



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH 2011 AT 10.00 AM
MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY**

AGENDA

Agenda Item	Page No
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Declarations of Interest	
3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 November 2010, to be confirmed	1 - 14
4 Matters Arising	
5 Rights of Way Group Report Helen Beavers, Definitive Map Officer; Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access Officer Joanne Taylor Operations Team Leader.	15 - 24
6 LAF Members' Report	25 - 46
7 Any Other Business	
8 Date of Next and Future Meetings The next meeting is to be held on 6 July 2011, 10am, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury.	



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2010, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.05 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.38 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr J Elfes, in the Chair

Mr D Briggs, Mr P Challis, Mr N Harris, Mr C Hurworth, Mrs V Lynch, Mr J Coombe and Mr Caspersz

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr M Walker, Mr J Clark, Mr M Bailey, Ms H Beevers and Ms J Taylor

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Richard Pushman, Brenda Jennings and Alan Lambourne.

The Chairman welcomed observers from Oxfordshire County Council, Chiltern Society and BHS.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2010 TO BE CONFIRMED

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2010 were confirmed subject to the following:

It was commented in relation to page 9, Item 4, Forestry Commission proposal to charge for horse ridings in its woods that charges had in fact been in place for a number of years.

Page 5, paragraph 16 – an error was raised in the meeting and it was asked that Public Footpath No 20 should be amended to No 29. This amendment was made but it has since been clarified that the original statement was correct and that it should read 'The path links Public Footpath No 20, Little Marlow with Footpath No 1 Marlow'.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Viv Lynch advised that she was no longer able to write a report on access to Wendover Woods. She informed the Forum that she had experienced difficulties contacting the Forestry Commission as her phone calls were not being returned. She said she would continue to try and contact them.

Neil Harris informed the Forum that the National Trust were going through a process of internal re-organisation.

5. HS2 UPDATE

Mark Bailey, Natural Environment Team Manager provided an update on the work being undertaken by Planning and Environment Services and its partners.

The key points were as follows:

- The Council has appointed the Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake Landscape Character Assessment and HS2 Landscape Sensitivity Assessments. All of this work will provide a better understanding of potential impacts as a result of any development proposals (in this case HS2). The Council has also been undertaking its own baseline environmental and public access audits relating to high speed rail.
- Proposals for HS2 through Buckinghamshire will, without adequate crossings, have substantial negative impacts on the public rights of way network; affecting route connectivity, amenity and the public's quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Any of the three proposed routes will cut-off green, non-vehicular transport corridors between communities, their services and routes to school and work. The many trails promoted by the County Council and other organizations would be greatly affected, including the Ridgeway National Trail.
- Baseline access audits have been carried out on the 3 proposed routes, which looked at the network and the impact of the options on the Rights of Way network.
- The 3,300km network of public rights of way in Buckinghamshire is a considerable public and economic asset, an important part of the county highway infrastructure and a key element within the county's tourism sector.
- Maintaining a fully integrated network is essential to protect opportunities for the public to both safely enjoy the countryside for recreation and health; and for non-vehicular access to services and between communities.

Severance and impacts to the ROW network as a result of proposals for **HS2 Route 3 (preferred route)**

Corridor	Footpath	Bridleway	Byway or Restricted byway	TOTAL
Directly severed	67	11	1	79
Affected within 200m corridor	123	28	1	152
Affected within 500m corridor	250	40	3	293
Affected within 1000m corridor	374	66	9	449

- Officers would like to take the assessment further and put a cost against the impact and also consider how routes could be taken across the corridor.
- Land Use Consultants have been commissioned to undertake a landscape character assessment. This can assist in managing the change in the landscape and looking at landscape sensitivity to HS2 proposals.
- Looking at a 5 stage level of impact to include looking at the routes and infrastructure such as gantries (whether in tunnel/cutting, etc), also access routes, ventilation shafts and sheds, etc. The full assessment should be completed early next year.

David Briggs asked what the sensitivity to change was? Mark Bailey said that true 'sensitivity to change' can only be assessed in relation to the specific proposed impact. Thus, certain proposals or developments might have more or less impact than others and this will also vary in accordance to local landscape and features. Some landscapes and features are more able to hide or take a specific impact whilst others will be far more sensitive.

- The outputs of this work were discussed and were summarised as being:
 - To produce a landscape sensitivity judgement and map based on the current HS2 proposals;
 - To develop guidance to help inform and minimise the impacts of potential change; and
 - To be equipped with robust baseline of information that can help assess and also feed into the statutory requirements on HS2 to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

The combined cost of the Landscape Character Assessments and HS2 Landscape Sensitivity Assessments is approximately £75k and this is being funded in partnership between Bucks CC and District partners.

Chris Hurworth said that the cost of the landscape and impact assessments compared to the cost of project was very reasonable. Mark Bailey said that high quality assessment are being undertaken by the Council but it is important that we do not duplicate work that falls strictly within the remit of HS2 Ltd to undertake. The work the County Council is doing will ensure that we are better informed about the possible impacts and that we can therefore fully 'test' HS2 Ltd proposals and findings. To date, all assessment work has looked at all three high speed rail route proposals, not just route 3.

Viv Lynch asked if, in relation to the Rights of Way network, whether there was a more detailed assessment. Mark Bailey advised that the Council is working directly with route data provided by HS2 Ltd. This information is GIS based but does not include structural engineering information. To ensure that the assessments are robust the Council requires route data to be provided by HS2 Ltd themselves. As yet there is no HS2 Ltd engineering detail beyond the route that could be incorporated into the access assessments.

David Briggs asked if any footpaths would be closed and asked how many extra kilometres would be required for any deviations? He said that this may mean that the LAF as a body strongly say they would vote top prioritise one route over another. Mark Bailey advised that the route would have a big impact on the network and the extent of impact is being assessed along with possible cost implications. Decisions will need to be made over priorities and Mark Bailey was also keen that his process also engaged with those communities and stakeholders directly impacted. He is keen that communities are consulted and are able to assist in helping to prioritise local needs for access.

Peter Challis asked how the impact could be mitigated balanced against the route not being built at all. The Officer said that the County Council stance is that it does not believe that the national business case for HS2 stacks up and that there is clearly little benefit for Buckinghamshire. However the Council are maintaining a 'twin track' approach to HS2. Whilst arguing against proposals the Council sees a need to ensure that it is fully aware and considering all the possible impacts and the potential cost implications if the route goes ahead. Mark Bailey pointed out the scenario with Kent and HS1. Kent was not fully prepared in terms of their understanding of the potential impacts and this is believed to be a key reason why the county was 'short changed' in the levels of mitigation it secured. There is clearly a fine line to tread between saying that the County does not support the concept but also being able to carry out the necessary background work that will allow us to understand the real impacts and local priorities.

6. COUNCIL BUDGET CUTS/SERVICE REDUCTIONS: IMPACTS ON THE RIGHTS OF WAY SERVICE

Joanne Taylor outlined the current impact of the budget cuts, the freeze on recruitment and the affect on the Rights of Way teams and delivery of the service.

A. Rights of Way Structure and Staff

1. As a result of two recent resignations Joanne advised that it had been necessary to re-organise both the Definitive Map Team, working out of Hampden Hall and the Rights of Way Operations Team, working out of Wycombe and Winslow Area Offices. The Officer discussed Appendix 1 which highlighted the new Rights of Way Group Structure.

2. Sue Burchell, Definitive Map Officer has left the County Council. Her duties and responsibilities will be shared between remaining Officers in the Definitive Map Team and Helen Beevers will be taking a more senior role.

3. James Mawson, Area Rights of Way Officer has left the Council. It has therefore been necessary to re-organise and reallocate the 4 current divisions of the County to 3. The Officer discussed Appendix 2 showing the redrawn Area Officer Map. It was commented that by re-allocating the divisions it had increased the mileage of the network from 500-1000 km for each Area Team, which was a large increase for Officers.

4. Due to the reduction in staff, the group's targets need to be reviewed, particularly the target to reduce the number of issues outstanding on the network by 8% annually and managing public expectations in terms of target times to resolve problems.

5. The team will work hard to reduce the backlog of maintenance issues, however due to a reduction in staff there has been steady build up of issues, something the Team has actively targeted over previous years. It is inevitable that the response to issues will become totally reactive and certain types of work only carried out after a problem has been reported.

6. The Definitive Map Team also has a steady build up of work following the departure of Sue Burchell.

7. Due to further cuts in the maintenance budget the Council will also need to review its current practice of offering 'free of charge' assistance to landowners when structures are repaired. Where a task is seen as being the responsibility of the landowner, the Council will require the owner to do it or will carry out the repair and

recover reasonable costs. This is likely to result in more enforcement work to ensure landowners carry out their duties.

8. It may further be necessary to reduce the number of contractor teams for this financial year. Due to budget shortfalls only urgent works, which pose a danger to the public will be carried out over the winter months.

9. The Group hope to continue with the donate-a-gate scheme.

Mike Walker advised that this was the current situation, but said that this may not be what happens next year as the outcome from the Comprehensive Spending Review is still awaited. The Group Manager said that the Planning & Environment Portfolio is to go through a restructure to achieve some savings. He said that there is likely to be further in-year financial difficulties and that contractors may need to be laid off for a few months. It was highlighted that the impact of the budget reductions will mean that the County Council will not be able to offer the same services as it did previously.

The Chairman commented that the supply of volunteers seems to be drying up and said that in the Ramblers Association volunteers are of a distinct age. Mike Walker said it would be interesting to hear from the voluntary sector.

John Coombe asked Officers if they still wanted to know about problems. Mike Walker said that the service did want to continue to have problems reported to them, but that expectations needed to be managed. Joanne Taylor advised that any problems reported would be prioritised. The Member then asked if an article could be included in the County magazine to highlight the issue. Joanne Taylor advised that currently she presents a monthly report on issues and how those issues are categorised.

Mark Bailey commented that the service is increasingly seen as a reactive service and asked what position the team would be in if foot and mouth happened again? He also highlighted that working with volunteers can be time consuming to co-ordinate and a job in itself. He also mentioned the issue of potential litigation and risks to the County Council should a member of the public get injured as a result of reported problems not being fixed.

An observer from the Chiltern Society commented that the lack of path maintenance was a concern. He said that without the programme many paths would become overgrown, which would be a false economy as it would be even more costly in years to come to re-open the paths. He asked about the funding arrangements with the Chiltern Society and Joanne Taylor advised that some monies had been set aside and that there was enough money to pay the Chiltern Society. She said that the difficulty may be in supplying materials. It was not of immediate concern, but she was not sure how budgets will impact on next year. It was highlighted that the Chiltern Society was struggling for work at present as the majority of work is for waymark posts which are completed fairly quickly. An issue with insurance prevented the Chiltern Society from carrying out chainsaw work as they faced the prospect of having to attend expensive courses.

A Chiltern Society observer also enquired that, if teams were laid off over the winter months, how long this would be for as no gate work would be completed? In response the Forum was advised that it was as yet unclear how long the gangs would have to be laid off. It was further commented that deliveries would also have to be considered as it would not be cost effective to have to instruct a team for a day just to arrange deliveries. It was enquired if a vehicle could be made available for use by volunteers? It was commented that the gangs would be put on other jobs and that they would be using the vehicles. Members were also advised that the budget would need to be looked at, as the Team may not be delivering gates if they did not come

under 'urgent works'. David Briggs said that most farmers are putting up gates several times a year and that some farmers may be amenable to do some more work.

Viv Lynch said the BHS had an annual meeting the following week and that she could enquire whether any members would be prepared to path clear. Although she raised concern about insurance and said that members did not have access to commercial equipment such as hedge trimmers. She was advised that volunteers may be covered by County Council insurance.

Action: Joanne Taylor

Viv Lynch enquired where members of the public stood with landowners regarding clearing a path. She was advised that it would be a judgement call whether a gate could be used safely, although it was highlighted that it remains the responsibility of the landowners.

Mike Walker advised Members that minor maintenance work did not impact greatly on staff time and that it was protecting the network which required more significant work and therefore time.

Chris Hurworth asked if Members with trailers or vans could be paid to deliver gates. It was advised that as well as insurance issues there may be other issues such as picking the gates up from the depots. It was commented that the depots have very strict access controls in place. This could however be explored.

Action: Joanne Taylor

The Chairman asked what volunteers were required to do and Mike Walker advised that there is a loss of control when using volunteers as volunteers are giving up their time for free and that they do jobs which they want to when it is convenient for them. Mike Walker said Members should discuss with their own areas and collectively as a LAF how they want to influence the County Council on the Big Society. The Chairman asked that Member consider what they and their representative organisations could do to help and that if this was not a viable option the LAF need to make it clear to the county council that volunteers would not be able to carry out the work if there were cuts.

7. 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). 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 into an Order to add two footpaths at Amersham College to the Definitive Map and Statement. The decision of the Inspector is awaited.
- 3 The Secretary of State directed us to make Orders upgrading to BOAT status routes at Little Missenden and Stowe/Lillingstone Dayrell. These Orders are 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 An Order to add a Public Footpath to the Definitive Map and Statement in Whitchurch is in the process of being made. 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. Directions from the Secretary of State are awaited.
- 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. Public Inquiries have been held for the applications at Pinewood Fields, Iver Heath and Daly Way, Aylesbury. A recommendation to accept or reject the applications from the Inspectors who held the inquiries is awaited.

David Briggs said that a couple of years ago there had been a rush of BOAT applications. The Officer advised that these applications were dated back to 2006 and that they are ongoing.

B) Rights of Way Operations Update

- 10 Over the summer period extra surface clearance gangs were taken on from June to September 2010. Paths to be cleared were targeted, ensuring that only those, for example, on school routes or with recent complaints of surface growth were undertaken.
- 11 Structure maintenance works are on target but overall not as many structures were replaced or improved compared to last year.
- 12 'Walk Your Local Paths' – this has been well received and it is anticipated that 63 parishes will take part to survey the network. The response has been positive and over 110 extra jobs for the County Council has been generated. There is concern that due to finances the works would need to be targeted and expectations had been raised.

C. Strategic Access Update

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, 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.
- 17 Progress is being made with the new Watermead bridleway, north of Aylesbury.
- 18 A meeting has been convened to discuss issues around path links across the north of Aylesbury - between Berryfields, Quarrendon Leas and Weedon Hill.
- 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 31st March 2011. A South East LAF conference date has been organised and will be held on Tuesday 15th February

2011. It is hoped 4 LAF Members from Buckinghamshire will attend.

The Officer said that this was to be held at the Friends Meeting House, London and John Elfes, Viv Lynch and David Briggs volunteered to attend.

Open Access

- 24 It has been decided to take forward the open access signing project following John Esslemont's survey. The Officer asked for feedback from LAF members on those sites chosen from the website and any sites which may require further promotion. John Coombe suggested that Langley Park be added.
- 25 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.

'Simply Walk'

- 26 Despite the great success of 'Simply Walk', 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.
- 27 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
- 28 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. These walks have been set up in Marlow, Bedgrove, Walton Court, Burnham, Holmer Green and Great Missenden, alongside current walks in those areas.
- 29 Simply Walk organised a walk and picnic on August 5th 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.
- 30 New volunteer walk leaders will be trained and development of the scheme continues.

Donate-a-gate

- 31 The council is no longer able to match-fund public gate donations, due to budgetary constraints. 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.

- 32 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

- 33 The 5th '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. Members were asked that if they had any articles to forward to Jon Clark.

Chris Hurworth said that he had received notification of a BOAT application in July and asked if in the event that the application was successful a pre-emptive TRO would be made and asked why this was being done and if this was officer or committee led. The Member was informed that this was Member led and Neil Harris said that the National Trust was involved in the Kimble application. Chris said he did not see how this improved access to the Countryside for all.

Chris Hurworth enquired if there was any possibility of the Scots Mill project happening should a funding contribution be received. The Officer from Oxfordshire said that the issue was not about money and highlighted that it was a low level floodplain and that the nearby farmer was against the route. This route is not an option but other options may still be considered. Chris mentioned the possibility of a causeway and asked if the LAF still supported the scheme. The Chairman said that the LAF supported the route as far as it could in Buckinghamshire. Peter Challis said that Sustrans also supported the route.

John Elfes asked Peter Challis if Sustrans funding was affected by cuts. Peter advised that they still have some lottery funding but that this is dependant on match funding, School work is however taking a hit following the demise of Cycle England and Local Authorities do not have money.

8. LAF MEMBERS' REPORT

Buckinghamshire County Council – Comprehensive Spending Review

1. Members were advised that The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review took place on 20th October 2010

[Addendum: Post Meeting Note provided by Richard Pushman

'The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review CSR, will not manifest itself in respect of local government until after we know what the final settlement of the rate support grant is. We know it will be reduced but the actual value will not be known until possibly later this month.

Cuts to the council's budget, in anticipation of the indicated government spending

cuts, have already been incorporated in the forward budgets. As you will know these will have a serious impact on some of the services associated with the Local Access Forums activities. I am unable to be more precise at this time'.]

Members noted the information

The Big Debate

2. John Elfes attended one of the meetings held in Chesham and said that Rights of Ways was one of the biggest single issues raised from the process.

3. The Chairman, The Chiltern Society and The Ramblers supported the Rights of Way service by attending the events.

Members noted the information

Coombe Hill Monument

4. Neil Harris showed Members with photographs of the new 'Access for All' track from the Coombe Hill car park to the Monument. He said that a grant of £14k had been received from Natural England and the National Trust put in the remaining £6-7k. The new track will enable all year round access to the hill and monument. Neil Harris thanked Mark Bailey for his work on the Monument.

Members noted the information

The 2012 Olympics

5. Peter Challis said that there are a number of walking and cycling improvements being made to paths in Buckinghamshire. He said that he hoped these would be a lasting legacy after the Olympics.

Joanne Taylor said that it was hoped that some maintenance on the Thames Path could be funded by Olympic monies, however it was also proposed that the Thames Path be closed and a diversion put in place just before the games and for the duration of the event.

Members noted the information

Bourne End to Wooburn Green walking and cycling route

6. Peter Challis said that negotiations are still ongoing regarding the opening of a walking and cycling route along the disused railway line from Bourne End to Wooburn Green.

Members noted the information

Grand Union Canal – Wendover Arm

7. Gavin Caspersz tested this route on his on mobility scooters for disabled users between Wendover and Halton Village and reported the following:

The route was really nice and safe. There were signs at the start with a recommendation regarding suitability for disabled and/or scooter users. He said there could be more information within the existing structure to ensure users were safer and to stop them from getting stuck.

Mr Briggs highlighted that the needs of those with children and pushchairs would be similar to those experienced by disabled and scooter users and said that whilst Colne

Valley is fairly well signed, other routes require more information. Mike Walker said that work is being undertaken on an interactive map. He said that technically the map is possible but that it is a cost issue. He said that currently some routes are promoted for disabled use, but that, to date, it has proved difficult to bring information on different routes together.

Mr Caspersz said that he was on a learning curve and that he had only recently heard of the definitive map. He said that he had been informed by Simply Walk that they did not have walks for disabled users but that they could suggest some routes. Jon Clark advised that the website has information on routes and that he would be happy to discuss further. He also said that there had been 6 gates specifically for disabled routes and he needed new locations for these. The Officer also said that he would need to speak to the Simply Walk group regarding finding a suitable route.

Chiltern Society Verges Project

8. A Member of the Chiltern Society undertook a report on 21 priority Rights of Way crossings and linear connections needing improvements in the Chilterns. The outcomes were considered in Appendix 1.

Members noted the information

Chiltern Way Extension

9. The Chiltern Way is a circular walking route of around 125 miles and there are now 3 optional extensions taking the route to around 172 miles.

Members noted the information

Chiltern Conservation Board Annual Forum

10. Neil Harris will be attending on behalf of the National Trust, David Briggs said he would attend and John Elfes would confirm his attendance.

Members noted the information

Review of the England Access Forum

11. The Chairman advised that he responded as previously minuted. He said that there is nothing wrong with present structure if it was allowed to work. Jon Clark asked if he could have a copy of the response - **Action: John Elfes**

Members noted the information

LAF 2009/10 Annual Review

12. The Review was published on the County Council website in August 2010.
http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/local_access_forum.page

Members noted the information

Hertfordshire Local Access Forum Conference

13. John Coombe asked whether expenses would be paid for out of County journeys. Mike Walker advised that if Members attend an event as part of the Forum they would be paid.

Members noted the information

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

10. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting is to be held on 9 March 2011, 10am, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury.

Chairman



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Report

Date: 7th March 2011

Title: Rights of Way Group report

Author: Jonathan Clark Strategic Access.

Contact Officer: Katy MacDonald (01296 383604)

A) Definitive Map Update (Helen Beevers)

Rights of Way Applications

- 1 Public inquiries were held in August 2009 and October 2010 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). The Order has been confirmed by the Inspector with modifications. Any objection to the proposed modifications should have been received by the Planning Inspectorate by 23 February 2011.
- 2 A public inquiry was held in September and October 2010 into an Order to add two footpaths at Amersham College to the Definitive Map and Statement in Amersham. We are still awaiting the Inspector's decision.
- 3 The Secretary of State directed us to make Orders upgrading to BOAT status routes at Little Missenden and Stowe/Lillingstone Dayrell. These Orders are soon to be advertised.
- 4 The Secretary of State also directed us to make Orders for BOATs in Great Missenden and Wendover. These Orders are currently being advertised with the objection period finishing 2 March 2011.
- 5 We are in the process of making Orders to add Public Footpaths to the Definitive Map and Statement in Whitchurch and High Wycombe. Three Orders have been made to add routes to the Definitive Map and Statement in Marlow and High Wycombe. Objections have been received. The Orders and objections will be sent to the Secretary of State for determination.
- 6 Applications for a claimed footpath in Shabbington; a claimed bridleway in Great and Little Hampden; a downgrading of a bridleway to a footpath in Ashley Green; and an extinguishment of footpath in Whitchurch have been rejected and the applicants appealed against these decisions. The appeal into the claimed footpath

in Shabbington has been rejected. The appeal into the claimed bridleway in Great and Little Hampden has been accepted and we have been directed to make an Order for a public footpath. We are awaiting directions from the Secretary of State for the remaining two appeals.

- 7 Applications for claimed rights of way are currently in progress: claimed footpaths in Fawley, High Wycombe, Lacey Green, Stowe, Aston Clinton, Lower Winchendon, Wendover, and Westbury; claimed bridleways in Taplow, West Wycombe and Downley; claimed Restricted Byway in Gerrards Cross.
- 8 A public inquiry was held for a Special School Extinguishment Order (Pipers Corner School, Hughenden). The Order has not been confirmed by the Inspector on the grounds that current fencing around the school is not considered effective and the extinguishment of the route would not provide a substantial improvement to the security of the school. An application for a Special School Extinguishment Order (Beachborough School, Westbury) has been accepted by the Rights of Way Committee. An Order is in progress.

Village Green Applications

- 9 There are currently two Village Green applications in progress – part of the former railway line, Quainton; and Lower Road, Gerrards Cross. A public inquiry will be held for the application along part of the former railway line, Quainton from 15 March to 18 March 2011. The village green applications for land at Pinewood Fields, Iver Heath; Daly Way, Aylesbury; and Coppice Farm Road, Tylers Green have been rejected.

B) Rights of Way Operations Update (Joanne Taylor)

- 10 The Team has been looking into purchasing power tools, such as strimmers and chainsaws, for the contracted Ringway Jacobs works teams. This could save on expensive hiring rates, but would need to look into secure storage to ensure equipment doesn't get borrowed by other R-J gangs.
- 11 There is a new problem report form on the website, accessed either from the Rights of Way or Transport for Buckinghamshire pages. The form enables the user to tag a problem onto a specific footpath using the county map or via an address system, and shows the Rights of Way layer when you zoom in close enough. The report will be picked up by email, but in the next few months it will be linked to the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS GIS system). This is the only location where a map of the Rights of Way is available on internet.
http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/transport/ea_report_problem.page
- 12 Over the summer moving in 2010 we reduced the number of extra summer clearance gangs from 4 to 2 and this resulted in an overall reduction in the amount of clearance carried out at just over 200km. At the time we also anticipated that, with in-year financial constraints, we would possibly need to reduce the number of rights of way work gangs over the winter. Thankfully, this was not necessary, and all works over the winter have continued as normal – with just a small amount of down-time due to the severe weather conditions.
- 13 A summary of the maintenance carried out between 1st April 2010 and 31st January 2011 is added to this report in Appendix 1. Certainly, the out turn of jobs and work completed has been much better than anticipated. So far this year the Operations

and Strategic Team has overseen over 220 structure improvements to aid mobility access.

- 14 The results from the 2010 BVPI 178 (Best Value Performance Indicator) survey across 5% of the network, shows that over 85% of paths surveyed were found *easy to use*, and 99% of structures along the surveyed routes were *easily negotiated*. BVPI 178 is a survey specific to Rights of Way and undertaken by ROW staff, measuring the percentage of rights of way '*easy to use*' by the general public. The official government system was abolished in April 2008, but has been kept on by the Rights of Way community as a means to compare the ease of use on paths and year-to-year performance between authorities.
- 15 'Walk Your Local Paths' – The primary aim of the initiative was to get more local people interested in walking along their local network, and so far we have provided 76 parishes (Appendix 2) with a complete set of maps and survey forms, with report forms back from about half the parishes so far, and the rest due back in the spring. The updated survey information provided to us by the parishes has enabled the Operations Team to clear out older data and issues that are no longer outstanding.
- 16 Only a few years ago the number of problem issues recorded on the database was over 4000, but with the assistance of our partners – parishes, Chiltern Society, Ramblers Association, BHS, and hard work from staff, we have managed to reduce the number of issues recorded as outstanding on the network to the lowest ever, at 928.

C) Strategic Access Update (Jonathan Clark)

Strategic developments

- 15 The Rights of Way Team and Natural Environment Teams are respectively moving out of Hampden Hall and Annexe A to the 6th Floor of the County Hall Tower block in May 2011. It is not yet clear what is happening with Area based staff at Wycombe and Winslow, but they are staying at their respective offices in the short to medium term.
- 16 Some staff will be working from laptops in order to work more flexibly and all paper files have been scanned into a system called EDRMS (Electronic Data Records and Management System).
- 17 The program for redesigning the Planning Environment and Development Service will take place over the summer and the new structure will come into place on 1st November 2011.
- 18 Mark Bailey left the Council on 25th February 2011 to work for HS2 Ltd. Sandy Kidd, the County Archaeologist, will line manage the Strategic Access Officer post, in a combined Historic & Natural Environment Team.
- 19 Budgets: County Councillor, Valerie Letheren, Cabinet Member for Transportation, has committed capital money for Rights of Way to spend on improvement projects and improvements to path infrastructure in 2011/12.
- 20 A total of 102 planning applications were commented upon by the Strategic Access Officer since 3rd November 2010, distributed between authorities as follows:

- Aylesbury Vale 30
- Wycombe 24
- South Bucks 30
- Chiltern 16
- Buckinghamshire County 2

21 We are still awaiting road, footpath and bridleway plans from HS2 Ltd, in order to undertake a map-based assessment on route crossings and diversions prior to a consultation with partners. Included will be the Local Access Forum, Chilterns Conservation Board, Sustrans, The Ramblers, British Horse Society, Chiltern Society, Parish Councils, neighboring authorities and the public.

Donate-a-gate

22 There have been 10 new donors since the November 2010 Local Access Forum, taking the total to 205 donors.

23 The project to remove all 127 stiles along the Chiltern Way continues, using the donate-a-gate tax rebate from the government (Gift Aid) with the route now having only 95 stiles through Buckinghamshire.

Parish Newsletter

24 The 5th edition of the online Rights of Way Parish Council Newsletter was published in December 2010. This is available on the website, but the distribution list of people informed by email when it is available, includes the Local Access Forum members, Buckinghamshire Parish Councils, The Chiltern Society, Ramblers' Association, County Councillors, Local Area Co-ordinators and other individuals on request. The Rights of Way Liaison Group will be added to the list when the next edition is available in the May 2011.

D) 'Simply Walk' (Fiona Broadbent)

25 Funding from current partners has been secured for 2011/12, but there is still a shortfall. NHS funding will probably cease when the Primary Care Trust is disbanded in 2013. Money for Public Health and Health Prevention will be re-directed into Local Authorities and it is hoped the scheme can continue to obtain the same amount of funding from this source.

26 Walkers themselves are mostly willing to give a small weekly donation in order to keep the scheme going, but leaders are not willing to collect money and be responsible for cash. Also, Simply Walk does not have its own bank account into which leaders could pay the money. Some leaders feel it goes against the ethos of SW and would lead to the exclusion of some walkers for economic reasons.

27 3 new walks are due to start:

- Gerrards Cross - Tuesday 1st march – 10.30am (weekly);
- Denham village - Tuesday 22nd March, 3pm (weekly); and
- Iver - Saturday 16th July, 2pm (monthly).

28 2 additional walks are being planned:

- Castlefield/Oakridge area of High Wycombe, with £1,076 donated by Castlefield and Oakridge Trust.

- Winslow
- 29 Funding has been sought for a further walk in Gerrards Cross using money from the £100,000 Tesco Community Fund.
- 30 Fiona Broadbent presented 'Simply Walk - and example of The Big Society' at the Chilterns' Access Conference on Thursday 3rd March, based on her article in the Rights of Way publication 'Waymark' in their Autumn 2010 edition.
- 31 Parish councils that have donated, or agreed to donate so far are:-
- Downley Parish Council: £500
 - Chalfont St Giles Parish Council £100 in April 2011
 - Stokenchurch Parish council £50
 - Chalfont St Peter Parish Council - £500
 - Princes Risborough Town Council - £100 in April 2011
- 32 The walks programme has a new style, which has been funded and produced by Reactivate Bucks. This has saved Simply Walk the cost of producing the former black and white leaflet.

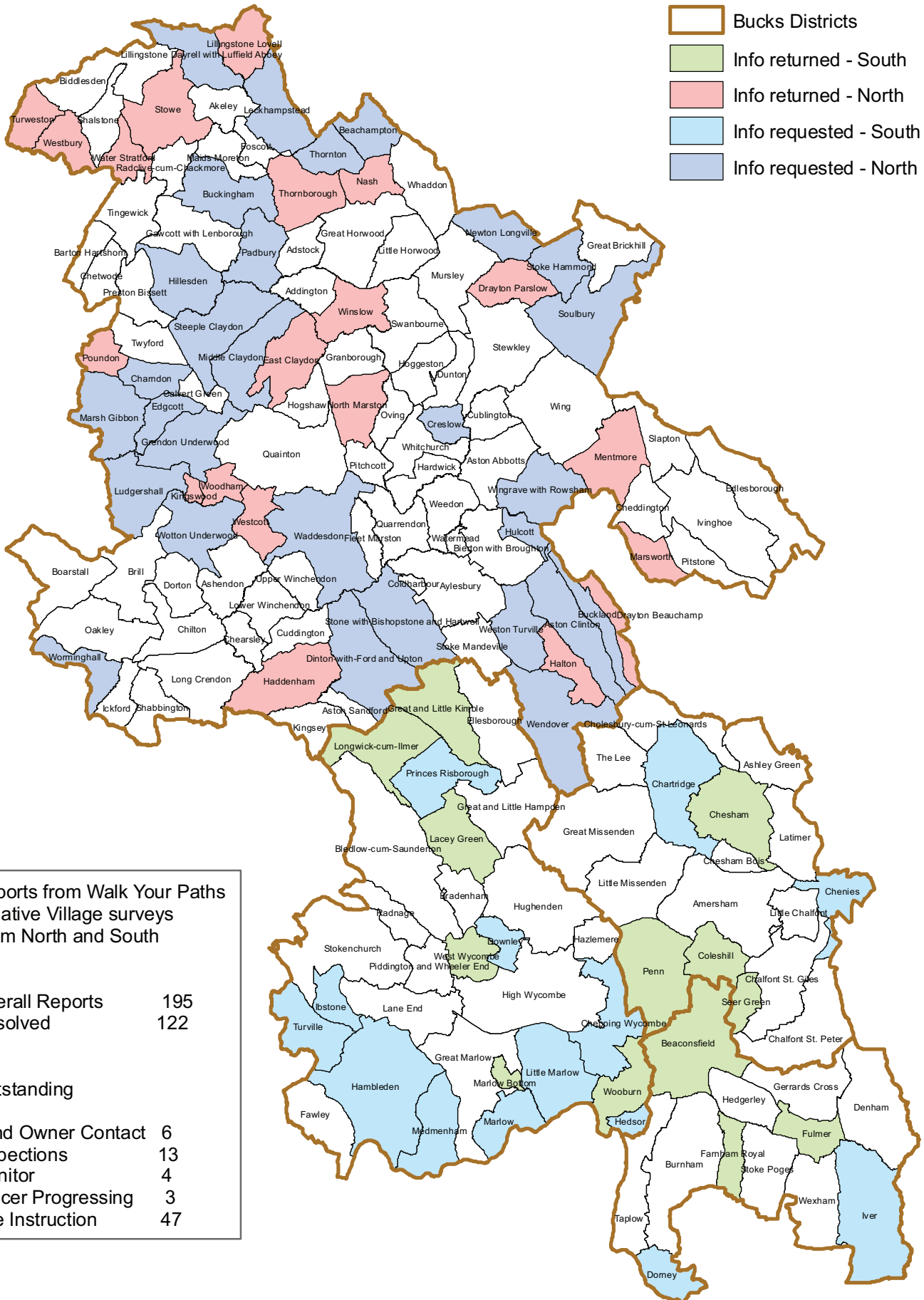
Buckinghamshire County Council - Rights of Way

Summary of Maintenance Carried Out Between 1/04/10 and 31/01/11

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	NORTH+SOUTH
Alignment	Path Off Line - resolved issue	18
Clearance	Clearance - carried out-jobs/km	681/207km
Bridge	Installed or repaired	35
Finger/post	Installed or repaired	172
Fly Tipping	Fly Tipping - removed	7
Gate	Gate repaired or installed	86
Intimidation + animal	Intimidation - resolved	17
Intimidating sign	Misleading Sign - removed	7
Obstruction - resolved	Barbed wire	7
Obstruction - resolved	Barrier - Fencing, wall or other	116
Obstruction - resolved	Electric fence	11
Obstruction - removed	Fallen Tree	117
Obstruction - resolved	Ploughing and Cropping	82
Other	Delivery of materials	29
Other	Miscellaneous issues resolved	78
Stile	Installed or repaired	173
Gate	Gate to Gap	3
Stile	Stile to Gap	32
Stile	Stile To KG	59
Stile	Stile To PG	37
Terrain	Bank Steps	21
Terrain	Path Surface problem resolved	30
Waymark Post	Installed/Repaired	185
Consultations	All Planning Applications	120
Volunteer Hours	RA, Chiltern Society	839/970
Improvements	To aid mobility access	217
5% Survey Results	Paths Rated easy to use	85%
5% Survey Results	Structures rated easy to use	99%
5% Survey Results	Routes with Roadside Signs	97%
Number on Database	No. of Job Sheets issued	801
Number on Database	Avg time to complete an order	70 days
Number on Database	No. of issues os 31/03/10	1019
Number on Database	No. of Issues os 30/09/10	928

Walk Your Local Maps - Initiative

- Bucks Districts
- Info returned - South
- Info returned - North
- Info requested - South
- Info requested - North



Reports from Walk Your Paths Initiative Village surveys From North and South

Overall Reports Resolved	195
Outstanding	122
Land Owner Contact	6
Inspections Monitor	13
Officer Progressing	4
Site Instruction	3
	47



**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

Report

Date: 7th March 2011
Title: LAF Members' Report
Author: Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access
Contact Officer: Katy MacDonald (01296 383604)

Buckinghamshire County Council – Finance and Budgets (Richard Pushman)

1. The County Council met on Thursday 17 February 2011 to discuss the budget for 2011/12 - 2013/14 and to outline the budget for the next three years. Over the last four years, the Council saved £57m and Council decided it now needs to save a further £56.3m over the next three years. In response to the need to make savings, as well as the recent public consultations, the following were agreed by County Council:
 - A freeze on Council tax;
 - £31.6m more for capital investment on roads, school buildings and property;
 - More time will be given to make changes to libraries and youth services;
 - School crossing patrols will remain;
 - Grant funding for the voluntary sector is to be maintained;
 - £250k provided for Big Society projects; and
 - Funding for Connexions service is to be maintained.

Next year, the Council will need to save £8.45m through internal programmes.

Recommendation: Members to discuss the implications.

Local Transport Plan (LTP) 3 consultation (John Elfes)

2. The LAF response to this consultation is enclosed in Appendix 1.

Recommendation: Members to note.

The 2012 Olympics (Peter Challis)

3. Peter Challis, member representing Sustrans, is project managing the walking and cycling improvements around the Eton Rowing Lake, involving a number of cross-boundary connections into Buckinghamshire from the Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead and Berkshire. Southern Construction & Surfacing has now been appointed to undertake these works, starting soon.
4. Dan Eastmond from Firestation Arts will be creating an arts trail and DEFRA is managing an active travel project to cover Eton-Dorney and other Olympic venues in London and Weymouth.

Recommendation: Members to note.

Chilterns' Conservation Board Access Conference, 3rd March 2011 (Neil Harris)

5. This year's conference was held at College Lake Nature Reserve, Tring. Neil Harris outlined the National Trust's Outdoors Vision for the Chilterns, which he will present today. Tom Franklin, Chairman of The Ramblers, spoke on the economic case for investing in access to the countryside; Mike Furness on future access to the Forestry Commission Estate land; and Fiona Broadbent on Simply Walk and The Big Society. In the afternoon, an access tour was taken around College Lake.

Recommendation: Members to note.

Natural England Countryside Code Review (John Elfes)

6. It is 6 years since the Code was re-written and Natural England is undertaking a limited stakeholder consultation, with a deadline of 31st March 2011. Natural England is particularly interested in the scale of the revisions and on ideas to promote the code locally. Their suggestion is to replace the existing five headline messages into three - one for each word of the strap-line: Respect, Protect and Enjoy. Please see Appendix 2 & 3.

Recommendation: Members to put forward comments and ideas.

British Horse Society correspondence (Viv Lynch)

7. Mark Weston of the British Horse Society has written to all Local Access Forums regarding the value of equestrian access in the countryside (Appendix 4). The Buckinghamshire LAF member for the BHS has been copied into correspondence from Richard Cuthbert in Hertfordshire, suggesting that in negotiating new definitive rights of way, their default position is to request a restricted byway and compromise on a bridleway.

Recommendation: Members to discuss the issue and a reply to the BHS.

Traffic Regulation Orders on bridleways (Chris Hurworth)

8. At the last meeting the Member representing off-road users asked if, in the event an order for a new byway being confirmed, the County would make a pre-emptive Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to ban vehicular use. If so, why was this being

done and was the policy led by officers or members? The decision to make a Traffic Regulation Order rests with the Council's Rights of Way Committee. The County Council's 'Policy for the Management of Motor Vehicles in the Countryside' states: 'The Council will consider the use of a TRO only on the basis of sound and sustained evidence and not as a means to solve what might be one-off or short-term problems. The use of a pre-emptive TRO may be useful, but will only be considered where exceptional circumstances dictate a significant potential for problems of public safety or damage to fragile environmental conditions or biodiversity.'

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/restricted_byways.page?

Recommendation: Members to put forward their recommendations.

Open Access – Chorley Manor Farm, near West Wycombe (GR: 810, 962).

9. Natural England is consulting on the restrictions at Chorley Manor Farm, as they expire on 19th May 2011. There is a fenced-off route along the northern boundary providing access all year and the owner proposes to shoot on 27 occasions during September, October, November, December and January. There is a restriction to keep dogs on the fenced-off route all year due to 'disturbance to game, and public safety during game shooting and for livestock'. In addition, there is a restriction for walkers to keep to the fenced route from 1st July until 1st February annually, from 23/8/2006 – 1/2/2011, in order to reduce disturbance to game. The LAF's views on the current directions are sought to assist in deciding whether the restrictions are still necessary for the original purpose and, if so, whether the extent and nature of the restrictions are still appropriate for the original purpose.

Recommendation: Members to put forward their recommendations.

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum

10. In the interests of fostering closer ties with neighbouring Local Access Forums, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead LAF have appointed Harry Hancock to serve as an observer to the Buckinghamshire LAF. Similarly, they have invited an observer to the next RBWM LAF. Their next meeting is in June 2011, though the precise date is still to be confirmed.

Recommendation: Members to suggest an observer, as necessary.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

23rd February 2011

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

Response to consultation on the Local Transport Plan

Herewith a response to consultation on the Buckinghamshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) 3 on behalf of the Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum. Our remit is to advise on all aspects of access to the countryside in Buckinghamshire, and we confine our comments to this subject. The Rights of Way network is central to public access in the county, and whilst we welcome the references to walking and cycling in the consultation document, we must express our concern that there is no direct reference to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) anywhere in the consultation booklet. The RoWIP was integrated into the previous LTP, and we believe that it is essential that Rights Of Way remain an integral part of transport planning in the county.

The consultation booklet is usefully divided into five themes, and we believe that the Rights of Way network fits into the philosophy and helps to deliver the aims of each of them.

- 1 **“A Thriving Economy”** – the economic case for investment in Rights of Way has been made several times and it is now widely accepted that Tourist and Visitor based businesses and those selling specialist equipment benefit greatly from the users of the Rights of Way network. This was pointed up in the last Foot and Mouth epidemic, when the closure of the network resulted in serious business losses. Buckinghamshire benefits greatly because of its highly developed and well maintained Rights of Way network, and this vital income stream can only be sustained and increased if the network itself is maintained and improved.
- 2 **“Sustainable Development”** – The consultation document already refers to the need to increase the levels of walking and cycling, and we would stress that this is not solely an urban issue, but should involve the wider Rights of Way network. Whilst utility walking may be limited to, for example, taking a short cut to the station, cycling is viable over greater distances. The opportunity to use off-road routes on suitably improved surfaces could attract many more people to the cycling option for their utility journeys.
- 3 **“Safe Communities”** – This section raises the issue of safety on the roads. Certainly walking, horseriding or cycling on Buckinghamshire country roads can be unnerving, and the safety of these users could be greatly improved if the many overgrown and rutted grass verges were made usable. We urge that a programme to achieve this be

implemented. Many Rights of Way involve crossing main roads which can be extremely dangerous, especially where there is no central refuge. We recommend that the most dangerous crossings be identified, and refuges installed wherever possible.

- 4 **“Health and well being”** – The health benefits of the network are well known to all forms of user and to the public. It provides useful exercise for the healthy and, in the case of walking, supplements medical treatment for many illnesses including heart, vascular and lung ailments. The consultation document already acknowledges this to some extent, but we wish to stress that implementing the policy should involve the wider network. More publicity is beginning to be given to the mental and emotional benefits of using the network for deeper access to the countryside, with a consequent improvement in the well being of users.
- 5 **“Cohesive and strong communities”** - The consultation document proposes to improve local walking routes for their value in making connections between communities, and we applaud this. However we urge that 'local' should not be limited to urban areas, but again should include the wider network.

Public Transport: There are many people who are not drivers and who wish to access the countryside by public transport. The rail system radiates from London, and cross county journeys rely entirely on bus services, which can be sketchy, particularly at weekends. If the acknowledgement on page 02 of the booklet that “good transport is essential” is to be honoured, cuts to these services should be avoided.

In summary, **we recommend that:**

- ❖ **The Rights of Way Improvement Plan should remain an integral part of the LTP, and a commitment to implementation be made.**
- ❖ **The LTP should acknowledge the value of the whole Rights of Way network in achieving its aims.**
- ❖ **A programme to improve verges on country roads should be implemented to enable off-carriageway use by walkers, cyclists and horseriders.**
- ❖ **Central refuges should be installed where Rights of Way cross single carriageway main roads.**
- ❖ **New well-surfaced off road routes for utility journeys on foot, or by cycle between centres of population be made a priority.**
- ❖ **That the LTP recognises the extra health benefits and the improvement in the well being of users that the wider Rights of Way network provides.**
- ❖ **That public transport services be protected.**

To conclude, we welcome the several references to the improvement of the walking and cycling environment, and the commitment to maintenance of Rights of Way, and the opportunity to comment provided by this consultation exercise.

John Elfes, Chairman,

Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum

143, White Hill, Chesham, BUCKS HP5 1AT.

The Countryside Code - Respect Protect Enjoy

Respect the working life of the countryside – leave gates and property as you find them and consider other people

Please respect the working life of the countryside, as our actions can affect people's livelihoods, our heritage, and the safety and welfare of animals and ourselves.

Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone – at home, at work and at leisure.

Protect plants and animals - take your litter home and keep dogs under effective control

We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants or trees.

The countryside is a great place to exercise dogs, but it's every owner's duty to make sure their dog is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, wildlife or other people

Enjoy the countryside, and all it offers- plan ahead and be prepared for the unexpected.

Even when going out locally, it's best to get the latest information about where and when you can go. For example, your rights to go onto some areas of open access land and coastal land may be restricted while work is carried out for safety reasons, or during breeding seasons. Follow advice and local signs, and be prepared for the unexpected.

The Countryside Code - Respect Protect Enjoy

Respect the working life of the countryside – leave gates and property as you find them and consider other people

Please respect the working life of the countryside, as our actions can affect people's livelihoods, our heritage, and the safety and welfare of animals and ourselves.

Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone – at home, at work and at leisure.

- A farmer will normally **close gates** to keep livestock in, but may sometimes leave **them** open so **livestock** can reach food and water. Leave gates as you find them or follow instructions on signs. If walking in a group, make sure the last person knows how to leave the gates.
- Leave machinery and livestock alone – don't interfere with animals even if you think they're in distress. Try to alert the farmer instead.
- In fields where crops are growing, follow paths wherever possible.
- Use gates, stiles or gaps in field boundaries when provided – climbing over walls, hedges and fences can damage them and increase the risk of farm animals escaping.
- Our heritage belongs to all of us – be careful not to disturb ruins and historic sites.
- If you think a sign is illegal or misleading such as a 'Private - No Entry' sign on a public footpath, contact the local authority.

Busy traffic on small country roads can be unpleasant and dangerous to local people, visitors and wildlife - so slow down and where possible, leave your vehicle at home, consider sharing lifts and use alternatives such as public transport or cycling. For public transport information, phone Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit www.traveline.org.uk

- Respect the needs of local people – for example, don't block gateways, driveways or other entry points with your vehicle.

Co-operate with people at work in the countryside. For example, keep out of the way when farm animals are being gathered or moved and follow directions from the farmer.

- When riding a bike or driving a vehicle, slow down for horses, walkers and livestock and give them plenty of room. By law, cyclists must give way to walkers and horse-riders on bridleways.

Protect plants and animals - take your litter home and keep dogs under effective control

We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants or trees.

The countryside is a great place to exercise dogs, but it's every owner's duty to make sure their dog is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, wildlife or other people

- Wild animals and farm animals can behave unpredictably if you get too close, especially if they're with their young - so give them plenty of space, and know what to do if you are with a dog.
- By law, you must control your dog so that it does not scare or disturb farm animals or wildlife. Keeping your dog under **effective control** means that you
 - keep your dog on a lead or,
 - keep it within sight and be confident that it will return on command
- **Importantly though**, if a farm animal chases you and your dog, it is safer to let your dog off the lead – don't risk getting hurt by trying to protect it. **Your dog will be much safer if you let it run away from a farm animal in these circumstances and so will you.**
- You do not have to put your dog on a lead on public paths, as long as it is under **effective** close control. But as a general rule, keep your dog on a lead if you cannot rely on its obedience. Farmers **may** destroy a dog that injures or worries their animals.
- Take particular care that your dog doesn't scare sheep and lambs or wander where it might disturb wildlife.

Ground-nesting birds and their chicks and eggs are especially vulnerable to trampling and disturbance by people and dogs and can be very difficult to see on farmland, grass, heath land or moorland and along the coast.

Eggs and young will soon die without protection from their parents and **adult birds are also vulnerable in the winter and at migration times, when they may be very short of food and energy.** There may be special restrictions for these reasons, for example:

- On areas of open country and registered common land, known as 'open access land', you must keep your dog on a short lead between 1 March and 31 July to protect ground-nesting birds and all year round near farm animals
- On open access land and on coastal land, you may be asked to keep your dog on a lead at other times of year. There may also be times when you may not be allowed to go on the land with a dog.

- Everyone knows how unpleasant dog mess is and it can cause infections, so always clean up after your dog and get rid of the mess responsibly. Also, make sure your dog is wormed regularly to protect it, other animals and people.

Fires can be as devastating to wildlife and habitats as they are to people and property – so be careful not to drop a match or smouldering cigarette at any time of the year. Sometimes, controlled fires are used to manage vegetation, particularly on heaths and moors between October and early April, [but if a fire appears to be unattended then report it by calling 999.](#)

- Litter and leftover food doesn't just spoil the beauty of the countryside, it can be dangerous to wildlife and farm animals and can spread disease – so take your litter home with you. Dropping litter and dumping rubbish are criminal offences.

[If you discover a dead bird or wild animal that may have been shot, trapped or poisoned, do not touch it, but call your local \[police force\]\(#\).](#)

- [Protecting](#) the natural environment means we should [also](#) take special care not to damage, destroy or remove features such as rocks, plants and trees. They provide homes and food for wildlife, and add to everybody's enjoyment of the countryside.

Enjoy the countryside, and all it offers- plan ahead and be prepared for the unexpected.

Even when going out locally, it's best to get the latest information about where and when you can go. For example, your rights to go onto some areas of [open access land and coastal land](#) may be restricted while work is carried out for safety reasons, or during breeding seasons. Follow advice and local signs, and be prepared for the unexpected.

- Refer to up-to-date maps or guidebooks, visit www.naturalengland.org.uk or contact local information centres .
- You're responsible for your own safety and for others in your care – especially children - so be prepared for natural hazards, changes in weather and other events. Visit www.naturalengland.org.uk for links to organisations offering specific advice on equipment and safety, or contact visitor information centres and libraries for a list of outdoor recreation groups.
- Check weather forecasts before you leave. [Conditions can change rapidly on mountains and along the coast](#), so don't be afraid to turn back. [When visiting the coast check for tide times at Easy Tide](#), don't risk getting cut off by rising tides and take care on slippery rocks and sea-weed.
- Part of the appeal of the countryside is that you can get away from it all. You may not see anyone for hours, and there are many places without clear mobile phone signals, so let someone else know where you're going and when you expect to return.
- [England has about 190,000 km \(118,000 miles\) of public rights of way, providing many opportunities to enjoy the natural environment.](#) Get to know the signs and symbols used in the countryside to show paths and open countryside.



Footpath - open to walkers only, waymarked with a yellow arrow



Bridleway - open to walkers, horseriders and cyclists, waymarked with a blue arrow



Restricted byway - open to walkers, cyclists, horse riders and horse drawn vehicles, waymarked with a plum coloured arrow.



Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) - open to walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, horse-drawn vehicles and motor vehicles, waymarked with a red arrow.



National Trail Acorn – identifies 15 long distance routes in England and Wales. All are open for walking and some trails are also suitable for cyclists, horse riders and people with limited mobility.



Open access land - areas of mountain, moor, heath, down land and registered common land (mapped under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) open to people to walk, run, explore, climb and watch wildlife, without having to stay on paths. **Coastal land** (identified under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009) which will extend coastal access rights in stages, beginning with the 'Olympic' stretch at Weymouth in 2012.

Countryside Code – advice for land managers

Know your rights, responsibilities and liabilities

People visiting the countryside provide important income for the local economy. Most like to follow a visible route, prefer using proper access points like gates, and generally want to do the right thing - but they need your help.

- The Ordnance Survey's 1:25,000 maps show public rights of way and access land. These maps are generally reliable but not 'definitive' so you will need to check the legal status of rights of way with your local authority. You can also find out which areas of access land are mapped under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 on Natural England's [Open Access pages](#).
- For guidance on your rights, responsibilities and liabilities, contact your local authority or National Park authority and look on the [Open Access pages](#).
- By law, you must keep rights of way clear and not obstruct people's entry onto access land - it's a criminal offence to discourage rights of public access with misleading signs.
- Trespassing is often unintentional - for advice on tackling trespass see 'Managing Public Access' booklet available through the [Open Access pages](#) or ask for a copy from the Open Access Contact Centre on 0845 100 3298.

Make it easy for visitors to act responsibly

Most people who visit the countryside are keen to act responsibly and problems are normally due to a lack of understanding. There are a number of ways you can help them to realise their responsibilities:

- [Keeping paths clear and waymarks and signs in good order will help people stick to the right routes and access points](#). Contact your local authority or National Park Authority to find out what help is available.
- Where there is public access through a boundary feature, such as a fence or hedge, create a gap if you can – or use an accessible gate or, if absolutely necessary, a stile. When installing new gates and stiles, make sure you have the permission of the local authority.
- Encourage people to respect your wishes by giving clear, polite guidance where it's needed. For example, telling visitors about your land management work helps them to avoid getting in your way.
- Rubbish attracts other rubbish - by getting rid of items such as farm waste properly, you'll discourage the illegal dumping of rubbish and encourage others to get rid of their rubbish responsibly.

Identify possible threats to visitor's safety

People come to the countryside simply to enjoy themselves safely. As land managers, it is up to us to help them to do so. In fact we have a duty of care under the Occupiers' Liability Acts of 1957 and 1984 to make sure that they can pass through our land safely.

- Your duty of care under depends on the type of access right – so it's important to know what rights, if any, apply to your land. Contact the [Country Land and Business Association](#) 020 7235 0511 or the [National Farmers' Union](#) on 0870 845 8458 for more guidance.
- Consider possible man-made and natural hazards on your land and draw any risks to the public's attention if they are not obvious.
- Try to avoid using electric fencing where people may accidentally touch it, particularly alongside narrow paths. Barbed wire can also be dangerous, especially for children. Instead we strongly recommend you use plain wire.
- Animals likely to attack visitors should not be allowed to roam freely where the public has access – you may be liable for any resulting harm.

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

The British Horse Society
Abbey Park,
Stareton,
Kenilworth,
Warwickshire CV8 2XZ

Email enquiry@bhs.org.uk
Website www.bhs.org.uk
Tel 0844 848 1666
Tel 01926 707700
Fax 01926 707800



Fulfilling your passion for horses

To all English Local Access Forums

04 February 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Equestrian Access

The British Horse Society works for safer on- and off-road riding and carriage driving through an improved public rights of way network, seeking to create new opportunities of lawful off road riding and carriage driving, and by safer use of our highways by all users.

The UK equestrian industry is currently valued at £7 billion per annum, 4.3 million people regularly engage in horse based leisure and sport, 80% of whom are female, and 53% come from CDE demographics. Horses are an integral part of British culture and society. The BHS is the largest equestrian charity in the UK and represents the interests of the everyday rider and driver. It has a world-wide reputation for its activities in welfare, education and training and on access issues.

The Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales, published in December 2005, was prepared by the British Horse Industry Confederation (including the BHS) in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Strategy includes the following aims:-

Aim 2 'Increase participation in equestrianism and develop the social contribution of the Horse Industry.'

Aim 3 'Boost the economic performance of equestrian businesses.'

Aim 5 'Increase access to off-road riding and carriage driving', including the encouragement and improvement of urban and suburban riding and carriage driving.

In England the length of the public right of way network currently amounts to 188,700km, of which ONLY 22% is available to horse riders and horse-drawn vehicle drivers have only 5%. Also, many equestrian rights of way are now disconnected from each other because the roads that should connect them are no longer safe for equestrian use because of the speed, size and volume of motorised traffic on them. Many equestrians have no access to a safe local route. There is much therefore that needs to be done to provide parity of access for the growing number of equestrians.

The Society fully appreciates all councils are experiencing unprecedented cut backs in their budgets and that access is generally not a priority. And it is precisely because such resources



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The British Horse Society is an Appointed Representative of South Essex Insurance Brokers Limited who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

Registered Charity Nos. 210504 and SC038516. A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England & Wales No. 444742



are so severely limited that when such public funding is available this should achieve maximum value and provide access for ALL non-motorised users. If all Councils were to adopt this default assumption all users would see measurable gains.

The three different pieces of legislation listed below have increased rights of access to the countryside to walkers, without similar provision for equestrians and other users. The Society would welcome any new access opportunities that your forum is able to secure to address this unfair situation for equestrians, and consequently, to improve access for cyclists as well.

The Society is keen to hear from Local Access Forums that currently do not have an equestrian representative, so that we can highlight this fact to our own members to encourage them to apply and ensure that relevant local equestrian access issues are passed to their area forum for consideration.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Weston". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark Weston,
Director of Access, Safety and Welfare,
The British Horse Society.
02476 840560
mobile: 07967973196

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000:

- The creation of Open Access land has resulted in many landowners and local authorities erecting barriers and padlocked gates which, while they provide no impediment to walkers, exclude access to riders, even where they had previously enjoyed access rights, often enjoyed for centuries.
- Riders rights over Urban Commons, as provided for under the Law of Property Act 1925, are often being denied by the erection of barriers which deny access to equestrians.
- The maxim “Once a Highway, always a Highway” has stood the test of time since 1169 but in 2026, all under-recorded and unrecorded rights of way may be extinguished. Some landowners, when unwilling to dedicate higher rights over their land are persuaded to do so when they see historical documents showing an ancient way. The dearth of riders after the war meant that many bridleways were not properly recorded during the definitive map process. Some 50% of footpaths are actually ancient bridleways, and the bridleway rights will be extinguished in 2026 if section 53 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is brought into force.
- Forestry Commission freehold land has been dedicated for walkers but no such rights have been given to riders. This means that such access as is currently provided for equestrians will be lost when any such land is sold.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

- This Act has restricted the creation of off-road routes for motorists. However there are many miles of dual status routes – routes which are on the List of Streets as Unclassified County Roads (UCRs) but also recorded on the definitive map as either footpaths or bridleways. Many local authorities have erected anti motor barriers which are also denying access to equestrians. Many of these dual status stretches are short lengths in the middle of longer off road routes, thus denying equestrian access on miles of safe off road routes. The barriers are also denying access to the less able rider who, as a consequence of disability, is unable to negotiate them.

Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

- The foreshore is now designated as Open Access Land, which has a restriction against horses. The government refused to acknowledge equestrian common law rights to the foreshore, stating that any existing rights will be protected but in practice there is nothing in writing to protect riders’ rights. There should be a presumption that any foreshore which is accessed via a road or bridleway has equestrian rights.
- The coastal strip is only for walkers. No acknowledgement is being made of under or unrecorded equestrian rights, that coincide with the route.

