



**NORTH BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
RIGHTS OF WAY LIAISON GROUP**

Minutes of the Meeting at 10am on the 30th April 2003
Conference Room, The Winslow Centre

Present:	Joanne Taylor	- Bucks CC
	Phil Turner	- Bucks CC
	Phil Prigg	- Bucks CC
	Dave Freeman	- Bucks CC
	Mike Walker	- Bucks CC
	Margaret Freeman	- Bucks CC
	John Elfes	- Chairman, Bucks Local Access Forum
	Viv Lynch	- British Horse Society
	John Savage	- Chiltern Society
	Paula Varey	- Bucks Assc for the Blind – MK Walking Group
	Maureen Reeves	- Bucks Assc for the Blind
	David Bradnack	- Ramblers' Association
	Mike Roe	- Ramblers' Association
	Audrey Hughes	- Cyclist Touring Club
	Angus Colquhoun	- National Trust
	Nick Phillips	- National Trust
	Robert Weeks	- National Farmers' Union

1. Apologies:

	Clive Chandler	- Open Space Society
	Robert Llewellyn	- Land Access Recreation Association

2. Introductions

All those present introduced themselves going around the table.

3. Rights of Way North Area Progress Report

Enclosed with this document a map showing the split of the areas within Bucks by Area Officer.

Work Completed 2002-3. The Report outlined the majority of the works, cropping and structure repairs. Showed the variety carried out. Annual clearance 60 km total.

Parish Paths Partnership – grant aid works carried out, displaying maps etc..

PT explained the scheme and how Parishes apply for a grant: involves local people. Grant aid is available for leaflets/map boards to be produced, could be fully funded in certain circumstances.

Leaflets for partially sighted people are to be investigated. Further advice is to be sought. (Bucks Assoc. for the Blind has offered help with taping of leaflets PV/MR/JMT).

Definitive Map Annual Progress Report

MEF reported the work done on definitive map to 31 March 2003.

A large amount of work has been done, the split in areas shows to be fairly equal.

Diversion/Extinguishments

The report had some amendments/updates

- Weedon Footpath 12 – No objections made
- Worminghall Bridleway 6 – withdrawn advertised next week or week after.

A discussion took place concerning creation of new paths:

Landowners and County Council must be involved in creating new Rights of Way. Chiltern Soc. are putting forward suggestions for creations to be considered under the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. If agreement is reached with landowner then BCC can proceed to create. The process of opening new Rights of Way will take some time to completion.

4. Feedback from the Local Access Forum.

Report by JE on the Bucks LAF. New duty under the Countryside RoW Act to set-up the Local Access Forum. LAF covers the whole county and is available for feedback/consultation. The LAF and the Rights of Way Liaison Groups allow more opportunities to talk and confer, this will enable better co-operation/consultation and should allow promotion for better countryside access. The Government are pushing more open access to the Countryside.

LAF held its first meeting recently, covering housekeeping, framework and agenda for new access rights, the Open Access Maps (due out Summer 2003), and the process for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Advice on the above would be welcomed.

5. Report on Works Projects 2003 (European Year of Disabled People)

JMT explained that money had been secured from separate funding. Monies given to improve disabled access. Projects to be done will include; Grand Union Canal, Disabled Link at Ludgershall, Claydon Farm – new off road

path. Tramway Trail at Quainton, and possible extra funds for Bernwood Way to identify link routes for disabled access.

BCC are looking for opportunities for improving rights of way for people with mobility difficulties, and will lead in pulling in funds from all areas - National funding could contribute in some instances, but will take time to source.

Smaller projects will be included, and will be a priority in linking paths.

6. Rights of Way Improvement Plan Report

JMT explained the report and the current draft proposals to progress the plan. There is a need to assess the network and draw up a plan within 5 years, but will be pressing forward as soon as possible. Plan will include a statement on the improvements and financial implications. Plans are open to public consultation, and have to be published. The plan has to be completed in five years and will then be updated every ten years.

Careful consideration on a wide-ranging consultation will need to be made.

Consultation could include the National Trust's customer surveys, British Horse Society – Horse Density Surveys.

A discussion took place covering the Definitive map and fragmentation which will be included in the plan, plus extra requirement for mobility needs will also be taken into consideration. More importance was requested with regard to cul-de-sac footpaths that need to be opened.

Parish involvement is necessary when creating new routes as it makes clear that Bucks County Council are working with the local community.

Pilot schemes are ongoing throughout the country and Countryside Agency will issue results/guidance on these at end of the year.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan will be part of the Local Transport Plan and therefore Capital money will pay for some improvements. It must be noted that once in place the finances will come from revenue to then maintain.

Bucks County Council will fund improvement works if part of the Improvement Plan, but each case will be scrutinised.

If new access is imposed on a landowner by Bucks County Council and this becomes contentious, if included in the document it will give weight to the case to create.

Support for farmers is available from various means i.e. Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Access can be financially beneficial.

7. Ploughing and Cropping Report

JMT explained the process for this season, and asked members to note and comment on the report.

A list was drawn up in November 2002 of transgressing landowners, each received a letter, and these landowners will be visited this year. Some Notices have already been served and reinstatements have all been carried out by landowner without BCC having to do. JMT thought reinstatement better than expected. So far process seems to be working. Farmers are responsible for keeping paths clear.

A request has been made that NFU state the cost to farmers when legal action is taken against them. It would be helpful if this could be published in farming magazines.

8. Other Business

- Promoted routes – BCC were undertaking a check and this was finalised last year. Will implement a rotational check for all routes annually.
- A request for the Progress Report to be condensed was acknowledged, the paperwork will be minimised and condensed to one summary sheet of tables and columns.
- Three sleeper bridges have been reported with no action as yet. These were first checked Jan 01, still no action. The matter will be investigated. MR to supply details to BCC.
- National Trust – Access Strategy – NT wants to contact user groups to find out how access to Stowe can be improved. Addresses of member groups required.
- Any initiatives, please bring forward and report. Please could this Group be a networking/consultation forum. It is necessary that there is input from all.
- Country Landowners Association and extra NFU should be recruited as well as Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trust and RSPB and British Waterways (Canal Footpaths) - JT to contact.

9. Date of Next Meeting November 2003

Likely to be November 2003 – JMT to advise.