



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Report

Date: 28th November 2012
Title: LAF Members' Report
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HS2

- 1 Neil Harris attended the HS2 Chalfonts & Amersham Community Forum on 21st November 2012; John Elfes attended the Central Chilterns Forums on 25th September and 27th November 2012 and the Dunsmore, Wendover & Halton Forum on 10th September 2012; Viv Lynch attended the Stoke Mandeville & Aylesbury Forum on 11th September 2012 and 14th November 2012; and Alan Lambourne attended the Waddesden & Quainton Forum on 19th November 2012.
- 2 HS2 are unable to attend today's meeting, but the Chairman has received an invitation from HS2 for a bilateral meeting and wishes to set up a LAF working group. Rosie Brake, the lead officer for HS2 at Bucks CC, has suggested the LAF should have a place within the engagement framework, of which the Community Forums are a part. There will be a Buckinghamshire Mitigation Panel to which John Elfes will be invited and a Planning Forum every 2 months, into which the LAF can make representations.
- 3 HS2 commissioned 'Landscape Assessments' and 'Open Space Surveys' in Buckinghamshire, in some cases on rights of way that cross the proposed route, and these took place in September 2012 (see HS2 update to Community Forums in Appendix 1). The results of these surveys are currently unknown. They were conducted to assess the use of those rights of way potentially be severed by the railway both during construction and final operation. The surveys also focused on understanding the use and amenity value of open spaces accessed by PROW, near to or sometimes on the proposed route.

LAF Conferences

- 4 There is a National Conference in Sheffield on 27th February 2013. Generally, only one member from each LAF will be able to attend, but there will be a few additional spaces on request. Travel expenses and overnight accommodation will be reimbursed, but train tickets will need to be bought centrally at Natural England.

- 5 There will be a South East Conference in May 2013, the agenda for which has not yet been set, but if you have anything you wish to be raised, please make it known.

Turville Open Access

- 6 Kate Ashbrook, Open Spaces Society, has asked if one new stile or kissing gate, and one further kissing gate along the same fence line, can be installed to aid walkers on open access land above Turville village (see plan in Appendix 2). It is an iconic parcel of access land, with excellent views, owned by the Wormsley Estate. There are currently five entrances onto the land via public footpaths, but walkers are now prohibited from traversing the top ridge by the new fence, thus reducing public enjoyment, and elderly local residents cannot climb over an existing stile. An informal approach to the Wormsley Estate could not persuade them to take any action, unless they were legally obliged to do so. Advice and guidance is sought from the LAF, as it may be that a letter from the Forum may have better results.

Annual Report

- 7 LAF regulations require every LAF to produce an Annual Report and last year Natural England introduced a pro forma in order to regularize responses, enable monitoring of LAF activity to be more easily monitored by Natural England and so justify future LAF funding. The reporting year has been changed to reflect the financial year, and the deadline for submission of the pro forma is now 31st October 2012. Natural England wrote to every Forum in this regard (see Appendix 3). Comments are welcome from Forum members on the content.

Correspondence

- 8 John Elfes wrote to Anne James questioning the future role of volunteers with regard the new contract with a Ringway Jacobs. Forum members and volunteers have questioned the propriety of a volunteer effort being used to help deliver a commercial contract. Anne James suggested this problem was recognised and addressed through the business planning process. John asked for a detailed explanation as to how this is to be achieved, and what safeguards are in place to ensure that volunteer effort is not supporting the profits of a commercial concern. Anne James' reply is in Appendix 4.
- 9 Peter Challis wrote to Watermead Parish Council in support of their Paths for Communities bid (Appendix 5). Viv Lynch hopes to write on behalf of the British Horse Society. The LAF have already put forward support in the July 2012 meeting, but an official letter would greatly help Watermead Parish's bid.

Membership

- 10 The Officer wrote to the NFU Regional (Virginia Stollery) and National Office Office (John Archer) on 5th October 2012 inviting possible candidates to represent farming issues on the Forum, and we are awaiting a reply. Diana Bird's membership has been discontinued.

LAF dates for 2013

- 11 Meeting dates for 2013 are 27th March 2013, 17th July 2013 and 20th November 2013.