



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Report

Date: 29th February 2012

Title: Rights of Way Team Update

Author: Helen Beevers, Joanne Taylor and Jonathan Clark

Contact Officer: Katy MacDonald (01296 383604)

A. Definitive Map Update (Helen Beevers)

Rights of Way Applications

- 1 A public inquiry was held on 8 November 2011 into an Order to add public footpaths at Deangarden Wood, High Wycombe to the Definitive Map. The Order has not been confirmed by the Inspector because he could not be certain that the routes shown on the Order plan were routes actually enjoyed by the public.
- 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; a third public inquiry was held on 5 January 2012. We await the Inspector's decision.
- 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 have been made and advertised. Objections to the Orders have been received and the matters are being referred to the Secretary of State.
- 4 The Order to add a Public Footpath between Sheraton Drive and Windsor Drive to the Definitive Map and Statement has been advertised. Objections to the Order have been received. The Order and objections will be determined by the Secretary of State. Orders will soon be advertised in Lacey Green, Chartridge and Taplow.
- 5 Orders to add routes to the Definitive Map and Statement in Marlow, Whitchurch, and Great and Little Hampden have been referred to the Secretary of State. A public inquiry into the Marlow Order will be held on 22 May 2012. The Great and Little Hampden Order will be determined by written representation. We await direction for the Whitchurch Order.
- 6 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. This appeal has been rejected by the Secretary of State.

- 7 Applications for claimed rights of way are currently in progress: claimed footpaths in High Wycombe, Stowe, Aston Clinton, Lower Winchendon, Wendover and Halton, Princes Risborough, Iver, Westbury, Penn and Beaconsfield; claimed bridleways in 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 seven village green applications in progress – land at Lower Road, Gerrards Cross; land at the Field, Bryants Bottom in Great Missenden; a second application has been received for land at the Fields and the Clump, Iver; land at Hampden Hill, Beaconsfield; land at Coppice Farm Road, Tylers Green, Penn; land at Meadow Close, Wycombe Marsh; and land off Cherwell Road, Bourne End.

B. Rights of Way Operations Update (Joanne Taylor)

- 10 Vegetation Clearance operations continued up to the end of October 2011 with the total amount for clearance amounting to 481 kilometres, exceeding last year's total of 330km. It appears that the extra investment in hiring additional mowing machinery would account for the increase. Hopefully we can replicate a similar arrangement for summer clearance in 2012.
- 11 A summary of the work carried out between 1st April 2011 and the 15th February 2012 is attached to the report in Appendix 3. Whilst the teams were tied up over the summer period on clearance works only urgent structure improvements were carried out, which created a backlog of outstanding structure works and other basic maintenance jobs. It has been possible to employ additional crews to catch up on these jobs and I feel this is reflected in the summary figures.
- 12 Some of the more notable work outputs are the number of road signs repaired or replaced, currently standing at 164 – up from October 2011 by 104 signs - and stiles repaired currently at 215, up from October 2011 by 140. However, the backlog of outstanding work instructions resulted in an increase in the average time taken to complete an instruction, from approx 38 days to 70 days. The number of issues outstanding on the system currently stands at 848.
- 13 Congratulations and thanks should go to members of the Chiltern Society and Ramblers' Association for all their help carrying out the November BVPI 178 survey (Best Value Performance Indicator). LAF Members will recall that the County Council approached these organisations last autumn to help assist in the 2.5% path network survey which is completed in May and November each year. Happily, the new surveyors quickly grasped the methodology, completing and returning the paperwork very promptly. As was hoped, the results were roughly consistent with previous surveys, showing 81% of paths rated 'Easy to Use', 96% of structures in good/adequate condition and 99% of roadside path arms correctly in place.
- 14 However, the survey result also gave us a surprise. Regrettably it appears there was an increase in the number of paths not reinstated/made visible across arable land. This may be the result of an oversight and omission to send out the usual autumn 'Ploughing and Cropping' letter to farmers with arable land. It is usual to

send such a reminder around April and October each year, but unfortunately last October's letter wasn't sent out. Whilst we cannot be absolutely certain that this was entirely the cause of the rise in the number of paths recorded as not reinstated, nevertheless, there was an increase. We recorded only 2 path fails on paths surveyed in spring 2011 (with 92% of arable land reinstated) but 10 path fails in November 2011 (with only 37.5% of arable land reinstated).

- 15 Some of the more significant improvement works for this year 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, plantings 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 metre 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.
 - Haddenham FP17: Footbridge - replacement of 11 metres of deck and handrail.
 - Cheddington FP3 and Pitstone FP1: 300 metre resurfacing works.
 - Great Brickhill Bridleway 9: 200 metres resurfacing works.
 - Great Brickhill FP13: construction of a flight of steps down a near vertical drop.
 - Dorney FP18: Thames Path, near to Olympic Rowing Lake, resurfacing works.

C. Strategic Access Update (Jonathan Clark)

- 16 58 planning applications have been commented upon since 2nd November 2011, distributed between authorities as follows:
- Aylesbury Vale 19
 - Wycombe 20
 - South Bucks 3
 - Chiltern 4
 - Buckinghamshire County 12
- 17 Improvements have been undertaken on the Ridgeway at Steps Hill, Ivinghoe, to improve disabled access across the site. This completes one further section towards the vision to have the whole Ridgeway through Buckinghamshire accessible by mobility scooter.
- 18 Following planning consent for the ARLA Dairy at Aston Clinton, a s.106 legal agreement includes improvements to the surface of the Grand Union Canal towpath between the ARLA site and Aylesbury (Bridge 9 to Lock 15). This will be a £367,630 investment into the ROW network.
- 19 The announcement by Government on Tuesday 10th January 2012 to proceed with the High Speed 2 railway project following last year's consultation has huge

implications for the rights of way network. The impact has already been assessed and mapped internally, illustrating 66 rights of way directly severed by the route. It is hoped the shape of mitigation measures will emerge this year. The County Council's position is unchanged in that it opposes the decision and consideration is being given to a judicial review.

- 20 A meeting between the County Council and Chiltern Society Area Secretaries and Path Maintenance volunteers (PMVs) was held on Thursday 17th November 2011 at The Full Moon, Hawridge Common. The aim of the day was to look back over the last few years to seek further opportunities for BCC staff, Area Secretaries and PMVs to work better together and for BCC to provide feedback to the Chiltern Society on some on-going projects. The meeting discussed the possible increase in geographic range for the PMVs; a review of health and safety practice; feedback from BCC on the Chiltern Way and Donate-a-gate projects; and a review of PMV output for 2011. A new system for ordering timber was proposed and a system for recording the state of stiles in the county compared to the British Standard. The meeting was well-received by all.
- 21 A footpath creation is proposed by Lane End Parish Council through the Lane End Industrial Estate. The path will connect two halves of the village divided physically and socially and will link residents from each part of the village with the shops in their respective areas. The owners of the Industrial Estate Road are likely to object to any creation proposal. The matter was discussed at the Marlow and South West Chilterns Local Area Forum meeting on 27th February 2012, which included County, District and Parish Councillors.
- 22 There have been 9 new 'Donate-a-Gate' donors since the November 2011 Local Access Forum, funding 11 new gates, and taking the total to 232 donors.
- 23 The partnership project with the Chiltern Society to remove all 127 stiles along the Chiltern Way continues, with 14 more stiles having been removed using the donate-a-gate Gift Aid tax rebate from the government. The route now has only 67 stiles through Buckinghamshire; with 10 locations having landowner refusals.
- 24 It is hoped the next edition of the Parish Newsletter will be produced in March 2012. The previous edition is available at this address:
http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/parish_news.page?

D. 'Simply Walk' (Fiona Broadbent)

- 25 The new walks programme leaflet (April – September 2012) will shortly be 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.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/simply_walk.page?
- 26 Additional funding for Simply Walk has been received from walkers' donations, currently standing at over £2,600. Burnham Health Promotion Trust agreed to fund £1000 per annum for the next 3 years. It is hoped and anticipated that all current funding partners will continue at their current levels.
- 27 The emphasis is now on consolidation of current walks rather than developing walks in new areas, bearing in mind that resources are finite and not being increased. However, wherever possible, an option of slower pace or shorter walks is being offered alongside the current walks programme.
- 28 The latest quarterly figures for October, November and December 2011 stand as follows:-

- Total walkers 1,222
- Total new walkers 161
- Total new volunteer leaders trained 5
- Total volunteer walk leaders 181
- Total footfall 6,053

29 These are considered excellent figures considering the hard winter weather and Christmas period.

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