

Otterton Footpath and Rights of Way Signs

The many footpath and rights of way signs (shortened to footpath* in the rest of the report for convenience) in the Parish of Otterton are mostly coming to the end of their useful lives. They were probably all replaced at the same time some 20-30 years ago.

Every time the footpaths are inspected more and more posts are found to have fallen over. This is mainly due to a combination of a lack of maintenance, natural rot at their base and getting hit during hedge trimming operations. Appendix A has a list of damaged posts, this does not include directional signs which are now getting difficult to read due to natural wear.

There are four categories of signs considered in this report as follows;

- Finger posts - long posts supporting directional arms
- Long posts - with attached footpath (or other) discs
- Short posts – with attached footpath discs
- Farm fencing, posts, walls or other existing infrastructure with attached discs.

The footpaths and right of way consist of;

- Footpaths (FP)
- Permitted paths (PP)
- Bridleways (BW)
- County Roads (Green Lanes, GL) – of which we have many

Some posts have footpath related reliefs chiselled in them.

Funding

The footpaths* are the responsibility of Devon County Council. They however have limited funding and an increasing network (as minor roads get downgraded). Broken and damaged signs are not currently getting replaced in a timely way. It is thought that in future only “essential” posts may be reinstated.

The traditional wooden directional finger signs are being replaced with polycarbonate signs.

Otterton is a quintessential picture postcard village. Would green polycarbonate directional signs be acceptable in a village of cob walls and thatch roofs? The Parish Council have limited funds but within their resources there is a ring fenced money of footpaths*. Should this money be spent on replacement wooden directional signs and if so which ones?

Within the actual village there is only one green polycarbonate sign at present (Anchoring Hill / Pub footpath 14, attached to Telegraph Post at East end)

Priority

How do we decide where to spend our limited funds? The coastal path seems to be reasonably well funded and badged so is excluded. I suggest the first wooden replacements should be;

1. Brendon Lane (311) Finger post at north west end.
2. Passaford Lane (301) at Farm End
3. Reinstatement of as many fallen posts as the monies will allow - DCC responsibility but needs doing urgently

I suggest the Parish Council needs to develop a pecking order for future funding as follows;

- a) Finger Posts (rather than posts with discs)
- b) Within the village
- c) Most popular footpaths*
- d) Key junctions
- e) Other

Costs

Appendix B has indicative costs obtained from 3 potential providers. The third supplier was suggested by DCC and they have provided many finger posts and waymarkers for the National Trust based at Branscombe, which also included South West Coast Path signage. They seem to have the most reasonable prices and best experience and are local.

Appendix A - List of damaged, broken or missing posts.

Finger posts

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Brendon Lane (311) | Tall post cut down and reinstalled (rot) |
| 2. Colliver Lane (3) | Fallen due to rot at base (mid way) |
| 3. Bar's Lane (308) | One of 3 arms fallen off (by Seaview Farm), post leaning |
| 4. Passaford Lane (301) | Fallen due to rot and probably hit (Farm End) |
| 5. Bay Road (8) | In shrubs (jn to back road to Seaview) |

Long Posts

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 6. Holestone Lane (303) | Fallen due to rot at base (N end of stream) |
| 7. Sewage Works PP | Fallen due to rot at base (outside works) |

Short Posts

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 8. Colliver Lane (3) | Fallen due to rot at base (mid way) |
| 9. Holestone Lane (303) | Fallen due to rot at base (Junction with 306 / 307) |
| 10. Bar's Lane (308) | Fallen due to rot at base (Junction with 307) |
| 11. Chockenhole Lane (305) | At angle - Hit by tractor (Junction with Bar's Lane) |
| 12. Chockenhole Lane (305) | At angle / damage – Flailed by tractor (Mid point) |
| 13. Mutters Moor PP | Fallen – bottom of plantation) |
| 14. Sewage Works PP | Missing – outside works, vehicle damage |

Appendix 2 – Costs

Three potential suppliers were contacted.

A Nature Sign Design

Price of 3m length solid oak finger posts are:

1 post with 1 finger - £250

1 post with 2 fingers - £280

1 post with 3 fingers - £340

1 post with 4 fingers - £380

Additional routed letters on above are £2.50 each.

Additional arrow or chevron on above are £7 each.

Delivery would depend on distance and quantity.

All prices plus VAT @ 20%

B Grain Designs (found in internet, mainly makes coat racks)

All prices are for 10ft posts with 2.5ft finger post each way, fitted together, green oak.

Double = £97, Painted £107

Corner = £107, Painted £117

Single = £87, Painted £97

For just the finger post (single 2.5ft double and corner 5ft)

Double = £54, £64 painted

Corner = £54, £64 painted

Single = £47, £57 painted

C Wild Work // Widecombe-in-the-Moor (suggested by DCC)

For example, a fully assembled finger post with two arms would typically be;

1x 9-10ft, 100mm x 100mm oak post with weather top, 2x oak arms with 2x lines of engraved text per side and all engraved text infilled black - £132 ex vat

At the other end of the scale a finger post with four arms would be;

1x 10-11ft, 100mm x 100mm oak post with weather top, 4x oak arms with 2x lines of engraved text per side and all engraved text infilled black - £194 ex vat

Prices increase slightly if engraved text is required on the post itself and/or logos (trails symbols) are needed on the arms.