



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Report

AGENDA ITEM 9

Date: 2nd November 2011
Title: Rights of Way Team update
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A Definitive Map Update (Helen Beevers)

Rights of Way Applications

- 1 A public inquiry will be held 8 November 2011 into an Order to add public footpaths at Deangarden Wood, High Wycombe to the Definitive Map.
- 2 The Order to upgrade Public Bridleways Nos. 40 and 40A Great and Little Kimble and No. 62 Ellesborough to Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) was confirmed by the Inspector with modifications. Objections to the proposed modifications were received and a third public inquiry will be held 5 January 2012.
- 3 The Secretary of State directed us to make Orders for BOATs in Stowe/Lillingstone Dayrell, Great Missenden/Wendover and Little Missenden. All the Orders, apart from two in Little Missenden, have been made and advertised. Objections to the Orders have been received and the matter will be referred to the Secretary of State. The remaining two Orders in Little Missenden are soon to be advertised.
- 4 An Order is being made to add a Public Footpath to the Definitive Map and Statement in Lacey Green. One Order will soon be advertised in High Wycombe. In addition, Orders have been made to add routes to the Definitive Map and Statement in Marlow, Whitchurch, and Great and Little Hampden. Objections to these Orders have been received, so will be determined by the Secretary of State. The application for claimed footpaths at Fawley Court has been rejected.
- 5 An application for the extinguishment of a public footpath in Whitchurch was rejected by the Rights of Way Committee and the applicant appealed against the decision. We are awaiting direction from the Secretary of State.
- 6 Applications for claimed rights of way are currently in progress include: claimed footpaths in High Wycombe, Stowe, Aston Clinton, Lower Winchendon, Wendover and Halton, Princes Risborough, Iver, Westbury, Penn and Beaconsfield; claimed bridleways in Taplow, West Wycombe and Downley; and claimed Restricted Byway in Gerrards Cross.

- 7 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

- 8 There are currently four village green applications in progress: land at Lower Road, Gerrards Cross; land at the Field, Bryants Bottom in Great Missenden; for land at the Fields and the Clump, Iver; and land at Hampden Hill, Beaconsfield. The application to register part of the former railway line, Quainton as village green has been rejected by the Rights of Way Committee.

B Rights of Way Operations Update (Joanne Taylor)

- 9 The mowing season started in May 2011 and the first cut was completed by the end of July 2011, despite having two major machinery break downs. Whilst we have not quite achieved second cuts on all those paths identified on the schedule, we have carried out, in total, clearance on 263 kilometres of path. We will also continue to carry out clearance if we receive a complaint, at least until the end of October 2011, or until overgrowth completely dies back.
- 10 A summary of the maintenance carried out between 1st April 2011 and the 15th October 2011 is attached to the report Appendix 1. We completed the first of the 2.5% network surveys in May 2011 (second due in November 2011) and the condition of the network, using the nationally recognised methodology for path surveying (Best Value Performance Indicator - BVPI 178), shows that the number of paths rated 'easy to use' are at 83.6%, with 96% of structures (stiles/gates/steps/bridges) rated 'easy to use'. The total number of known issues currently outstanding on the network is 1,064; a slight increase from the beginning of the year, due in part to the re-deployment of the works teams from structure repairs to summer path clearance. Additionally, we have in the last few months received several very large batches of reports (over 200) from one prolific complainant, which has increased the south teams work load accordingly. Reassuringly, a large proportion of these relate to minor issues which will be relatively easy to resolve.
- 11 BVPI 178 is adopted by a number of Highway Authorities to assess the general condition of their rights of way networks, using a recognised methodology; the condition survey is carried out in the months of November and May each year and 2.5% of the overall length of the network is checked in each of those months (5% annually). Basically, it is a very good indication of the condition of the network and typically Buckinghamshire usually achieves above 80% of the network as 'Easy to Use'. Whilst it is not an absolute requirement on authorities to carry out the survey, it is probably the easiest and simplest method of actually checking and 'bench marking' the condition of the network against other authorities, and will be a good 'early warning' indicator of a deterioration in network condition. We would normally carry out the 5% survey in-house, but due to the reduction in the number of staff over the last few years we are finding this difficult to fit in with more critical work. This dilemma was addressed by the Chiltern Society and a local member of the Ramblers' Association (Aylesbury Walking Group) and they were asked if there were any volunteers willing to participate in the November 2011 survey. Take-up was very good with a total of 12 volunteers coming forward, who will be given an area to survey with some basic instructions on the methodology. Hopefully the results will be roughly consistent with previous survey results, and we will give feedback on this at future meetings. Volunteers from the LAF would be most welcome.
- 12 We launched a new reporting system in February 2011 which is an on-line form together with a map layer that enables the public to easily find and mark the position of their issue. Whilst the number of issues currently logged is quite low, we envisage the public will find this method most convenient, and eventually the most popular, for logging problems with the County Council.

- 13 Some of the more significant improvement works for this season have included:
- Byway No. 1 in Longwick-cum-Ilmer: improvements to a 100 metre section next to the Phoenix Trail, originally reported by Peter Challis. Very large potholes were repaired, planings laid and a new wearing course installed.
 - Footpath No. 10 Soulbury: improvements were made across a marshy area, including new gates and two new board walks.
 - Footpath No. 59 in Chepping Wycombe: improvements have been made to a 50 metres section of the well-used path - a route that Thames Valley Police wished to close using a Gating Order. However, through negotiation and discussion, including a report submitted to the Joint Neighbourhood Action Group, we were successful in persuading the parties concerned that a series of improvements, including a tarmac surface and overgrowth clearance would help reduce anti-social behaviour and negate the need for gates across the route.

C Strategic Access Update (Jonathan Clark)

- 14 The Planning Environment & Development Service is in a 3-month consultation period, where the Service is proposed to be merged with Transportation for Buckinghamshire to form a new 'Place Service'. It is stated by Neil Gibson, Strategic Director for Communities and Built Environment, that savings are needed to meet the overall budget challenge faced by the County Council. Jobs are being re-evaluated, with some roles being deleted. The ROW Service will be affected. The number of Area Officers is proposed to be reduced from 4 to 2, and the Maintenance function, (Joanne Taylor's Team), is proposed to be moved across to the private company Ringway Jacobs, who currently manage the Transportation contract.
- 15 A total of 70 planning applications have been commented upon by the Strategic Access Officer since 6th July 2011, distributed between authorities as follows:
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|---|------------------------|----|
| • | Aylesbury Vale | 30 |
| • | Wycombe | 11 |
| • | South Bucks | 9 |
| • | Chiltern | 9 |
| • | Buckinghamshire County | 11 |
- 16 A strategic overview of the County Council's 'restoration principles' were submitted earlier in the year to the County Planners with regard to 6 minerals and waste sites. Subsequent negotiations with have resulted in the site's owner, WRG, putting forward a raft of new bridleways and footpaths across their site, which will connect with the surrounding network when the landfill is restored. This will not be for a number of years, but the proposals will be secured, in perpetuity, by planning consent.
- 17 Attempts are being made to secure a s.106 contribution to the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust towards the conservation and management of Quarrendon Leas, and to BCC for a proposed leisure route (a new dedicated bridleway) connecting east-west between Berryfields and Weedon Hill developments to the north of Aylesbury. The overall vision is to create a bridleway across the whole of the north of Aylesbury and eventually a bridleway around the whole circumference of the town. Capital is needed for a new £80K bridge in Watermead, crossing the River Thames, on land owned by the Parish Council, and advice from the forum in sought in this regard.
- 18 Following work by the Strategic Access Officer and Gavin Caspersz, Neil Harris has agreed to some gate improvements on routes into Coombe Hill, which provides better mobility scooter access into and out of the site. A quote has been obtained to ramp the Ridgeway National Trail across a sunken lane that leads into the adjoining land to enable mobility scooter access between Wendover and Coombe Hill.

Donate-a-gate

- 19 There have been 8 new donors since the July 2011 Local Access Forum, funding 11 new gates, and taking the total to 223 donors. A launch of the 17 new gates at Ivinghoe Beacon, being part funded with 5 gates from a Dunstable Walking Group and celebrating new disabled access to public rights of way and open access land, will take place on Saturday 5th November at 10am in the main car park, with members present from The Disabled Ramblers.
- 20 The partnership project with The Chiltern Society to remove 127 stiles along the Chiltern Way continues using the donate-a-gate Gift Aid donations. Only two stiles now remain from Penn to Chenies, a distance of approximately 21 kilometres. A further 81 stiles remain to be removed or replaced throughout Buckinghamshire.

Parish Newsletter

- 21 The 6th edition of the online Rights of Way Parish Council Newsletter became available on the website in early September 2011. Articles included submissions from Definitive Map, Maintenance and Natural, Historic and Environment Teams. The next edition will be produced between December 2011 and January 2012 and articles from LAF Members would be most welcome.

D 'Simply Walk' (Fiona Broadbent)

- 22 The new walks programme leaflet (Oct 2011 - end March 2012) is available on the website and gives information on all walks in the county. The full-colour programme is currently funded and produced by Reactivate Bucks: http://www.bucksc.gov.uk/bcc/row/simply_walk.page?
- 23 Additional funding for Simply Walk has been received from walkers' donations, currently standing at £1356, but only £115 has been received since 1st July 2011. Additional funding has been requested from South Bucks District Council and the NHS.
- 24 New Walks started since the July 2011 LAF meeting include:
 - Castlefield - Wycombe July 20th (weekly walk);
 - Iver Village July 27th (monthly walk); and
 - Buggy walks in Burnham, Iver and Chesham.
- 25 The latest quarterly figures for July, August and September 2011 (not all data for September has been entered), includes:-
 - Total walkers 1,268
 - Total footfall 7,081
 - New volunteer leaders trained 14
 - Buggy walk leaders trained 11

Recommendation: Members to consider advice, comments, feedback and questions.