

Hello to Ashendon Parish Council with reference to improving your rights-of-way network. Potential Discussion document for PC meeting on Monday 9th June 2025.

I'm Bill Piers, founder in 2015 of a group of retired volunteers, known as North Bucks rRIPPLE (ramblers Repairing and Improving Public Paths for Leisure and Exercise). I live in Haddenham and am a share holder in The Ash Tree public house.

I came up on Sunday 25/5/25 to practice some hill walking for a week long walking holiday in Shropshire starting 2/6/25. I was pleased and impressed to see The Ash Tree ordnance survey map in the pub with Ashendon in the very centre.



This implies there is an interest perhaps in putting Ashendon “on the map” for walkers who might in turn use the pub. There are after all, numerous routes down hill from the pub via Footpath 9, west to Dorton; FP2 northeast to Westcott; FP4 east to Upper Winchendon and FP10 southeast to Nether Winchendon; from the Pollicotts FPs 12/8 & 7 southwest to Chilton; FP6 south to Long Crendon; FP5 southwest to Chearsley.

Furthermore I was interested in the minutes of the parish council meeting on the wall of the village hall. Under 10 PC Finance, footpaths/rights of way improvements for leisure and exercise was mentioned with accessible gates as opposed to stiles. Note was made of our group’s Donate-a-Gate Scheme.

10. PC Finance

End of Year accounts for the financial year ending 2024-2025 were agreed. A financial report for 2025/26 was also circulated and agreed. This highlighted village projects for 2025/26. The most pressing projects remain the **extension of the footpath to Wotton Road/White City, a safe footpath from Pollicott to Village End and footpath/rights of way improvements for leisure and exercise with accessible gates (as opposed to stiles).** The [Donate a Gate scheme by North Bucks rRIPPLE](#) (ramblers Repairing & Improving Public Paths for Leisure & Exercise) was noted. **ACTION: LJ/SM/CLERK to follow-up.**

Also mentioned were two parish councillors acting as Footpath Monitors: Sian Miller and Andy Howes. Devolved services such as grass cutting maybe should also include clearance of nettles through copse on FP9 – see photos below.

- **Footpath Monitor:** Sian Miller (PC Lead) Andy Howes (Footpath Monitor)
- **For reviewing PC Governance and Parish Council Insurance:** Chris Rand/Sian Miller
- **For monitoring Grass Cutting (Devolved Services):** Fiona Jacob with support of Kevin Nash

Below is the result of a very brief and limited survey of the state of Ashendon's footpaths: (Rec: S2G means Stile to Gate is recommended).

It is by no means good news. There are a lot of restrictions to access for less mobile or agile walkers and it appears farmers are deliberately making it difficult for dogs. This is not at all unusual in Bucks where sheep are grazed. All we can do is suggest a coming together of local farmers, local dog walkers, walkers and parish councillors. Discussions between these groups of people can only help to get some mutual understanding of the problems and difficulties that exist between farmers, dog walkers and elderly less able walkers. Otherwise with no buy-in to replacing stiles with gates, the footpath network will simply remain in the somewhat dire state it currently exists.

FP9 heads west towards Dorton from Lower End opposite the pub and starts promisingly through a kissing gate, and across a pasture past Hill Farm to Wotton Road. At Wotton Road, however, there is a quite awkward and high 4-rail, only 1-step, no hand post, dog-resistant stile (ASH/4197). Rec: S2KG.



Across Wotton Road, is a completely unusable and derelict stile hidden in the hedge. Some 5 m away is an unlocked field gate that with some difficulty and potential for injury can be opened (and closed) to gain access to the FP9 that continues across the field.



Should the farmer ever decide to padlock and chain this field gate, the path would become impassable at this point. The hidden stile in the hedge is WUN/4229, as the field across the road is in the parish of Wotton Underwood, even though the next field over towards the railway and Dorton is back in Ashendon. Rec: S2G.

Across this field, FP9 passes through a narrow spinney. This 50 m section of FP9 is invisible, being severely overgrown with high nettles and in the spinney is a collapsed footbridge, ASH/4196. On the west side there is a short way-marker post hidden in the nettles. There is no way-marker post on the east side.



Rec: Get village handyman to strim the 50 m section of path through the spinney as part of the devolved services contract in April, June & September or as necessary. Get BC RoW to replace/repair footbridge. Provided path is kept strimmed and obvious then way-marker posts are not really necessary.

FP2 northeast to Westcott: Starts off great with a kissing gate only to be followed by a series of stiles. One, bottom right of these 6 photos, has two steps and a hand post and could be considered as conforming to the British Standard and is useable but the others are far from friendly. All these stiles could and should be replaced with gates, however only if the landowner is happy with the one kissing gate that's been installed and is happy for more to be installed. Only local engagement and discussion and negotiation can move things forwards here. NB rRIPPLE could install all these gates.



FP4 east to Upper Winchendon and FP10 southeast to Nether Winchendon. Again this starts off with a kissing gate but quickly deteriorates to a falling over way-marker post and numerous stiles of various styles. This double stile is quite close to what appears to be a normally open gap the size of a field gate that walkers obviously use in preference to the difficult and virtually impassable stiles.



A farmer has replaced several old stiles with new “home-made” stiles.



One of the main problems is a lack of hand posts. Users of stiles do like something to hang onto whilst getting their legs over the upper rail. All these stiles appear to be very anti-dog, with no dog-ways or dog-latches to allow dogs to pass.

I didn't venture over to Pollicott. However this brief reconnoitre of Ashendon shows that there is a lot to do before The Ash Tree can welcome walking groups to Ashendon as a walker friendly area. As a member of Haddenham U3A walking groups, as too is Kevin Nash, we know how many local pubs welcome walking groups of maybe 20 people at lunchtimes.


We wish you well with your endeavours and are very happy to offer advice and help. Through the Donate-a-Gate scheme, straight forward pedestrian gates are £350 and kissing gates £500. Further information can be found on our website, including application forms. Anyone can donate a gate, it doesn't have to be the PC.

Our best advice is to get the farmers on side, and get the dog walkers to be actively responsible. Get them to love each other!



Regards

Bill Piers

1st June 2025



RAMBLERS
Bill Piers, Coordinator
48 Stokes End
Haddenham
Bucks HP17 8DX
Tel 01844 290923
Mob 07799 110128
williamsbp@gmail.com



RAMBLERS

See details of the Donate a Gate Scheme at:
bucks-wmiddx-ramblers.org.uk/donate-a-gate