

Dear Local Access Forum,

I am writing to you regarding an issue with a gap in the footpath system in Great Missenden that is causing problems for walkers and for the owners of the land. The problem occurs because of a 200m (approximately) stretch of farm land, belonging to Sedges Farm, which is not a public right of way, essentially creating a 'no mans land' between the footpath system from Little Kingshill and the wider footpath system which joins the path up to Sedges Farm in one direction and Great Missenden in another, running alongside the railway at the back of the Misbourne School. This path has been used by a great deal of people 'unofficially' for many years, but recently very thick barbed wire was put up, barring this 200m (approx.) of pathway. Recently, we noticed it had been vandalised badly with wire cutters, which is obviously a criminal offence and one which is not going to dispose the landowner favourably to walkers.

To stop this situation between walkers and the landowners escalating, and to allow a happy resolution for both sides, we hoped it would be possible to approach the land owner at Sedges Farm in an official way, asking permission for people coming from the Little Kingshill footpath system to access the Sedges Farm footpath system. The 'unofficial' path runs alongside a fenced field, and is next to the railway, so causes absolutely no issues for the landowner and is not of any value of use to them as such. Their blocking of the pathway is purely because the landowner is asserting their rights over the land, and not because of any concern over livestock. In any case, there have been no animals in the field running next to the unofficial path for months if not years, and the fences are all broken. The land owner may assert that walkers can go round to get from the Little Kingshill path system to the other paths, but this detour is an unpleasant one alongside roads and adds approximately ten minutes to the walk, when within a couple of hundred metres one can be back on the official path.

We were hoping that we could appeal to the land owner's better nature and ask for a magnanimous gesture which would make so many walkers' lives more pleasant every day, whilst not affecting them adversely. We understand that after the vandalism to their property they are going to be angry and unfavourably disposed to walkers, but we are hoping that they realise that this was the actions of one, not all of the walkers in the area and is not condoned by us. We would be happy to discuss a donation towards the farm or a charity for the privilege of accessing the footpath system through their land.

We have also contacted the local parish council, but thought it worth getting in touch with the Forum directly since it seems to have exactly these types of issues in mind.