



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**WEDNESDAY 31 MARCH 2010 AT 10.00 AM  
MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY**

### **AGENDA**

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<b>9 Any Other Business</b>	
<b>10 Date of Next and Future Meetings</b> The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday 7 July 2010, 10am, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury	





# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## *BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM*

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2009, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.50 AM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr J Elfes, in the Chair

Mr D Briggs, Mr P Challis, Mr N Harris, Mr C Hurworth, Mr A T A Lambourne, Mrs V Lynch, Mr J Coombe and Mr E Tamkin

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mr M Walker, Mr J Clark, Ms S Burchell and Ms J Woods

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Brenda Jennings.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2009, TO BE CONFIRMED**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2009 were confirmed subject to the following:

Annette Weiss appears in the attendance list as Annette Venters – change to Annette Weiss.

David Briggs was not recorded as being in attendance.

Page 3, Countryside Closer to Home, line 2 'National England' should read 'Natural England'.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman informed the Forum that he had written to the Cabinet Member for Transport regarding Grays Lane Bank. The Cabinet Member advised that Mr M Walker would consider this issue. The Chairman will keep the Forum updated.

## 5. RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP REPORT

### 1. Definitive Map Update

#### a) Recent public inquiries

Three public inquiries had been held and a hearing. One public inquiry concerned a long standing problem regarding the diversion of Public Footpath No. 12 Ickford. The route originally passed through several back gardens and this now runs outside the gardens.

A public inquiry was held into an Order to upgrade Public Bridleways Nos. 40 and 40A Great and Little Kimble and No. 62 Ellesborough to Byway Open to All Traffic. The County Council made the Order because it believes that there is sufficient evidence to show that the route carries public motor vehicular rights. During the course of the inquiry it transpired that notice had never been served on one of the major landowners in the area, the National Trust. The Inspector ruled that, despite the National Trust being fully aware of the matter, the County Council should serve notice and re-advertise the Order following the inquiry. The period for receipt of representations ended on 28 October 2009.

The Officer discussed the Drayton Parslow hearing and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) and said that vehicular rights would be lost unless the exceptions in NERC section 67 are met. She highlighted that there was a case in Hampshire where an application was made before the cut off date but was not accompanied with all the evidence, which resulted the application being regarded as not duly made and therefore it did not meet the exceptions and motor vehicular rights lost.

A Member asked the Officer the process for diverting Public Footpath in Ickford. The Officer said that the public had been walking the diverted route for a number of years and that the farmer agreed to the diversion of the route.

#### b) Rights of Way applications in progress

The Officer advised that there are several applications waiting for a direction from the Secretary of State regarding the upgrading of the routes to Byway Open to All Traffic. Officers considered that the application were not duly made and asked that the decisions be reassessed with this in mind.

An application for a claimed footpath in Shabbington has been rejected and the applicant has appealed against this decision.

Applications for claimed rights of way based on user evidence are currently in progress, including claimed footpaths in High Wycombe and Whitchurch and claimed BOAT in Iver.

#### c) Village Green applications

There are currently nine village green applications in progress.

### 2. Maintenance Update

#### 'Walking the paths in your parish'

This is a new initiative intended to get more people interested in walking and surveying paths in their parish so that maintenance or improvements on paths can

be identified. A letter will be sent to parishes and information included in the Parish newsletter.

### **3. Strategic Access Update**

#### a) Creating new links

Naphill Riding Club has been very proactive in helping to identify and prioritise the more significant missing links in the bridleway network around Princes Risborough, Speen, Bledlow, Lacey Green and Great and Little Hampden. There will be a meeting with the landowner on November 17<sup>th</sup> at Great Hampden Estate Office.

Officers have met with Naphill Common Preservation Society. Subsequent to the meeting the group submitted a successful claim to Natural England for grant funding to renew their six interpretation boards.

Officers have met with Lane End Parish Plan Working Group and the Chiltern Society to develop an action plan for new walking and cycling routes around the village. Officers met with a local landowner to gain permission to clear an area of woodland on his land, which would provide an alternative route to the busy main B482 Marlow Road, and successfully negotiated a permissive path and sleeper bridge to link to networks severed by the road, linking the woodlands at Widdenton Park and Moor Wood. The route has already proved very popular as it diverts people away from the main road.

Officers are negotiating the relocation of a permissive bridleway across Moorend Common, Lane End. The bridleway would be diverted to a drier route away from the fragile acid grassland meadow and allow marshy ground to recover. The new bridleway will provide a better link in the fragmented bridleway network and the proposed surface will allow users a safer route between Lane End and Frieth. Work is due to start imminently to create the new route.

Officers have been working with the Lane End Conservation Group and the Chiltern Society to help identify the definitive footpath across Wheeler End common. The definitive footpath will be re-instated in late autumn/early winter and the path will be way marked.

Negotiations are ongoing with Paul Newman Homes at Valley Farm, Soulbury for a possible bridleway dedication west of the Leighton-Linslade bypass.

Officers have been working with a representative from the National Grid to dedicate a short section of their land near Caps Wood, Denham as a public right of way, for use as a bridleway.

Officers have been unsuccessful in negotiating a footpath upgrade to bridleway linking the communities of Jordans and Seer Green.

Part of the Swan's Way promoted route had been overgrown and almost impassable after wet weather. A bridge had also fallen into disrepair. Surface improvements have recently been completed and a new bridge installed.

A feasibility study has been undertaken regarding the Haddenham to Thame cycle route and it will be discussed at the Haddenham Local Area Forum on 9 December 2009.

Members discussed Lacey Green Bridleway 30 and it was commented that there is no statutory width for bridleways and that the path had been in existence for

approximately 50 years. It was highlighted that the width of the path is approximately 3 feet and has barbed wire fencing on one side. Officers have been trying to negotiate with the landowner to move back the landowner's fencing to widen the path. Members had a discussion regarding the compulsory purchase process and compensation. The Officer said that Officers firstly try to gain agreement but there are powers to compulsorily create a public right of way, which will trigger a public enquiry if there are objections.

A dead-end bridleway, fragmenting networks in Fulmer and Hedgerley, has been an anomaly on the definitive map for many years. The Council is looking to create a new section of public bridleway to close the gap.

A Member enquired how much these processes would cost. An Officer said that it would cost in the region of £4-5k to make an Order plus other associated costs such as the cost of any public enquiry and any compensation that might be payable.

#### b) Strategic developments

Officers met with Aylesbury Vale District Council in May 2009 to consider the impact on rights of way within the three proposed strategic development areas around Aylesbury.

The Weedon Hill and Berryfields developments are progressing.

Officers are considering the effects of proposals to upgrade the railway line running north from Aylesbury which is currently only used for freight, and the line between Bicester and Bletchley which is currently disused. The proposals form part of an East-West Rail link. A number of public rights of way cross the lines and there are concerns about safety and access as trains will run at up to 100mph. Officers have met with Network Rail's consultants to discuss options. Officers will keep the Forum updated on any developments. Viv Lynch advised Officers to contact her should they require any assistance from the British Horse Society.

Initial comments have been requested from the Rights of Way team regarding the Chiltern Railway's 'Evergreen 3' project which aims to reduce journey times between Marylebone and Birmingham Snow Hill by increasing line speeds to 100mph. Neil Harris advised that one of his colleagues was attending a meeting in London regarding the route and that he will report back at a future meeting of the Forum.

**Action: Neil Harris**

#### c) Open Access

Downley Parish Council is promoting Downley Common using an information sheet that has been developed by the Rights of Way team. The information sheet maps the open access common land and provides useful information about what is special about the common. The sheets are being displayed on parish notice boards and in local pubs. This template can be made available to any Parish Council with common land. The Forum was advised that Oxfordshire County Council has also adopted the template.

A Member suggested changing the word 'Country Code' on the information sheet to Countryside Code. Another Member also requested that Officers check the grid reference on the Downley Common information sheet.

With regards to Grays Lane Bank Open Access Land at Ibstone, the Chairman wrote to Val Letheren, Cabinet Member on 24 August explaining that no agreement could be reached with the owner to create physical access to the site, but advising that the land be opened up to the public for access on foot from the adjacent bridleway. An Officer advised that legal advice had been sought although there was no legal precedent on this issue. The Chairman asked if the Forum was fully supportive on this issue.

**Action: The Forum agreed their support**

d) Partnership Work

The Thames Path National Trail at Bourne End Marina and Spade Oak had been resurfaced with the Thames Path Preservation Trust contributing towards the cost.

An Officer attended the Chiltern Disability Focus Group hosted by Chiltern District Council, and regularly attended by Ed Tampkin. It was highlighted that this is a good opportunity for Officer to communicate and learn from disability groups of their requirements in the Buckinghamshire Countryside.

Officers have been working with the Chilterns' Conservation Board and Transport for Buckinghamshire to develop the Chilterns' Cycleway.

Officers are working with Transport for Buckinghamshire to support the Walk Wycombe project, which is linked to the online facility called walkit.com where walking routes and rights of way information can be obtained.

The Simply Walk target to increase the number of engaged walkers has been included in the County Council's Corporate Plan targets for the next four years.

e) Donate-a-gate

The scheme has attracted its 153<sup>rd</sup> donor.

f) Parish newsletter

The first parish newsletter was published in July and positive feedback received. Parish Councils have reported that they will link to the newsletter from their own websites, and are using some of the articles in their own newsletters.

## 6. LAF MEMBERS' REPORT

### 1. Walkers' Welcome Initiative

Ed Tamkin contacted Chesham Town Council and a working group was set up to consider the initiative. Over 400 signatures of support have been obtained.

The Chairman thanked Ed for all his efforts in this matter.

**Members NOTED the information**

### 2. Inter LAF meeting

John Coombe attended a meeting on 12 August 2009 with representatives from Slough LAF. It was highlighted that Slough only has one Rights of Way officer and it was suggested to members of Slough LAF that they should ensure regular contact with Officers at Buckinghamshire on rights of way matters.

**Members NOTED the information**

### **3. Fennels Wood Underpass**

John Coombe raised this issue. An Officer commented that lighting within the underpass often gets vandalised and has been hugely expensive to continue to repair. It is the responsibility of the Highways Agency to maintain the lighting in question as the route passes beneath the M40 Motorway. It was suggested that Members might like to contact the local Area Co-ordinator from Localities Services at the Council suggesting a letter be sent to the Highways Agency.

**Members NOTED the information**

### **4. Walker's injured by cattle when crossing fields on right of way**

This has been raised as a significant issue receiving much publicity in the national media. The NFU representative was not present at the meeting but David Briggs commented that the advice he had received was not to put up signs warning of the cows as it means an implied acknowledgment that the animals are dangerous and could be illegal by deterring members of the public from using a path. An Officer said that he would be attending a meeting of the National Rights of Way Review Committee and that David Blunkett was due to attend to advise of his own recent experience in this respect where he had been trampled by cattle whilst walking on a public right of way.

Members said that they would like to hear from the NFU in Buckinghamshire to see how they deal with this issue.

Members had a discussion regarding the number of injuries as a result of this issue and who might be liable suggesting that there are often issues around the farmer's responsibilities in such matters.

**Action: Officers to report back to the next meeting and the NFU representative be asked to comment.**

### **5. Regional LAF**

A Member enquired if the LAF should have a policy on wind turbines and it was agreed that there was currently not a need in Buckinghamshire to have such a policy. Viv Lynch informed the Forum that she was attending a meeting in Milton Keynes regarding this issue and would report back at the next meeting of the LAF.

In relation to the example of an information leaflet for dog walkers provided by North York Moors National Park Authority, Members commented that they thought the leaflet was very good and that it should be adopted in Buckinghamshire. A Member commented that dog bins were necessary and another Member highlighted some concerns with the use of stereotypes in the cartoons. The Chairman asked if something could be included on the website and the Officer said this would be investigated.

**Action: Viv Lynch to report back to the next meeting and Officers to draft a leaflet**

### **6. Forestry commission**

**Members NOTED the information**

### **7. Draft Defra guidance on the DDA in relation to gates and stiles**

An Officer agreed to circulate a summary of the document to Members and to



draft a response if Members forwarded comments.

**Action: Officer**

## **8. Buckinghamshire Ramblers – 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Members NOTED the information**

### **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Forum was advised that as part of the Council's Medium Term Plan, the Rights of Way Group will be expected to absorb approximately £35k inflation. And potentially see budgets reduced by a further 5% which equates to approximately £50k. On top of this, the three year capital programme which equates to £150k a year comes to an end this year.

The Council's Transformation process could result in approximately 400 job losses within Buckinghamshire County Council. All Service areas are being looked at and the process is currently well underway. The principles of Transformation will reduce the number of 'managers' and support staff. How Transformation affects Rights of Way specifically is not yet clear. Consultation on Transformation issues with staff begins in December. Staff may be re-organised and required to apply for posts.

David Briggs advised that he attended a CLG meeting which was organised by a firm of rural solicitors, the purpose of which was to give advice to landowners on access issues. It was suggested that landowners only allow new access by permission whenever possible as this means the landowner remains in control. It was also suggested that if a more convenient path be installed, people are encouraged to use it and ensure the path has permissive access. The suggestion was that when, at some future date, the right of way was to be moved more people would support the application.

He said that there was a lot of discussion regarding the 20year rule and that the message was to 'manage your land'. Permissive access needs to be managed as it may turn into statutory access.

Discussion on this point followed and an Officer said that the Rights of Way Group is also an excellent source of advice on Rights of Way issues.

### **8. DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING**

31 March 2010, 10am, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury

**Chairman**





**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

## *Report*

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**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> March 2009

**Title:** Proposed Haddenham to Thame cycle route.

**Author:** Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access Team.

**Contact Officer:** Katy MacDonald (01296 383604)

Lee Stevens, Transport for Buckinghamshire Cycling Team Leader, will outline proposals for a cycle route between Haddenham and Thame. The two routes use public rights of way in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

Three routes were originally proposed:

- i) along the Thame Road and A418;
- ii) through Scotsgrove Mill; or
- iii) through Tythrope Park.

The A418 route was discounted on costs and being unattractive. A consultation is now out on the two remaining rural off-road routes through Scotsgrove Mill and Tythrope Park.

There is no significant money to pay for new surfaces, but other funding such as s.106 developer money may be available in future.

**Recommendation:** Members to consider comments.





## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# *Report*

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**Date:** 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010

**Title:** Planning Environment & Development Service Restructure and 2010/11 budgets

**Author:** Mike Walker, Rights of Way Group Manager

**Contact Officer:** Katy MacDonald (01296 383604)

### **Restructure**

As part of the Council's 'Transformation' programme, the Planning, Environment and Development Service has restructured management posts. The former post of 'Rights of Way and Access Group Manager' has been deleted and is encompassed within a wider remit of 'Environment Group Manager'. Mike Walker has been appointed to this post which encompasses Rights of Way, Natural Environment, Historic Environment (Archaeology), Gypsy & Traveller Services, Sustainability and Country Parks.

The Strategic Access Team Leader and Assistant posts have been deleted and Jonathan Clark's role as Strategic Access Officer will now fall within the Natural Environment Team, the Team Leader for which will now have an extended role to cover this aspect. Fiona Broadbent will continue to run the 'Simply Walk' initiative but within Sue Burchell's Definitive Map Team. Sue will be reducing her hours to work 3 days per week from April. Joanne Taylor's post as Maintenance and Enforcement Team Leader remains as before, but the contracts of two temporary posts terminate this month and will not be renewed.

### **Budgets**

In February 2010 the Council determined that the budget available to the Rights of Way Service would be reduced by £68,000. A three year, £100,000 capital investment programme also comes to an end this month. John Elfes wrote to County Council Members in support of the work of the Group in an effort to avoid the proposed budget cuts (Appendix 1).

**Recommendation:** Members to note.



## **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

To:  
Mr. D. Shakespeare,  
Leader, Buckinghamshire County  
Council,  
Ms. Viv Letheren,  
Cabinet Member Transportation,

16<sup>th</sup> February 2010

Mr. R. Pushman,  
Chairman,  
Mr. C. Williams,  
Chief Executive.

### ***The Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum is the statutory advisory body on all matters relating to Access to the Countryside***

Dear Mr. Shakespeare, and colleagues,

#### **Proposed Cuts to the Rights of Way Budget**

We understand that your current finance proposals will result in severe cuts to the Rights of Way Group budget; that both capital and revenue would be affected, and that staff reductions are a strong possibility. Indeed staffing is already effectively reduced by a freeze on the filling of vacant posts. The total effect, as it will be visible to the public, will be a reduction of some thirty five per cent in works carried out on Rights of Way.

We believe that cuts of this magnitude will permanently damage one of Buckinghamshire's most praiseworthy achievements: the high quality of its footpaths and bridleways. A few months neglect can take years to restore, and users, once deterred, take even longer to regain confidence. The value of those users to the local economy is well known to you.

Furthermore you risk impairing the various health and social programmes which involve walking and riding, and, indeed, failing in your statutory duty to maintain the network. There will be a slower response to enquiries and problems, which will not improve your relations with the public.

Our remit is to advise on and encourage access to the countryside, and we urge you to think again.

Yours Sincerely



John Elfes Chairman, Buckinghamshire Local Access  
Forum, 143, White Hill, Chesham, BUCKS HP5 1AT.







## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

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**Date:** 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010

**Title:** Rights of Way Group Update

**Author:** Jonathan Clark Strategic Access.

**Contact Officer:** Katy MacDonald (01296 383604)

### 1. Definitive Map Update (Sue Burchell)

#### Rights of Way Applications

Following the public inquiry into an Order to upgrade Public Bridleways Nos. 40 and 40A Great and Little Kimble and No. 62 Ellesborough to Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), we are awaiting the Secretary of State's decision.

We are still awaiting a reply from the Secretary of State about the direction to make Orders upgrading to BOAT status routes at Little Missenden and Stowe/Lillingstone Dayrell. We wrote to Defra as we considered that the applications were not duly made, asking that the decisions be reassessed with this in mind.

The outcome of the Trail Riders' Fellowship appeals against the County Council's rejection of applications for BOATs in Great Missenden is still awaited.

Orders have been made for public footpaths in Amersham and Ellesborough and objections have been received.

Applications for a claimed footpath in Shabbington and a claimed bridleway in Great and Little Hampden have been rejected and the applicants have appealed against these decisions.

Applications for claimed rights of way are currently in progress: claimed footpaths in Fawley, High Wycombe, Marlow and Whitchurch; claimed bridleway in High Wycombe; downgrading of a bridleway to a footpath in Ashley Green; claimed BOAT in Iver.

#### Village Green Applications

Village greens have been registered at: Burton's Wood, Little Chalfont; Windmill Hill, Princes Risborough; Candlemas Lane, Beaconsfield (landowner voluntary registration).

There are currently six village green applications in progress – Barn Meadow, Amersham; Daly Way, Aylesbury; Bloomfield Cottages, Bellingdon; Pinewood Fields, Iver Heath; Station Road, Marsh Gibbon; and Coppice Farm Road, Tylers Green.

### **New paths and achievements**

- i) A new network of bridleways at Denham Golf Club has been added to the Definitive Map.
- ii) 2 new public footpaths have been added to the map in Wexham and Lillingstone Lovell.
- iii) 4 new village greens have been registered in Downley, Beaconsfield, Princes Risborough and Little Chalfont.
- iv) The problems with Ickford Public Footpath No. 12 have finally been resolved by diversion after 30 years.

### **2.Maintenance Update (Joanne Taylor)**

Positive responses have been received from Parish Councils towards the 'Walk Your Local Paths' initiative. This is intended to get more people interested in walking and surveying paths in their parish so that maintenance or improvements on paths can be identified and local people can better understand their path networks. So far 30 parishes have responded positively and requested survey forms.

### **BVPI results**

#### Based on a 5% survey of the network

- 86.5% of the network was found to be 'easy to use'.
- 98% of structures found on the survey were 'easy to use'.
- 97% of routes are correctly signed.
- 98% of cropped and ploughed land had been adequately reinstated.

We still need to reduce the outstanding 'issues' down to less than a 1000 (currently 1050). However, this compares favourably with the figure two years ago when the number of issues outstanding issues was 2800.

### **Structures**

250 structure have been improved to aid mobility access, including 47 gates installed this year through the donate a gate scheme.

### **Surfacing**

Over half a kilometre of public paths have been surfaced and repaired.

### **Partnership Working**

- Path maintenance continues through the Chiltern Society Path Maintenance Volunteers.
- 900 volunteer hours carried out on path surveys by the Ramblers' Association.
- Over 170 planning applications assessed by officers - comments provided to District Councils where appropriate.

### **Transport for Buckinghamshire**

From the first April 2009 the County Council appointed a new Highways Contractor, and a new alliance called Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) was set up between the County Council and the new contractor, Ringway Jacobs. Although the Rights of Way Group is not part of TfB, it draws services from this organisation by way of the teams which carry out a wide variety of maintenance and improvement works on the path network. It was expected that at the commencement of the contract there would be various issues to address such as working methods, provision of equipment and vehicles and of course the actual cost of employing the works gangs through the new

contract arrangements. Certainly the first few months of the contract showed a reduction in the work actually carried out on the ground. As an example, the clearance season May to September 2009 showed a reduction in the number of mowing/strimming tasks completed of around 10%, and overall 12% fewer tasks were carried out between April and September 2009 compared to the same period the previous year. We assume that this 'lost' output was due to the new contract arrangement and will be working with TfB to improve output and to reduce the cost of the gangs they are providing.

### **3.Strategic Access Update (Jonathan Clark)**

#### **a. Creating new links**

A report has been prepared for the Council's Rights of Way committee, along with a stakeholder consultation, with a view to using s.26 Highways Act 1980 to undertake a compulsory creation of a greater width for Lacey Green Bridleway 30. The route is currently only around 1.5m wide. After negotiations, the landowner refused to move fencing to provide a usable width for horseriders. Creating a bridleway of greater width would render the fence an obstruction and the landowner would be required to remove it. The proposal has support from local riders and Lacey Green Parish Council.

Naphill Common Preservation Society has been successful in a bid to Natural England for Access Management Grant funding to install six interpretation boards at various points on Naphill Common.

Discussions with Great Hampden Estate, initiated by Strategic Access and Naphill Riding Club, are on-going. They are happy to allow permissive horse riding on selected routes to complement the existing Rights of Way network for walkers and horse riders, but wish to omit permission for cyclists.

Officers are investigating a possible extension to the Lord Parmoor permissive path into Lane End village to create what would be an excellent new connection from the village into Moor Wood and the surrounding path network.

Officers have met once again with Paul Newman Homes regarding a pending planning application on land at Valley Farm, Soulbury to be submitted in late March 2010 to Aylesbury Vale District Council. The developer has effectively agreed to provide everything we requested, which is very pleasing. Should the planning application be approved by AVDC it will create new links as part of the Leighton Buzzard Green Wheel and the 'spokes' out to Milton Keynes and potentially into Wing.

Caps Wood, Denham: The National Grid Land & Development Team has indicated that it cannot grant an easement for a public bridleway over its land. Although the land is owned by National Grid, it is answerable to shareholders and no employee or director is able to give third party rights over the land. The next step might be to make an order under s.26 Highways Act 1980 to compulsorily create the route.

#### **b. Strategic developments**

After negotiation between officers and the consultants for Chiltern Railways, five diversion applications have been submitted to close 'at-grade' crossings as part of the 'Evergreen 3' project proposals, which aim to increase line speeds between London and Birmingham. There will be consultations on diversions at Gerrards Cross (SL9 8RP); Potkilt Lane (HP9 2XA); Chepping Wycombe (HP10 9RW); West Wycombe (HP14 4EX); and Princes Risborough (HP27 9NJ). As a result of negotiations three new bridges are proposed at the Gerrards Cross, Chepping Wycombe and West Wycombe crossings.

The Government's High Speed Rail (HS2) proposals were published on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010. The preferred route tunnels under the Misbourne Valley, then passes Great Missenden, Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury, Waddesdon, Quainton, Calvert and Twyford. Buckinghamshire County Council's Strategic Planning Team have been asked to provide a briefing on landscape, environment and heritage impacts (including rights of way and access) to the EiP (Examination in Public) Inspector, who is currently making a judgement on AVDC's Core Strategy. The briefing will inform the inspector on whether HS2 has a material impact on the Aylesbury Growth Arc options.

#### **c. Open Access**

A successful Access Management Grant scheme application to Natural England was submitted by The Chilterns' Conservation Board for £2002.50 (+ £667.50 from other contributions) to install 6 new interpretation boards on Naphill Common.

#### **d. Simply Walk**

Simply Walk currently has 49 walks throughout Buckinghamshire, attracting over 500 walkers each week. The walks are led by trained volunteers and are free.

Since November last year, Simply Walk has joined forces with Marlow Community Police Officers to start a new walk in Hambleden. The idea for this came from the PCSO for Marlow with the aim of bringing the local community together. Fiona Broadbent has now trained 3 PCSO's as walk leaders in Marlow and hopes to spread the same idea into other areas.

Simply Walk has forged a new partnership with the Barnados charity. Training has been organised for their volunteers to start new walks in Waddesdon & Whitchurch, Ivinghoe, Wing, Wendover, Great Missenden, Hazlemere & Loudwater, Risborough, Stokenchurch & Hambleden Valley, Amersham, Beaconsfield, Gerrards Cross & Denham.

#### **e. Donate-a-gate**

There have been 16 new donors since the last meeting taking the total to 168. An article about Chepping Wycombe Parish Council's work was outlined in the Parish Magazine and an article about the 200<sup>th</sup> donated gate is due in the spring edition of the Chiltern Society's Magazine. The Chiltern Society Area Secretaries have surveyed the entire length of the Chiltern Way through Buckinghamshire with the intention of replacing 127 stiles to create a stile-free route as a celebration of its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A series of walks has also been organised.

#### **f. Parish newsletter**

The third edition of the Parish Council newsletter became available online at the beginning of March. The distribution list includes Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, The Chiltern Society, Ramblers' Association, County Councillors, Local Area Co-ordinators and others individuals on request. The newsletter has been well-received, in particular from the Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils.

Alan Lambourne, on behalf of Westcott Parish Council, and Richard Skym, on behalf of Waddesden Parish Council, have offered to write articles for the May 2010 edition of the Parish Newsletter on their 'Walk your Local Paths' events.



**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

## *Report*

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**Date:** 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010  
**Title:** LAF Members' Report  
**Author:** Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access  
**Contact Officer:** Katy MacDondald (01296 383604)

### **1. Membership**

Gavin Caspersz has agreed to represent disabled users, replacing Ed Tamkin who is to resign. At the July 2010 meeting Gavin will give a short introduction to his background in accessing the countryside on a mobility vehicle.

David Briggs, Alan Lambourne, Richard Pushman and Brenda Jennings have agreed to continue to be members of the Forum.

**Recommendation:** Members to note.

### **2. Sustrans update (Peter Challis)**

- i) Negotiations are underway with the landowner of the Bourne End to Wooburn Green disused railway line with a view to purchasing a section to create a cycling link.
- ii) Volunteers have surveyed National Route 50 with a view to signing this section from Winslow to Aylesbury.

**Recommendation:** Members to note.

### **3. Slough LAF correspondence (John Elfes & John Coombe)**

Correspondence from Slough LAF is in Appendix 2. This follows John Coombe's meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2009 with representatives from the Slough LAF.

**Recommendation:** Members to offer their views and consider a response.

### **4. South East LAF members meetings (John Elfes)**

John Elfes will update members on the above meeting held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at Defra Offices in London.

**Recommendation:** Members to note for information.

### **5. Conference for LAF members (John Elfes & Viv Lynch)**

John Elfes and Viv Lynch will update members on the above meeting held on 16th March 2010 in central London.

### **6. LAF Annual Review (all)**

Members to consider articles for this year's annual review.

**Recommendation:** Members to agree on a way forward.

### **7 Chiltern District Council toilet closures (John Elfes & John Coombe)**

Chiltern District Council proposes to close the toilets they manage unless parish councils are willing to take them over. This could reduce accessibility for some users in the countryside.

**Recommendation:** Members to discuss.

### **8. Chesham 'Walkers are Welcome' initiative (John Elfes)**

In March 2010 the Chesham Environment Group achieved 'Walkers are Welcome' accreditation for Chesham. 'Walkers are Welcome' is a community based initiative, launched at Hebden Bridge in 2007 and inspired by the 'Fairtrade' movement. The goals are to improve conditions for walkers and to illustrate, through practical examples and publicity, how recreational visits can help support local economies.

The initiative draws on six steps before accreditation:

- Communities must demonstrate popular support, for example - organising a petition.
- The local council must formally endorse the scheme and allocate a small budget.
- Rights of Way must be actively maintained, walked regularly and kept clear of obstructions.
- Leaflets, signs and waymarks can all form part of a thorough marketing plan.
- Clear advice on public transport will encourage walkers to leave the car at home.
- A properly established steering group will maintain 'Walkers are Welcome' status.

The status will raise the profile of Chesham and support the local economy by promoting tourism. This will be particularly relevant in the context of the current economic climate. Both Chesham Town Council and Chesham Ramblers' Association are on board.  
<http://www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk/index.html>

This was raised at the July and November 2009 Buckinghamshire Local Access Forums by Ed Tamkin, who said that over 500 signatures had been raised in support. Members of the Chesham Environment Group include Andrew Clark, Tony Biddle, Ken Austin, Phil Folly (Chairman) and Henricus Peters (secretary); as well as two Town Councillors, Collette Little and Gill Walker.

**Recommendation:** Members to note for information and offer support, as necessary.

### **9. Countryside 2010 - 29<sup>th</sup> May to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

'COUNTRYSIDE 2010' is a campaign funded by the Rural Development Programme for England and supported by SEEDA and Tourism South East. Similar to the Heritage Open Days, 'COUNTRYSIDE 2010' is co-ordinating and promoting two-weeks of activities, events and attractions to illustrate the different ways in which people can enjoy the countryside. There is an event directory going live in March with details available at [www.countryside2010.org.uk](http://www.countryside2010.org.uk).

Entries are invited for activities and attractions within a rural setting which encourage the enjoyment and understanding of the countryside in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex.

Organisers throughout South East England are using the campaign to generate more business, new visitors, greater interest and volunteers.

Organisations that have registered include the National Trust, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, voluntary groups and rural businesses. It is hoped to sign-up a large number of visitor attractions, farms, food producers, hotels, pubs, B&B's, galleries and studios.

Activities include walks, rides and cycle rides; country based events, fetes and festivals; talks and tastings; open house afternoons; guided tours; introductory taster sessions; and voluntary projects. For further information [info@countryside2010.org.uk](mailto:info@countryside2010.org.uk); Tel: 01494 776622.

**Recommendation:** Members to note, offer support and possibly suggest events to be registered.

#### **10. Forestry Commission proposal to charge for horse riding in its woods (John Elfes).**

Alan Marlow (SE Region LAF Representative) and Mark Weston (BHS) met with the Forestry Commission at Beaconsfield in December 2009 to discuss reports that charges are to be introduced for horse riding in FC woodlands. Viv Lynch has written to object (Appendix 3). The meeting was held in order to question this proposal and raise the profile of LAFs within the Forestry Commission's consultation process. The model run by the Hodgemoor Riding Association in Hodgemoor Woods, Buckinghamshire, was discussed. In this scheme it is compulsory for riders to purchase membership of the Hodgemoor Riding Club to gain permission to ride in the wood, following damage to soils attributed to horse riders in the SSSI a number of years ago. A summary of the meeting is outlined in Appendix 4.

**Recommendation:** Members to decide on next action.

#### **11. Open access survey (John Elfes)**

The Ramblers' Association has undertaken to survey of every piece of open access land in Buckinghamshire. This is now completed for 66 sites in north Buckinghamshire and a sample of findings is outlined in Appendix 5. The results will be collated and potentially fed through to Chiltern Society Area Secretaries to undertake signing.

**Recommendation:** Members to note.





17 November 2009

## Slough Local Access Forum

Buckinghamshire LAF  
c/o Local Access Forum Secretary  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
County Hall, Walton Street,  
Aylesbury  
Bucks  
HP20 1UA

Replies to: Jacqui Wheeler,  
Officer to Slough Local Access Forum  
Highways Engineering  
Slough Borough Council  
P.O Box 580  
Slough, SL1 3UQ

Tel: 01753 477 479  
Fax: 01753 875 660  
Email: [Localaccessforum@slough.gov.uk](mailto:Localaccessforum@slough.gov.uk)  
Ref: Cross boundary links

Dear Buckinghamshire LAF,

The importance of walking and cycling links from residential areas to areas of urban fringe countryside is now widely recognised and has been established locally through the process of preparing Rights of Way Improvement Plans. Regular walking in attractive natural environments has proven benefits to overall health and well-being.

With Slough being mainly urban but surrounded by countryside, the Slough Local Access Forum has decided to look at issues local residents face in accessing the countryside just across the borough boundary.

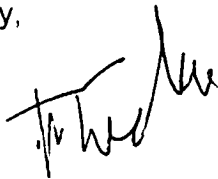
To this end as an initial reference point the Chair of the Slough LAF met with a member of the Buckinghamshire LAF in the summer to have a discussion and attempt to identify the main issues. These were seen as including the following:

- Identification of cross boundary access currently available and assessing it's condition and quality.
- Public Transport availability to close by countryside
- Joint circular routes between areas – seen as most desirable to encourage new or occasional walkers.
- Importance of well marked routes. To enable the route to be followed without a map.
- Effective Marketing ie; leaflets targeting groups who wouldn't normally walk
- Requirement for practical joined up working involving other community groups eg; Parish Councils, healthy walking groups, local doctor's surgeries etc in both areas.

It is accepted that not all cross boundary paths will offer suitable opportunities for improvement or will meet the needs of local users. Therefore the Slough LAF wants to begin by producing an initial catalogue of current access available across the borough boundary, its condition and quality in terms of enjoyment to be gained for local users. Opportunities for improvements to routes and for promotion can then be identified based on data gathered.

Whilst we appreciate that this project is focused on providing routes for Slough residents, at some point it will require co-operation between adjoining areas and everyone can benefit from improved access. So if there is anyone with an interest in this issue within your organisation; or if you would like to offer another perspective please contact us at Slough LAF.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurie Tucker', written in a cursive style.

**Laurie Tucker**  
**Chair 2009, Slough Local Access Forum**

Cc. Bucks Local Access Forum  
Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum  
Spelthorne Local Access Forum  
Hillingdon Local Access Forum  
Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council  
Britwell Parish Council  
Wexham Court Parish Council  
Wexham Parish Council  
Burnham Parish Council

**Letter from Viv Lynch to Alan Marlow**

04 December 2009 10:45

I strongly believe that equestrians should not be expected to pay to ride on FC land and tracks nor should they be the only group who pay to park.

There are over 2,500 miles of public rights of way, including footpaths, bridleways and National Trails in Buckinghamshire, of which only 15% (371 miles) are available to equestrians. Therefore this make access to the FC forests very important to equestrians.

Some Forestry Commission sites in our county can be visited by horses, e.g. Hodgemoor near Chalfont St. Giles, Shabbington and Wendover Woods. Much of the work done, in conjunction with FC, to enable horse rider access to Hodgemoor Wood was undertaken by The Hodgemoor Riding Association, founded in 1995 by Susie & Marcus Bicknell (see [www.hodgemoor.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.hodgemoor.org.uk/index.htm)).

As to the supposed 'damage' that horses do to the forest tracks, it seems unjust that walkers and cyclists are excluded when they also cause damage/wear and tear. It should be remembered that cyclists also use bridleways but they do not have to pay. It is not right that equestrians should be the only group who have to contribute to maintenance of routes when other users do not.

Three-quarters of horse riders are female, with about one-third of that number aged under 16. Horse riders are a vulnerable group which need safe places to ride and exercise horses. Contrary to some images, many horse owners are not at all wealthy. A quarter of horse-owners earn less than £10,000 pa. Most of the people who ride in the forests are 'happy hackers' - ordinary people who ride for pleasure and work hard to keep their horse. They should have the same access as cyclists and walkers to these safe 'off-road' places.

Viv Lynch

Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum

BHS North Buckinghamshire District Access & Bridleways Officer



**From:** atmarlow@aol.com  
**Sent:** 19 December 2009 21:13

Hi Everyone,

Thank you for the input and comments you provided to me in preparation for the meeting that Mark Weston and I had with the Forestry Commission at Beaconsfield earlier this week. Below is a short summary of the meeting to keep you in the picture.

Mark is writing a more detailed note of the meeting (I have stolen some of the words below from his draft!) and I will be following up further as noted below.

We met with Simon Hodgson, (FC Chief Executive) together with David Williamson, Paddy Harrop and the local forest manager for the area around Buckinghamshire, including Hodgemoor. We also met Susie Bicknell who, together with her husband, is the driving force behind the Hodgemoor Wood scheme which we visited in the afternoon.

The meeting was quite lengthy, and spent quite a lot of time discussing the principles and reasoning which has us in the situation we are in today. One thing I was able to achieve was to give Simon Hodgson a firm reminder of the role of LAFs. He was clearly previously of the impression that we were all something of a non-event! (as evidenced by the FC's failure to properly involve us in the recent consultation until we prompted them).

There were no stunning revelations or massive changes of direction at the meeting, it would have been very surprising if there had been!, but there was a definite willingness to try to move the whole business forward by utilising some creative thinking and by being open minded about how to progress. However, Simon made it clear that the FC do not have access to any additional funds for infrastructure work. As with all publicly funded bodies the government is squeezing budgets tighter and tighter and they have to balance their books. This means that any improvements (for any class of user) have to be self funding (by applying for grants, fundraising or whatever). We were reminded that a lot of work done for cyclists in the FC estate has been funded by way of Sustrans for instance.

The FC did state that they have no plans for introducing any further equestrian permit schemes and if they do consider any more they will consult properly beforehand.

Mark made it clear that equestrians are more than happy to contribute to Forestry Commission income as walkers and cyclists do by paying car parking charges and purchasing refreshments at the cafes after they have been riding, etc.

We obtained quite a bit of data on costs, permit numbers etc, both from the FC and from Susie, who spent several hours with us as we walked round Hodgemoor. This data needs some digesting!

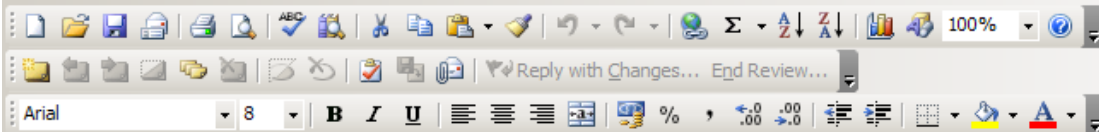
I believe that there is scope for LAFs in the SE region to sponsor some realistic forward thinking on this whole subject, but it won't be easy! It's an ideal topic that is well within our brief so we should pick up the challenge.

What I propose is that I will report back more fully to the meeting of SE Region LAF chairs that is planned for 26<sup>th</sup> January, I will endeavour to produce a discussion note in advance of the meeting. This will give chairmen an opportunity to informally brief themselves from their LAF members before the meeting so that we can attempt to put together something more formal for LAFs to look at after 26<sup>th</sup> January.

My immediate off-the-cuff thoughts are that I would like to encourage each of the LAFs (certainly those that think they have a problem) to think about encouraging some kind of local co-ordinated approach to 'new thinking', perhaps along the lines of the Hodgemoor model, perhaps along some other suitable line that individual local groups may think of. (It is clear to me that one of the biggest drawbacks of the Hodgemoor model is that it depends very much on the enthusiasm of one or two local volunteers to run it, this sort of commitment is hard to find and sustain!!). I suspect that in the past this sort of activity has generally not happened because local FC managers have not been receptive to suggestions of change. I think one thing this week's meeting made clear is that the FC are open to positive suggestions, and if resistance by FC managers is encountered at local levels we now have the contacts to escalate such matters in the hope of getting something changed.

Quite a challenge, but worth the effort I believe!

Alan Marlow  
SE Region LAF Representative



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	Grid reference (of an arbitrary point within area)	Name (or nearest named place)	Size 1=tiny 5=large	Type (if known) C=common D=dedicated O=other	Checked against countryside access website	Date visited	Date reported to Council	Signage	Access points	Boundaries	Evidence of usage	Misleading notices	Notes	BCC Ref	
2	SU730919	Fire/Hanging Woods (part)	5	D(?)	Yes: no restrictions	08/04/09	08/06/09	None	SU728922 SU732916	OK		No	Mainly in Oxfordshire		
3	SU730928	Northend Common	4	C	Yes: no restrictions	08/04/09		None	Various	OK	Various non-definitive paths	No		CL5	
4	SU740920	East of Swain's Wood	3	O	Yes: no restrictions	17/04/09	08/06/09	BBONT sign but no access sign	SU739922. Path leading to gate is not indicated as being permissive	Not thoroughly checked	Nature Reserve	No		Swain's Wood, Turville	
5	SU745910	Turville Heath	4	C	Yes: no restrictions	17/04/09		None	Various	OK	Various non-definitive paths	No		CL257 CL6	
6	SU749923	Grays Lane Bank	3	O	Yes: no restrictions	17/06/09	22/06/09	None	Needs gates or stiles at either end of SW edge for access from bridleway	Not fully checked		No	Added to map 1.5.09; status in dispute	Gray's Lane Bank, Ibstone	
7	SU750904	Summer Heath	4	C	Yes: no restrictions	17/04/09		None	Various	OK		No		CL9	
8	SU750935	Ibstone Common	4	C (part O?)	Yes: no restrictions	08/04/09		None	Various	OK apart from SE corner	Various non-definitive paths	No		CL87 Hellcorner Farm, Ibstone	
9	SU753896	Southend Common	3	C	Yes: no restrictions	30/03/09		None	Various	OK	Various non-definitive paths	No		CL142 CL288 CL289	
10	SU756963	Stokenchurch	3	C(?)	Yes: no restrictions	08/04/09		None	Gates to allotments at SU756964 and SU757953; other part unfenced	No clear boundary between eastern section and cricket field	Mainly allotments	No	Presumably the allotment plots would be excepted land (but one could use paths?)		
11	SU760892	Kimble Wood	4	D	Yes: no restrictions	30/03/09	06/04/09	None	SU758889 SU757891 SU762898	Not clearly defined		No	Shooting in progress when no restrictions	SEE/15080	
12	SU767983	Sprig's Alley	2	C(?)	Yes: no restrictions	29/04/09		None	Gate to road probably normally padlocked	OK	One allotment plot, otherwise rough grass	No			
13	SU768915	Cobstone Hill	4	O	Yes: no restrictions	17/04/09	08/06/09	Access signs at 3 out of 5 access points	SU765915 (2, both signed) SU767917 (no sign) SU768913 (signed) SU769915 (no sign)	OK		No		Turville Windmill	
14	SU779931	Pound Wood south of M40	3	D	Yes: temporary restriction	17/04/09	08/06/09	None	SU776933 SU780930	OK	Apparently well used path from eastern access point	No		Presumably part of SEE/15045	
15	SU780961	Waterend	2	C	Yes: no restrictions	29/04/09		None	Gate from road	OK	Used as allotments	No		CL166	
16	SU780986	North of Daw's Hill Farm	4	O	Yes: no restrictions	29/04/09	08/06/09	None	No adjacent rights of way; easiest access would be from road at SU782999	Unable to check			Looks pleasant; unlikely to be much used unless two access points can be negotiated	Nr Daw's Hill Farm, RDN	
17	SU783974	Bennett End	2	C(?)	Yes: no restrictions	29/04/09		None	Gaps in hedge on road at SU783974	OK	Semi-derelict allotments	No			
	SU785880	North of	4	C	Yes: no	26/04/09		None	Various	Unclear at north-	Some additional	No		CL215	

