

Our walking environment

Talking about the last year, I can state the obvious; webbed feet would have been useful. As for the broader picture, we face big threats to the off-road network with the numerous housing developments which will only get worse. I am an official consultee and see all of the major planning applications and do object where I feel it called for but more usually suggest better or at least passable diversions.

On the positive side, the five-million-pound project in the Charnwood Forest is going well although a lot of what is being done is not obvious; the paved path between the bottom of Beacon to the Outwoods is a blessing and shortly there will be a much-improved path from the top car park at Bradgate down to the Deerbarn café. There will also be improvements to the path from Nanpantan sports club to the car park in the Outwoods

The project is promoting trails, enhancing the various honey-pot sites, and installing interpretation boards. Cultural heritage, arts, education and skills/training work is progressing well, and they are working to protect the geological heritage. They hope to become a UNESCO global geopark site along with the likes of Stonehenge. On the subject of paths, the ambition to create the long-distance links from Loughborough to Leicester via Charnwood Forest brings me to a sadder point.

Stan Warren, long -time area footpaths officer has passed away. He was like a Jack Russel with a rat in its mouth on causes he believed were right.

He had been paralysed from the waist down and in a care home for several years but finally succumbed to heart failure after struggling to breathe with pneumonia

He had campaigned for and assisted the Charnwood Forest project from its inception and they have suggested that a good way to commemorate Stans life and contribution would be to create a Stan Warren Way. Early days yet but we are exploring the practicality of this and one suggestion s that the route from Leicester to Charnwood might be a suitable option. Another might be the path from the school to the church in Groby as he spent 12 years fighting for that, twice getting the Secretary of State to overrule the County Solicitor and in the end had to conduct the 3-day hearing himself.

Stan lived alone, never married or owned a car and as such had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the footpaths in the East Midlands, second only to his knowledge of bus routes and timetables

He will long be remembered