



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

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**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011

**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 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 was confirmed by the Inspector with modifications. Objections to the proposed modifications were received; a third public inquiry is being arranged by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 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. The Inspector confirmed the Order with modifications. The confirmed Order with modifications has recently been advertised and we await further instruction from the Secretary of State.
- 3 The Secretary of State directed us to make Orders upgrading to BOAT status routes at Little Missenden and Stowe/Lillingstone Dayrell. The Orders regarding Holback Lane in Stowe/Lillingstone Dayrell and Mop End Lane in Little Missenden are currently being advertised. The remaining two Orders in Little Missenden are soon to be advertised.
- 4 The Secretary of State directed us to make Orders for BOATs in Great Missenden and Wendover. The Orders have been made and advertised. Objections to the Orders have been received and the matter will be referred to the Secretary of State.
- 5 We are in the process of making an Order to add a Public Footpath to the Definitive Map and Statement in High Wycombe, one Order is currently being advertised in Whitchurch. Orders have been made to add routes to the Definitive Map and Statement in Marlow, High Wycombe, and Great and Little Hampden. Objections to the Orders have been received. The Orders and objections will be sent to the Secretary of State for determination.

- 6 Applications for 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 downgrading of a bridleway to footpath in Ashley Green has been rejected. We are awaiting direction from the Secretary of State for the remaining appeal in Whitchurch.
- 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 Halton, Princes Risborough, Iver, and Westbury; claimed bridleways in Taplow, West Wycombe and Downley; claimed Restricted Byway in Gerrards Cross.
- 8 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 four village green applications in progress – part of the former railway line, Quainton; land at Lower Road, Gerrards Cross; land at the Field, Bryants Bottom in Great Missenden; and a second application has been received for land at the Fields and the Clump, Iver. A public inquiry was held for the application along part of the former railway line, Quainton in March 2011, we are currently awaiting the Inspector's recommendation.

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

- 10 The Team has purchased new power tools for the contracted Ringway Jacobs works teams, with a view to reducing expensive hire costs. They have bought 4 brush cutters, 2 chain saws, 2 long-handled hedge cutters and a high-powered drill. It is thought that costs can be recouped within 4 months.
- 11 This year's mowing season started in May and the first cut on the annual strimming list in the south has been completed. The north tends to run right through until August/September. There will then be a short break for the south teams until August, before the second cut will start. In the meantime they will concentrate on structures and surfacing.
- 12 The Revenue budget is slightly down on last year, but the finances have been boosted by a £100K capital injection, predicated on projects to improve accessibility, to be spent over the next 2 years. The installation and purchase of the 13 gates at Ivinghoe Beacon has been financed in this way.
- 13 A summary of the maintenance carried out between 1/4/201 and 1/4/2011 is attached to the report in Appendix 3. A new figure has been included calculating the number of problems per length of path. This year it is 3.68km, with a national average of one problem very 2km. The BVPI survey, across 5% of the network in May 2010 and November 2010, showed the number of paths 'easy to use' at 80%. The number of issues since March 2011 has been reduced from 928 to 907, but these figures fluctuate daily. A few years ago the figure was 4,000.
- 14 The new problem report form on the website, accessed either from the Rights of Way or Transport for Buckinghamshire pages, is being heavily used.

[http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/transport/ea\\_report\\_problem.page](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/transport/ea_report_problem.page). Reports are currently picked up by email, but when our Countryside Access Management System (CAMS GIS system) is upgraded from 5.3 to 5.4, reports logged in the contact centre will be presented to Area Officers for 'approval' then automatically mapped on CAMS. This is the only location where a map of the Rights of Way is currently available on internet.

- 15 Some examples of recent revetment, step and surfacing works include Bledlow Footpath No. 28; Chesham Bois Footpath No. 4; and Bledlow Byway No. 92 respectively.

### **C) Strategic Access Update (Jonathan Clark)**

#### **Strategic developments**

- 15 The Rights of Way Team and Historic & Natural Environment Team respectively moved out of Hampden Hall and Annexe A on 31st May to the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor of the County Hall Tower block. The Area based staff at Wycombe and Winslow remain at their offices on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; and their telephone numbers remain the same.
- 16 The County Council recently elected a new leader, Councillor Martin Tett, who until his election had been Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, which includes Rights of Way. A number of new Cabinet Members have been appointed and as a consequence the political geography of the County Council looks very different. Cabinet Members for Planning and Environment activities are:
  - Martin Tett (Leader) - HS2, Economic Development;
  - Peter Hardy - Planning & Transport;
  - Steven Adams – Environment (including Rights of Way, replacing Val Letheren); and
  - Peter Cartwright - Finance & Resources
- 17 Heads of Service and senior managers are working to understand what the new Leader and Cabinet Members' priorities are, and the impact upon the Service. This has resulted in the Acting Head of Planning and Environment to reconsider the timetable for restructuring the Planning, Environment & Development Service, so the 3-month consultation period, planned to begin on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011, has been postponed.
- 18 Steven Adams, the new Portfolio holder for Environment, (which includes Rights of Way) has been invited to introduce himself to the Local Access Forum.
- 19 A total of 65 planning applications have been commented upon by the Strategic Access Officer since 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010, distributed between authorities as follows:
  - Aylesbury Vale 23
  - Wycombe 13
  - South Bucks 14
  - Chiltern 7
  - Buckinghamshire County 8

- 20 Reports and maps have been produced to summarise the restoration principles with regard to Rights of Way at six minerals and waste sites in Buckinghamshire. These included High Heavens, Langley, Amersham, Thorney Mill and Richings Park. A strategic overview of each site was included along with the linkages needed into the surrounding network and legal framework. This work reflects how the system may look in the future, whereby planning applications are 'front loaded' with consultations taking place with the planning authority and consultees *before* an application is made.

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

- 21 There have been 10 new donors since the March 2011 Local Access Forum, taking the total to 215 donors. One particular success has been on National Trust land at Ivinghoe Beacon for a Dunstable Disabled Group who donated 5 gates.
- 22 The project to remove 127 stiles along the Chiltern Way continues, following the route's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2010, using the donate-a-gate tax rebate from the government (Gift Aid). The route is now stile-free from the county boundary with Oxfordshire at North End, through Stokenchurch and on to Bledlow Ridge, except two landowners (and 3 stiles) that have refused to change their structures. 84 stiles remain through Buckinghamshire.

### **Parish Newsletter**

- 23 The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the online Rights of Way Parish Council Newsletter will be available on the website in July 2011. Articles from LAF Members are welcome.

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

- 24 The walks programme leaflet is available on the website and gives information on all walks for the county between April and September 2011.  
[http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/simple\\_walk.page?](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/simple_walk.page) The leaflet is now funded and produced by Reactivate Bucks, which has resulted in a saving for Simply Walk programme, replacing the former black and white version.
- 25 Additional funding for Simply Walk has been received this year from Downley Parish Council (£500); Chalfont St Giles Parish Council (£100); Stokenchurch Parish Council (£50); Princes Risborough Town Council (£100); Bucks Sport for the First Footers programme (£2,500); Castlefield and Oakridge (£1075); Gerrards Cross (£500); Burnham Health Promotional Trust (£1000) and donations from walkers (£865).
- 26 One new walk has started since the last LAF meeting:
- Denham village - Tuesday 22nd March, 3pm (weekly).
- 27 One new walk has been agreed since the last LAF meeting and is due to start shortly:
- Iver - Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2pm (monthly).