

Report on the use of matting and steps on the Tying

In November Freshford Parish Council agreed to lay matting on the Tying along two pathways and the building of steps to link the paths, as per the diagram attached, to tackle the mud on the paths making them impassable. Together the steps and matting would not only make the paths safe for all members of the community, allow the children to enter the Tying school gate whilst adhering to social distancing measures and also protect the Tying ground.



It was stated in the meeting that:

"The matting is expected to be removed next spring, as soon as is practicable, and the timing will be decided in discussion between Freshford school and the Parish Council."

Now spring is upon us I have revisited the subject and have been in touch with the school whose response is below:

"We regret that we are not currently in a position to resume normal procedure for children entering and leaving the school and request that the steps and matting may remain in place until the time in the future when social distancing measures are no longer in place and normal school drop off and pick up can be reinstated. Once we have been advised by the DofE that it is safe to do so we will of course be in contact. Until then we remain very grateful to the Freshford community for its forbearance in allowing us to keep our children and the school community safe in this regard." Andrew Wishart

Taking into consideration the schools view and that of my own I would like to note the following points to the Parish Council:

- The restrictions which the school is under to adhere to social distancing are still in place with nothing having changed since the matting was laid and with no indication as to when normal procedures can resume. The school is still staggering drop offs and collections for different year groups.
- With no idea as to when these restrictions will be lifted, I see little benefit in taking up the matting to potentially only have to lay it again requiring time and effort from volunteers.
- The matting is protecting the Tying and now looks much improved as the grass is growing through so the plastic is not nearly as visible.
- If the matting were taken up and we experience rain like we currently are, with the current footfall I think we would only find ourselves in a similar situation to the autumn with the paths becoming in passable.

Recommendation:

My recommendation to the Parish Council is that we leave the matting and steps in place until we and the school have a clear exit strategy from the Department of Education in consideration of COVID19 social distancing restrictions. I will continue to liaise with the school who will keep me informed as to any developments from the Department of Education.

