Rights of Way report - May 31st 2018

It has been another busy year for the Rights of Way team.    
  
Generally most of the tracks are in good to excellent condition, and I am very grateful to the team of Footpath Wardens who  continue to take great pride and care of "their" particular tracks, clearing fallen branches and trees, and cutting back vegetation.  This  helps to keep the paths open and makes them such a pleasure to walk.  The tracks have been truly stunning this spring, with bluebells, red campion and wild parsley in full flower, not to mention the amazing birdsong.  
  
An enthusiastic working party of volunteers gave up two mornings in March to work on Cross Lane and the track from the Bruce Arms to Milton hill.  We hope that further planings may become available at some stage to improve the wet and muddy  areas.  Thank you to all those who gave up their time and joined in.  Much progress was made.  
  
A very large branch fell from a beech tree on the Milton Hill track.  It was too large for our usual volunteer chainsaw team, and Stephen Leonard from Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way team kindly dealt with it last week.  
  
The kissing gates are generally working well and have improved the access to the footpaths.  One has been damaged by hedge trimming operations.  The landowner concerned has promised to repair it in the near future.  
  
The vigorous grass growth this season, plus the reduction in the numbers of horses using the tracks,  has led to an increase in grass mowing requirement. Easton Royal Parish Council has undertaken the responsibility for this from Wiltshire Council.  Wiltshire's limited funds means that this is a task they are now unable to fulfill.  My thanks go to Mark and James dePass for mowing the paths in their fields, and to Hew for mowing the tracks around Home Farm and Cross Lane.  Also to Roger Tilbrook, who has already done a stint with the strimmer on his track.  
  
I am sure the entire village appreciates the amount of effort and work that goes into maintaining and improving the tracks and paths; and so I would particularly like to thank Christopher Elliott for achieving so much during his time as our Footpaths officer. His energy and enthusiasm led to the greatest improvement to the tracks and paths for very many years. The planings surface on Harris lane has now settled in and  remains dry and accessible throughout the year.  The kissing gates are being well used and allow good access to a range of paths for most walkers.

Special thanks also go to the landowners for allowing access and helping to keep theIr field paths in good order; Mark and James de Pass, Graham Cooper, Francis Brookes,  Richard and David Butler,  Beverley and Simon Turton.   For footpath wardens Marc Cramsie, Paul Narizanno, Lloyd Cockbain, Colin Sibun, Ben Higham, Roger Tilbrook, Chris Elliott,  plus  Liz and Brian Norman, Colin and Katy Chesterman, Cedric, Fay Rickhuss, Alan Archer and Mark Edwards.  So many have helped this year.

Thank you all.

   Beverley