gate secured by plastic cable is very difficult to open

Path surface	<b>X</b>	Signs and waymarks	⊘
Bridges, gates and stiles	<b>X</b>	Obstructions	<b>X</b>

## Footpath No 9

101/009



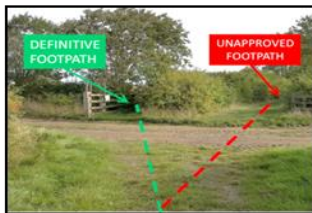
### Route

From the Togston-New Morwick Road, South of Chester House, in a north easterly direction to join Footpath No 7 at the Togston Parish boundary.

### Current condition

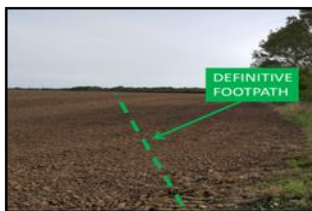
The southern end of the path is easily accessible, but at the mid point the footpath deviates from the NCC Definitive Map.

### Immediate priorities



#### Obscured footpath sign and waymark

Vegetation growth around the footpath sign and gate have encouraged the use of an unapproved pathway – away from the Definitive Footpath.

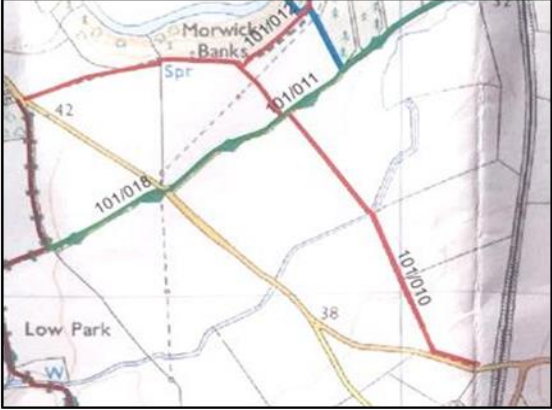


#### Cross-field path has been ploughed over

The landowner, or Tenant has cultivated the field and has not reinstated the Definitive Cross-field Footpath (within 14 days).

Path surface	<b>X</b>	Signs and waymarks	<b>X</b>
Bridges, gates and stiles	<b>X</b>	Obstructions	<b>X</b>

<b>Footpath No 10</b>	101/010
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**Route**

A 1.5 metre path west of the railway overbridge, in a westerly then north-westerly direction crossing Coal Burn for 750 metres. Thereafter as a field-edge path to cross footpath 101/011. Thereafter as a path in a north-westerly then westerly direction to arrive opposite Acklington Park Farm.

**Current condition**

Dense vegetation on the path surface and invasive hedging to the side. Field ploughed and cultivated over the pathway.

**Immediate priorities**



**Field-edge pathway unusable**

The field-edge hedge is overhanging the pathway. The plough has cut into the pathway; forcing walkers to walk on the cultivated field.



**Gate locked. Access to footpath denied**

Where the footpath crosses path 101/011 the pathway is blocked by a 5-bar gate, secured by a screwed bolt; impossible to undo by hand.

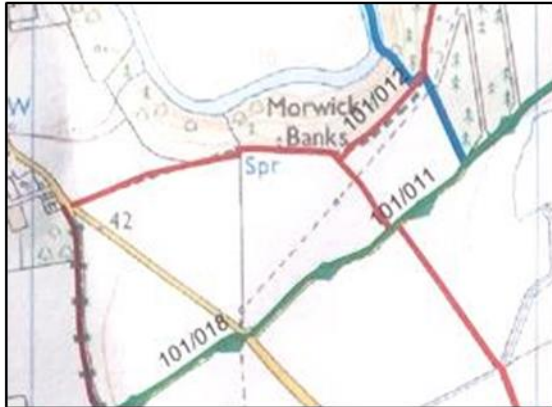


**Footpath ploughed over**

200 metres short of Acklington Park Farm the footpath has not been restored following ploughing and cultivation (14 days).

Path surface	<b>X</b>	Signs and waymarks	⊘
Bridges, gates and stiles	<b>X</b>	Obstructions	<b>X</b>

**Footpath No 11** 101/011



**Route**

From the Guyzance-Acklington road, opposite the junction with Bridleway No 18, in a north-easterly direction to join Bridleway No 44 at the Warkworth Parish boundary.

**Current condition**

A wide, well maintained, easy to navigate pathway.

**No immediate priorities**

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	✓
Bridges, gates and stiles	✓	Obstructions	✓

**Footpath No 12**

101/012

**Route**

From Footpath No 10 east of Acklington Park in a north easterly direction to join Footpath No 18 at the Warkworth Parish boundary.

**Current condition**

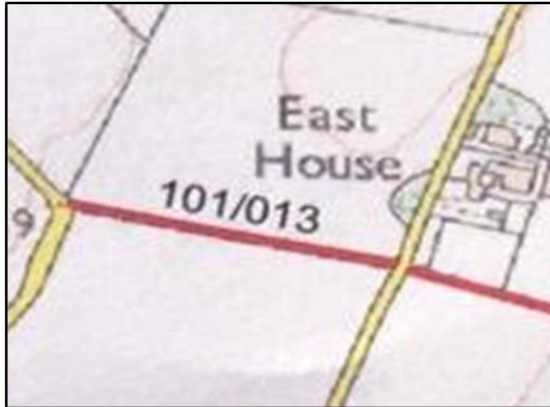
A very short, well maintained field edge footpath,

**No immediate priorities**

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	✓
Bridges, gates and stiles	✓	Obstructions	✓

## Footpath No 13

101/013



### Route

From the C100 road south-east of Bank House in a general south-easterly direction to the U3088 road south of East House.

### Current condition

Footpath is well maintained by the Davidson family of East House Farm . They cut the grass along the length of the path.

### Immediate priorities



### Missing footpath sign

A footpath sign is required where footpath 101/013 joins the U3088 metal road south of East House.

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	<b>X</b>
Bridges, gates and stiles	✓	Obstructions	✓

## Footpath No 14

101/014



### Route

From the C101 road north of East House in a north-easterly direction to join footpath 237/025 at the Warkworth Parish Boundary.

### Current condition

A short, well maintained path. The signpost needs some attention.

### Immediate priorities



### Signpost leaning at an acute angle

Signpost at the south end of the footpath needs some minor repairs.

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	<b>X</b>
Bridges, gates and stiles	✓	Obstructions	✓

## Footpath No 15

101/015



### Route

From Footpath No 1 in the Parish of East Chevington at the Morpeth Rural District boundary in a westerly and north-westerly direction to join the U3078 road west of the Old Quarry Acklington.

### Current condition

An important footpath with several issues and obstructions.

### Immediate priorities



#### Path surface destroyed by the plough

The field headland path has been partly ploughed out.



#### Collapsed stile

The wooden timbers have rotted away and the stile has collapsed. A barbed wire barrier represents a real danger to walkers.



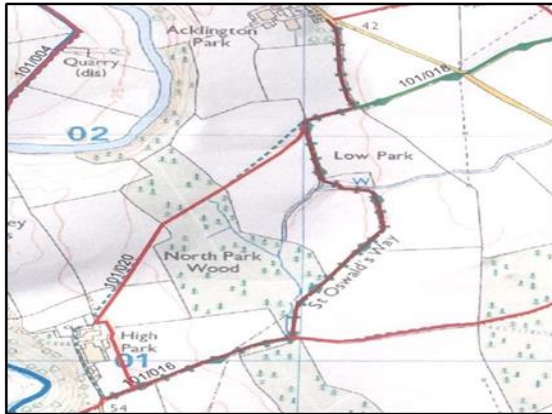
#### A fence is obstructing the pathway

The stile has rotted away. A fence has been erected in its place creating an obstruction. A fallen tree is also blocking the pathway.

Path surface	X	Signs and waymarks	⊘
Bridges, gates and stiles	X	Obstructions	X

## Footpath No 16

101/016



### Route

2.5 metre wide pathway from C102 road, south of Acklington Park Farm in a southerly and south-west direction, passing North and South Park Woods to join the U3042 road 260 metres south of High Park Farm.

### Current condition

A well maintained footpath, which forms part of St Oswald's Way.

### Immediate priorities



#### Field gate has a broken hinge

A broken hinge has made it very difficult to open and close this field gate.

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	✓
Bridges, gates and stiles	<b>X</b>	Obstructions	✓

**Footpath No 17** 101/017



**Route**

From the U3088 road in a south-easterly direction to join footpath no 137/024 in the Warkworth Parish

**Current condition**

A missing footpath sign, and busy caravan site makes finding this path difficult. Deviates from the Definitive pathway

**Immediate priorities**



**Missing footpath sign**

A footpath sign is required where footpath 101/017 joins the U3088 metal road south of East House.



**Footpath obstruction**

Footpath along the field edge is obstructed by touring caravans' electric hook-up posts . Cables and waste pipes cause obstructions.



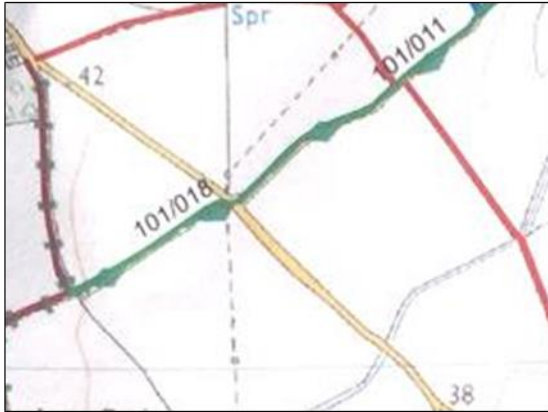
**Footpath deviates from Definitive route**

Definitive cross-field footpath has been ploughed over, but not restored. The landowner has recommended an alternative pathway: with supporting signage

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	<b>X</b>
Bridges, gates and stiles	✓	Obstructions	<b>X</b>

## Footpath No 18

101/018



### Route

From the Guyzance – Cheeveley road north of Low Park, in a north-easterly direction to join the Guyzance – Acklington road opposite its junction with Bridleway No 11.

### Current condition

A wide, well maintained, easy to navigate path.

### Immediate priorities



#### Fallen tree obstructing the path

A storm-blown tree is blocking and obstructing the pathway

Path surface	✓	Signs and waymarks	✓
Bridges, gates and stiles	✓	Obstructions	<b>X</b>

## Footpath No 20

101/020



### Route

From footpath 101/016 north west of Low Park, to a point 65 metres east of High Park farmhouse, thereafter as a 1.5 metre wide footpath in an easterly direction for 25 metres, then southerly for 300 metres to re-join footpath 101/016.

### Current condition.

This footpath is difficult to navigate because of vegetation growth, and a major deviation from the Definitive pathway.

### Immediate priorities



#### Major obstruction of the Definitive pathway

The landowner has ploughed across the pathway and erected a fence across the Definitive route.



#### Shoulder-high vegetation for 100 metres

A 100 metre section of the route through North Park Wood is almost impassable. Waist-high vegetation 50 metres east of High Park Farm.



#### Rotten/dangerous stile

Rotten wooden stile at the north east entry point to North Park Wood.

Path surface	<b>X</b>	Signs and waymarks	⊘
Bridges, gates and stiles	<b>X</b>	Obstructions	<b>X</b>

## APPENDIX 2

### Priorities at a glance

Footpath number	Path surface	Gates Stiles	Signs Waymarks	Obstructions
No 1	✓	X	X	✓
No 2	X	X	✓	X
No 3	✓	X	X	✓
No 4	✓	X	⊘	✓
No 5	✓	✓	✓	✓
No 6	X	X	X	X
No 7	✓	X	X	✓
No 8	X	X	⊘	X
No 9	X	X	X	X
No 10	X	X	⊘	X
No 11	✓	✓	✓	✓
No 12	✓	✓	✓	✓
No 13	✓	✓	X	✓
No 14	✓	✓	X	✓
No 15	X	X	⊘	X
No 16	✓	X	✓	✓
No 17	✓	✓	X	X
No 18	✓	✓	✓	X
No 20	✓	X	⊘	X

Well maintained ✓

Adequate, but improvement needed ⊘

Difficult, or impossible to use X

X



## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Extracts of Highways Act 1980**

#### **Section 130 (6)**

If the council of a parish or community or, in the case of a parish or community which does not have a separate parish or community council, the parish meeting or a community meeting, represent to a local highway authority—

(a) that a highway as to which the local highway authority have the duty imposed by subsection (3) above has been unlawfully stopped up or obstructed, or

(b) that an unlawful encroachment has taken place on a roadside waste comprised in a highway for which they are the highway authority,

it is the duty of the local highway authority, unless satisfied that the representations are incorrect, to take proper proceedings accordingly and they may do so in their own name.