

Norton St Philip Footpath Report – May 2024

Introductory Notes

This report is intended to define the designated Public Rights of Way (PROWs) in the Parish of Norton St Philip and to identify potential areas of risk and opportunity for the maintenance and possible development of the footpath network in the Parish.

The report is provided to the Area PROW Warden at Somerset County Council and NSP Parish Council, and is based on observations made from Autumn 2023 to Spring 2024.

Reference numbers for PROWs, gates, stiles, bridges, or fingerposts, reflect the designations given on the excellent interactive map, 'Explore Somerset', on the SCC website.

There are 38 designated PROWs in the Parish – 33 footpaths and 5 bridleways (although 3 of these comprise a single route). 28 PROWs are in and around NSP and the remaining 10 are in and around Farleigh Hungerford. 36 PROWs have a designation of FR11/xx (FR11 denoting NSP Parish), whilst the remaining 2 are named BA25/xx for reasons unknown.

The paths are largely numbered in logical groupings, with a few exceptions:

- Paths to and across the Mead are numbered FR11/1 to FR11/5
- Paths extending from Vicarage and Watery Lanes are numbered FR11/7 to FR11/11
- Paths across and extending from Shepherd's Mead and also from Bath Road, are numbered FR11/12 to FR11/19
- Paths extending from Chever's Lane are numbered FR11/20 to FR11/23
- Paths extending from Ringwell Lane towards Hassage and Tucker's Grave – are numbered FR11/25 to FR11/27, but also include FR11/37 and BA25/26 and BA25/47
- Paths in the part of Farleigh Hungerford close to Farleigh House are numbered FR11/29 to FR11/31
- Paths extending from the area around the Castle are numbered FR11/32, FR11/38 and FR11/39
- Paths extending from the lane between Farleigh and Westwood are numbered FR11/33 to FR11/35, plus FR11/40
- There are some missing designations – e.g. there is no path FR11/6

In addition to this introduction there are two further sections to the report:

- > A comprehensive summary table giving a brief description of each of the PROWs and a status assessment – Green, Amber, Red. Where appropriate, further comments and suggestions of possible actions are given. (However, please note that the status assessments are purely personal interpretations of the prevailing conditions at a particular point in time – on this basis 22 are Green, 10 Amber and 6 Red).
- > An appendix providing more detailed explanations of two of the specific risks/opportunities highlighted in the summary table.

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
Section 1 – Footpaths and Bridleways around Norton St Philip				
FR11/1	Runs through the churchyard and then across the Mead to the gate and between the houses to the High Street (with nearby access to Fortescue)	GREEN	A. There are five designated paths crossing The Mead with four of them extending out to provide access to the Mead – from the churchyard, from Bell Hill, and from two points on the High Street. These are labelled FR11/1 to FR11/5 and are detailed here for completeness.	
FR11/2	Runs diagonally across the Mead joining gates from the Bell Hill/Fair Close access to the opposite corner.	GREEN		
FR11/3	Runs from Bell Hill/Fair Close to the Mead and along the bottom edge as far as the gate to the churchyard	GREEN		
FR11/4	Runs along the edge of the Mead from the Bell Hill/Fair Close access to the top gate and along the path to the side of the George to the High street.	GREEN		

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
FR11/5	Runs diagonally across the Mead joining the gate from the churchyard to the gate by the George.	GREEN		
FR11/7	Begins at Vicarage Lane and progresses through several fields and over a number of stiles, merging with FR11/8 before crossing the parish boundary. The path continues as FR6/41 in Hemington parish, leading to the metalled road at Hill Brow Farm.	RED	<p>A. The footboard on stile #34530 is damaged and it is therefore difficult to negotiate. Also the approach to the stile is through a thicket of bushes and is uneven and boggy (even in summer) and very difficult in winter months.</p> <p>B. After lying fallow for some years, the field after stile #34530 has been planted with maize in 2023. This was planted right to the hedgerows and in late summer it was virtually impossible to find any sort of path.</p> <p>C. The footpath network in this field is somewhat complex, and may benefit from re-engineering.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Request SCC to repair stile #34530 or preferably to replace with gate and install bridge / duckboards on approach. 2. Contact landowner to ensure that footpath is re-established and maintained in the short term. 3. Consider attempting to re-route the paths. (see detailed notes for more information)
FR11/8	Short footpath from Mackley Lane, running diagonally across a field and merging with FR11/7	RED	<p>A. There is no fingerpost or other signage on Mackley Lane to indicate this path. The fieldgate where the path begins is padlocked.</p> <p>B. The route of the path is completely overgrown with maize.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the possibility of re-routing the path along the edge of the field to join FR11/7 in the corner (see detailed notes)
FR11/9	A bridleway beginning at	AMBER	A. The lower section of Watery Lane is cleared of	1. Ensure path is routinely

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
(Bridleway)	Watery Lane and progressing through fields with a number of gates until reaching the parish boundary at gate #34520. The path continues as FR6/25 in Hemington parish, leading to Marrow Pole Lane.		<p>excessive overgrowth by SCC contractors each year.</p> <p>B. Typically the upper section of Watery Lane has flowing water from Oct/Nov to Apr/May and is dry during the summer months. During exceptional periods of very heavy winter rain, the way can be effectively impassable.</p> <p>There are a number of ailing trees on the steep banks of the upper section, often weighed down with ivy. Stormy weather often results in trunks/branches coming down onto the way.</p>	monitored (particularly during winter months), and fallen trees / branches are dealt with as necessary.
FR11/10	Short footpath from Vicarage Lane passing through a field, past Hurley House, and leading to the start of Watery Lane (FR11/9)	GREEN	A. The field normally contains horses and is well curated with signs advising appropriate behaviours and temporary fencing sometimes used to indicate the line of the path.	
FR 11/11	Footpath from Vicarage Lane running diagonally across the field below the Fortescue Fields drainage ponds, along the bottom edge of the 'MUGA' field, over a stile and around the edge of a field to join Mackley Lane	GREEN	<p>A. This is the only 'official' footpath on the land below the ponds although the area is currently criss-crossed with various 'permissive' paths across, around, and to/from the ponds.</p> <p>B. The latter part of the official path is hardly used, as access to Mackley Lane is currently available through either the unsecured field gate from the 'MUGA' field or the pedestrian gate in the adjacent field. However, to the credit of the landowner, the line of the official path has been maintained along the edge of the field despite the field being cropped with maize.</p>	
FR11/12	Running from Chatley	RED	A. Field at start of path completely overplanted with	1. Landowner to be contacted

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
	Furlong across fields in the direction of Peart's Farm. Becomes FR9/2 at the boundary with Lullington parish. (only a short stretch is within NSP parish)		maize in 2023. A path was re-established by one person using a scythe to cut down the maize.	to request that path be maintained next year.
FR11/13	Begins at Town Barton running through Shepherds Mead, and on across fields heading north, running parallel to Foxholes Lane, eventually terminating at the A36	GREEN	<p>A. There is a permissive path running from near the termination of FR11/13 across to the Farm Shop.</p> <p>B. In conjunction with FR11/19 and part of FR11/18 provides a circular walk of c4.5 miles with the Farm Shop at roughly the half-way point.</p>	<p>1. The permissive path needs to be formalised with the landowner and appropriate signage implemented.</p> <p>2. Produce a guide of the circular walk for inclusion on the PC website.</p>
FR11/14	Short path across two small fields from the A366 to join FR11/13 just beyond the small commercial yard.	GREEN	A. Signed from the A366 but unlikely to be used very often.	
FR11/15	This designation appears to be given to two separate paths running diagonally (although skirting the new houses) across Shepherd's Mead to join opposite corners.	GREEN	A. It's unusual for two paths to have the same designation. Naturally the two paths intersect at a point on the Mead.	
FR11/16	Runs from Townend to	GREEN		

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
	Shepherds Mead and along the southern edge towards Town Barton			
FR11/17	From Bath Road heading across fields towards Norwood Farm, passing the buildings to the west. Soon after this the path crosses the border into BANES and the footpath continues to Hinton.	GREEN	A. Forms part of a pleasant circular walk continuing through Hinton and on a footpath to Wellow Lane and thence back to NSP.	
FR 11/18	Branches from FR11/17 and passes Norwood Farm to the east. Eventually passes through other farm buildings and terminates at the A36.	GREEN	A. Section of footpath beyond Norwood Farm likely to be little used.	
FR11/19	Footpath branching from FR11/18 near Norwood Farm, leading to the A366 at the bungalow next to Sparkey's Yard.	AMBER	<p>A. On the definitive map the footpath branches from FR11/18 in the middle of a large field (possibly a number of bounded smaller fields in the past). However there is an established track running around the perimeter of the field and the field is protected by a temporary (electrified?) fence. This seems to work well for everyone and it may be sensible to formalise this.</p> <p>B. The field leading to the gate into Sparkey's bungalow is entered via a field gate (#34472). The field is</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider whether to try to formally reroute the first section of the path along the edge of the field by Norwood Farm. 2. Consider the implementation of a pedestrian gate beyond the field gate and rerouting of the path along the edge of

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
			sometimes used for grazing cattle and the area around the gate can be exceptionally muddy. The field itself is very uneven and there is no discernible path across to the gate into Sparkey's bungalow.	the field to Sparkey's bungalow. (See detailed notes for diagram of changes suggested above)
FR11/20	Runs from Chever's Lane (opposite North St) behind the houses on Bath Rd, across a field to the B3110.	GREEN	A. This path is discernible but appears little used	
FR11/21	Runs from Chever's Lane (opposite North St), diagonally across the field as far as the 'footbridge' and stile crossing Lyde spring. Continues as FR11/23	AMBER	A. The 'footbridge' is no more than a crumbling sleeper and is very slippery in winter. The stile passes over a distorted metal field gate (clearly never used).	1. Ask SCC to update / replace current footbridge and stile with a new bridge and gate.
FR11/22	Runs diagonally across the field from south-east to north-west.	GREEN	A. Access to this path is alongside Lyde Green Cottage. However, there is no evidence of a used path running diagonally. Rather, a path has been created along the southern edge of the field leading to the footbridge over Lyde spring (where FR11/21 and FR11/23 meet).	1. Seek confirmation of the path along the southern edge as a permissive path.
FR11/23	Essentially a continuation of FR11/21, runs from the footbridge crossing Lyde spring down to Wellow Lane	GREEN		
FR11/25	A very pleasant path branching from FR11/37	GREEN	A. Begins just after the ford and runs alongside the brook and then through an uncultivated 'hidden' valley with	

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
	on the northern side of Mount Pleasant Farm, and leading towards Tucker's Grave. Becomes FR6/29 after it crosses the parish boundary just before the Tucker's Grave camp site.		lots of flora and fauna, e.g. wild orchids, butterflies, etc. B. There is also a permissive path running parallel to the first section of the path which offers a drier alternative in very wet conditions.	
FR11/26	Leading from Ringwell Lane across various fields and passing to the south of Mount Pleasant Farm, eventually terminating at a particularly dangerous stretch of the A366 shortly before Tucker's Grave.	AMBER	A. The path doesn't lead to anywhere useful. The only safe option on reaching the A366 is to return on the same path. B. There is a track running from the footpath just below MP Farm down to FR11/37. This is gated and heavily signed as Private Land. If this were to be enabled as a permissive path it would form a pleasant short circular walk from Ringwell Lane. C. Update, April 2024: The early part of the path crosses a 10 acre field often used for grazing sheep and the landowner has installed a fence along the length of the field to demarcate the public footpath. Unfortunately, although a c2m width has been allowed for the path, the ground underfoot is very uneven, there are swathes of nettles and a lot of potential overgrowth from the hedge. The path could become difficult or even impassable if not well maintained.	1. Consider approaching the landowner to discuss a permissive path linking FR11/26 and FR11/37. A possible quid pro quo would be to seek closure of FR11/26 beyond MP Farm. 2. Update, April 2014: the landowner has indicated his approval for the above suggestion. However, enjoyment of a circular walk could be compromised by the issues mentioned under point C.
FR11/27	Very short section of path branching from FR11/26, running behind	GREEN		

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
	the bungalows at the end of Springfield, and joining with the 'highway' running from Ringwell Lane, leading to FR11/37.			
FR11/37 Bridleway	A short section of bridle path leading towards the northern side Mount Pleasant Farm, and ending at the ford across the path.	AMBER	<p>A. The first section of the path leading from Ringwell Lane, alongside Burrigate Cottage), is classified as a 'highway' and therefore does not have a PROW designation (apparently within living memory this path was wide enough to drive a car along). After approx. 500m the path is gated and beyond this point becomes FR11/37. Both sections can be very muddy in winter.</p> <p>B. See comments about possible circular walk with FR11/26 above.</p> <p>C. The short detour to bypass the ford can become very overgrown with nettles and brambles. This was cleared manually on a number of occasions last summer.</p>	1. Investigate whether the ford bypass can be added to SCC's annual clearance schedule (despite it being some distance from the highway).
BA25/47 Bridleway	This is a continuation of the bridleway (previously FR11/37) beyond the ford below Mount Pleasant Farm. The main path goes uphill, past the Old Barn and down into Hassage.	AMBER	<p>A. It's unclear why this path has a 'BA' designation (rather than 'FR') as it is wholly within the NSP parish.</p> <p>B. The narrow uphill section of the path is quite overgrown from the new trees and bushes planted alongside by the landowner in recent years.</p> <p>C. There is also a branch path with the same designation, just after the Old Barn and leading to Hassage (Rainbow) Cottage. This comes to an end just before the cottage, but makes a very pleasant 'there and back' detour with interesting old stone walls and trees.</p>	1. It will probably be necessary to have a word with the landowner about the overgrowth onto the narrow path.
BA25/26	Leads from Hassage, and	GREEN		

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
	steeply uphill to the road leading to Baggridge Farm. However, leaves the parish for BANES shortly after Hassage.			
Section 2 – Footpaths around Farleigh Hungerford				
FR11/29	Footpath from the lane down to Church Farm across fields to the A366 (intersects with FR11/30)	AMBER	A. The end of the footpath closest to Church Farm is well established. However the further part leading to the A366 appears to be lost. There is no signage or apparent entry point to the path from the A366.	1. None, unless considered desirable to re-establish the connection to the A366
FR11/30	Footpath from the grounds of Farleigh House across fields to the A366 (intersects with FR11/29)	AMBER	A. The footpath is difficult to follow and disappears completely beyond the intersection with FR11/29. There is no signage or apparent entry point to the path from the A366.	1. None, unless considered desirable to re-establish the connection to the A366
FR11/31	Short footpath through the grounds of Farleigh House joining to FR11/30	GREEN		
FR11/32	Path from Farleigh Castle towards Iford, running close to / alongside the river.	GREEN	A. The path is part of the Macmillan Way, boggy in places but very picturesque, especially approaching in the direction of Farleigh Castle.	
FR11/33	Path from Westwood Lane leading down to Stowford Farm	RED	A. This path is very difficult to locate on Westwood Lane and the entrance is very overgrown. The path across two fields is then completely obscured by crops.	1. Install fingerpost on Westwood lane. 2. Work with landowner to

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
				ensure path remains available through crops.
FR11/34	Path from Westwood Lane towards Iford, the first section of which lies within the parish boundary	RED	A. The first part of this path leading from Westwood Lane is very overgrown and horribly boggy underfoot – it runs alongside a drainage ditch which clearly overtops onto the path frequently. After that the path runs pleasantly around the edge of fields and has been fenced by the landowner.	1. Drainage ditch requires maintenance to prevent flooding onto the path.
FR11/35	Another path from Westwood Lane down to Stowford Farm, however only a short section at the top end of the path lies within the Parish boundary.	GREEN	A. The trodden path across the first field does not follow the line of the Definitive Map. It does however lead to a track down to Stowford Farm (this part of the path being in Wiltshire).	
FR11/38	Leading from the gates of Farleigh Castle, through the car park and uphill to Farleigh Plain, where the footpath terminates at the border with BANES.	AMBER	A. It is believed that the path into BANES beyond Farleigh Plain was historically a PROW, but it is now heavily signed as Private. B. Although boggy at the bottom, the views from the top of the path are tremendous and make the walk worthwhile even though it is necessary to retrace steps. However, it is believed that the path is under threat from the combined parties of Historic England and Iford Estates, who are apparently combining to seek a closure order.	1. Monitor situation and be prepared to object strongly to any attempt by Historic England / Iford Estates to close this path.
FR11/39	Very short path leading down from the old Hungerford Arms to join	RED	A. The path is wrongly marked on the 'Definitive Map' as being to the east of the old pub building whereas in fact the historically used path is to the west side, and	1. Follow-up with SCC Highways wrt the entrance / exit of the new path.

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PROW	Brief Description	Status (R/A/G)	Comments / Issues	Recommended Actions
	FR11/38. The subject of much prior discussion.		<p>runs though private land.</p> <p>B. There has been much correspondence and a meeting of all parties to try to resolve this issue. The favoured outcome was to establish a new path beginning opposite Church Lane and running along the inside of the wall parallel to the A366 down to the Castle gates. This would require a new entrance in the wall and the agreement of Iford Estates to enable the path.</p>	<p>2. Identify how to influence Iford Estates to agree to the path across their land (this may not be easy as the path would link to FR11/38, which they and Historic England would like to be closed).</p>
FR11/40 (Bridleway)	Bridleway from Westwood Lane towards Iford, the first section of which lies within the parish boundary.	AMBER	<p>A. The first part of the path goes down steeply and is regularly inundated by run off from Westwood Lane. SCC have implemented repairs to the path in spring 2024, but it is feared that the stones laid may be swept away in future winters unless actions are taken to clear nearby ditches.</p> <p>B. The path is horribly muddy/boggy in sections. It is clearly much used by riders.</p> <p>C. Although apparently not detailed on the Definitive Map (but shown on OS maps), there is a gated path, fenced along the side of a field and joining with FR11/34 at the edge of the parish boundary by the sewage works.</p>	<p>1. Liaise with Area Warden to require landowner to maintain ditches to alleviate future flooding of the path</p>

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FR11/7 and FR11/8 – Status RED (Footpaths from Vicarage and Mackley Lanes)

There are two key issues associated with FR11/7 – a broken stile with a very difficult approach, and beyond this stile a field planted to the edge with maize (Autumn 2023). These issues combine to make this footpath virtually unusable at present.



The approach (from the direction of NSP) to stile #34530 is boggy even in summer, the ground is also very uneven and therefore treacherous in winter months.

It can be seen that someone has attempted to improve the situation by placing a plank of wood, but this is unstable and could in itself become a hazard.

Improvements are required.

The footplate on the stile is broken, which makes it more difficult to negotiate.

This needs to be repaired or preferably replaced with a gate.



The waymark points diagonally across the field in accordance with the Definitive Map, which shows FR11/7 converging with FR11/8 (coming from Mackley Lane) in the middle of the field, and continuing as FR11/8. Older maps show the field as three smaller bounded fields and in this context the convergence makes sense. However, the trodden path for the continuation of FR11/7 has in recent years been along the western hedge-line leading directly to a stile on the other side of the field. This arrangement appears to have been acceptable to both the landowner and footpath users.



However, in 2023 the field has been planted with maize up to the hedge-line and combined with the hedge growth during the summer, the previously trodden path has been completely lost.

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The section of FR11/8 running diagonally across the field from Mackley Lane is also completely compromised.

There is no signage to indicate the start of FR11/8 on Mackley Lane and the field gate is padlocked.

The route of the path is obliterated by the maize crop.

The landowner should be approached to request that footpaths be reinstated and maintained in future, with the possibility of re-routing FR11/8 along the northern edge of the field to join FR11/7 in the northwest corner, with FR11/7 then running along the western field edge, as has been the case recently.



Purple lines show the existing footpaths per the Definitive Map. These were defined when the field comprised three smaller bounded areas.

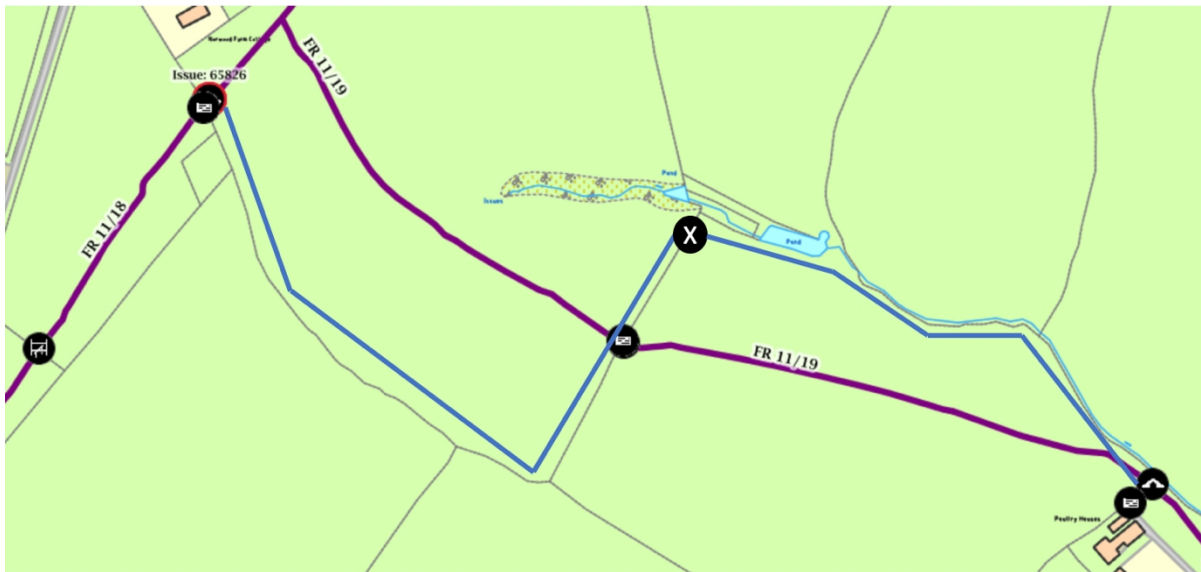
The field has been completely cropped with maize in 2023 and the paths as shown are impassable.

Blue lines indicate proposed routes around field edges. The proposed route of FR11/7 has been the trodden path in recent years and a stile already exists at position X.

(The path crosses into Hemington parish at position X and becomes FR6/41. This path has also followed the proposed route in recent years)

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FR11/19 – Status AMBER (Footpath leading from Norwood Farm to Sparkey's bungalow)



The line of FR11/19 per the definitive map is shown in purple.

The suggested alternative line is shown in blue.

The first section around the edge of the field is an established gravelled track as far as the field gate illustrated, and provides an existing and sensible alternative to the line shown on the definitive map. This is effectively already the trodden path as there is no discernible path on the line of the definitive map, and the field is often protected by an electrified(?) fence.

At the field gate the path passes through an area which in winter months is often extremely muddy and slippery, caused by cattle churning up the ground by the gate.

To avoid this muddy area, it would be possible with agreement to continue the path along to the corner of the field, install a pedestrian gate at position X and sign the footpath along the edge of the next field. The terrain here is pleasant, overlooking an area of bushes and ponds, and would potentially be preferable to the current line for both walker and landowner.