



Botesdale & Rickingham Paths and Streams Project – an update

This community project is now nearing the end of its second season of activities and much progress has been made over the winter months.

For those of you who walk down the footpath located almost opposite the village Post Office, the differences from two winters ago are very apparent. From crossing the wooden bridge at the foot of the slope and turning right, the tidying of the stream bank is evident, as is the repair to the vandalised fence and memorial bench on the field side of the footpath. The first attempts have been made to remove some of the silt from this stream bed on the right, while the hedgerow on its opposite bank has also received some much needed attention.

After eighty metres or so the footpath takes a sharp left hand turn and it is at this point where the effect of the new culvert pipework (paid for by Botesdale Parish Council) can be seen. Water now flows through this pipe down a pebbly slope into a freshly excavated stream bed and eventually into the main stream at its foot which is about 60 metres distant. The undergrowth has also been pruned along this whole stretch. Water hasn't flowed along this stretch in over ten years.

Turning right at the end of this length of footpath the walker will come to Fen Lane where on the left a triangular strip of land has been completely cleared of tree debris and thick undergrowth to allow some light to reach the floor of this small glade. Forming the base of this triangle is another spring fed stream which until very recently had been almost totally silted up and littered with fallen branches and dead trees all of which have now been cleared, as has a short stretch on the opposite side of the culvert.

The main stream that flows through this stretch was also seriously blocked by a number of fallen trees, all of which were hauled from the stream bed and removed the site.

This work has been completed by a very small, hard pressed and dedicated team of volunteers from the village along with help and support from the Suffolk Probation Service and their Community Payback Teams. These teams have provided a much needed heavy labour resource at regular intervals throughout the past year. Much still remains to be done, although the teams finish work shortly for the spring and summer period to provide nature time to take its course during the breeding and growing seasons.

The work is already paying off in that sightings of a Kingfisher have been reported along with that of the resident Little Egret. During the harsh cold snap in December, 20 or so Mallard were seen on a daily basis swimming in what was the only moving and ice free water for quite a distance.

Much remains to be done and there are plans in hand for a third season commencing in mid - September. If you would be prepared to give up two hours of your Sunday morning once a fortnight, and don't mind getting hands and boots dirty, then you will be made very welcome by an enthusiastic and friendly bunch. To find out more about it or to simply volunteer your services call Chris Lambert on 01379 897053.