



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

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**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> 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](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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 and 31<sup>st</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011.
- 18 Mark Bailey left the Council on 25<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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.