



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Report

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Title: Rights of Way Group Update
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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); Potkilm 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 17th 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 200th 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 10th 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.