



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2013 AT 10.00 AM  
MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY**

### **AGENDA**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>1 Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>2 Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>3 Update on Membership</b>	
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<b>5 Matters Arising</b>	
<b>6 Charles Hurst, Network Rail: The East-West Rail Project</b>	
<b>7 Gavin Casperz - Disabled Access Routes</b>	
<b>8 Annette Venters - Partnership Projects</b>	
<b>9 Rights of way group report</b> Claire Hudson, Definitive Map Team; Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access Advisor; and Joanne Taylor, Operations Team Leader	<b>7 - 16</b>
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<b>11 Any Other Business</b>	
<b>12 Date of Next and Future Meetings</b> The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday 19 March 2014, 10am, Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury	





# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## *BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM*

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2013, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.50 AM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr J Elfes, in the Chair

Mr D Briggs, Mr A T A Lambourne, Mr J Coombe, Mr Caspersz and Mr G Thomas

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mr J Clark, Ms J Taylor and Mrs C Hudson

### **GUESTS PRESENT**

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Neil Harris, Peter Challis, Chris Hurworth, Viv Lynch, Richard Pushman and Lesley Clarke OBE.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2013, TO BE CONFIRMED**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2013 were confirmed.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

#### **5. RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP REPORT**

Members had received the Rights of Way Group Report.

Claire Hudson took Members through the Definitive Map Update.

The following updates were provided:

- The Order made on 18 June 2013 regarding the application in Taplow to record the route from River Road to Amerden Lane as Public

Bridleway was referred to the Secretary of State for determination. However it has been returned stating that there was a flaw in the plan submitted. The application will now need to be re-advertised. All Parish Councils involved have been written to advising them of the situation. The old objections are not valid and objections will need to be made again.

- The Lower Winchendon application which was accepted by the Rights of Way Committee at its January meeting is at risk of challenge by the landowner. The issue will be presented to the Committee again in due course and the Committee will be asked to consider a rescindment under a point of law.
- An Order regarding Lane End was made. It will need to be referred to the Secretary of State as an objection was received.
- The application to divert Footpath No 7 was made by network rail.
- 52 objections were received in relation to an application to extinguish Footpath No 14. The recommendation to the Committee will be for the Order to be abandoned.
- Point 45 on the report should read Hughenden not Great Missenden
- The applicants of the land at Coppice Farm Road, Tylers Green, Penn now own the land

The Chairman commented that the law regarding Village Green applications was in the process of being changed. Clare Hudson advised that it would mean that a Village Green application could not be applied for if a planning application had been applied for.

The Chairman asked if the Forum could know the reasons why the applications under points 14 and 16 were rejected by the Committee. Clare advised that this was an Officer Recommendation. Members were informed that the Rights of Way papers were publicly available to view on the BCC website should Members wish to see the detailed information

Jon Clark then took Members through the Strategic Access Update.

A Member enquired if all the path diversions, extinguishments, etc., for HS2 would have to go through the same process as presently. Jon Clark advised that they would not as there would be provisions within the Hybrid Bill.

Jon Clark updated members on HS2. He said he was looking at longer diversions, further away from the line and that this work was progressing. Jon asked if all Members of the Forum wished to be consulted or just the HS2 working group on these proposed changes. The Chairman asked that all Members be consulted. Jon said that he would make up some draft maps and send them to Members.

Glyn Thomas advised that an application had been submitted to fund a new bridge and public access on land owned by Watermead Parish Council and that it was with Natural England to adjudicate. It was highlighted that the funding was from Natural England's 'Paths for Communities' fund. Jon advised that Watermead Parish Council was willing to dedicate the land for a bridleway.

Members had received a Summary of Maintenance Carried Out (Appendix 1 of the report) and a Maintenance Update was tabled (attached to the minutes).

A Member enquired about the terms of the Ringway Jacobs contract and whether everything had to be procured through the Ringway Jacobs contract or if smaller or

more specialist jobs could be carried out by other contractors. Joanne Taylor advised that everything has to be procured through the Ringway Jacobs contract.

The Chairman said the Forum should consider whether they thought the TUPE staff transfer was a good idea or not and what the effect if any would be on Rights of Way. Glyn said that he was concerned about who would be monitoring Ringway Jacobs. He said that Officers had expertise but that if they were TUPE'd to Ringway Jacobs they would not be in a position to be able to criticise or highlight any concerns they may have. The Chairman said that the Forum needed real assurances about the protection of Rights of Way and said that the Forum may need to lobby the Cabinet Member for Transport.

Alan Lambourne said that the County Council has a statutory duty to maintain the Rights of Ways and that they can contract this work out but asked how the County Council would ensure that the works were carried out to its satisfaction.

Following the discussions it was agreed that the Chairman would write to the Cabinet Member for Transport (who had responsibility for Ringway Jacobs) and the Cabinet Member for Environment (who had responsibility for Rights of Ways), highlighting concerns and seeking reassurances. It was also suggested that the issue of Parish path contractors be raised and to ask why Ringway Jacobs would not allow Parish Contractors to undertake rights of way work due to Health and Safety concerns. It was highlighted that Ringway Jacobs was the County Councils contractor and that if the County Council wanted to devolve services Ringway Jacobs should comply. Members did not feel that it was in the public interest to prevent Parish Contractors from undertaking the work and Members expressed deep concern that there needed to be a shield put up between the County Council and Ringway Jacobs.

**Action: John Elfes**

David Briggs enquired why the Chiltern Society volunteering hours had decreased. The Chairman commented that it may be an issue with the recording of the hours. Joanne advised that it was an interim figure and suggested that this be re-looked at next time.

Glyn Thomas queried the number of job sheets which appeared to have decreased from 1792 to 1631, but highlighted that the number of issues had increased from 799 in 2012 to 1150 in 2013. Joanne advised that the backlog of issues had increased and said that this was due to various issues such as the weather and staffing issues.

## **6. LAF MEMBERS REPORT**

Members had received the LAF Members' report.

The Chairman advised that he had submitted a response to the Draft Environmental Statement on behalf of the LAF and that this would be circulated to Members (attached to minutes).

Alan Lambourne confirmed he attended the Waddesdon HS2 Community Forum meeting on 31 May 2013.

David Briggs, Glyn Thomas and Viv Lynch all attended the South East LAF Conference. David advised that a key theme of the conference was that it is sometimes difficult to maintain and manage open access if the landowner is doing something else on the land and that it is sometimes difficult for landowners to do the right thing. Glyn commented that it was highlighted at the Conference that the MOD did not insure land and that this is one of the reasons access to the land is restricted. Both David and Glyn commented that they felt the Conference was well organised

and interesting.

Gavin Caspersz advised that he is now a Regional Representative for the National Disabled Ramblers, with a role to promote the Chilterns. Gavin provided the following update:

- The Disabled Ramblers is a national organisation
- It is open to the public to participate
- There are 52 visits a year held
- Gavin is trying to get the organisation de-centralised so that there can be localised groups and that this idea has been accepted
- De-centralisation has started
- Gavin is a volunteer for Bucks and The Chilterns
- Bucks has got Stoke Mandeville Hospital and hosted the Paralympic Games
- He would like disabled rambling in the Chilterns to be promoted for tourism
- It may help to promote and publicise how well Bucks is doing in this area
- Gavin has been working with Jon Clark to create a list of routes, with the aim to publicise them on the website.
- The scheme improves upon the Simply Walk and 'Miles without Stiles' schemes where local people can get involved and just turn up without prior booking
- Some routes have been finalised and the focus is now on advertising them. This could also help to promote the LAF
- Gavin has identified, tested and graded 10 routes
- 50% are nearly ready to be classified as accessible routes

Members noted the Natural England correspondence and Glyn Thomas commented that Kevin Haugh had been very helpful with the application he had made for Watermead.

Jon Clark advised the LAF was a statutory consultee for Dog Control Orders. He said that Burnham Beeches were considering making an order and asked if Members would like them to attend a LAF meeting to discuss the issues. Members agreed that he should be invited to the November 2013 meeting of the Forum.

**Action: Jon Clark**

Jon advised that there had been some changes in staff and that he would circulate the Area Team Map to Members.

**Action: Jon Clark**

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no AOB

## **8. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members noted the next meeting date as Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013, 10am, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury

**Chairman**







**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

## *Report*

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**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013  
**Title:** Rights of Way Team update  
**Authors:** Claire Hudson, Jonathan Clark, Joanne Taylor  
**Contact Officer:** Katy MacDonald (01296 383603)

### **A. DEFINITIVE MAP UPDATE (CLAIRE HUDSON)**

**Resources Appraisal**                      **Definitive Map investigations are statutory duties for the Council, funded through Place Service revenue budgets. Costs associated with Public Path Orders are, for the most part, recovered from applicants.**

#### **The Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to appraise LAF Members of the outstanding Definitive Map caseload undertaken by the Definitive Map Team and provide an update for matters previously considered by the Rights of Way Committee.

### **DEFINITIVE MAP APPLICATIONS DETERMINED BY COMMITTEE / ORDERS MADE**

- 1. Great Missenden – upgrading of Public Bridleways Nos. 52 and 55 (part) to Public Byways Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 14 July 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order has been made and advertised. Objections to the Order have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **Public Inquiry held 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 and adjourned to 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013.****
- 2. Great Missenden/Wendover – upgrading Public Bridleways No. 1 Great Missenden and Nos. 45 and 61 Wendover to Public Byways Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 14 July 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order has been made and advertised. Objections to the Order have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **Public Inquiry held 1st to 2nd October 2013 and adjourned to 19th November 2013.****

3. **Little Missenden** – upgrading Public Bridleway No. 24 (Featherbed Lane) to Public Byway Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 2 March 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order was made and advertised on 20 September 2011. Objections have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **Public Inquiry held 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> August October 2013. The Inspector determined that the Order be not confirmed.**
4. **Little Missenden** – upgrading Public Bridleway No. 25 (Kingstreet Lane) to Public Byway Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 2 March 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and we were directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order was made and advertised on 20 September 2011. Objections have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **Public Inquiry held 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> August October 2013. The Inspector determined that the Order be not confirmed.**
5. **Little Missenden** – upgrading Public Bridleway Nos. 29/42 (Mop End Lane) to Public Byway Open to All Traffic. The application was rejected by the Committee on 2 March 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order for Byway status. An Order was made on 21 June 2011. Objections have been received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **Public Inquiry held 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> August October 2013. The Inspector determined that the Order be not confirmed.**
6. **Stowe and Lillingstone Dayrell** – upgrading Public Bridleways No. 6 Stowe and Nos. 11 (part) and 12 Lillingstone Dayrell to Public Byways Open to All Traffic. The application was partly rejected by the Committee on 2 March 2006. The applicant appealed the decision and the Council was directed by the Secretary of State to make an Order. An Order was made on 10 May 2011. Objections were received and the matter referred back to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry was held on 14 May 2013. The Inspector determined that the Order be not confirmed.**
7. **High Wycombe** – claimed public footpath between Sheraton Drive and Windsor Drive. The Committee accepted the application on 10 November 2010. An Order was made on 25 October 2011. Objections were received and the matter has been referred to the Secretary of State for determination. **A public Inquiry was held on 16 April 2013. The Inspector determined that the Order be confirmed.**
8. **Taplow** – application to record the route from River Road to Amerden Lane as Public Bridleway. The application was accepted by the Committee at its meeting on 7 December 2011. An Order was made on 18 June 2012. **Order remade and to be advertised.**
9. **Aston Clinton** - application to record the route from Weston Road to Public Footpath No. 28 as Public Footpath. The application was accepted by Committee at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2012. An Order was made on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012 and one objection received. **Secretary of State determining matter by Written Representations – accompanied site inspection with Inspector scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013.**
10. **West Wycombe / Downley** – application to record Cookshall Lane as part Public Bridleway, part Restricted Byway. This application was rejected by the Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2013, although public footpath rights were accepted. **Matter completed with a Public Footpath Creation Agreement.**

11. **Wendover & Halton** – application to record the route from Public Footpath No. 24, Wendover to Public Footpath No. 13, Halton as Public Footpath. **This application was rejected by the Committee at its meeting on 21st January 2013 and has not been appealed. Completed.**
12. **High Wycombe** – application to record the route from Burnham Close to Whitelands Road, High Wycombe as Public Footpath. This application was accepted by the Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2013. **An Order was made on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013. Objections have been received and it is likely the matter will be referred to the Secretary of State to determine, probably at public inquiry.**
13. **Princes Risborough** – application to record the route from Elm Road to Bell Street, Princes Risborough as Public Footpath. **This application was rejected by the Committee at its meeting on 21st January 2013 and has not been appealed. Completed.**
14. **Lane End – drafting error of Public Footpath No 25.** This matter was accepted by the Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2013. **An Order was made on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and one objection received and not withdrawn – matter referred to Secretary of State for determination, probably by written representations.**
15. **Beaconsfield** – application to record the route from Minerva Way to the junction with Public Footpath No. 15 and No. 16 as a Public Footpath. **This application was rejected by the Committee at its last meeting and has not been appealed. Completed.**

#### **DEFINITIVE MAP APPLICATIONS TO BE INVESTIGATED AND REPORTED TO COMMITTEE**

16. **Westbury (Route 1)** – application to record the route from Footpath No 14, Westbury (at the Oxfordshire county boundary) to Public Footpath No 11, Westbury as Public Footpath. The route is 90% in Oxfordshire. Investigation not started. Discussions have been held with Oxfordshire County Council with a view to their entering into an Agency Agreement with us in accordance with section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and to pay us, pro-rata, to undertake and complete the necessary investigations. **Agency Agreement currently under discussion – likely this case will be taken to next Committee meeting, early in 2014.**
17. **Westbury (Route 2)** – application to record the route from Footpath No 14, Westbury (at the Oxfordshire county boundary) to the route referred to in (19) below as Public Footpath. This route is entirely in Oxfordshire. Investigation not started. Discussions have been held with Oxfordshire County Council with a view to their entering into an Agency Agreement with us in accordance with section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and to pay us to undertake and complete the necessary investigations. **Agency Agreement currently under discussion – likely this case will be taken to next Committee meeting, early in 2014.**
18. **Westbury (Route 3)** – application to record the route from the junctions of Footpath No 303, Mixbury, Oxfordshire to Fulwell Road, Westbury as Public Footpath. Investigation not started. Discussions have been held with Oxfordshire County Council with a view to their entering into an Agency Agreement with us in accordance with section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and to pay us, pro-rata, to undertake and complete the necessary investigations. **Agency Agreement currently under discussion – likely this case will be taken to next Committee meeting, early in 2014.**

19. **Lower Winchendon** – application to record the route from Public Footpath No 10b to Public Footpath No. 3, Cuddington as Public Footpath. This application was accepted by the Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2013, but this decision was rescinded during the Committee meeting of 9 July. Case to be investigated from the start. **Investigation not yet started.**
20. **Iver** – application to record various routes across The Fields and The Clump, Iver as Public Footpaths. **Investigation not yet started.**
21. **Chepping Wycombe** – application to record the route from Elmshott Close to King’s Wood as Public Footpath. **Investigation not started.**
22. **Bledlow** – application to record the route from Footpath No 49 to Bridleway No 55 as public footpath. **Investigation not started.**
23. **Edgcott** – application to record Lawn House Lane as a Public Footpath to Public Footpath 11 Edgcott. **Investigation not started.**
24. **Iver** – application to record route from Grange Way to Colne Orchard as a Public Footpath. **Investigation not started.**

#### **PUBLIC PATH ORDERS**

23. **Aylesbury** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 7(part) and Footpath 8 (part). **Objections have been received to Order therefore matter to be referred to Secretary of State.**
24. **Bradenham** – Application to divert Footpath No 7. **Still in discussion.**
25. **Coleshill** – Application to divert Footpath No 11(F) part. **Order made and no objection received. Landowner works awaiting completion and then Order will be confirmed.**
26. **Ellesborough** - Application to divert footpaths Nos.3 and 9 Ellesborough. **Informal consultation not started.**
26. **Gerrards Cross** – Application to temporarily divert Footpath No 11. **Order made and confirmed.**
27. **Hambleton** – Application to divert Footpath No 24 (part). **Order made and confirmed.**
28. **High Wycombe** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 27. Wycombe District Council planning matter. **Order made and confirmed by WDC. Awaiting developer works.**
29. **Leckhampstead** – Application to divert Footpath No 34. **Order made and confirmed. Completed.**
30. **Marsworth** – Application to divert Footpath No 3. **Order made on behalf of Aylesbury Vale District Council and no objections received. Awaiting landowner works and then Order will be confirmed.**
29. **Oving** – Application to divert Footpath No.1 Oving – **awaiting formal application from landowner.**

30. **Pitchcott** – Application to divert Footpath No 4 (part). Order made and objections received. **Secretary of State to determine matter by Public Hearing scheduled for 11 March 2013.**
31. **Quainton** – Application to divert Bridleway Nos 17 & 17a. **Order made and confirmed. Completed.**
32. **Quainton** – Application to divert Bridleway No 21. **Awaiting completion of works before Order can be confirmed.**
33. **Quarrendon** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 2. **Order made and confirmed. Completed.**
34. **Steeple Claydon** – Application to divert Footpath No 6. **Under discussion.**
35. **Thornborough** – Proposal to divert Public Footpath No 9. **Order made and confirmed. Completed.**
36. **Tingewick** – Application to divert Footpaths Nos. 10, 11 and Bridleway No 13. Order made and objections received. **Referred to Secretary of State who confirmed the Order. Completed.**
37. **Waddesdon** – Application to divert Public Footpath No 13(part) Waddesdon. **Order made and in formal objection period.**
38. **Westbury** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 14 (Special Schools). Order made. Objections received. **Matter referred to Committee and it was determined to abandon the Order. Completed.**
39. **Whitchurch** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 4 (part). **Within initial informal consultation period.**
39. **Winslow** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 5. **Order made and no objections received. Awaiting landowner works ahead of confirmation.**

#### **PUBLIC PATH CREATION AGREEMENTS**

40. **Edgcott** – Bridleway Creation (BCC Land). **Head of Legal and Democratic Services instructed to complete.**
41. **Edgcott** – Bridleway Creation (ERC Land). **Awaiting go ahead from ERC to proceed.**
42. **Westcott** - Footpath Creation. **Head of Legal and Democratic Services instructed to complete.**
43. **Gerrards Cross** – Footpath Creation. **Head of Legal and Democratic Services instructed to complete.**

#### **VILLAGE GREEN APPLICATIONS**

43. **Gerrards Cross** – land at Lower Road. A Public Inquiry was held 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and the Inspector recommended the application be rejected. **Matter referred to Committee and it was determined to reject application. Completed.**
44. **Iver** – land at The Fields and The Clump. **The application is being investigated.**

- 45. **Hughenden** – land at The Field, Bryants Bottom. **Application advertised and objections received. Likely to need public inquiry before referral to Committee.**
- 46. **Beaconsfield** – voluntary registration of the land at Hampden Hill. **Awaiting ownership confirmation from Town Council.**
- 47. **Penn** – land at Coppice Farm Road, Tylers Green, Penn. **Applicants purchased the land and voluntarily registered the land as a Village Green. Completed.**
- 48. **High Wycombe** – land at Meadow Close, Wycombe Marsh. **The application is being investigated.**
- 49. **Wooburn** – land off Cherwell Road, Bourne End. **Waiting investigation.**

**For further information please contact: Claire Hudson on 01296 383425.**

## **B. STRATEGIC ACCESS UPDATE (JONATHAN CLARK)**

- 50. A total of 50 planning applications have been commented upon by the Strategic Access Officer since the last meeting, distributed between authorities as follows: Wycombe 10; Aylesbury Vale, 27; South Bucks 4; Chiltern 6; and Bucks County Council 3.
- 51. The Strategic Access Officer has had no further meetings with HS2, since the LAF-HS2 meeting in Wendover. The 2<sup>nd</sup> version of the Bucks Blueprint is being drafted which will inform the petitioning process in Parliament.
- 52. The Rights of Way team use a Geographical Information System (GIS) called Countryside Access Management System (CAMS). This is an electronic map and linked database listing all rights of way and their structures (stiles/gates), and the maintenance and enforcement attached to those paths. It is about to be upgraded and it is hoped that with a small additional payment, the footpaths, bridleways and structures can be made available on the website. Users would be able switch on and off certain layers such as promoted routes and structures, which is particularly useful for walkers with less mobility planning stile-free walks or disabled access walks in the countryside.
- 53. Following several Freedom of Information requests and formal complaints to the council, it has been decided all Rights of Way GIS mapping data should now be available to the public on the website. This is via what is called an 'Opendata' licence, similar to that provided by other Local Authority rights of way teams. This will enable, for example, developers to download precise information onto their plans in order that rights of way can be accurately mapped and compared against development proposals. It is likely to be useful to landowners wish to make Highway Act 1980 s31(6) applications and also by a specific private company wishing to promote walking nationally.
- 54. The Haddenham & Thames Safe Walking and Cycling Group have successfully made a £10K application to the Local Area Forum to fund the purchase and installation of around 25 new gates to replace stiles on the 'Wychert Way' and spine routes out to the circular walk around Haddenham. Also through this group, the Strategic Officer is investigating a possible new permissive path around the Haddenham Airfield to avoid pedestrians having to use of the verge alongside the A418 in order to connect more conveniently to the network of paths around Notley Abbey.

55. Several meetings have taken place with Network Rail to discuss RoW crossings of the East West Rail corridor between Bletchley and Bicester, via Winslow, and between Calvert Green and Aylesbury. All RoW 'at grade' crossings of the line are being closed and diverted to new or existing bridges or underpasses. Specific crossings to be reviewed on the Milton Keynes to Bicester line include: Lower Horwood Footpaths 20 & 19; Swanbourne Footpaths 1 & 17; Winslow Footpaths 6 & 5; Addington Footpath 12; Middle Claydon Footpaths 4 & 6; Twyford Footpaths 4, 3 & 2; Charndon Footpaths 4 & 3; Poundon Footpath 2 and Marsh Gibbon Footpath 5.
56. There have been 7 new Donate-a-Gate donors since July 2013, taking the total number of donors to 278.

### **C. RIGHTS OF WAY OPERATIONS UPDATE (JOANNE TAYLOR)**

57. A 'Summary of Works' is attached to this report in Appendix 1, outlining work carried out by the Rights of Way Operations Team between 1st April 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013.
58. The Rights of Way Operations team has six members: a Team Leader, three Rights of Way Officers and two FTE Assistant Rights of Way Officers. These officers were TUPE transferred (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013 into the employ of the County Council's principle highways contractor Ringway Jacobs.
59. The team has had a 0.5 FTE vacancy for an Assistant Rights of Way Officer since Rebecca McNaught went on maternity leave last spring. Unfortunately, recruitment for a temporary person to fill Rebecca's post has been delayed due to the transfer of staff into Ringway Jacobs. However, it is hoped that a green light for recruitment will be given shortly – Rebecca is on maternity leave until June 2014.
60. At the last meeting of the Forum in July, it was reported that the interim results for the May 2013 BVPI were available, but they appeared to be slightly down for the time of year, which could mean an overall reduction for the BVPI from 80% to approx 75% for 2013. The November survey is ongoing with results available by January/February 2014.
61. BVPI 2013 – Survey Results 2.5% figure May 2013
- 80% Paths Easy to use
  - 96% Signs on Roadside
  - 93% Structures Easy to use
62. Summer Clearance - Extra clearance crews were employed both north and south from June to October, first cut, and second cuts, where these were necessary, are now completed. Total for clearance so far this year is 293 kilometres; this includes all scheduled annual surface clearance and other overgrowth.
63. Other significant works carried out this year include two large replacement bridges, two surface repairs and a flight of steps replaced on the Ridgeway in Princes Risborough. Other works planned to be completed within this financial year (up to April 2014) include two more surface repair jobs in the south of the county and replacement of two further bridges in the north of the county.
64. It is believed that the recent storm that swept across the country at the end of October brought down a large number of trees. Indeed, the Operations team

received 45 complaints from the public and residents reporting obstructions and or dangerous trees/branches across or over paths within a few days of the event. It is still too early to tell how this will affect the team's work load, but it will be necessary to prioritise incoming reports that record a potential hazard and attempt to deal with these as swiftly as possible. Where necessary the landowner will be contacted and told to remove or make safe trees that are part of a boundary line.



**Buckinghamshire County Council**  
**Summary of Rights of Way Maintenance Carried Out**  
**Between 1/04/12 and 31/10/13, planning consultations, BVPI survey**  
**and 'issues outstanding'**

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	Mar13- 12 mth	Oct13- 6 mth
Alignment	Path Off Line - resolved issue	15	9
Clearance *	Clearance - summary jobs/km*	655/290km	977/293km
Bridge	Installed or repaired	40	17
Finger/post	Installed or repaired	259	106
Fly Tipping	Fly Tipping - removed	8	26
Gate	Gate repaired or installed	96	46
Intimidation + animal	Intimidation - resolved	10	11
Intimidating sign	Misleading Sign - removed	3	6
Obstruction - resolved	Barbed wire	6	2
Obstruction - resolved	Barrier - Fencing, wall or other	74	48
Obstruction - resolved	Electric fence	8	4
Obstruction - removed	Fallen Tree	192	125
Obstruction - resolved	Ploughing and Cropping	56	50
Other	Delivery of materials	46	23
Other	Miscellaneous issues resolved	45	37
Stile	Installed or repaired	139	75
Stile	Stile To Gap	14	16
Stile	Stile To KG	53	42
Stile	Stile To PG	59	36
Terrain	Path Erosion - resolved	7	4
Terrain	Bank Steps	11	5
Terrain	Path Surface problem resolved	47	45
Waymark Post	Installed/Repaired	159	68
Consultations	All Planning Applications Assessed	202	106
Volunteer Hours	RA, Chiltern Society - interim	945 hrs	1250
Improvements	To aid mobility access	222	140
5% Survey Results	Paths Rated easy to use	79%	80%-2.5%
5% Survey Results	Structures rated easy to use	97%	93%-2.5%
5% Survey Results	Routes with Roadside Signs	97%	96%-2.5%
No. on Database	No. of Job Sheets issued	1631	1060
No. on Database	Av. time to comp. order(exc A.Clear)	38 days	36 days
No. on Database	No. of Issues os 31/03/12	799	
No. on Database	No. of Issues os 1/10/12	1088	
No. on Database	No. of Issues os 15/03/2013	1149	
No. on Database	No. of Issues os 31/10/13		1342

\*Clearance figure for Oct 13 Interim -  
Data maybe revised.





## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

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**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013

**Title:** LAF Members' Report

**Author:** Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access

**Contact Officer:** Katy Macdonald (01296 383604)

### LAF Correspondence

- 1 The Forum wrote to Janet Blake, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Rights of Way maintenance at Bucks County Council, expressing concerns over the rights of way team's recent performance figures and management changes (see Appendix 1).
- 2 In July 2013 the Cyclists Touring Club (CTC) published a briefing, enclosed in Appendix 2, to all Local Access Forums.

### Conferences

- 3 The National Local Access Forum Conference is being held next year at Natural England's Office, Temple Quay House, Bristol BS1 6EB on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014, with one place available from each Forum. Due to central government funding cuts, travel expenses are expected to be met by respective local authorities.

### Open Access

- 4 A parcel of common land called Pinner Green (HP5 1UL) has been fenced off by a local landowner in Latimer, near Chenies, the ownership of which needs to be clarified. The map in Appendix 3 outlines the extent of the fencing in bold red and The County Council seeks the Forum's advice on the matter.
- 5 A sign has appeared on common land in Fingest village (see map and photo in Appendix 4). The sign appears to be misleading by informing people to '*Please keep off the verge – thank you*'. The intension may be to keep *vehicles* off the road, rather than people wishing to rest or a picnic, as stones have been positioned in the road to prevent parking. The County Council seeks the Forum's advice on the matter.

### Natural England correspondence

- 6 A quarterly newsletter has started for Local Access Forums providing opportunities to share good practice and advertise news and support from Natural England and Defra. The latest version is attached in Appendix 5. If members have any articles they would be welcome.

- 7 The Chairman is in the process of writing the Buckinghamshire LAF's Annual Report 2012/13. Natural England plan to bring forward the LAF Annual reporting deadline for the 2013/14 cycle to June 2014. Hopefully this will be an improvement as issues relating to the reporting year will be fresh in the mind.
- 8 Natural England pass on their thanks to LAFs for their involvement in supporting applications to the Paths for Communities Scheme. All the money has now been spent, but there is no update at present for 2014/15 funding. The LAF supported an application by Watermead Parish Council which was successful in obtaining an offer of £100,000, to go with £80,000 s.106 funding for a Pegasus crossing, but this was unfortunately returned by the Parish Council.

**LAF dates for 2014**

- 9 The dates for next year's meetings are 16<sup>th</sup> March 2014, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2014 and 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

## ***BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM***

County Councillor Janet Blake  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
County Hall  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire  
HP20 1UY

11<sup>th</sup> August 2013

***The Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum is the statutory advisory body on all matters relating to Access to the Countryside***

Dear Janet,

### **Maintenance of the Rights of Way Network**

At the July meeting of the Bucks Local Access Forum reports were received on Rights of Way maintenance. Since the Rights of Way network is integral to access to the countryside, we have a keen interest in maintaining its standards, and we were deeply concerned at the statistics presented to us. Interim results for the annual BVPI suggest that the standard maintained over many years has not been met, and that the backlog of problems has grown.

**In our view these figures show a marked deterioration in the standard of service and are unacceptable.** We urge you to establish the reasons for this unwelcome decline.

We were also informed of changes to the contract with Ringway Jacobs and, although we were not given full details, of a proposal to transfer the council's Rights of Way staff to Ringway Jacobs as part of that contract. This raises a number of concerns.

We are concerned that Rights of Way will be submerged in the wider aspects of Ringway Jacobs activity; that the present close knit and highly skilled Rights of Way team may be dispersed within Ringway Jacobs and the core of expertise which has been so valuable in maintaining standards will be diluted. **What safeguards does the contract give on maintaining expertise?**

Given the scope of Ringway Jacobs' activities we are also concerned that Rights of Way will be low in their priorities, and standards may suffer. **What safeguards are there on maintaining standards?**

Bucks County Council, as Highway Authority has statutory duties in relation to Rights of Way. **How does the contract ensure that the Council's statutory duties are honoured?**

Highway Authorities are required to have a formal Rights of Way Improvement Plan **Will this responsibility be devolved to the contractor?**

Volunteers: a considerable amount of valuable work on Rights of Way is undertaken by volunteers, and we are aware that some volunteers have ethical objections to their effort being used to support a commercial concern. When we first raised this issue your response was that the volunteers would still be dealing directly with BCC Rights of Way staff, and therefore distanced from the contractor. This will, presumably, no longer be the case, and volunteers will be expected to support the contractor's profit-making activities directly.

### **General concerns**

Although not relating to Rights of Way directly, we are also concerned about some general aspects of the contract.

Firstly, we understand that it is to run for seven years. We regard this as far too long for a new, radical and untried system. It carries a level of risk inappropriate to the use of public funds. Ringway Jacobs could fail financially, or could be subject to a takeover bid. Or it could simply fail to deliver to the required standard: **are eventualities of these kinds covered in the contract?**

Although we do not have the details, we understand that the contract may be exclusive, and other contractors cannot be used. This will be a severe inconvenience to Parishes, and indeed we understand that already a scheme to fund them for local path clearance has been delayed because of the contractor's internal bureaucracy. **We consider that the length of the contract and its apparently exclusive nature are not in the public interest.**

Monitoring or supervision of the progress of a contract is vital. **Who within BCC will be responsible for this, and how closely will they be able to supervise?** At what point would they intervene if standards are not maintained?

It may be that you have considered all the concerns we have outlined, and are satisfied that it is safe to proceed, but until we are convinced of that, and since there is already evidence of a lowering of standards **our formal advice is that you should not implement the proposed transfer of Rights of Way staff to the contractor, and should reconsider the length of the contract and its exclusive nature.**

Yours Sincerely,

John Elfes,

Chairman, Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum  
143, White Hill, Chesham, BUCKS HP5 1AT.



## CTC CAMPAIGNS BRIEFING

Local Access Forums

### Local Access Forums (LAFs) (England and Wales)

#### THIS BRIEFING COVERS

- Headline messages
- CTC view
- Key facts and arguments (membership and remit of LAFs, cycling objectives, cycling representation)
- Priority aims and actions

#### HEADLINE MESSAGES

- Local Access Forums (LAFs) should aim to maximise the benefits of the Rights of Way (RoW) network for both recreational and day-to-day travel.
- LAFs should include representation of cyclists' interests to ensure that the network is developed, maintained and promoted accordingly.

#### CTC VIEW

- Cycling interests should be represented on all LAFs.
- Local authorities should be receptive and responsive to LAF recommendations on:
  - amendments to the definitive map<sup>1</sup> and on processing them in a timely fashion, to the benefit of off-road cycling
  - the promotion and signing of the RoW network and other opportunities for off-road cycling
  - the proper maintenance of byways, bridleways and un-surfaced unclassified roads
  - the removal of obstructions.
- LAFs should promote off-road cycling as a healthy and enjoyable activity, particularly to families and young people.
- LAFs should adopt, implement and promote CTC's key *Rights of Way Improvement Plan* (RoWIP) priorities (see CTC's Campaigns Briefing on RoWIPs).



## KEY FACTS AND ARGUMENTS

### 1) Background

- The Government was keen to encourage local people to engage with local authorities on implementing the open access provisions of the *Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW Act 2000*<sup>2</sup>). To facilitate this the Act made Local Access Forums (LAFs) mandatory.
- Forums include recreational users, landowners and other interests such as tourism.
- People with an interest in one or more of these topics are invited and nominated by the local authority to represent these interests.
- A member is not allowed to represent an organisation, but should be able to represent his / her particular interests knowledgeably.
- Through the Forum, members advise local authorities on the promotion and management of Open Access (walkers only), and Public Rights of Way (PRoW), including Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) for all users.
- In May 2009, the then minister for the Natural and Marine Environment, Wildlife and Rural Affairs, wrote to all LAFs and Chief Executives of every English local authority, confirming government commitment to the continuing success of LAFs.<sup>3</sup>
- Regional coordination is now being supported by Natural England to facilitate networking, the dissemination of information useful to LAF members and uptake of a dedicated, interactive website for LAF members.

### 2) Representing cycling interests on LAFs

**CTC view:** Cycling interests should be represented on all LAFs

Local authorities differ widely in their support of LAFs. Many are very supportive, but some perform their Public Rights of Way duties poorly, only paying lip service to working with their LAF. In these situations, the best advice is for people with cycling interests to engage with elected members to try to bring about change.

- CTC encourages anyone with an interest in cycling to represent off-road cycling needs on their LAF either as members, or as contributing members of the public.
- Where a LAF does not have cycling representation, CTC encourages local cyclists to attend meetings with the aim of positively influencing local authority policy to benefit off-road cyclists.





### 3) Cycling objectives for LAFs

#### CTC view:

- Local authorities should be receptive and responsive to LAF recommendations on:
  - amendments to the definitive map<sup>1</sup> and on processing them in a timely fashion, to the benefit of off-road cyclists
  - the promotion and signing of the RoW network and other opportunities for off-road cycling
  - the proper maintenance of byways, bridleways and un-surfaced unclassified roads
  - the removal of obstructions
- LAFs should promote off-road cycling as a healthy and enjoyable activity, particularly to families and young people.

LAFs are in a good position to boost cycling in their areas by, for example, engaging in:

- **The promotion of cycling as a beneficial activity:** government policy recognises the importance of cycling for recreational purposes and for its positive influence on good health and wellbeing. For instance, young people who are uninterested in other recreational pursuits may well enjoy mountain biking, so improving opportunities for off-road cycling will help encourage them to take up a beneficial physical activity for fun.
- **Providing motor traffic-free routes:** families especially often prefer to cycle together in a motor traffic-free environment, but it can be difficult for them to identify somewhere to ride.
- **The upkeep and promotion of RoW:** the byway and bridleway network has not realised its full potential as a useable and well-known resource for off-road cycling because it is often poorly maintained, promoted and publicised.

### ADVICE FOR CYCLISTS and CYCLING REPRESENTATIVES

- **Local cyclists who wish to influence their LAF are advised to:**
  - Get involved with the local PRow officer by reporting obstructions and inadequate signing or waymarking of bridleways and byways.
  - Look up the LAF and RoWIP pages on their local authority's website to find out about future meetings, the minutes of previous meetings and aspirations for the future.
  - Read CTC's RoWIP priorities and present a case for one of them at a future LAF meeting:  
[www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings/rights-of-way-improvement-plans-england-wales](http://www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings/rights-of-way-improvement-plans-england-wales)
- **When introducing a cycling-related topic at a LAF meeting:**
  - Research the topic thoroughly.
  - Discuss beforehand with the LAF's chair.
  - If appropriate, liaise with the equestrian representative (bridleways).
  - Have a summary paper to hand out at the meeting and as an attachment to the minutes.
  - Be firm, but polite. Not all members will favour cycling initiatives.
  - Try to commit the LAF to an action point for the local authority to consider.



### FURTHER READING

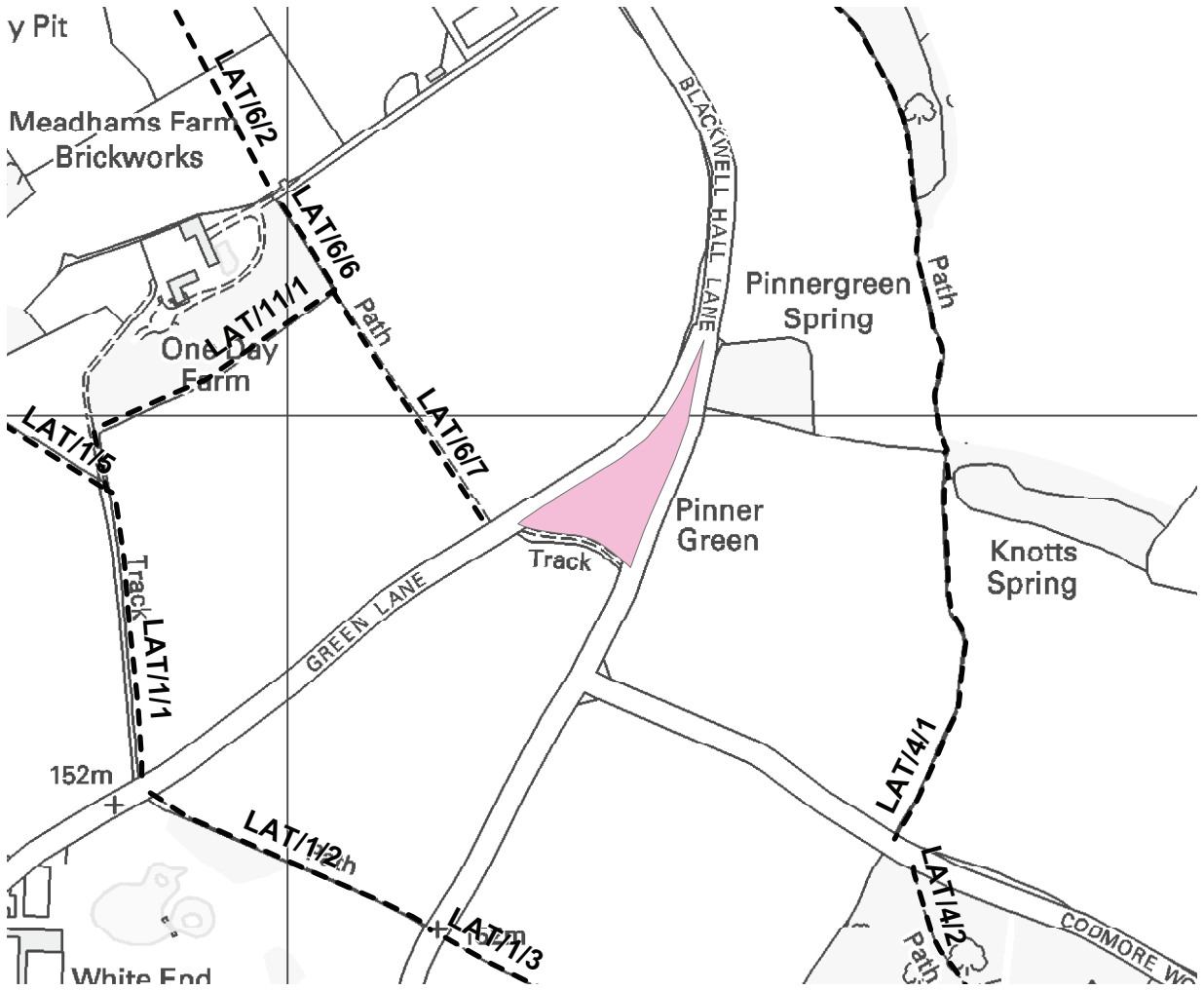
- CTC campaigns briefing *Rights of Way Improvement Plans*:  
[www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings/rights-of-way-improvement-plans-england-wales](http://www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings/rights-of-way-improvement-plans-england-wales)
- Natural England Rights of Way web page:  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/rightsofway/default.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/rightsofway/default.aspx).
- Natural England LAF web page:  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/laf/default.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/laf/default.aspx)

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> The definitive map is a statutory document that must be produced and kept up to date by every county council or unitary authority (except Inner London Boroughs). Every single right of way in an authority's area should be recorded on it. The map can be modified via Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs), as long as there is evidence to support the application.

<sup>2</sup> *Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000*. Part II. Public Rights of Way & Road Traffic  
[www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga\\_20000037\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000037_en_1) P60 *Rights of Way Improvement Plans*; P94 *Local Access Forums*

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Huw Irranca-Davies MP Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment, Wildlife and Rural Affairs, 28/5/2009 to all LAFs in England. <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/countryside/crow/20090528laf-letter.pdf>










 NATURAL  
ENGLAND


 Ladder stile on Hadrian's Wall National Trail

# LAF NEWS

## Quarter 2 2013/14

Issue 2

### Welcome

Welcome to our second LAF News, and what an exciting edition it is. A lot of energy went into producing the 2011/12 Annual Report, capturing the breadth of LAF activity, and providing an opportunity to showcase LAF achievements. The hard work has paid off and I'm delighted that we are able to publish a response to the Annual Report from the Minister, Richard Benyon. Thanks to all of you who made this happen, and I hope it will provide encouragement and impetus for us to do even better next time! You'll find a reminder later in this newsletter.

We are keen for the LAF family to work together, sharing ideas and good practice, so I'm delighted that LAF members have contributed so many interesting articles to this edition. We've also set up over 50 Whiteboard Discussions on Huddle where you can learn from and share with other LAF colleagues on topics ranging from 'Unsurfaced Roads' to 'Wind Farms'; from 'Health Agenda' to 'Public Consultations'.

I hope you enjoy this edition of LAF News, with articles on LEPs, Mountain Bikes, Rural Policing, Good Practice, Measuring Effectiveness, Regional Conferences, Annual Reporting, and last but not least, an introduction to some of your Natural England colleagues! And don't forget, we need to hear from you. If you have any thoughts on the newsletter, or articles to contribute, please let us know.

Martin Shaw  
Senior Advisor, LAF and Paths for Communities

### In this issue...

Letter from the Minister  
Local Enterprise  
Partnerships - LEPs  
LAFs RoWIPs and  
Mountain Biking  
LAFs & Rural Policing  
Making a Difference  
Measuring Effectiveness  
SW Regional Conference  
LAF Annual Reporting  
Meet the NE team

Contact us

[enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)

## Ministers Letter to the LAF



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

T: 08459 335577  
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
www.defra.gov.uk

Local Access Forum Coordinators

3 September 2013

From Richard Benyon MP

Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries

*Dear Chair*

I would like to thank you for your work and achievements during the period of April 2011 to March 2012 in providing a local level body of expertise on public access and outdoor recreation issues.

The annual report by Natural England summarises this range of achievements including good partnership working on Coastal Access Paths, proactive working on the Pennine Bridleway, value for money use of a budget for countryside access improvements, and assurances of a better deal for access and rights of way along the HS2 line.

The Government recognises the important role of the Forums in contributing to improvements to greenspace, open access and connecting routes. These improvements contribute to local economic growth as well as the health and wellbeing of the population by attracting visitors to explore the landscapes, wildlife and heritage in an area. I also welcome your contribution to the successful delivery of the Paths for Communities scheme which has awarded 28 projects aimed at improving the network of public rights of way. In order to make the most of your expertise in these and other areas I would encourage you and your members to continue to develop relationships with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, and Health and Wellbeing Boards.

I look forward to hearing about the continued achievements of LAFs in the future.

*Yours sincerely*

*Richard Benyon*

RICHARD BENYON MP

## Local Enterprise Partnerships - LEPs

Richard Benyon's letter to LAFs encourages you to develop relations with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards. Many of you are doing this and building good relationships but you may still welcome this quick reminder about LEPs and what they are being asked to do.

The Government attaches importance to local solutions for local growth and encourages local authorities to set up partnerships with the business community to guide economic growth in their area. In England, 39 LEPs were established and have been running for a couple of years now. You can find out more about your local LEP through this interactive webpage.

## Links

*Huddle specific links*

**Minister's Letter to LAF**

You can find out more about your local LEP by through this interactive webpage [www.lepnetwork.org.uk/](http://www.lepnetwork.org.uk/)



Earlier this year LEPs were given a significant responsibility to design and deliver strategies on how to use the EU Structural and Investment funds in England for 2014-2020. They are charged with preparing a Growth Programme Strategy to set out plans with the first drafts expected by 7th October and final versions prepared by January. So as this newsletter is circulated the first drafts will be either in the very final stages of preparation or already submitted. They will be assessed by panels set up by the department for Business, Innovation and Skills and some of the funds must be spent in rural areas, by Defra Rural Development Teams.

Despite this first stage being well underway, there should be opportunities to continue to shape these strategic plans and to provide examples of the way improvements to access infrastructure can make big improvements to the lives of people bringing a range of economic and social benefits. The sort of projects that have been funded by Paths for Communities provide excellent examples – see last newsletter - of the sort of things that can be achieved with community involvement at the heart of all projects. This can be supported by MENE data to provide facts and figures about how people visit and engage with the outdoors.

One way into your LEPs is through the Local Nature Partnerships, which have been active in prompting discussion about projects to improve the natural environment and people's enjoyment of it. Joining up will add strength and a direct route into influencing LEP plans.

If you have news of how you are working with a LEP, through the LNP or directly, it would be good to hear from you so that we can share that experience on Huddle or through the next newsletter.

Wendy Thompson  
Principle Adviser, Natural England

## LAFs, RoWIPs and Mountain Biking

The first mountain bikes arrived in the UK during the mid-1980s and were, for many years, regarded as a threat to the status quo by landowners and traditional users. This unease settled into grumbles rather than outright opposition – and, nearly 30 years later, cycling off-road in the countryside is receiving an increasingly warm welcome for its contribution to the national health and tourism agendas. But is the rights of way network any more suitable for mountain bikers now than it was in the mid-1980s?

A look at the destinations for mountain bikers and families wishing for traffic-free cycling provides the answer - they have voted with their pedals and migrated en masse to Forestry Commission trails and railtrails.

CTC, the national cycling charity, is delighted that these facilities are so well appreciated by the cycling community, but also recognises that the potential of the rights of way network for cyclists has yet to be realised. It

## Links

[Paths for Communities Newsletter](#)

[GOV.UK web pages about LEP inc links to links to further information](#)



# LAF News

is therefore keen that cyclists and others engage with the network to help improve and promote its use for cycling.

A glance at CTC's website reveals how the charity feels that this should be achieved, with comprehensive advice on how to get involved with Local Access Forums (LAFs) and Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs), together with suggested actions.

Colin Palmer, CTC Rights of Way Adviser

## LAFs and rural policing

The two Lincolnshire LAFs (Mid Lincolnshire LAF, and South Lincolnshire and Rutland LAF) held a joint meeting in April for a presentation by and discussion with P.C. Nick Willey, Rural Crimes Officer, Lincolnshire Police.

P.C. Willey's post was originally created to tackle the widespread problem of illegal hare coursing, which can often be linked to other criminal activity. The post has developed to cover these, such as thefts of farm machinery. An important part of the post is gathering information and coordinating response over the county and with neighbouring forces.

We explained our problems: particularly damage by illegal use of motor vehicles with particular reference to the section of Sewstern Lane which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. These types of problem were a new to the officer, and he showed a keen interest. A productive discussion followed, from which the following points emerged:

The police need the public to record and report incidents to enable them to spot patterns of activity and identify "hotspots". The use of cameras and phone-cameras by the public was welcomed, but if appropriate people need to be willing to give statements. P.S Willey emphasized the importance of getting an incident number when reporting incidents, not least because only this ensures it will be entered into the data system.

Members with connections to national organizations passed on their knowledge of successful approaches taken by the police in other regions, which P.C. Willey was interested to explore more fully.

It had been a very useful meeting for both sides. There was an obvious fit with our concerns and the wider issues of rural crime, not least the value of the public's eyes and ears, if they will report illegal or suspicious activity, but also the need to have someone who not only is aware of this area of law, but is looking at the data with a view to spot the patterns and hot-spots. Although not mentioned, the direct contact with a named officer who shows interest and enthusiasm for the task, and had gained an understanding of the issues, raised ones feeling that reporting is worthwhile.

Chris Padley, Mid-Lincolnshire LAF

## Links

Find the CTC views at

[Local Access Forums - CTC View](#)

[Rights of way Improvement Plans - CTC View](#)

## Making a Difference

Many LAFs will find that whilst their existence is enshrined in law, their Appointing Authority may not be fully aware of their presence and the work that they do. For a LAF to be effective two things need to be in place - full and active membership, and knowledge of the important role that the LAF plays in local decision making. Other suggestions are as follows:

Hold regular meetings: whilst lots can go on between, meetings serve as a good time to brief others on current work and for presentations from those that may benefit from LAF expertise. Invite local councillors, especially cabinet members, as well as Officers from departments including Highways and Planning. Also, consider inviting potential members.

Membership should be broad and varied and those with very narrow interests discouraged. The Ramblers are well supported and The British Horse Society have local access officers who are usually trained in Highway Law up to and including Public Enquiry level. Having members that are willing to champion a specific area or run projects - a P4C bid for example - are a real bonus. Specialities could include: planning applications, landowner liaison, disability and health issues, volunteer working and ROW clearance parties. Recruitment through word of mouth often works well.

Develop and maintain a good relationship with at least one rights of way officer. This is vital.

Maintain focus on LAF core aims: "I always begin LAF meetings with a reminder of the LAF aims as defined by s94 CROW 2000," comments Anthony Francis-Jones Chair of the Telford and Wrekin LAF. "This helps all of us focus our thoughts on broader issues and supports our policy of multi-user access wherever possible."

Get your LAF known locally: talk to members of the Appointing Authority (Planning, Legal, RoW etc.), comment on planning applications both on the planning website and at Plans Board, and liaise with local developers for improved access. Be proactive and take part in all consultations that could involve access to open spaces. Success will breed success and the LAF will be known locally as the main place to go for advice and help from a group of experienced users.

Consider using a logo for your LAF headed paper – branding is important and can give a LAF identity. It is also important that the LAF stays 'on message'. Whilst robust discussion is welcomed and views can differ, to remain respected locally the LAF must be seen to operate in a cohesive rather than disparate manner.

Your LAF can really make a difference!

Anthony Francis-Jones  
Chairman, Telford and Wrekin LAF

## Measuring Effectiveness

The Guidance on Local Access Forums in England is an important document. Section 3.9 on Measuring Effectiveness incorporates some critical yet challenging guidance on ensuring LAFs make a positive contribution. The paragraphs in the guidance are as follows:



3.9.1. Appointing authorities and forum members will want to ensure that time invested in their forums is worthwhile and that advice makes a positive contribution to decisions affecting the local area.

Forums should therefore consider and agree criteria against which to measure their effectiveness (possible measures might be the amount, relevance, range of advice given; feedback from section 94(4) bodies; assessments of where advice has made a difference). This will help forums to improve their effectiveness and make appropriate adjustments where necessary. The information can also be used in preparing the annual report.

3.9.2. As the body that is likely to be the main recipient of forum advice, the appointing authority(ies) are encouraged to assist forums in developing relevant and meaningful criteria which suit the local circumstances.

The Annual Review Form offers the opportunity to record important data on involvement in a number of subject areas and to give examples of three key pieces of advice. Measuring the effectiveness of that advice is more demanding. Reasons for this are lack of feedback from the bodies that LAFs advise (section 94(4) bodies); time delays between giving advice and subsequent changes in policy; and trying to give an objective assessment of how important the advice has been in making a difference. So what can LAFs do to try and fulfil section 3.9 of the Guidance?

LAFs should ensure how to measure effectiveness is discussed with the appointing authority.

Seek feedback on the advice the LAF has given. Sometimes this might mean going through a summary of responses and proposed changes in order to identify whether there has been a change due to comments the LAF has made. Where the LAF has made a difference, even in a small way, make sure this is recorded and that all members and the appointing authority know. Think about devising a ranking system so that the influence of any advice can be measured, for example, a difference that is 'very significant', 'significant', 'minimal', or 'no difference'. This might also help to focus LAF activity in certain areas where it has more impact.

Member morale and commitment is greatly enhanced when they feel the work they have put in is making a significant difference to access provision or policy.

Hilary Winter  
Forum Officer, Devon Countryside Access Forum  
Regional Coordinator, SW Region

# LAF News

## South West Regional Conference March 2013

Members from the twelve LAFs across the region enjoyed a day at Dartmoor National Park offices with a specific theme of dog management. Dog Control Orders and other dog issues are matters which concern LAFs yet views are frequently polarised.

The region was fortunate to have Stephen Jenkinson as the key presenter for the day. Stephen is an independent consultant to such bodies as the Forestry Commission, local authorities and Natural England and also the Access Adviser to the Kennel Club. There was no doubting Stephen's enthusiasm for dogs but at the same time his key message was ensuring dogs, and their owners, learn how to share space with other access users. He gave several highly informative and relevant presentations on the following subjects:

- Dogs and their owners;
- What the law can and cannot achieve;
- Principles of good practice;
- Integrated management;
- The role of LAFs in promoting good practice.

Illustrated with case examples, the presentations and discussions focussed LAF members' attention on what could be achieved when access sites, in both urban and rural areas, were well managed.



Andrew Watson, Head of Access, Recreation and Estates at Dartmoor National Park Authority, gave a further presentation on a specific educational campaign, PAWS on Dartmoor, targeted at dog owners. The aim was to promote good dog management in order to reduce the impact of uncontrolled dogs on livestock and conservation objectives.

Hilary Winter  
Regional Coordinator, SW

## Dog Update (MENE)

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment report for year 4, March 2012 – February 2013, published at the end of July indicates just how important dog walking is for health and how dog management issues should be explored more fully.

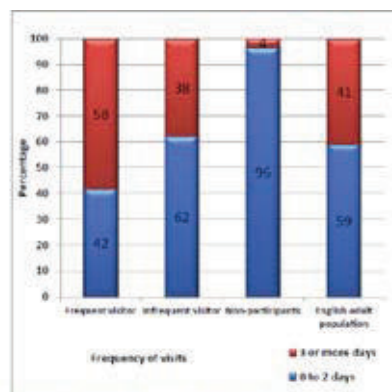


Figure 7: Number of days in the last week Wiltshire residents undertook 30 minutes or more of physical

## Links



The full report with details of useful publications can be found on Huddle or by e-mailing me at [hilary.winter@devon.gov.uk](mailto:hilary.winter@devon.gov.uk)

A few key facts from the MENE report (England):

58% of visits to the countryside involved walking with a dog;  
45% of visits to coastal destinations involved walking with a dog;  
1.4 billion visits to the natural environment, by far the top activity, were with a dog;  
47% of people went out to exercise their dog, the top motivating factor.

As discussed at the SW LAF Conference, LAFs have an important role to play in identifying significant and sustained problems, developing consistent and integrated approaches and looking at the least restrictive and enforceable approaches to achieve the desired solutions. This may mean responding to Dog Control Order consultations or taking a proactive approach to dog management on particular sites.

Hilary Winter  
Regional Coordinator, SW

## Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum working with MENE

The CAF has worked on developing a local statistical evidence base, using MENE data. The objective has been to produce a “single version of the truth” upon which policy decisions can be made based on the concept in Wiltshire’s “Joint Strategic Assessment” initiative. The CAF considers that for its advice to be influential it must adhere to the same quantitative rigour that the Authority adopts towards its other decision making processes. Initial analysis has focused on public health outcomes and the level of walking generally throughout Wiltshire and Swindon. The aim of the first study carried out by the CAF was to support the proposition that some transfer of funding takes place from the health budget to pay for infrastructure improvements in the rights of way network, particularly in areas of highest health inequality.

The CAF has also worked in partnership with the ROWIP officer to include robust data in the new emerging ROWIP, as illustrated by one of the graphs based on MENE in the ROWIP consultation draft.

Jane Yates  
Lead Advisor

## LAF Annual Reporting

A few months ago the National LAF Annual Report for the financial year 2011-12 was produced by Natural England and submitted to Defra and earlier this month the Minister Richard Benyon sent a letter in response. This national report was only able to be produced due to the LAFs completing and submitting their annual report proformas to Natural England in time for them to be included.

[MENE on NE's website](#)

# LAF News

This year Natural England is asking all of the LAFs to complete and submit the new Annual Review Form for the reporting year of April 2012 – March 2013 by 31st October submission deadline. They can be submitted either by email to Rob Leek / Regional Coordinator or uploaded straight to Huddle with an alert to Rob and the Regional Coordinator so they know that it's there and can log its submission.

Once all the Annual Review Forms have been collected, using the information from them, each Regional Coordinator will complete a Regional Report Form and will submit this to Natural England by 30th November. Natural England will then use all these forms plus other information collected from the reporting year - such as the LAF Survey Results and the feedback from the LAF Conference - and produce the 2012-13 LAF National Annual Report for submission to Defra.

If you have any questions or would like to provide feedback about any part of the LAF annual reporting process, please contact Rob Leek.

Rob Leek, Lead Advisor

## Who's Who in Natural England

Wendy Thompson is a Natural England Principal responsible for leading two national teams responsible for local level access and engagement projects across England. The work of the two teams is wide ranging and includes Paths for Communities, working with Local Access Forums, the Countryside Code and associated public advice, public engagement on National Nature Reserves, local advice on Country Parks and Local Nature Reserves and seeking opportunities to improve access through European funds such as the Common Agricultural Policy and Growth Programme. Previously she has worked on Public Rights of Way legislation and in particular the guidance on ROWIPs and options to complete the definitive map, as well as within research teams focusing on day visit surveys, Greenspace and providing online information about enjoying the outdoors. Wendy is a long standing and active member of the Countryside Recreation Network which she chaired between 2010-2012. Out of work her interests include walking, cycling and running; gardening and relaxing with a film or a good novel.



## Links

[LAF 2011 - 12 National Annual Report](#)

[LAF 2012 - 13 National Conference feedback](#)

### *Huddle specific links*

[Ministers Letter to LAF](#)

[Annual review reporting form](#)

[Huddle filestore for annual reviews](#)



Martin Shaw is based in Newcastle upon Tyne and has worked closely with LAFs for a number of years. Since April 2012 he has been the Senior Advisor steering Natural England's strategic involvement with LAFs nationally. He played a key role in setting up the Paths for Communities Grant Programme and leads its Natural England Delivery Team. Previous to this Martin headed up the Walking for Health Programme in the North East and has had many years involvement in countryside management and access issues,

particularly in the urban fringe. Outside of work he enjoys travel, countryside walks and cooking anything that involves the use of chilli!

Rob Leek has been the National LAF Lead Adviser since April 2012 though previously worked with LAFs in the West of England area of the South West and on Huddle development in his role as a People and Partnerships adviser. Previous to this he worked regionally on Walking for Health and before that on the Countryside Agency's Local Heritage Initiative scheme both regionally and nationally. His main outside work interests are music making/playing and looking after his 3 year old daughter.



Next month we will introduce you to the local delivery officers!



Sycamore Gap Hadrian's Wall National Trail

Contact us

[enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)