

Meeting re Public Footpaths 5.09.16

Meeting

Meeting held in the Meeting Room of Herstmonceux Integrative Health Centre

Attendees

5 parishioners who represent Herstmonceux Walking Club, informal walking groups and a parishioner who is walking and reviewing all footpaths in the parish.

Comments

- The Clerk to the Steering Group explained that a Green Spaces Report had been prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan but the Steering Group wished to seek the opinions of residents on the accessibility, the state of the footpaths and whether there are any points they wish to raise in respect of future developments in the parish.

Key Points

1. There is a wide network of Public Footpaths across the parish.
2. Herstmonceux Walking Group arranges walks using footpaths in the parish – one of the members reported that there are a number of issues which need addressing e.g. broken or unsafe stiles, kissing gates, overgrown paths.
3. There is a scheme Hailsham where members of the Walking Group work with Hailsham Town Council to inspect particular problems on the footpaths around Hailsham – minor clearing work and repairs can be carried out by the Walking Group Members and more serious faults are reported back to Hailsham Town Council.
4. Herstmonceux Walking Group has no contact with Herstmonceux Parish Council and were not aware that there was a Herstmonceux Council Working Group with responsibilities for the footpath network.
5. Residents who regularly walk the footpaths in Herstmonceux Parish also had no contact information about how to report any problems with footpaths and usually reported any problems to ESCC Rights of Way. There are problems on a number of footpaths, e.g. broken or obstructed stiles, overgrown paths, lack of signage.
6. Some residents are unable to use stiles and there should be a number of walks in the parish where stiles are replaced with kissing gates.
7. One resident, Mr M. Emery, who works for Natural England is walking the footpaths of the Parish, noting any problems with stiles, gates, signage etc. He has made one report to Herstmonceux Parish Council but does not know what action has been taken on problems reported.
8. Residents, Mr and Mrs S. Burke have produced an information leaflet for a walk to All Saints Church, Herstmonceux from Victoria Road,

Windmill Hill. A second leaflet with details of a walk between All Saints Church, Herstmonceux and St Mary's, Wartling is planned. This is an initiative from the churches.

9. Some years ago, there was a small selection (perhaps 5 or 6) of walks in the parish. These walks were popular with residents and visitors to the parish. It was suggested that an appeal be placed in the Parish Magazine to see if anyone had copies of the walks.
10. More leaflets about local walks should be produced with information about accessibility (for wheelchair and families with prams), points of interest, pubs or tea shops for refreshments, the length of the walk etc. Signs should be erected on popular routes e.g. to the churches, Herstmonceux Castle, the Truggery, the Science Centre. A recent WI Scheme to arrange walk for WI Members was abandoned as it was impossible to find an accessible route (no stiles) from the village.
11. A series of walks is planned from Herstmonceux Integrative Health Centre by the Green Open Spaces for Health (GOSH) Scheme. Each walk, at 2pm on Mondays between 12 September 2016 – 28 November 2016, will last approximately 1 -1.5 hours and will be led by a Ranger from the South Downs National Park. These walks are part of the Health and Well-Being Programme at the Health Centre.
12. The residents noted that there have been two sites in Herstmonceux which have received Outline Planning Permission for 40 and 70 dwellings respectively. It was suggested that these sites and any development sites in the future would benefit from having access on to the footpath network. This would support the Health and Well-Being Programme at the Health Centre

Action

1. All new developments should have direct access to the closest footpath which allows residents to use footpaths to access other parts of the parish and supports the evidence of the health benefits of outdoor activity.
2. Communications (newsletters, web site, meetings) between Herstmonceux Parish Council, Walking Groups and residents who use the Public Footpaths must be improved – a scheme similar to the one in Hailsham would be a good idea. This will lead to improvements in stiles, gates, signage etc.
3. A series of leaflets about local walks should be produced.