

A message from James Brown



Many thanks to the villagers who have contacted us following the erection of new signage on the river bank path along Pollybell Farmland. We have installed private signs on private land at the advice of the police and our insurers following an escalation of issues. Misson Parish Council has been working to educate and inform villagers about the river bank walk at the end of River Lane. Everyone who reads the local newsletter will be aware that the path is a Public Right of Way for a very short distance, then a section of private land which is walked with the permission of the land owner, and then Pollybell Farmland. We have now erected signs requiring access to this land to be authorised.

We value the support of local villagers in doing our work as authentic organic farmers and have given permission to local people to walk paths across our land subject to this being at our discretion and there being no right of way created. The walk along the river bank is such a route. Allow me to explain why we have taken the steps we have.

We have been experiencing an increase in worrying activity over the past twelve months including; the butchering of sheep in fields, theft of sheep (some of which have then been found in back street abattoirs in the area). The Police Force has advised that our land should be clearly signed as private, to remove the excuse of "I didn't know". We have also had issues of people and their dogs off lead, being allowed to bother livestock (cows and sheep) putting both them and our stock at risk. We have had a serious rise in illegal fishing, including on a Site of Special Scientific Interest. We have experienced more littering and fly tipping. Over the summer, children were repeatedly found jumping from the Bailey Bridge into the river which, given the concrete pillars that are in there and the poor quality of the water, is very dangerous; hence the private signs so they are aware it is private property and be deterred from doing so. Most upsetting for us, is the verbal abuse and threats of physical abuse towards our staff (particularly from cyclists and fishermen) whilst they are going about their job - something that people should not have to put up with at work.

During the year we also had a couple of incidents of people driving on the river bank and then getting stuck behind gates, resulting in damage done to our property. The Police Force and Fire Brigade were called to those events and subsequently asked us to erect additional signs to prevent this happening again.

I am genuinely sorry that some villagers have been upset by this turn of events and am grateful for this opportunity to send this message to every household in Misson Springs, Misson Village, and Newington Hamlet. Local villagers may continue to walk the river bank path across our land with our permission, noting it is not a Public Right of Way. All we ask is that our property is respected, the Bailey Bridge is not used as a diving board, and our staff are not subjected to abuse.

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