KIRKWHELPINGTON FOOTPATHS MAY 7 2024

Quick Recap: work has been done on local paths structures by local people for many years. Recent contact with the county council(NCC) started in 2022 over paths blocked by The national trust. NCC are aware of many outstanding jobs in the area but have a huge backlog.

Stiles:NCC are keen to reduce reliance on stiles (more gates to allow easier access), but in the meantime we have repaired 6 ladder and step stiles. Negotiations about stiles at West Harle and Kirkharle are under way -both stand by gates and NCC favour removing the decaying stiles.NCC promise to provide us with materials, which we await in order to work on the step stile at Marycastle, the ladder stile above Walkmill, and others.

Ditch work:NCC are keen that duckboards and small bridges be replaced with backfilled pipes. Discussions are required.

Signage:We have placed many footpath and bridlepath signs, having aquired a supply, but have run out of the latter. Again , supplies from NCC awaited.

Vegetation: In the village we have had regular efforts at clearing the paths through Priests Close and to The Groove Well. We are not meant to use powertools (notably strimmers) for this without approved training. Would the PCC consider funding such training?.We have worked at vegetation in other sites , notably the wood north of Marycastle.

Gates: Like stiles, these are the undeniable responsibility of the landowner. We have drawn the NCCs attention to difficult gates where needed, and hopefully our relatively new local footpath officer Adam Musk will take this on.

Things that nobody's sure about: The local footpath network is not unusual in exhibiting problems which seem insoluble. We have a staircase on a bridlepath,well used thoroughfares with no official status (where permissive access has lapsed and only the landowners goodwill allows use), illegal diversions which have been in place for decades, and paths you cant trace on a map.Much of this will continue into the future , tolerated one hopes with good will on both sides.