



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

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**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2010  
**Title:** Rights of Way Group report  
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### A) Definitive Map Update (Helen Beevers)

#### 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). We are still awaiting a decision 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 A public inquiry was held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2010 into an Order to add two footpaths at Amersham College to the Definitive Map and Statement. The second day of the inquiry has been arranged for the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2010.
- 3 The Secretary of State directed us 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. A reply from the Secretary of State was received in April 2010, stating that the decisions could not be rescinded and that the Orders should be made as directed. These Orders are now in the process of being made.
- 4 The Secretary of State also directed us to make Orders for BOATs in Great Missenden and Wendover. These Orders are in the process of being made.
- 5 The Secretary of State confirmed an Order to add a Public Footpath to the Definitive Map and Statement at Dunsmore, Ellesborough.
- 6 We are in the process of making an Order to add a Public Footpath to the Definitive Map and Statement in Whitchurch. An Order has been made for a Public

Bridleway in High Wycombe and one objection has been received. The Order and objection will be sent to the Secretary of State for determination.

- 7 Applications for a claimed footpath in Shabbington, a claimed bridleway in Great and Little Hampden; and a downgrading of a bridleway to a footpath in Ashley Green have been rejected and the applicants have appealed against these decisions. We are awaiting directions from the Secretary of State.
- 8 Applications for claimed rights of way are currently in progress: claimed footpaths in Fawley, High Wycombe, Lacey Green, and Marlow; claimed bridleways in Taplow, West Wycombe and Downley; and a claimed Restricted Byway in Gerrards Cross.

### **Village Green Applications**

- 9 There are currently five village green applications in progress – Pinewood Fields, Iver Heath; Daly Way, Aylesbury; Coppice Farm Road, Tylers Green; part of the former railway line, Quainton; and Lower Road, Gerrards Cross. Public Inquiries have been held for the applications at Pinewood Fields, Iver Heath and Daly Way, Aylesbury. We are currently awaiting a recommendation to accept or reject the applications from the Inspectors who held the inquiries.

### **B) Rights of Way Operations Update (Joanne Taylor)**

- 10 Over the summer period extra surface clearance gangs were taken on from June to September. We ran only two gangs in total whereas in previous seasons we had been able to run up to 4 gangs. Clearly this has resulted in a significant reduction in the amount of clearance carried out. Between April and September 2009 we had completed 300km whereas this year, over the same period, it is about 200 km. However, we were targeted in selecting the paths to be cleared this summer, ensuring that only those, for example, on school routes or with recent complaints of surface growth, and we reduced the number of second cuts later in the season.
- 11 Structure maintenance works carried out so far during this financial year amount to 217 jobs/improvements which is down on the same period last year (274), although the number of structures improved for accessibility is almost the same at 143 structures replaced or improved, which includes kissing gates and donated gates.
- 12 'Walk Your Local Paths' – The aim of this initiative is to get more local people interested in walking and familiar with their network. It also provides the Operations Team with up-to-date information in order that maintenance or improvements can be identified. Since the last meeting an additional 19 parishes have signed up to take part increasing the number of parishes expected to survey to 63. There is some concern amongst staff of the extent to which we are raising expectations that we will now be unable to meet. With parishes identifying issues or improvements during their walks, they will justifiably feel that their issues could or should be dealt with more quickly than we are able.

## C. Strategic Access Update (Jonathan Clark)

### Creating new links

13. Until the financial situation improves, it is unlikely that any Highways Act 1980 s26 compulsory creation orders will be pursued unless funding can be sourced from outside the Council. These can be contentious and lead to a public inquiry and the Council can be liable to pay compensation in the event of a Creation Order being confirmed. One exception is the proposed new path through the Edmunds Road Industrial Estate in Lane End, where the Parish Council has set-aside funding for compensation.
14. The new footpath link between Ivinghoe and the Grand Union Canal, due to be covered by BBC local news, is awaiting the finishing touches to the Highways element of the project before being officially launched. The second phase is unlikely to be realised as British Waterways does not own the connection to Seabrooke Lock (GR: 935, 172) and the canal tow path.
15. An upgrade to bridleway of Footpath No 72 Hughenden was being pursued at Four Ashes, High Wycombe with the view to taking horse riders off the busy Kingshill Road and providing a link into the existing bridleway network. However, the owner was too concerned this would invite motorbikes onto his land and so the upgrade cannot be pursued.
16. A new 1.5m wide path has been created linking Lane End Public Footpaths Nos. 8 and 10 using 230m of previously inaccessible highway verge on Fingest Lane, east of Fingest village. This was completed with help from the Chiltern Society's Path Maintenance Volunteers, with Lane End Parish Council paying £100 towards the costs.
17. Progress is being made with the new Watermead bridleway, north of Aylesbury. A Dedication Agreement is being processed by the Definitive Map Team and a site survey has been done on the River Thames bridge crossing, detailing bank heights needed for approval by the Environment Agency. Following dedication a new 'Pegasus' crossing will be installed by Transport for Buckinghamshire, which will complete the link between Watermead and the new Weedon Hill development to provide a further link in the chain for a circular bridleway around the town.
18. A meeting has been convened to discuss issues around path links across the north of Aylesbury - between Berryfields, Quarrendon Leas and Weedon Hill. This is of concern to AVDC, BCC and The Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust which is now responsible for the Quarrendon Leas site. This will cover rights of way aspirations for access and Trust/Archaeology proposals for car parking and visitor facilities. Development in this area is still likely to be a few years away.
19. The 'Transport for Buckinghamshire' online public consultation to decide the route between Haddenham and Thame for a new cycleway/bridleway has finished and resulted in 251 responses. 196 people (78%) were in favour of the 'Scotsgrove Mill' route. Unfortunately, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Transportation has now decided he no longer wishes to pursue the upgrade. Val Letheren's letter in **Appendix 1** summarizes the issues Oxfordshire raised.

## **Strategic developments**

- 20 Since reducing the Rights of Way Areas from 4 to 3, the Strategic Access Officer has taken on the role of replying to Rights of Way related planning applications for the county.
- 21 Proposals to widen Bridleway 30 Lacey Green have had to be shelved until the financial position improves or outside funding is available, as the necessary fencing and replacement hedge replanting proved to be prohibitively expensive.
- 22 The main strategic planning issues since July 2010 have been for two areas north of Aylesbury; a detailed application for 324 new houses at Berryfields and outline planning for new houses and schools further north west at Fleet Marston. Comments were made on the need for new bridleway links to provide sustainable transport links around and into Aylesbury and Waddesdon.
- 23 The Strategic Access Officer has taken on the role of Local Access Forum Co-ordinator for the South East Region, a position funded by Natural England until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. A South East LAF conference date has been organised and will be held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011. It is hoped 4 LAF Members from Buckinghamshire will attend.

## **Open Access**

- 23 It has been decided to take forward the open access signing project following John Esslemont's survey. Feedback from LAF members is required on those sites chosen from the website and any sites Members think need further promotion. A training session will be provided to volunteers, likely to involve John Esslemont and members of the Chiltern Society Area Secretaries.
- 24 Volunteer help to sign open access sites will be with 'Open Access' discs or clip frames outlining the mapped area and interesting features of chosen sites. Improving signing on Open Access land will help to meet Indicator 17 of the Chilterns AONB 'State of the Environment 2009' report, which highlights the need to increase awareness of Open Access in the Chilterns, its provision of information, signing and promotion.

## **'Simply Walk' (Fiona Broadbent)**

- 25 Despite the great success of 'Simply Walk', affording numerous benefits to the health and well-being of residents throughout Buckinghamshire, the scheme needs more funding in order to continue and has been looking at how this can be achieved. Fiona has requested an opportunity to present the case for funding Simply Walk from all parish councils, particularly those where 'Simply Walk' operates so successfully. To date she has presented to Downley, Stokenchurch, Chalfont St Giles, Chalfont St Peter and Princes Risborough. A donation of £500 has been made by Downley and a decision is awaited from the other parishes.
- 26 Walkers will be asked for voluntary donations via the newsletter. Walk leaders are not happy to collect donations on the walks and handling cash between so many walks and walk leaders would make this unfeasible

- 27 Bucks Sport has donated £2,500 from its 'Fit for Life' programme in exchange for setting up 5 new walks, aimed specifically at those who cannot walk more than 30 minutes. Some of these are on 'walkers' (a zimmer frame with wheels) and live in sheltered housing. These walks have been set up in Marlow, Bedgrove, Walton Court, Burnham, Holmer Green and Great Missenden, alongside current walks in those areas.
- 28 Simply Walk organised a walk and picnic on August 5<sup>th</sup> 2010 in Amersham, with care providers and service users from 'Chesham Outreach', Chiltern & South Bucks Community Learning Disability Team and the 'Ridgeway Partnership' (Oxfordshire Learning Disability NHS Trust). Fiona and two volunteer leaders lead the walk, which was very well received.
- 29 Training of new volunteer walk leaders and development of the scheme continues.

### **Donate-a-gate**

- 30 The council is no longer able to match-fund public gate donations, due to budgetary constraints. There is still a commitment to match gates up to the 188<sup>th</sup> donor but, in future, there will only be one gate installed for each £250 donation. In the New Year the amount of each donation will be reviewed with a view to increasing the donation to £300 as there have been three 6% rises in metal gates since the project started in 2007.
- 31 There have been 14 new donors since the July 2010 Local Access Forum, taking the total to 195 donors. The project to remove 127 stiles along the Chiltern Way in Buckinghamshire continues, using funding from 'Gift Aid': the tax rebate from the government.

### **Parish Newsletter**

- 32 The 5<sup>th</sup> 'Autumn' edition of the online Rights of Way Parish Council Newsletter will be available soon. 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.