



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

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**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013  
**Title:** LAF Members' Report  
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### HS2

- 1 The Buckinghamshire LAF has now firmly established itself within the engagement framework for HS2. Two bilateral meetings have taken place, the first on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013, the second on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013. It is expected there will be a further meeting following the publication of the Environmental Impact Assessment.
- 2 At the first meeting, general introductions were made. HS2 were represented by Mark Bailey, Deputy Head of Environment; Charlotte Brewster and Louise Portelly, part of the Community Engagement Team; and Steve Katesmark, from Atkins. A Draft Environmental Statement will be published in the spring of 2013 and the Hybrid Bill is due in the autumn of 2013; construction is due to start in 2017. Examples were provided of how Warwickshire LAF have already engaged with HS2. A general discussion was had, which resulted in a number of strategic requests from the LAF. These included a request that all road bridges have footways/cycleways/bridleways constructed alongside the carriageway to enable safe passage of users where rights of way have been diverted onto road bridges. A request was also made that disabled access was designed into all crossing points, to ensure future disabled access improvements would not hit a barrier at HS2 because this hadn't been taken into consideration. A discussion also took place over the methodology of construction, illustrating how bridges are built first and how this could compliment the maintenance of access. The Hybrid Bill will deliver the rights of way diversions - HS2 are trying to avoid these being greater than 500m in length.
- 3 The second meeting focussed on individual crossing points throughout the whole line from the border with Hertfordshire to the border with Brackley, Northamptonshire. The crossing solution for each path was discussed, including diversion routes and some additional crossing points. These had to be considered in the light of their impact on the landscape, particularly in the Chilterns where most of the line will be in a cutting. Information was provided by HS2 summarising the proposals for each diversion as it was presented to the Community Forums. It was also confirmed that the construction specification for all bridleway bridges had been agreed with the British Horse Society. A

comprehensive information programme would be provided during construction to advise the public of open and closed paths.

- 4 The LAF Chairman now sits on the Chiltern's Conservation Board HS2 Access Group, the first meeting of which took place on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013.
- 5 A summary of LAF attendance at the HS2 Community Forums can be confirmed at the meeting. Meetings were held as follows: Wendover 12th February 2013; Stoke Mandeville and Aylesbury 13th February 2013; Colne Valley 21st February 2013; Central Chilterns 26th February 2013; Chalfonts and Amersham; Newton Purceval and Brackley 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013; Calvert 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013; and Waddesdon 4<sup>th</sup> February 2013.
- 6 The next meeting with HS2 has not yet been arranged. The next thing to prepare for will be the Draft Environmental Statement, due out in the spring. The Hybrid Bill process will follow in autumn 2013.

### **Conferences**

- 7 There will be a South East LAF Conference on 21st May 2013 in London. The keynote speaker will be Sarah Slade, National Access Advisor for the CLA, addressing the main themes from '*The Right Way Forward: The CLA's common Sense approach to accessing the countryside 2012*'. Other topics being covered include, 'Engaging with Local Nature Partnerships'; 'LAF involvement with the planning process'; the MOD's Access Strategy; 'Disabled Access' and a discussion on 'Management of LAFs against a background of cut-backs'.
- 8 The annual Chilterns Access Conference took place at Hastoe Village Hall on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2013.
- 9 The National LAF Conference took place in Sheffield on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013, the papers for which are being compiled by Natural England and will be out shortly.

### **Turville Open Access**

- 10 Kate Ashbrook, Open Spaces Society, has asked if one new kissing gate can be installed to aid walkers on open access land above Turville village. It is an iconic parcel of Open 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. John Elfes wrote to Wormsley Estate on (Appendix 1) and received a reply on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 (Appendix 2). Their reply suggests they would be open to having a new gate installed providing it is self-funded and the existing fence construction is not compromised.

### **Cycling and Walking Project**

- 11 Peter Challis, LAF Member from Sustrans, is heading a project to improve facilities for walking and cycling to a number of train stations in Buckinghamshire. He is currently working on a station travel plan for Beaconsfield, alongside the Beaconsfield Cycle Path Action Group. Around £5K has been made available from the Local Area Forum and £10K from the Sustainability Team in Bucks CC

## **Correspondence**

12 Natural England undertook an online Local Access Forum survey, the closing date for which is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. This is for both the LAF Secretary and Chairman to complete.

## **LAF dates for 2013**

13 The next meetings are due to take place on 17<sup>th</sup> July and 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013.