



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

---

**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.