

Warnford Parish

Rights of Way Summary May 2023

1. General

This report summarises the overall status of rights of way in the Parish for the Parish Meeting on 25th May 2023

2. “Green Lanes” (Bosenhill Lane, Green Lane and Dark Lane)

Natural recovery continues following the banning of motor vehicles in 2018. Fallen trees are an occasional problem but have been dealt with by landowners. The landowner has also improved the drainage and eliminated the seasonal mud pool in the middle of Bosenhill Lane. Bosenhill Lane and Green Lane are now a pleasure to walk on and are in use by cyclists and equestrians as well as walkers. Dark Lane is still deeply rutted through half its length and is less used. Occasional illegal use by motorcycles continues, but not at a sufficient level to have resulted in complaints.

3. Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways

The general state is satisfactory. There are occasional minor issues with restoration of cross-field footpaths after ploughing/harrowing and some cases of obstruction by growing crops (usually sweetcorn). These are registered with landowners and (where necessary) HCC, which usually results in action.

The significant problems (as currently registered with HCC) are:

- **Very high stiles on Footpath 9, Pinks Hill.** These stiles have been repaired occasionally but have remained essentially unchanged for many years despite pressure on the landowner. They are difficult for people of less than average height and impossible for the less able.
- **Hydraulic gate closers on Bridleway 11, Beacon Hill.** Two gates have been fitted with hydraulic closers which make it very difficult for a horse and rider to pass, even dismounted. They are unnecessary because all adjacent pasture has been separately fenced. The landowner has been asked to remove them.

If you walk our footpaths please report any problems that you encounter. If you don't walk our footpaths – let us know what might encourage you to do so!

4. Diversion Applications

There are no current diversion applications in the Parish.

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5. Long Term Changes

Status of possible changes to the network is as follows:

Improvements to the existing network

1. **Gates to replace stiles on Footpath 7 (North End Cottages to West Meon Church).** There are two stiles which make this path difficult for the less able, plus the steps up the bank from Lippen Lane. Sherri Barfoot has recently initiated a project which aims to replace the stiles with gates and improve the steps. A rough estimate of cost is around £1000. Hampshire Countryside has indicated that they would support an application for a grant, which could cover up to 50% of the cost. The Waltham Ramblers have offered to carry out installation of the gates, which can count as up to another 25%, leaving 25% to find.
2. **Change of status of Footpath 10 (Wheely Down Road via Ran Lane to Wheely Farm) from footpath to bridleway.** A Parish Meeting in the 1960s agreed that this route had been misclassified on the original Definitive Map in 1949 and Hampshire County Council took an action to change it, but never did so. A recent Parish Meeting expressed concerns about this idea as it might encourage cyclists to ride on the other footpaths in the area. Unless representations from the equestrian or cycling communities are received it will not be taken further.

Potential additions to the network

As reported at previous meetings, the Ramblers have initiated a project to get footpaths and bridleways which were missed from the original Definitive Map in 1949 added to the network – otherwise the right to add them expires in 2026. The following are included on their list (see the attached map). As far as is known (with the exception of #1) no action has yet been taken:

1. A footpath from the A32 south of the entrance to Abbey House and across what is now the Abbey House garden and estate to Beacon Hill Cottage, then onward on the line of Beacon Hill Lane to Beacon Hill. HCC has already made a Definitive Map Modification Order to create this path based on strong evidence of its former existence which has been presented. However a landowner objection has been received and the Order is now subject to review by the Planning Officer. The footpath through the Abbey House grounds would be of little value, but the continuation linking Beacon Hill Lane to Beacon Hill would create very useful and attractive route from the Meon Valley Trail to Beacon Hill. It is hoped that a compromise can be worked out.
2. A footpath from the village to the church, representing roughly the line of the pre-turnpike road through the valley. It ran from opposite the George & Falcon through what is now the Manor Farmhouse garden, then east of the river to the old house site and the church.
3. A footpath from Coronation Cottages along the back of Hanover Cottages, School Terrace and the Old Grain Store, then across the Pinks Hill track (Footpath 9) and onward high on the bank behind The Farmhouse and Warnford House, emerging onto Wheely Down Road about 400 yards up from the A32 junction. (This path is marked on some current maps)

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4. A footpath from Lippen Lane at The Old Calf Shed and running in a straight line north west across fields, crossing Footpath 17 at right angles and continuing to join Footpath 8 on the shoulder of Pinks Hill.
5. A footpath from Hayden Lane, about 150 yards above the track to Lower Peake Farm and running east of north in a shallow zigzag to Brocklands Farm, West Meon, crossing the Meon Valley Trail on the way. (Note that only the first 200 yards would be in Warnford Parish).

There is one further possibility which was suggested in 2019. It has (as far as is known) no provable basis in documented history, although it does use the line of a “herepath” (army road) mentioned in the Saxon boundaries of West Meon! It would, therefore, depend on landowner consent.

6. A new footpath from Footpath 7 (Lippen Lane to West Meon Church) at the parish boundary, running down the boundary bank to a new footbridge over the Meon and onto the A32 at Sheepbridge. This would turn Footpath 15 (Hayden Lane to Sheepbridge) into a useful through route and add a good circular route to the local network. Unfortunately the individual who was pursuing this in West Meon (it would be on their side of the boundary) has left the village and it seems unlikely to be taken further in the short term.

Please suggest other ideas for consideration. The following kinds of improvement can be considered:

- Replacement of stiles with gates
- Improvements to surfaces, particularly where this helps accessibility
- Changes of designation (for example footpath to bridleway)
- Improvement to walking routes along roads
- New links in the network (with landowner consent)

Derek Chapman

23rd May 2023.

Warnford Parish
Footpaths Identified by Ramblers' "Don't Lose Your Way" Project

