



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7 JULY 2010, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.04 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.55 AM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr J Elfes, in the Chair

Mr C Hurworth, Mr A T A Lambourne, Ms D Bird, Mr J Coombe and Mr Caspersz

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr M Walker, Mr J Clark, Mr M Bailey, Ms S Burchell and Ms J Wesley

GUESTS PRESENT

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies of absence were received from Viv Lynch, Richard Pushman and Brenda Jennings.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 MARCH 2010 TO BE CONFIRMED

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2010 were confirmed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

A Member commented that the minutes of meetings did not include Members or Officers' names and asked if names could be minuted against actions and comments. The Democratic Services Officer advised that it was standard practice not to include names. Members had a discussion and the majority of Members present expressed a desire for names to be recorded in the minutes. As not all Members were present the Democratic Services Officer suggested that advice on the issue be obtained and for the issue to be raised at a future meeting of the LAF.

Action: Democratic Services Officer

5. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LANDSCAPE INFORMATION SYSTEM & HIGH SPEED TWO (HS2)

Mark Bailey, Natural Environment Team Manager gave a presentation on the Buckinghamshire Information Landscape System (BLIS).

The key points of the presentation were as follows:

- The system brings together environmental and landscape data which can be analysed and utilised collectively.
- It is a 'one stop shop' of data allowing fast and detailed assessment at local and strategic scales.
- Offers great value to spatial planning, development control, master planning, informing local policy and design, mitigation and opportunity assessment.
- It can improve the design and sustainability of future development proposals and projects.
- Provides a cost saving in terms of staff time.
- The Historic Environment map can show how villages can change over time and mapping can be down to field level.
- Aylesbury Vale district has a fine grain Landscape Character Assessment in place but these have been absent for other county districts. However, the remaining three districts have agreed to a fine grain characteristic assessment which will commence shortly.
- BLIS will support Achieving Outstanding Performance by:
 - Short/Medium Term
 - Looking at local growth
 - Shape the design of new developments internally and in relation to surroundings.
 - Produce Green Infrastructure plans and other assessments.
 - Aid Biodiversity action plans
 - Be an educational resource
 - Getting closer to communities
 - Long Term
 - Monitor landuse and habitats
 - Monitor climate change
 - Aid Transport planning

The Officer then updated the Forum on proposals for High Speed Rail (HS2) and demonstrated how BLIS is being used by the County Council to undertake Baseline Environmental Impact Assessments for each of the three proposed rail routes within Buckinghamshire.

The Officer made the following points:

- The overall estimated cost of HS2 is £34.012 billion.
- The maximum speed of the trains is to be 225-250mph
- Wider and taller trains with suitable lower platforms which could include double decker trains are being considered
- Trains could be 200 metres in length but possibly joined to reach lengths of 400metres and carry 1000 people.
- The HS2 Baseline Environmental Impact Assessment look at the potential environmental, landscape and landuse impacts as a result of the three HS2 routes.
- The three routes affecting Buckinghamshire are Route 2,5,3 and 4. Route 3 is the preferred route.
- A 1km corridor with a 500 metre buffer is used to identify the direct and indirect impact potentials. 1km was used as that was the area used for

HS1.

- The assessment includes statutory and non statutory sites and species, archaeology, rights of way and access land, biodiversity action plan priority habitats and areas of attractive landscapes.

Following the presentation Members then asked questions. A summary of the questions and answers follows:

The Officer was asked if the public could access the system online and he advised that it was on the Buckinghamshire County Council website. The Officer was then asked if the data will be renewed as data is updated. In response the Officer said that in terms of BLIS and HS2 details will be updated on an ongoing basis. A Member asked if the updates would be made on a 6 monthly basis or as changes happen. He was advised that the system would be updated as changes happen and that this would show how development could affect BLIS. The Officer commented that whilst the system will be public there are discussions regarding whether there should be some control of the level of data which developers would be interested in and possibly introducing a charge for accessing this more detailed level of data.

One of the short term advantages is listed as 'Getting Closer to Communities'. What will the benefits of this be other than the general public awareness? The Officer said that it would break down boundaries and it works beyond the County Council and links to other systems. The Member asked if there would be any direct link to Parishes and the Officer said only in terms of the data available. The Officer informed the Committee that the system will be available online shortly but that IT is currently working on the system.

6. RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP REPORT

A Definitive Map update

Rights of Way Applications

1. A public inquiry was held in August 2009 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). A decision is still awaited and, following further representations about the alignment of the route, the Inspector has called a second inquiry, to deal with issues of alignment only. This has been arranged for 19 October 2010.
2. The Secretary of State directed the Council to make Orders upgrading to BOAT status routes at Little Missenden and Stowe/Lillingstone Dayrell. The Council wrote to Defra as it considered that the applications were not duly made, asking that the decisions be reassessed with this in mind. A reply from the Secretary of State was received in April 2010, stating that the decisions could not be rescinded and that the Orders should be made as directed.
3. The Secretary of State has also directed the Council to make Orders for BOATs in Great Missenden and Wendover.
4. Orders have been made for public footpaths in Amersham and

Ellesborough and objections have been received. A public inquiry into the Amersham routes is to be held on 29 September 2010. The Ellesborough route is being dealt with by written representations and a decision from the Secretary of State is awaited.

5. 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. Directions from the Secretary of State are awaited.
6. Applications for claimed rights of way are currently in progress and some of the applications will be discussed at the next Rights of Way meeting. The applications are as follows:
 - claimed footpaths in Fawley, High Wycombe, Lacey Green, Marlow and Whitchurch;
 - claimed bridleways in High Wycombe, West Wycombe and Downley;
 - downgrading of a bridleway to a footpath in Ashley Green;
 - claimed restricted byway in Gerrards Cross. Members were informed that this has now been withdrawn as Officers has negotiated with the landowner/tenant to have a side gate put in for walkers and cyclists to use the route by permission; and
 - claimed BOATs in Iver.

Village Green Applications

7. There are currently six village green applications in progress – Daly Way, Aylesbury; Pinewood Fields, Iver Heath; Station Road, Marsh Gibbon; Coppice Farm Road, Tylers Green; part of the former railway line, Quainton; and Lower Road, Gerrards Cross.
8. A public inquiry was held into the Marsh Gibbon case in June 2010 and the Inspector's recommended the application be rejected. A public inquiry into the Daly Way case has been arranged for 5 to 7 October 2010.

New paths and achievements

9. Creation Agreements have been completed for Public Footpaths at Church Farm, Haddenham, and Great Gap, Ivinghoe. Members were informed that the Great Gap, Ivinghoe was an item on the agenda and would be discussed in detail later on in the meeting.

B. Rights of Way Operations update

10. The Operations team has outsourced half of the summer mowing contract to Aylesbury-based firm, Richard Ashford Ltd. There are 4 gangs (2 in the south and 2 in the north) working until the end of August 2010. In addition, an 'Atasia' ride-on brushcutter has been hired, to complement the two tractor mowers used by Ringway Jacobs.
11. In order to work more efficiently, it has been decided to merge the north and south Rights of Way Liaison Group meetings. Many of the agenda items were similar, so it was thought a better use of resources to combine the two

meetings.

12. The Operations Team is developing its programme of surfacing works to be carried out during the summer. One recent scheme on the Thames Path in Dorney also saw the installation of coir logs to repair the eroded banks.
13. Since the last meeting an additional 9 Parish Councils have responded positively to the 'Walk Your Local Paths' initiative and requested survey forms. This makes a total of 44 Parishes signed-up for the project. The aim is to get more people interested in walking and, at the same time, surveying paths in their parish to provide the County Council with up-to-date information in order that maintenance or improvements on paths can be identified and local people can become more familiar with their network. The Forum was advised that Mr Lambourne had completed a report on this issue and that it had been included in the Local Access Annual Review.
14. Despite the P3 scheme coming to an end, Area Office staff in Wycombe and Winslow will continue to work in partnership with Parish Councils wherever possible. If positive value for money can be obtained using local workers or volunteers then funding may be available. The Team has also been discussing possible new ways of working if budget cuts are realised.

C. Strategic Access Update

Creating new links

15. Members were informed that Jackie Wesley will discuss the new footpath link between Ivinghoe and the Grand Union Canal under the next agenda item for the meeting.
16. A new permissive path has been negotiated with landowners to the east of the A404 Marlow bypass. The path links Public Footpath No 29, Little Marlow with Footpath No. 1, Marlow and the Thames Path National Trail. The land is owned by Harleyford Holdings Ltd and Messrs A. & R. Mash. (Members were advised that there was an error in the original agenda papers which listed the footpath as No 20 when this should have read No 29).
17. A meeting has been held with local horse riders in Ashenden and Nether Winchenden to identify possible links with existing bridleways in the area. The Officer said that discussions with landowners were required.
18. Correspondence continues with the Highways Agency to secure use of a strip of land next to the M40, Junction 1, to provide a walking, cycling and horse riding link between Southlands Road and Field Road, Denham. The Officer said he was trying to arrange a site meeting.
19. A meeting was held with representatives from Edlesborough Parish Council, a local cycling group and landowners along Footpath No 3 Edlesborough to negotiate a possible new bridleway or permissive cycling track. The Officer advised that issues regarding crime have been addressed and that hopefully there will be agreement for a permissive cycle path.

Strategic developments

20. Officers from the Operations and Strategic Access Teams attended a Parish Clerks Forum at the Winslow Centre in April 2010, in conjunction with Transport for Buckinghamshire, to outline the work undertaken in rights of way and how parishes can work more effectively with the Rights of Way Teams.
21. AVDC had planned a workshop to look at possible Green Infrastructure opportunities for developer contributions in the Aylesbury Growth Areas. Improvements to the 'Grand Union Triangle' – Aylesbury to Marsworth, Marsworth to Wendover and back to Aylesbury formed the basis of the Rights of Way improvements. The Forum was advised that the meeting was postponed pending announcements about the growth arc options. It was highlighted that there may be reduction of the housing growth in Aylesbury which could reduce Section 106 contributions.
22. Discussions are ongoing with Oxfordshire County Council regarding the Haddenham to Thame bridleway. The online Haddenham to Thame bridleway consultation, undertaken by Lee Stevens in the Cycling Team, resulted in 251 responses, 196 of which (78%) were in favour of the Scotsgrove Mill route.
23. The Chilterns Cycleway was launched on the 18th June 2010 at the Bridgewater Monument, Ashridge.
24. A meeting was held with Transport for Buckinghamshire and the Cycling Team to discuss how rights of way improvements could contribute to the Wycombe Transport Strategy. The Officer asked if Members had any suggestions to contact him.

Open Access

25. On behalf of the Ramblers' Association John Esslemont has completed his survey of all 157 areas of access land in the county (except some very small commons). The main finding illustrated the lack of on-site signing to let the public know when they were entering open access land. The results were available in Appendix 5 of the March 2010 minutes.

Simply Walk

26. Simply Walk now has 52 walks throughout Buckinghamshire, attracting over 500 walkers each week. The walks are led by trained volunteers and are free.
27. Simply Walk and Community Police Officers have joined forces to start another new walk in Waddesdon, following the success of a similar walk in Hambleden. In partnership with PCSO Sarah Turner from Marlow, a second walk was set up with PCSO Antony Hurd, in Waddesdon on 21st April 2010. Anyone wishing to take part should phone Fiona Broadbent on 01494 465367.
28. One of the first tasks for Wycombe's new Conservative MP, Steve Baker, was to launch the 'Walk Wycombe' event on Saturday 8th May 2010; a scheme aimed at encouraging residents of Wycombe to leave their cars at home and walk more often. Simply Walk had a stand in the Eden Centre, supported by many Simply Walk volunteers, who led a walk featuring a new pocket-sized map. High Wycombe Town Mayor, Julie Pritchard and Val Letheren, Cabinet member for Transport, were also present to support the launch. Pocket maps

are available from Tanveer Ghani on 01296 387119.

29. The Simply Walk scheme needs more funding in order to continue as current funding finishes in April 2011. Fiona Broadbent, Health Walks Co-ordinator is currently looking at how this can be achieved. One idea being considered is to request voluntary donations from participants. Members were invited to contact Fiona Broadbent (01494 475367 fbroadbent@buckscc.gov.uk) with any ideas for any additional sources of funding.

Donate-a-gate

30. There have been 14 new donors since the March 2010 Local Access Forum, taking the total to 182. A two-page spread on 'Donate-a-Gate' and the 200th gate was published in the summer edition of the Chiltern Society's magazine, 'Chiltern News', Issue 196, pages 12 & 13. 'Gift Aid' gates – funded by money received as a tax rebate – are now being ear-marked for the target of replacing or removing 127 stiles on the Chiltern Way through Buckinghamshire.

Parish newsletter

31. The fourth edition of the online Rights of Way Parish Council Newsletter will be available next week. The distribution list includes Local Access Forum members, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, The Chiltern Society, Ramblers' Association, County Councillors, Local Area Co-ordinators and other individuals on request.
32. Alan Lambourne, on behalf of Westcott Parish Council and the Local Access Forum, has written an article on his Parish Council's 'Walk your Local Paths' event. The Member was thanked on behalf of the Committee.

Members then had a discussion. A Member asked if, in relation to point 22, the Haddenham to Thame bridleway, whether it would be useful if the LAF wrote to Oxfordshire County Council to express support for the scheme. The Chairman said he would be happy to write on behalf of the LAF.

Action: John Elfres

An Officer said it would be a good idea if a Member of the LAF would be willing to go on a joint site visit with the Oxfordshire Local Access Forum.

Action: Strategic Access Officer

Officers were asked if in relation to point 25 they agreed with the main finding which illustrated a lack of on-site signing to let the public know when they were entering open access land. The Member asked if Officer had resources to carry out the signage. In response the Officer advised that staff resources were tight, but that it was proposed to ask the Ramblers member who undertook the survey to also undertake a managed project to sign open access areas.

A Member raised concern that landowners didn't cut back overgrowth across paths and that the County Council usually ends up carrying out the work. He asked if the County Council could write formally to landowners. The Officer said that if a large hedge did require cutting back the County Council would

contact a landowner and this was normally acted upon after the summer bird nesting season. It was highlighted that this is an issue which Officers revisit regularly. A Member said that there are greater environmental issues and that there is a scheme for cutting back farm hedges every three years. An Officer reminded the Member it was a legal requirement to cut back overgrowth. A Member also highlighted that many small farms now contract the work out. A Member offered to put forward and discuss any issues with the National Farmers Union any issues Members may have.

7. GREAT GAP, IVINGHOE

Jackie Wesley, Locality Services Area Co-ordinator attended the meeting to discuss the new footpath link at Great Gap, Ivinghoe.

The Officer advised that the scheme which was to provide a new footpath from Ivinghoe village to the hamlet of Great Gap. The scheme had originally been put forward for the Great Brickhill, Wing and Ivinghoe Local Area Forum delegated budget but advised that the bid had not been successful. Members of the Local Area Forum had asked what other options there was to enable the scheme to proceed. To realise the full potential of this footpath, it was decided to extend the footpath to link up with other footpaths in the network to create a circular walk, with the aim of further linking to the Grand Union Canal (Aylesbury Arm) at a later stage.

The Officer said that funding was obtained from various organisations including Buckinghamshire County Council, Ivinghoe Parish Council, AVDCs Community Chest, the Big Lottery Fund and WREN. Ivinghoe Parish Council received £3k funding from the Local Area Forum's local priorities budget which they match funded. It was highlighted that as there was a demonstrated community need for the footpath the scheme had been included on the Local Area Forum's local area plan. The community supported the application with letters from residents, local businesses and community groups supporting the grant applications.

She said that the Council was able to create a new legally defined footpath by agreement with the landowners. A new bridge had been constructed over the Whistle Brook, fencing erected to separate the path from surrounding farmland and a short link is currently being provided on the highway verge to connect with the pavement network of Ivinghoe village. The new footpath is now a public footpath and is expected to be formally opened mid September 2010.

The Forum was advised that the second phase of the work would be to secure the final 200 metres to the canal towpath, which will create an additional 2km circular walk suitable for all users. She said that it would also assist local businesses by enabling canal users and other visitors to walk to amenities in Ivinghoe. The Community Chest has agreed to fund this further phase by contributing £7k towards this work. The Officer also said that they are also looking at lock accessible gates.

A Member asked the Officer how many people lived in Great Gap and she advised that there were approximately 40 residents.

8. LAF MEMBERS' REPORT

Transformation

1. An officer outlined the new structure of the Environment Group. The Forum was advised that there were three different portfolios to report to:
 - Planning and Environment (which includes the Strategic Access Officer);
 - Transport (which includes the Rights of Way Team, Operations and Definitive Map Teams); and
 - Sustainability

A Member asked that the structure chart be included in the minutes.

Action: An Officer

Members NOTED the information

Membership

2. The Chairman welcomed Gavin Caspersz the new member for disabled users. Gavin Caspersz provided a brief introduction of his background and informed the Forum that he was disabled as the result of a horse riding accident. He advised Members that his main interest was access to countryside for people with disabilities. He commented that he appreciated he had a big learning curve but welcomed the challenge and hoped he could bring a fresh approach to the Forum.

The Chairman advised the Member that he should feel free to raise any access issues to the Forum.

Members NOTED the information

Community Impact Bucks

3. An Officer has been in contact with Community Impact Bucks regarding sitting on the Forum. The Officer will report back to a future meeting with any updates.

Members NOTED the information.

Forestry Commission proposal to charge for horse riding in its woods

4. A meeting was held in December 2009 to discuss reports that charges are to be introduced for horse riding in Forestry Commission woodlands. Viv Lynch had written to object to this proposal.

Members NOTED the information.

5. Alan Marlow, LAF representative for the South East Region, has established a LAF working group to try to make some progress towards resolving the issue of equestrian access to Forestry Commission land. The working group met for the first time in March 2010. They decided to request each LAF in the region contribute by identifying one case in its territory where it believes access (particularly equestrian access) could be significantly improved.

Members NOTED the information.

6. Viv Lynch has offered to write a report on access to Wendover Woods. It is hoped members' will support her proposals.

Members NOTED the information.

England Access Forum

7. The Chairman advised that he had attended a recent England Access Forum and referred Members to Appendix 2 and 3 of the Agenda. The correspondence received from Natural England requested LAFs views on the following:
- The links between England Access Forum and LAFs through the regional co-ordinators;
 - The effectiveness of the links between LAFs and Natural England at a national level through England Access Forum;
 - The added value that a national body representing LAFs can bring; and
 - The options for England Access Forums development.

The Chairman then made the following comments:

- He said that in his opinion the links between England Access Forum and Local Access Forums was non-existent. He commented that whilst these links appear to be improving, more could be done.
- The direct link to government was the added value which a national body representing LAFs could bring
- Options for England Access Forums development could include regular meetings supported by Natural England.

The Chairman requested that Members forward to him any views on the subject and said that he would write a response.

Action: Members NOTED the information and John Elfes AGREED to write a response to Natural England

LAF Annual Review

8. Members were advised that a draft has been prepared for review by the Chairman. It was commented that John Coombe had an article to add. Viv Lynch was also due to write an article. The Officer agreed to chase.

Action: An Officer

Hertfordshire Local Access Forum Conference.

9. The Chairman advised that the second Hertfordshire LAF Conference was due to take place in London Colney on 9th October 2010 and asked if a Member of the Forum would like to attend. John Coombe, John Elfes and Gavin Caspersz said they might be able to attend but would need to confirm.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

An Officer highlighted that attendance at the LAF meetings was dropping and that there had been 6 Members in attendance at the last meeting in March 2010 and only 6 at today's meeting. He said that the purpose of the LAF was to provide advice to the County Council on access strategy and policy. To achieve this, the County Council needs to hear back from LAF Members and attendance at the LAF meeting

to enable this to be achieved a stronger attendance was needed. The Officer said that if Members of the LAF are not able to commit to attending, the County Council and LAF would have to look at alternatives. The LAF Chairman said that the Forum needed new Members and highlighted that Members should send apologies if they were unable to attend the meeting. He commented that the LAF was presently low on membership and said that a wider membership was required. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to recruit new Members.

10. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday 3 November 2010, 10am, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury.

Chairman