



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH 2014 AT 10.00 AM  
MEZZANINE ROOM 2, 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 Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 November 2013 to be confirmed</b>	<b>1 - 8</b>
<b>4 Matters Arising</b>	
<b>5 The East-West Rail Project</b> Charles Hurst, Network Rail	
<b>6 The Definitive Map</b> Background and role of the team	
<b>7 Rights of way group report</b> Claire Hudson, Definitive Map Team; Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access Advisor; and Joanne Taylor, Operations Team Leader	<b>9 - 14</b>
<b>8 Priority Matrix</b> Joanne Taylor, Operations Team Leader	<b>15 - 18</b>
<b>9 LAF members report</b>	<b>19 - 22</b>
<b>10 Any Other Business</b>	
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>23 - 58</b>
<b>11 Date of Next and Future Meetings</b> Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury, 10am Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2014	





# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## *BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM*

---

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2013, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.32 PM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr J Elfes, in the Chair

Mr D Briggs, Mr N Harris, Mr C Hurworth, Mr A T A Lambourne, Mrs V Lynch, Mr J Coombe, Mr Caspersz, Mr G Thomas and Ms N Glover

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mr J Clark, Ms S Keene, Mrs C Hudson and Ms J Taylor

### **GUESTS PRESENT**

Mr C Hurst

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

There were no apologies for absence received.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP**

Jonathan Clark advised that Richard Pushman was no longer a County Councillor but that he had been appointed as 'Bucks Heritage Champion'. Jonathan asked the Forum if they would like to invite Richard to be a member of the Forum as Bucks Heritage Champion and Members agreed.

**Action: Clerk to write to Richard Pushman inviting him to be a member of the Forum**

Jonathan also advised that he was in discussions with a farmer in the Chilterns to see if he would like to join the Forum. Jonathan advised that Councillor Netta Glover had also made a couple of suggestions for other farmers to approach. Jonathan will provide an update at the next meeting.

Members were informed that a letter had been sent to the District Councils inviting nominations for a District Council member to the Forum, however no response had been received to date.

The Chairman then welcomed Netta Glover representing Bucks County Council to the Forum and introduced Shelia Keene, the new manager of the Environment Team.

#### **4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2013 TO BE CONFIRMED**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2013 were confirmed

#### **5. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

#### **6. CHARLES HURST, NETWORK RAIL: THE EAST-WEST RAIL PROJECT**

Charles Hurst, Network Rail was welcomed to the meeting.

Charles gave a presentation on 'The East-West Rail Project'. The key points were as follows:

- The project has been split into 3 sections; Western, Central and Eastern:
  - Western is Oxford to Bedford
  - Central is Bedford to Cambridgeshire
  - Eastern is Cambridgeshire to Norwich/Ipswich
- The Western section is split into two phases. Phase 1 is Oxford to Bicester and this has been authorised and is in the process of being built
- Phase 2 is Bicester to Bedfordshire.
- The Consortium which is an amalgamation of local councils and businesses was formed in 1995 to re-establish parts of the line.
- The Consortiums objectives include:
  - Building cross party support
  - Build and maintain confidence
  - Support residential and commercial development along the route
- The benefits of the East-West rail, Western section include:
  - Easier access to London
  - Promotion of growth and additional transfer of freight
- Additional stations along the route will be necessary
- Construction of Phase 2 is scheduled to commence in 2015. Presently surveys for newts, door mice and bats are being undertaken. Surveys and consultation regarding crossing are also required.
- There is a commitment to early and thorough consultation. Informal consultations are a good precursor to this and this has started with an informal consultation on safety and network efficiency. There needs to be understanding regarding 'what is right for users'.
- It is estimated with there will be 83 crossings which will need to be diverted.
- Examples of crossings include;
  - Swans Way – this is a used crossing. Options include; close footpath, put a bridge or underpass in, or divert. If a bridge is put in it would need to be a step bridge not a ramp. It is in a cutting and not many steps are needed. If the crossing is diverted it could be diverted directly onto a road
  - Swanbourne Old Station – this is a used crossing and to the North leads to a conference centre and to the South a road. The

crossing could be closed or redirected.

- Officers will also be informally consulting with interested properties along the route

Members then asked questions.

Viv Lynch asked if mountain blocks could be positioned either side so that horse riders can dismount and lead their horses through an underpass or bridge as horses can get spooked by trains. She asked that head heights of any underpass be sufficiently high enough for horse riders and highlighted that an underpass needs to be light and airy as horses do not like the dark. In response Charles said that there are industry standards which would be adhered to. He commented that there was poor visibility on parts of the network and said that a rider would need to be near the track for the horse to see the trains. Viv highlighted that horses can get spooked from hearing the trains.

Chris Hurworth asked Charles if the 'less able' could be considered with any designs. He said that steps upto a bridge rather than a ramp may cause difficulties for some. Charles said that there would be instances where there are ploughed fields each side and assumptions are made that those using the bridge can use steps.

John Elfes asked how high any bridge would need to be if there was to be electrification on the line. Charles said the line would be similar to the West Coast main line with additional height required for electrification.

Alan Lambourne asked Charles if he had encountered any problems with the Aylesbury section of the line. Charles advised that due to HS2 the line had been moved 50m. He highlighted that crossings on that part of the route had not been looked at yet.

John Coombe asked Charles if a handout would be issued. Charles said that there was a leaflet and that he could provide Jon with copies.

David Briggs enquired if there were any design guidelines in relation to footpaths and Charles said that any standards would be Highways standards and not Railway standards.

The Chairman thanked Charles for attending and asked if he would be able to attend a future LAF meeting to provide a further update.

## **7. GAVIN CASPERZ - DISABLED ACCESS ROUTES**

Gavin Caperz gave a presentation on Disabled Access Routes. The main points highlighted were:

- Gavin represents disabled ramblers on the LAF
- The purpose of the presentation is to:
  - Update members on the work to date
  - Canvass for members supports and encourage members to be partners.
- The 'Chilterns Roamability' is interested in promoting the Chilterns for tourism, sport and recreation.
- The countryside should be for all to enjoy, however people with disabilities or those requiring wheelchairs and scooters have been restricted
- The biggest challenge to disabled users wanting to access the

countryside is man made obstacles such as stiles, narrow gates and other structures

- There are also a rising number of older people who are becoming isolated and this also needs to be addressed.
- Older and disabled persons want to enjoy the countryside with their families
- It was felt that a short term project to run a pilot project was needed.
- Five potential sites have been identified and progress on a pilot project is being made.
- The sites have been surveyed and issues identified to see what needs to be done to make the sites totally accessible
- BCC and The Chilterns Society have been very supportive
- Chilterns Roamability do not want to see the countryside and footpaths changed to the detriment of the environment. There needs to be removal of minor obstacles such as mud, tree roots, snow and leaves with minimal intervention.
- From initial assessments this equates to approximately 10 gates along 40 miles of footpaths.
- Site owners need to be brought on board
- In 2014 Chilterns Roamability will run a programme in the Chilterns called 'Access for All', which is similar to Simply Walk. It is where whole families or groups of friends can access the countryside together.
- There only needs to be one route at each site which all users can access and which shows the suitability of the route and is graded.
- There will also be information included on a website and Chiltern Conservation Board has said that they would be willing to host information on their website.
- The Chiltern Conservation Board also has a scheme for providing grants which Chilterns Roamability will be applying to shortly.
- September 2014 will be the launch date for 'Access for All' and it is hoped that a Paralympic athlete will launch the event.
- Press interest is also being sought
- Chilterns Roamability would like the support of the LAF and LAF members. Perhaps you could look at where our information can be linked to your information.

Chris Hurworth suggested Gavin consider contacting Countryfile to highlight the project. Neil Harris advised that he had a contact at Countryfile if Gavin needed. Gavin thanked Neil for his offer and said that he needed to contact landowners in the first instance and assure them that there would be no significant changes which are being undertaken through Jonathan Clark but that he would liaise with Neil in due course.

Chris also suggested that Gavin consider contacting companies who supply mobility scooters to enquire about sponsorship which could fund the production of leaflets. He suggested that Gavin could also contact District and Parish Councils in the areas the project covered.

Neil advised that he was a member of the LAF representing the National Trust and said he would be happy to liaise with Gavin where the National Trust had land holdings.

John Coombe advised that the Chilterns Society installed gates on behalf of the

County Council. He said that no all gates are suitable for disabled users and asked what the Council policy was on stiles which served no purpose. In response Joanne Taylor said that if it is a lawful structure the stile was there by limitation (at the point of creation of a Right of Way). Removal can be negotiated with the landowner. If it is not a lawful structure removal can be discussed with the landowner. If the structure is for stock control purposes a gate or gap could be suggested to the landowner.

Gavin said that Chilterns Roamability was not looking to remove all stiles, but to have one route at this point which can be accessed by all. He said the group want to optimise what is currently in place with minimal intrusion.

## **8. ANNETTE VENTERS - PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS**

Annette Venters gave a presentation on the Partnership Projects and the work of the Chilterns Conservation Board. The key points from the presentation were:

### Cycle Chilterns

- 3 year project which is funded by a Department for Transport (DfT) grant. £868k has been received to develop cycling in the Chilterns
- There are 3 gateway towns in Buckinghamshire: Amersham, Chesham, Great Missenden
- The Cyclist Touring Club is the lead body. There will be:
  - New off road track for children
  - Cycle training, led cycle rides
  - Shoretrax, adapted bikes (Green Park)
  - Dr Bike at Great Missenden railway station
  - Additional cycle parking at railway stations
  - Electric bike network (rolled out in Central Chilterns next year)
  - Improved signage

### Tourism Project

- This is a £30k LEADER project to generate more staying visitors

### Chiltern Conservation Board (CCB)

- The CCB 'State of the Chilterns Environment' report is due to be published December 2013
- There is a section in the report called 'Understanding and Enjoyment' which explores Access and visitor satisfaction. Responses suggest:
  - Continued growth in health walks
  - Overall high level of satisfaction and usage
  - Voluntary open access is decreasing
- Looking ahead the CCB will:
  - Continue with Chiltern Cycle project until March 2015
  - Promote new off road scooter routes
  - Provide more stile free routes
  - Promote sustainable tourism
  - Input to the management of National Trails

David asked about the Cycle Chilterns project and asked how much of the funding had been spent. Annette said that a third of the funding has been spent and said that the project is on track as the project is loaded on a lot of spend in year 3.

David enquired where the next electric bike depots would be. Annette said that this is still to be agreed and said that ideally they would be in a cluster of places. Glyn raised concern that manufactures had different connections. Annette commented that from

being fully charged the bikes could usually travel approximately 25 miles.

The Chairman thanked Annette for her update.

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

Members had received the Rights of Way Group Report.

Claire Hudson took Members through the Definitive Map Update and the following updates were noted:

- The outcome of the Public Inquiries for Great Missenden and Great Missenden/Wendover are expected in the next few weeks.
- The objection period for Taplow has started
- There will be a formal meeting in March 2014 regarding Pitchcott

Members then asked questions.

Neil Harris referred to the Bradenham Public Path Order and advised that he would chase.

Viv Lynch enquired if the Quainton Bridleways had been completed. Joanne Taylor advised that work is ongoing on the ground.

The Chairman enquired why the decision regarding Lower Winchendon was rescinded. Claire Hudson advised that this was due to new evidence.

Jonathan Clark took Members through the Strategic Access Update and the following updates were noted:

- The consultation on the HS2 Environmental Statement is due to start on 2 December 2013 and run until the end of January 2014.
- Publication of the Rights of Way GIS mapping data is not seen as a risk to income for the search process

Shelia Keene advised that an extension to the consultation had been requested but that this had not been granted. The County Council will focus on major emissions and inaccuracies. It is a very large document can also be accessed on the government website. Key parts are available in hard copy. The County Council is working with various partners regarding the petitioning process.

The Chairman asked members if they wanted to get involved and members agreed they did. Shelia advised that a HS2 summit was held the week before. Lawyers in attendance explained the new guidance on the petitioning process and that petitioners needed to be directly affected. The Chairman advised that the LAF could provide input in relation to the maintenance of access to the countryside and Rights of Way.

John Coombe asked if anyone could download data from the Rights of Way GIS mapping data. Claire advised that anyone could access the data but that a GIS system would be required to read the data.

Glyn Thomas referred to Agenda Item, Appendix 1, which is a letter to the Cabinet Member expressing concern regarding maintenance of the Rights of Way network and asked what response had been received. The Chairman said that the Cabinet Member had advised him that she had not received the original letter. He said he has forwarded a copy of the letter and the Cabinet Member has said that she will respond to it. The Chairman said that this is disappointing as a decision has now been made.



Chris Hurworth said that it is a concern that the decision has been made without the LAFs concerns being taken into account. He said that LAFs are not new bodies and that the County Council should be reminded that the LAF is a statutory body. Chris said that he also still struggled to see how volunteers fit in with a private organisation.

Glyn asked whether the 7 year contract could be extended. Joanne advised that performance was a ground which enabled extension of the contract. The Chairman was asked if he would write to the Cabinet Member, Janet Blake on behalf of the LAF expresses the LAFs disappointment and concerns. The letter should also remind the Cabinet Member that the LAF is a statutory body.

Chris Hurworth advised that Bridleway 52 was obstructed with large oak branches. Joanne asked that Chris report this in the normal way.

## 10. LAF MEMBERS REPORT

Members had received the LAF Members' report.

Jonathan Clarke asked members if anyone would like to attend the National Local Access Forum Conference. Jonathan asked members to contact him with expression of interest. If there are no expressions of interest the Chairman will attend representing the LAF.

Jonathan asked for LAF members' advice in relation to a parcel of common land called Pinner Green. David Briggs advised that there is no access to the common and that the footpath across the common is in accessible. The Chairman commented that it is common land and that it should not be fenced off. The view of the LAF was that the fence should be removed. Members asked Jonathan Clark to investigate the issue further and update members.

Members discussed the issue of the sign which had appeared on common land in Fingest village. Neil Harris advised that he could highlight the concerns raised with the landowner.

Glyn Thomas advised that a letter had been sent to the Bucks Herald regarding the Pegasus crossing at Watermead. Members were informed that Watermead Parish Council had been successful in obtaining a grant offer of approximately £100,000 from Natural England for the Paths for Communities project, which would have been added to the £80,000 s106 funding for a Pegasus crossing, construction of a footpath and bridleway across part of the Parish Council owned land and a bridge over the River Thame, opening up access. The £100,000 grant was returned to Natural England by the Parish Council, as the Parish have said that they need to consult with residents first. Members discussed the issue and Members asked Netta Glover if the issue could be added to the next Watermead Parish Council agenda. **Action: Netta Glover**

Jonathan Clark said he would be happy to attend the meeting to talk to the Parish Council and address any concerns they may have. Members also raised concern about the s106 funding and asked when the funding needed to spent by. Jonathan said he would make enquiries regarding the s106 funding. **Action: Jonathan Clark**

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Glyn Thomas asked what the increase in budget for access and rights of way will be

for next year. In response Joanne Taylor advised that the County Council is currently reviewing the budgets for services for next year and the Council Medium Term Plan, which sets budgets for the next 3 years, is being considered. The proposals have been submitted for review by County Councillors and a decision on budgets is expected February next year. Joanne said that if members wanted to highlight concerns regarding the budget they should contact Janet Blake, Cabinet Member for Transport or Sean Rooney, Senior Manager, PLACE.

**12. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday 19 March 2014, 10am, Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

**Chairman**



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

---

**Date:**

**Title:** Rights of Way Team update

**Authors:** Claire Hudson, Jonathan Clark, Joanne Taylor

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

### 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. **Orders confirmed with modifications following 3 day Public Inquiry. Objections received to modifications; awaiting further contact from Secretary of State.**
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. **Orders confirmed with modifications following 3 day Public Inquiry. Objections received to modifications; awaiting further contact from Secretary of State.**
3. **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. **Due to objections to Order, Secretary of State require a Public Inquiry, scheduled for 27 August 2014.**

4. **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 30th May 2012. An Order was made on 22nd October 2012 and one objection received. **Following written representations, the Order was subsequently confirmed. Completed.**
5. **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. **Due to objections to Order, Secretary of State require a Public Inquiry, likely to be held 1 October 2014.**
6. **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 – Secretary of State deemed the objection to be irrelevant and confirmed the Order. Completed.**
7. **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. **Following 12 February 2014 meeting, the Committee determined to ACCEPT the application. Order to be made.**
8. **Radnage** – drafting error of Public Bridleway No. 3 Radnage. **Following 12 February 2014 meeting, the Committee determined to AMEND the Definitive Map. Order to be made.**

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

9. **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 under discussion. Investigation not started.**
10. **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 under discussion. Investigation not started.**
11. **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 under discussion. Investigation not started.**

12. **Iver** – application to record various routes across The Fields and The Clump, Iver as Public Footpaths. **Investigation not started.**
13. **Chepping Wycombe** – application to record the route from Elmshott Close to King's Wood as Public Footpath. **Investigation not started.**
14. **Bledlow** – application to record the route from Footpath No 49 to Bridleway No 55 as public footpath. **Investigation not started.**
15. **Edgcott** – application to record Lawn House Lane as a Public Footpath to Public Footpath 11 Edgcott. **Investigation not started.**
16. **Iver** – application to record route from Grange Way to Colne Orchard as a Public Footpath. **Investigation not started.**
17. **Hegerley** – application to upgrade Public Footpath No. 14 to public bridleway status based on historical evidence. **Investigation not started.**
18. **Bledlow** – application to investigate the alignment of Public Footpath No. 52 Bledlow. **Investigation not started.**

#### **PUBLIC PATH ORDERS**

19. **Ashley Green** – Application to divert footpath 2B. **Application received; matter to be started.**
20. **Aylesbury** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 7(part) and Footpath 8 (part). **Written Representations procedure adopted by the Secretary of State.**
21. **Bradenham** – Application to divert Footpath No 7. **No progression therefore case closed.**
22. **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.**
23. **Dinton with Ford and Upton** – Application to divert footpath 16. **Application received; matter to be started.**
24. **Ellesborough** - Application to divert footpaths Nos.3 and 9 Ellesborough. **Order made and open to consultation.**
25. **Great and Little Kimble** – Application to divert footpath 29. **Application received; matter to be started.**
26. **Great Marlow** – Application to divert footpath 21 and bridleway 52. **Application received; matter to be started.**
27. **High Wycombe** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 27. Wycombe District Council planning matter. Order made and confirmed by WDC. **Awaiting developer works.**

28. **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. **Landowner works awaiting completion and then Order will be confirmed.**
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 No 21. **Landowner works awaiting completion and then Order will be confirmed.**
32. **Steeple Claydon** – Application to divert Footpath No 6. **Order made but matter on hold.**
33. **Tingewick** – Application to divert Public Footpath No. 25. **Objections received to informal consultation therefore Council refused to make an Order. Matter closed.**
34. **Waddesdon** – Application to divert Public Footpath No 13(part) Waddesdon. **Landowner works awaiting completion and then Order will be confirmed.**
35. **Whitchurch** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 4 (part). **Order confirmed. Completed.**
36. **Winslow** – Application to extinguish Footpath No 5. Order made and no objections received. **Landowner works awaiting completion and then Order will be confirmed.**

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

37. **Edgcott** – Bridleway Creation (BCC Land). **Head of Legal and Democratic Services instructed to complete.**
38. **Edgcott** – Bridleway Creation (ERC Land). **Awaiting go ahead from ERC to proceed.**
39. **Westcott** - Footpath Creation. **Agreement not reached; matter closed.**
40. **Gerrards Cross** – Footpath Creation. **Head of Legal and Democratic Services instructed to complete.**

#### **VILLAGE GREEN APPLICATIONS**

41. **Iver** – land at The Fields and The Clump. **The application is being investigated.**
42. **Hughenden** – land at The Field, Bryants Bottom. **Following legal advice, a Public Inquiry is likely to be held to determine this matter.**
43. **Beaconsfield** – voluntary registration of the land at Hampden Hill. **Awaiting ownership confirmation from Town Council.**
44. **High Wycombe** – land at Meadow Close, Wycombe Marsh. **No objections have been received; aim to present this to the Rights of Way Committee in July.**

45. **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)**

49. A total of 174 planning applications have been commented upon by the Strategic Access Officer in the financial year to date (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013), distributed between authorities as follows: Wycombe 39; Aylesbury Vale, 87; South Bucks 13; Chiltern 21; and Bucks County Council 14. By 31<sup>st</sup> March this will be similar to last year (202).

50. The county council's environmental statement (ES) response was submitted to HS2 on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014 (Appendix 1). In addition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> version of the Bucks Blueprint has been completed which was submitted alongside the ES response. Both documents are available on the county council's website via this link:  
<http://www.transportforbucks.net/High-Speed-2/HS2-Blueprint.aspx>

51. The ES response is the first step in the parliamentary process. Over the next 5-7 weeks the council will be firming up the petitioning points, ensuring the mitigation requests are based on robust evidence to give the best chance of being heard by the select committee in the autumn of 2014. If the LAF have any further points to add with regard the rights of way response please let the Strategic Officer know.

52. The Strategic Officer attended the Winslow Local Area Forum on 12<sup>th</sup> March to provide advice to the town's ambition of creating a new circular walk. This is an evolving project, and will likely lead to another bid to Local Area Forum for funding towards creating new walking routes, guiding the public around sites of historic interest via a leaflet.

53. Five further 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. It may be possible for officer time to be off-set against the council's contribution to the project (and credited to the Environment Team's budget), which will include these ongoing preliminary meetings to discuss diversion routes and work on the diversion order process itself. There are around 26 path diversions in all.

54. There have been 13 new Donate-a-Gate donors since November 2013, taking the total number of donors to 291. The 300<sup>th</sup> donor will be celebrated in some way.

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

55. A 'Summary of Works' is attached to this report in Appendix 2, outlining work carried out by the Rights of Way Operations Team between 1st April 2012 and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014

56. As previously report to the Forum, 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. All officers are employed under TUPE arrangements through Ringway Jacobs the County Council's principle contractor.

57. The team has had a 0.5 FTE vacancy for an Assistant Rights of Way Officer since an officer went on maternity leave last spring. Unfortunately, recruitment for a temporary person to fill her post has been delayed due to the transfer of staff into Ringway Jacobs. I also have to report that Paul Hudson (Assistant Rights of Way Officer) left the team at the end of February 2014. Due to further re-structuring within Transport

for Buckinghamshire it is currently not possible to seek a replacement for Paul. The earliest date for recruitment is likely to be at the end of March 2014.

58. At the last meeting of the Forum in November, 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 has been complete, but due to shortage of staff it has not been possible to input the results, although I hope to give an update of the final figures for the next LAF meeting.

59. BVPI 2013 – Survey Results 2.5% figure May 2013

80% Paths Easy to use

96% Signs on Roadside

93% Structures Easy to use

60. Parish Paths Clearance Fund Update. Members may recall that funding has been made available by the county council to enable parish councils to benefit from being able to undertake and manage path clearance work. The money is in the form of a grant to parish councils who wish to employ their own contractors to undertake this work themselves.

61. The grant to the parish council will be equivalent to the current annual cost for the county council to cut paths in the participating parishes. It will be paid to any parish council wishing to become involved and who commit to undertaking the annual clearance works usually carried out by the county council. A parish council may also wish to contribute additional money either to cover the cost of clearing additional paths not included on the county council's annual clearance schedule or to increase the frequency of cuts on specific paths, thereby improving the quality of the local path network and encouraging greater use.

62. All parishes with scheduled annual clearance have already been contacted and invited to participate in the scheme. Some early positive feedback has been received, but it is too early to assess the likely take up by parishes.

63. Works carried out this year include two large replacement bridges, four surface repairs and a flight of steps replaced on the Ridgeway in Princes Risborough. Other works planned to be completed within this financial year (to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014) include seven more bridge replacements and seven surface repair jobs across the county. Some of these works have been delayed by the current ground conditions.

64. At the last meeting I reported on the rather large number of issues reported to us concerned with trees damaged by the storm at the end of October 2013. Since then we have experienced many more storms over this winter and there has been a significant increase in this type of report, with 220 instances of fallen/damaged trees reported to the county council. Clearly this has had a significant effect on the team's work load, and wherever possible issues have been passed onto the landowner involved.





## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# *Report*

---

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014

**Title:** Rights of Way Improvement Plan - Problem Management Matrix

**Author:** Joanne Taylor – Team Leader, Rights of Way Operations

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

### **Recommendation**

The Forum is asked to consider this report and provide feedback on which areas of the matrix should be scaled back; or the forum may considered that no changes are advisable, in order to enable future performance to be 'benchmarked' against previous years.

Option C would be the preferred recommendation.

### **Resources Appraisal**

The County Council is required to find significant savings across most service areas, and this has resulted in a substantial reduction being made from the Rights of Way Operations budget which will impact on response targets outlined in the Problem Management Matrix. Budget reduction is £120,000.

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

The purpose of this report is to appraise Members of the Forum on the likely impact on performance as a result of budgetary cuts to be made from this coming financial year (April 2014) and to seek a view from the group whether it is necessary or desirable to decrease the aspirational response times outlined in the Problem Management Matrix, which forms part of the Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which is a policy document. The decision made by the Local Access Forum will be used to assist the Cabinet Member for Transportation, in order for her to make a final decision on any necessary changes to the policy set by the Matrix within the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

## **Supporting Information - Background**

1. Approximately 9 years ago the County Council introduced a method of prioritising issues on paths according to the nature of the problem and its location, this was the Problem Management Matrix; in 2008 the Matrix was incorporated as policy within the Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
2. The Problem Management Matrix was developed, essentially as a public service agreement, which pledged to deliver maintenance to the entire network and to give the public a reasonable expectation of when works would be completed. The Matrix took into account maintenance related to public safety concerns and gave the more heavily used sections of the network top priority. See Matrix table Appendix 10
3. The Council set itself ambitious targets to deliver a high standard of maintenance countywide, but this was also at a point in time when the Rights of Way Group had a greater budget and staff levels. It continuously monitored its performance and gave feedback against the targets. The target times also recognised the level of public involvement in the process in terms of reporting problems and to show a commitment to their resolution.

## **Future Outcomes**

4. The County's network experiences high levels of demand and there is a high public expectation for quality routes. However, the majority of available funds will need to concentrate on the Council's core duty of maintaining existing structures, bridges and signs. This will, therefore, reduce the time spent on repairs to stiles and gates, and this is likely to have a negative impact on the resolution times for the matrix categories for enforcement (B and C on Matrix table), although it is not possible, at this point in time, to predict the likely decrease in percentages outline in the Matrix.
5. Regardless of any decision to change the targets in the Matrix, the County Council's priority will still try to ensure that rights of way are safe to use. Reports of problems potentially affecting the safety of the public remain the paramount.

## **Recommendations**

6. Due to the reduction in budget it may be necessary to change the times, targets and percentages outlined in the Matrix, to more realistically reflect the current financial constraints, with three options available.
  - A. Change the times outlined in the table – which vary from 5 days (severe/dangerous issue on a promoted path) to 12 months (minor issue on little used path). For example category B and C issues could be increased from current target times of 3 to 6 months to 5 months to 9 months.

- B. Change the percentage of times the targets are intended to be 'hit', (see Performance Measures in the appendix) for example category B and C issues are intended to be actioned within the time scale between 70 and 80% of the time, this could be reduced to 50 to 60% of the time.
- C. Leave the Problem Management Matrix targets as they were originally set, so that it is possible to more easily benchmark performance in future.





## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

---

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014

**Title:** LAF Members' Report

**Author:** Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access

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

### LAF Correspondence

- 1 The LAF Chairman and members from the Ramblers, Open Spaces Society and British Horse Society, met Janet Blake, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Rights of Way maintenance and Sean Rooney the contract manager in the Senior Management Team. The meeting was arranged following the Chairman's correspondence with Janet Blake and her reply of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013 (Appendix 3). Notes of the meeting are summarised in Appendix 4.
- 2 The Chairman wrote a response to the draft Chilterns Conservation Board Management Plan (Appendix 5) a document which outlines their strategy for the next 5 years.
- 3 The chairman completed the Bucks LAF Annual report to Defra for 2012/13 (Appendix 6). This year's report, for 2013/14, will be due earlier, on 30th June 2014.

### 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 map in Appendix 7 outlines the extent of the fencing in bold red. Consultation with the county council's land charges section indicates Green Lane is a restricted public highway and is gated at both ends, with a prohibition of motor vehicles other than for access. The fence remains unlawful unless it has consent under section 38 of the Commons Act 2006. No one has a legal duty to take action, but the county council has powers to enforcement. A site visit revealed the permissive footpath, running across the common and starting opposite the end of Footpath LAT6/7, is impeded by an earth mound. If the public wish to claim this as a public footpath then a definitive map modification order needs to be made.

### Ridgeway & Thames Path National Trails

- 5 Natural England have agreed to provide a grant of 75% towards the management and promotional costs for national trails, with a condition that management arrangements are reviewed and a new membership is created with a broader range of partners. Martin Fry has been recruited as the new National Trails Delivery Officer for one year to develop new trails partnerships and draw up delivery frameworks. It has been agreed informally to manage the Ridgeway

and Thames Path separately, but this has not been resolved. The new arrangements were expected to be in place for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014, but process is behind schedule.

- 6 The Chilterns Conservation Board set up a Ridgeway working group in June 2013 to assess the needs of the trail and identify some tasks to feed into the new trails partnership and management arrangements. The group surveyed the Chiltern's Ridgeway, assessing its condition and other issues: signage to local attractions and settlements is limited; information and interpretation is limited; hedges and vegetation obscure views; more scenic alternative routes could be investigated; and there are some poor surfaces. This work will feed into the development plan for the Ridgeway.

### **Cycling**

- 7 Cycle Chilterns has just launched their new independent website, which was previously hosted on the CTC website ([www.cyclechilterns.co.uk](http://www.cyclechilterns.co.uk)). This gives the project officer, Sara Randal, control of content, which includes a monthly Cycle Chilterns e-newsletter (<http://eepurl.com/MX1cP>). Sara's post is being funded by a £900,000 grant from the Department for Transport to increase cycling participation and cycling visitor numbers to the Chilterns. The programme runs to March 2015 with the hope of further funding after that date. A highlight will be a visit by the Tour of Britain to the Chilterns in September 2014. Much has already been achieved, including children's cycle training, an electric bike network in Henley, led bike rides, a children's off-road track at Aston Hill and a popular portable cycle track taken to regional events such as county shows.
- 8 A new cycle route is being proposed between Bourne End and Wooburn, utilizing the disused railway line (see map in Appendix 8). A new route here would allow cyclists and horse riders to avoid the busy road and connect their onward journeys on quieter local roads. Negotiations are ongoing between Sustrans and the landowner to agree compensation if a new public route is created. There is a proven need for new non-vehicular access between the two settlements, so it may be possible to use compulsory powers under s.26 Highways Act 1980, but that would require an Order, including a report and decision at the Rights of Way Committee. The LAFs views on the proposal are sought.

### **Natural England correspondence**

- 9 LAF News Issue 3, the quarterly newsletter for (and by) Local Access Forums is attached in Appendix 9. It provides opportunities to share good practice, advertise news and highlight support from Natural England and Defra.
- 10 The Chairman completed the Buckinghamshire LAF's Annual Report for 2012/13 in December 2013 (Appendix 10). The 2013/14 returns deadline has been brought forward to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, ready for the regional (31<sup>st</sup> July 2014) and national LAF reports (30<sup>th</sup> September 2014) later in the year.

### **Conferences**

- 11 The Chilterns Conservation Board Annual Access Conference will be held this year on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2014. Venue TBC.
- 12 The South East Local Access Forum Conference will be held this year on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014, 10.30am to 3.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ. Speakers will include Steve Jenkinson on the management of dogs of the countryside, Dr Phil Wadey from the BHS on work toward the proposed 2026 rights of way claims deadline and Mark Weston on sharing multi user routes with horse riders.

13

**LAF dates for 2014**

14 The dates for next year's meetings are 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2014 and 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014.





## **Rights of way environmental statement: omissions and corrections**

The aim throughout the environmental statement consultation process has been to ensure the public amenity of the strategic rights of way network is protected and, where possible, improved. Maintaining a fully integrated rights of way network is essential to maintain opportunities for the public to safely enjoy the countryside for recreation and health; and for non-vehicular journeys between communities and local services.

The majority of rights of way crossings have been provided across the line to maintain the connectivity of the strategic network and this is welcomed. However, what appears to be missing are a large number of cost-neutral improvements to user's onward journeys that would significantly mitigate the impact on local communities. These are outlined below and summarised by Community Forum Area (CFA). In addition, there are a number of general principles that appear to be absent from the environmental statement and these are summarised here:

**GENERAL OMISSION** – routes temporarily diverted during the construction process should have a minimum recorded width according to the path's status. Similarly, the final routes post-construction should have minimum legal widths. We would suggest at least 4m for a bridleway and restricted byway, and at least 3m for a footpath.

**GENERAL OMISSION** - structures required as part of permanent diversions, such as pedestrian and kissing gates for stock control, should be of British Standard design (BS 5709: 2006).

**GENERAL OMISSION** - many rights of way are missing from the map books. Assuming HS2 Ltd has the full highway authority rights of way electronic GIS data set, all areas of the plans should be populated to provide a strategic overview of the wider links and effects.

**GENERAL OMISSION** - The principle of pedestrian footway construction on HS2 bridges, used as part of diverted rights of way, was thought to be one of the main principles of mitigation agreed by HS2 with the Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum during pre-environmental statement discussions. This would significantly improve pedestrian safety walking along/alongside carriageways, especially for diversions introducing greater distances of road walking.

### **CFA 7 Colne Valley**

**SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT** - there is a much longer than expected temporary diversion of Bridleway DEN/2, off Shire Lane, around the edge of Juniper Wood and Nockhill Wood, for a period of >5 years. A much shorter alternative, to run around the south side of the construction site boundary, would be significantly preferable for pedestrians. Item reference: Vol. 2 Map Book, CFA/7, Plan CT-06-022/L1 construction phase (box F7 to G9 and D10 to D8) and vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment Part 6, p.7-45, Table 7-19.

### **CFA 8 Chalfonts and Amersham**

OMISSION - Public Footpath CSG/30 and AMS/16, crossing Bottom House Farm Lane, are not shown on the map book plans. It is assumed these two paths will be diverted or closed during the road widening and should therefore be included. Additionally, they are missing from Table 7-34 of the Transport Assessment (Part 6). Item reference: Vol. 2 Map Book, CFA/8, CT-06-026-R1 proposed scheme (box E4/F4) and vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment Part 6, Table 7-34, p.7-73.

### **CFA 9 Central Chilterns**

SIGNIFICANT OMISSION - LMI/21 – a connection is required in a north westerly direction from Mantle’s Wood to the footpath network connecting Hyde Lane. Completely closing this path will result in a substantial missing link and a lengthy diversion along Hyde Heath Road which has little or no space in the highway verge for pedestrians to walk conveniently or safely. Agreement was reached in principle during pre-environment statement discussions to provide a connection either on the north or south sides of the line. The northern option (box J4 to H6 - green line on Appendix 1) would provide a route along an existing track in Mantle’s Wood and connect to new vehicular tracks at GMI/23. The southern option could run alongside HS2 (box I7 to F7 – pink line on Appendix 1), enabling Footpath 21 through Farthing’s Wood to remain open. At least one option could be provided at relatively low cost. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/9, CT-06-31 and CT-06-32 (proposed scheme) and vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment Part 6, Table 7-54, p.7-109.

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT - the permanent diversion of GMI/33/4 on the south side of the line from Chesham Road (B485) to Hyde Lane, along the vehicular access track, is welcome. However, the route needs to be upgraded to bridleway to legally accommodate horses and cycles (box B7 to E7 – see blue line on Appendix 1). Agreement was reached in principle during pre-environment statement discussions to provide this cost-neutral improvement. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/9, CT-06-32; and vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment Part 6, Table 7-54, p.7-110.

SIGNIFICANT OMISSION - agreement was reached in principle during pre-environment statement discussions to provide a link over the South Heath Green Tunnel Head (box D4 to D2 – pink line on Appendix 2). There was also an agreement to create a path onto Frith Hill sharing the vehicular access track to the South Heath Mid-Point Auto-transformer Station (box E4 to F2 – green line on Appendix 2). The tracks largely already exist and the connections to the existing rights of way network are very short on both north and south sides of HS2. See Map CT-06-033; item reference: vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment Part 6, p.7-110, Table 7-54.

ERROR – Footpath GMI/12/1 has been omitted from Table 7-54 in Vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment Part 6, p.7-110. The tabular succession should be Frith Hill, GMI/13, GMI/12, GMI/2.

OMISSION - agreement was reached in principle during pre-environment statement discussions to provide a link adjoining the eastern or western boundary of Havenfield Wood to negate the need to construct a new track along the south side of HS2 and to provide a more direct and attractive route for walkers (green or pink lines on Appendix 3). Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/9, CT-06-34a (box H10 to F10); and vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment Part 6, Table 7-54, p.7-110.

#### **CFA 10 Dunsmore, Wendover & Halton**

POSSIBLE MISTAKE – Footpath WEN/37, on the north side of HS2, is shown running along Bowood Lane, whereas it should run along the southern field-side of the boundary hedge. This is the current route on the ground and should not be changed. It doesn't appear in Table 7-73, p. 7-148, but a certain length will need to be stopped-up. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/10, CT-06-35 and CT-05-35 (box B4 to B3); and Table 7-73, p.7-148. In addition, the path will be temporarily diverted or closed, but doesn't appear to be mentioned in Table 7-72, p.7-143 of Vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment. Investigations were being made to provide a footway within the bridge design, but this is not mentioned.

SIGNIFICANT OMISSION – no segregated route for vulnerable users (walkers, cyclists and horse riders) is provided along Small Dean Lane to avoid construction traffic. This forms a connection along the Icknield Way promoted route from Dunsmore to Wendover (Bridleway Wendover 57). Agreement was reached in principle during pre-environment statement discussions to provide this link and avoid conflict with large volumes of heavy construction traffic. This can also be utilised post-construction. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/10, CT-05-37 and CT-06-37 (D7 to C6).

ERROR – Bridleway WEN/57 is marked as a footpath in the map book. This should be checked to ensure the mistake hasn't been replicated in the Bill. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/10, Map CT-06-38 construction phase and proposed scheme (box H4).

SIGNIFICANT OMISSION - agreement was reached in principle during pre-environment statement discussions to provide a footway alongside Nash Lee Road (B4008) to link ELL/25 with Nash Lee Lane. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/10, Map CT-06-39 proposed scheme (box B7 to C6).

ERROR – Footpath ELL/20 has been omitted off the bottom of Table 7-73 in Vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment, p.7-148.

SIGNIFICANT OMISSION – agreement was reached in principle during pre-environment statement discussions, and inspected at a site meeting with HS2, to provide a new public footpath link along the north side of the HS2 maintenance loop, to connect Footpath SMA/5 at St. Mary's Church with the ELL/20 over bridge (box A5 to E4 - green line on Appendix 4). This would avoid the closure of a long section of Footpath 5, which should remain open to the HS2 boundary even if the additional link is not possible. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/10, Map CT-06-40a proposed scheme (box A5 to E4).

### **CFA 11 – Stoke Mandeville & Aylesbury**

OMISSION - Footpath SMA/17/3 has been omitted from the map book plans. The path branches off the property Hall End and runs towards the Princes Risborough to Aylesbury branch line and Booker Park School, Aylesbury. This will need diverting across the A4010 Stoke Mandeville bypass and has been omitted from Vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment Table 7-92, p7-186. Plan reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/11, CT-06-042 construction phase and proposed scheme (H4 to F2).

OMISSION - no segregated route for vulnerable walkers is provided alongside the A4010 Stoke Mandeville bypass between Footpath SMA/11 and its re-connection at Stoke Brook. Plan reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/11, CT-06-042 proposed scheme (H9 to G7).

### **CFA 12 – Waddesdon & Quainton**

GENERAL PRINCIPLE FOR CFA 12 to CFA 13 – there are on-going discussions between the highway authority rights of way team and Network Rail regarding the East West Rail project. Their stated aim is to remove all at-grade rights of way crossings by diversion to the nearest crossing point, or by utilising existing/new bridges and underpasses. However, they have stated they wish to avoid constructing crossings that would later require demolition to make-way for the HS2 project. It should be noted therefore, the network of rights of way may look different when HS2 come to divert the routes and the legal implications for the environmental statement and accompanying bill should be investigated.

SIGNIFICANT OMISSION – crucial to providing a direct walking and cycling route between Aylesbury and Waddesdon, is the creation of a new bridleway north-west of the Bridleway FMA/1 Accommodation Bridge on the south side of HS2, connecting along an existing footpath to the new track to Cranwell Farm which could link to the A41 along a new bridleway. It was thought that agreement had been reached in principle, during pre-draft environmental statement discussions, to make this improvement and only a relatively short new upgrade would create this significant sustainable transport link (see pink line on Appendix 5). Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/12, CT-06-047b proposed scheme (box F7 to D7).

SIGNIFICANT OMISSION – it was thought that agreement had been reached in principle during pre-draft environmental statement discussions to provide a connecting footpath for QUA/26 so that it runs along the proposed new track on the eastern boundary of the Quainton Auto-transformer Feeder Station. There is an existing access track from the Edgcott Road so no additional construction is required and the new path would provide a strategic link in the rights of way network connecting with Finemere Wood along Footpath QUA/35A/1 (box D6 to C4 see pink line on Appendix 6). Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/12, CT-06-051 proposed scheme.

### **CFA 13 Calvert, Steeple Claydon, Twyford and Chetwode**

REDUCED AMENITY - a replacement floodplain storage area is proposed on the northern side of the infrastructure maintenance depot to be constructed across Footpath SCL/8 (see pink line on Appendix 7). During periods of high rainfall this will become impassable unless a raised walkway is constructed. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/13, Plan CT-06-055-R1 (box E1).

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT - Footpath SCL/7 and SCL/9 should follow a much shorter desire line around the existing field boundaries to then link with SCL/8 next to Rosehill Farm. This will negate the need to create the footpath on the south side of and alongside the East West Rail corridor, thus reducing the extra walking distance, currently proposed to be 1km. A similar reduced length of footpath inherited by the landowner can be achieved (see green lines on Appendix 7) - Item reference: vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment, p.7-286, table 7-140. Vol. 2 map book, CFA/13, Plan CT-06-055-R1 (box J1 to G5).

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT – Footpath TWY/18 off Perry Hill should follow a desire-line to West Street. There needs to be a footway constructed over the bridge to separate vulnerable users from vehicular traffic, but this isn't described in vol. 5 Technical Appendices, Transport Assessment. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/13, see plan CT-06-056 (box E4/E5).

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT – it would make a significant improvement to the network if Footpath PBI/5 was extended in a northerly direction, on the south side of the line and along the old track-bed of the former Great Central Main line, to link with the Restricted Byway accommodation over-bridge. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/13, CT-06-057 (box E8 to D8).

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT – Footpath PBI/5 and PBI/6, on the north side of the line, could be consolidated into one path following the line of PBI/5. It seems highly likely PBI/6 will never be used post construction as the more direct alternative is more convenient. This would also be desirable from a landowner's perspective. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/13, plan CT-06-057 (box D4 to E7; and D4 to G7).

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT – Footpath CHW/18 should be diverted out of the Manthorne Farm buildings and onto the existing track leading up the bridge to the former Great Central Main line. This would be shorter for pedestrians and bring greater security for the owner of Manthorn Farm. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/13, plan CT-06-059 (box G8).

There needs to be a footway constructed over the School End Road bridge to separate vulnerable users from vehicular traffic, as a significantly greater distance of road walking is being introduced. Item reference: Vol. 2 map book, CFA/13, plan CT-06-059 (box D8 to C7).

#### **CFA 14 Newton Purcell to Brackley**

No further comments.



**Buckinghamshire County Council**  
**Summary of Rights of Way Maintenance Carried Out**  
**Between 1/04/12 and 28/02/14, planning consultations, BVPI survey**  
**and 'issues outstanding'**

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	April12- 12 mth	April13-Feb14
Alignment	Path Off Line - resolved issue	15	13
Clearance *	Clearance - summary jobs/km*	655/290km	1123/319km
Bridge	Installed or repaired	40	39
Finger/post	Installed or repaired	259	233
Fly Tipping	Fly Tipping - removed	8	31
Gate	Gate repaired or installed	96	85
Intimidation + animal	Intimidation - resolved	10	17
Intimidating sign	Misleading Sign - removed	3	9
Obstruction - resolved	Barbed wire	6	3
Obstruction - resolved	Barrier - Fencing, wall or other	74	74
Obstruction - resolved	Electric fence	8	8
Obstruction - removed	Fallen Tree	192	270
Obstruction - resolved	Ploughing and Cropping	56	86
Other	Delivery of materials	46	55
Other	Miscellaneous issues resolved	45	60
Stile	Installed or repaired	139	146
Stile	Stile To Gap	14	21
Stile	Stile To KG	53	64
Stile	Stile To PG	59	54
Terrain	Path Erosion - resolved	7	5
Terrain	Bank Steps	11	10
Terrain	Path Surface problem resolved	47	69
Waymark Post	Installed/Repaired	159	146
Consultations	All Planning Applications Assessed	225	174
Volunteer Hours	RA, Chiltern Society - interim	945 hrs	1750
Improvements	To aid mobility access	222	221
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	1845
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 31/10/2013	1342	
No. on Database	No. of Issues os 28/02/14		1298

\*Figure for Feb 14 Interim - Data maybe revised.





Cabinet Member  
Planning and Transportation

**Buckinghamshire County Council**

County Hall, Walton Street  
Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 1UA

Janet Blake

Telephone 01296 382707  
Email [janetblake@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:janetblake@buckscc.gov.uk)  
[www.buckscc.gov.uk](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk)

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

26 November 2013

Dear Mr Elfes

**Re: Maintenance of the Rights of Way Network – your email of 8 November**

The decision to TUPE transfer the staff was made following a Key Decision in August and all comments that were received were taken into account. I can assure you that although the staff have now TUPE transferred into Ringway Jacobs there will be no impact on the service delivery as a result of that transfer. All the staff in the Rights of Way, Management and Enforcement Team, have already been working within the Ringway Jacobs contract since April 2012 and they are recognised as a well organised and high performing Team who are dedicated to delivering the highest level of service, within the budget constraints by the Authority.

All the decisions about the budgets are retained by the County Council. As I am sure you are aware, all Councils are having to make some very difficult decisions about their finances. In Buckinghamshire the County Council needs to make a further saving of £60m on its budget by 2018. Elected Members will be consulting on the budget changes and potential cuts for next financial year before making their final budget decision in February 2014. With regards to maintaining expertise it is fundamental to the contract that the service delivers to a series of agreed Key Performance Indicators. The contract with Ringway Jacobs (RJ) is set up so that their profit in any one year can only be achieved in full if it meets the Key Performance Indicators. If the minimum standard for any KPI is not met then that KPI is deemed to have failed and the profit associated is lost. The contract with RJ commenced in April 2009 and over the last four years RJ's performance has improved against a suite of KPIs that have constantly driven the required higher standards year on



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



year. Through this mechanism the County Council is confident that RJ will maintain the expertise essential to deliver the service it expects.

It is, however, important to note that the level of service and the standard of service will have to be aligned to the Council's MTP budgets and, as I have stated above, these are under significant pressure. The Council retains the responsibility for setting the level and standard of service. You express concern about the length of the contract. Eight years plus Seven years is not unusual for this type of relationship as it brings the opportunity for the contractor to provide the Council with a level of investment that would not be available to the Council if it managed the services itself. The contract is robustly managed, scrutinised and audited by the County Council. The Contractor uses other subcontractors to deliver the service and can reach-back into its shareholder companies for specialist expertise as required to provide extra support and resilience at peak periods.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is not devolved to the Contractor but has been retained within the Place Service and is managed by the Strategic Access Officer. The Client Officer in the Place Service who is the nominated Contract Manager is Sean Rooney who is one of the Place Senior Management Team. The contract is monitored on a monthly basis against a detailed business plan agreed at the start of each year. If any activity is off track the intervention is made within the month and an action plan is produced.

Yours sincerely

**Janet Blake**

## Note of meeting with Bucks County Council, 8th January 2014

### Present

**Bucks County Council:** Councillor Mrs Janet Blake, Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation (and Ringway Jacobs contract); Councillor Dev Dhillon, Chairman, Rights of Way Committee; Sean Rooney, BCC Senior Manager for Transport, Place Service; Anne James, Network Resilience Manager, Transport for Bucks; Joanne Taylor, Team Leader, Rights of Way Operations (Maintenance and Enforcement).

**User groups:** Kate Ashbrook, Ramblers Bucks, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area footpath secretary, and Open Spaces Society general secretary; Janice Bridger, British Horse Society southern regional bridleways and access officer; John Elfes, Ramblers BMKWL Area vice chairman and access officer, and Local Access Forum chairman; David Harris, Chiltern Society Chairman and chairman of its Rights of Way Group; Alison Heath, BHS Bucks access officer; Geoffrey Heath, husband of Alison; Audrey Hughes, Cyclists Touring Club

- 1 KA thanked BCC for meeting, explained we understood their constraints but had concerns about how the quality of the service would be maintained. Buckinghamshire traditionally has an excellent record on rights of way and we are anxious that this should remain.
- 2 SR said they were having to make difficult decisions across the service. There was a reduction in budget allocation on the operational side. They had just come from a budget scrutiny meeting and each of their submissions had been challenged.
- 3 For RoW operations it was proposed to reduce budget by £120k, in future it would be more about trying to protect the network than enhance and improve. Proposals go to cabinet in Feb 2014.
- 4 They are expecting to stop the more proactive service, such as summer clearances.
- 5 JT confirmed that the budget for summer clearance had been cut and there would be no extra teams. They had reduced RoW gangs and would concentrate time on their legal responsibilities, such as bridges and signposts, and a bit with landowners. The team's work will be more on enforcement and serving notices, and ensuring landowners carry out their legal obligations. Looking to work with volunteers, explore how we can tap into your volunteers.
- 6 AJ talked about the website, CAMS was developing an element of website to log problems and adopt problems to help deliver solutions. Have to do things differently. Management will remain as last couple of years, contract managed by RJ, skills are in the team.
- 7 Client (BCC) sets key performance indicators. It's not a standard contractor arrangement.
- 8 J Blake: not just rights of way, other services also being devolved, hedge cutting, sign clearing etc.
- 9 JT said that part of the money made available to PCs and Chiltern Society would be put into something similar to P3 to enable PCs to fund clearance. Some parishes are joining forces, forming social enterprises.

- 10 JE asked how do we keep the expertise when it's now a separate organisation and beyond council's control?
- 11 AJ said she was really passionate about expertise and work force, but chances are that good people will move on. By having a good workforce we encourage people in. Joanne has developed fabulous people from grassroots, excellent people may choose to work elsewhere. Alliance between contractor and client, she didn't see that there would be any shift in the level of expertise.
- 12 JE said that RoW is a fairly small outfit compared with transport in general, we want an assurance that RoW is not shoved off or starved.
- 13 SR: RoW is part of a large service, they were having to find unpalatable and unpopular savings, but it would remain an important part of the service.
- 14 J. Blake said: **'It's incumbent upon us, it is a legal responsibility and it must be done.'** She is keen to see *pro bono* work, believes companies, wealthy landowners, nurseries, golf courses may be willing to help local community. She wants to look into sponsorship as for roundabouts.
- 15 JE asked how do you ensure contractor doing what contracted to do? SR said that we as a service are regularly scrutinised from within and without. Select committee scrutinises the essence of the contract. Element of self-audit.
- 16 Client agrees what's to be done, each line is checked, if it's not delivered, it's not paid for.
- 17 JT checks that it has been done. JT develops the business plan. Contractor unlikely to put its reputation at risk.
- 18 AJ said that if there's a rise in complaints we discuss the reason.
- 19 KA expressed concern about the split in the service, between maintenance, definitive map, planning, rights of way improvement plan, simply walk, there's a lot of advantage in everyone working together and benefiting from each others' experience. AJ acknowledged this and said there are linkages, people are still in the same office: 'We understand your concern, are working to mitigate the effect of split.'
- 20 JB spoke about the economic benefit of RoW and the BHS report; horse-riding brings £57m to Bucks economy.
- 21 SR keen to explore how we can work with organisations.
- 22 JB said there are bridleway groups which raise funds and do work, e.g. Chess Valley, Penn Area.
- 23 J Blake wondered whether RoW could get any help from riding schools which depend on the bridleway network for their businesses.
- 24 Gather examples of good practice. KA referred to the link to health and that health money should be funding rights of way. J Blake agreed.
- 25 KA asked what happened to the additional £50k which Martin Tett got for RoW last year. JT said it was to facilitate devolvement to parishes, but they didn't take it up so it was spent on the teams.

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

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

### **Bucks LAF response to the Chilterns Conservation Board Management Plan December 2013**

We welcome the opportunity to comment on your management plan. Our overall view is that it provides a firm basis for the continued development of the AONB, and in general it has our support. The forum's main interests are covered in the section on "Understanding and Enjoyment", and our few specific comments below are confined to topics in that section.

#### **Policies:**

**UE1 & 2:** We support the views expressed.

**UE3:** We welcome the view that gaps in the bridleway network should be filled by creating new Rights of Way, but emphasise that these should be entirely new, and should not involve the wholesale conversion of existing footpaths, as has been suggested in the past. Although walkers can of course use bridleways, many are not comfortable with close encounters with horses or cyclists and therefore shun bridleways. This is particularly the case with those new to walking in the countryside, who may be put off permanently. In any case, a good principle is that improvements for one group of users should not be at the expense, or to the detriment, of others.

**UE4:** Whilst we support the move to reduce the use of motor vehicles as a means to encourage walking and riding, the policy does imply a level of fitness and mobility not enjoyed by all. Moreover, there is an inconsistency between this policy and that set out in UE9 (which see), which talks of providing more parking facilities across the Chilterns.

**UE5, 6&7:** We welcome and support these policies.

**UE8:** We welcome and support any moves which would provide better facilities for those with special needs. Forum member Gavin Caspersz is at present engaged with Bucks CC and the CCB in developing more routes for the 'disabled', and we hope that this initiative will be realised speedily.

**UE9:** As noted above, the reference to the provision of more visitor facilities, insofar as it applies to car parking, is inconsistent with the wish expressed in UE4 to encourage less car use. The provision of more car parks will undoubtedly invite more car use. Each of these policies is desirable, but the inconsistency needs ironing out.

**UE 10:** Again, we support moves to reduce the use of cars, and the provision of the sort of facilities outlined in this policy, but the varying levels of fitness of likely visitors must be recognised. Walks and cycle routes should be graded, so that new visitors can find something suitable to use immediately, and something to graduate to as the health and fitness benefits are realised.

**UE11:** We support this policy, and the only change we would like to see is a much higher profile given to the use of verges on country roads. Many Rights of Way do not cross roads directly, but involve walking along the road. Sightlines are often poor, and users are put in danger. Whilst the ideal in such cases is the provision of new off-road Rights of Way, a programme of making verges usable by walkers, cycles and horses would be a useful interim measure. It would be possible in the majority of cases and is within the remit of Highway Authorities. In most cases it would not involve landowners.

**UE12:** we support this policy.

The few suggestions we have made above are relatively minor, but we would urge you to consider them, and as said at the beginning we welcome this very comprehensive plan overall.

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

## Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

Name of LAF: Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum

Name of LAF Chair: John Elfes

Name of LAF Secretary: Jonathan Clark

Number of LAF members: 12

### 1 - Involvement and Representation

What interests does your current membership cover?

County Council, District Councils, Ramblers, Chiltern Society, Sustrans, Farming/Landowning, Disabled, British Horse Society, Parish Councils,

What skills, sectors, interest groups, experience are missing?

Ethnic Minorities are not directly represented. That we have a member of Asian background is fortuitous, since he was appointed to represent the disabled. We have unsuccessfully attempted to recruit someone to bring expertise on tourism. (Not in the current year)

Describe any difficulties you had recruiting members from particular sectors: Interest in the countryside is still relatively undeveloped amongst local ethnic minorities, although anecdotal evidence suggests that this may be changing.

### 2 - Operation of LAF

What procedures (e.g. expense claims, new applications etc) do you follow that help you work effectively? Are these effective? By normal committee protocols, including e-mail communication

How do you ensure that your members are able to work as a team? By allowing full discussion and exchange of views/ideas.

In what ways do you reach consensus? Again through full discussion. We have only twice failed to reach a consensus - on recreational vehicles in the countryside, and whether to oppose hs2 outright, or only on the route chosen through the Chiltern AONB.

How do you ensure proper conduct and/or resolve any conflicts? We have not needed to do this.

Give up to 3 examples of where you have encountered operational difficulties (e.g. lack of resources); explain what mechanisms could be put in place to alleviate such issues:

1 - We lack resources and do not have a budget. In the present financial situation this is probably endemic.

2 -

3 -

### 3 - Partnership and Progress

Do you work well with the access authority? If not, why not? We have had difficulties in getting responses to our formal advice.

Do you work well with your planning authorities? If not, why not? Yes.

## Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

Have you established a clear role for the LAF in the local area? Not as well as we would like, but better recently because we have adopted a high profile in local discussions on and with HS2.

Were you successful in meeting the achievements set out in your work programme (please provide supporting information)? We have not set formal work programmes.

Have you achieved something else?

Main or notable achievements?

### 4 - Profile and Direction

Has anything changed over the last year?

What changes / barriers can you see ahead?

What are your priorities for the year ahead (list up to 3)?

1 - We have not set formal priorities.

2 -

3 -

What support or training do you need to deliver your priorities?

### 5 - Section 94 Bodies

Give up to 3 examples of advice given by your LAF to section 94 bodies:

1 - Advice to Bucks CC on restructuring RoW department.

2 - Advice to Bucks CC on the nature of a RoW outsourcing

3 - Response to HS2 draft environmental statement.

### 6 - Open Access Work

How many Restriction Cases have you been consulted on? 2

How many cases have you responded to? 2

Detail any informal involvement with Open Access Restriction cases:

**7 - Number of consultations, meetings and initiatives your LAF has been involved with over the year (please add numbers into the boxes below)?**

Public meetings		Working groups	
Training days		Definitive map modification orders	
Highway orders		Green Infrastructure strategies	



## Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

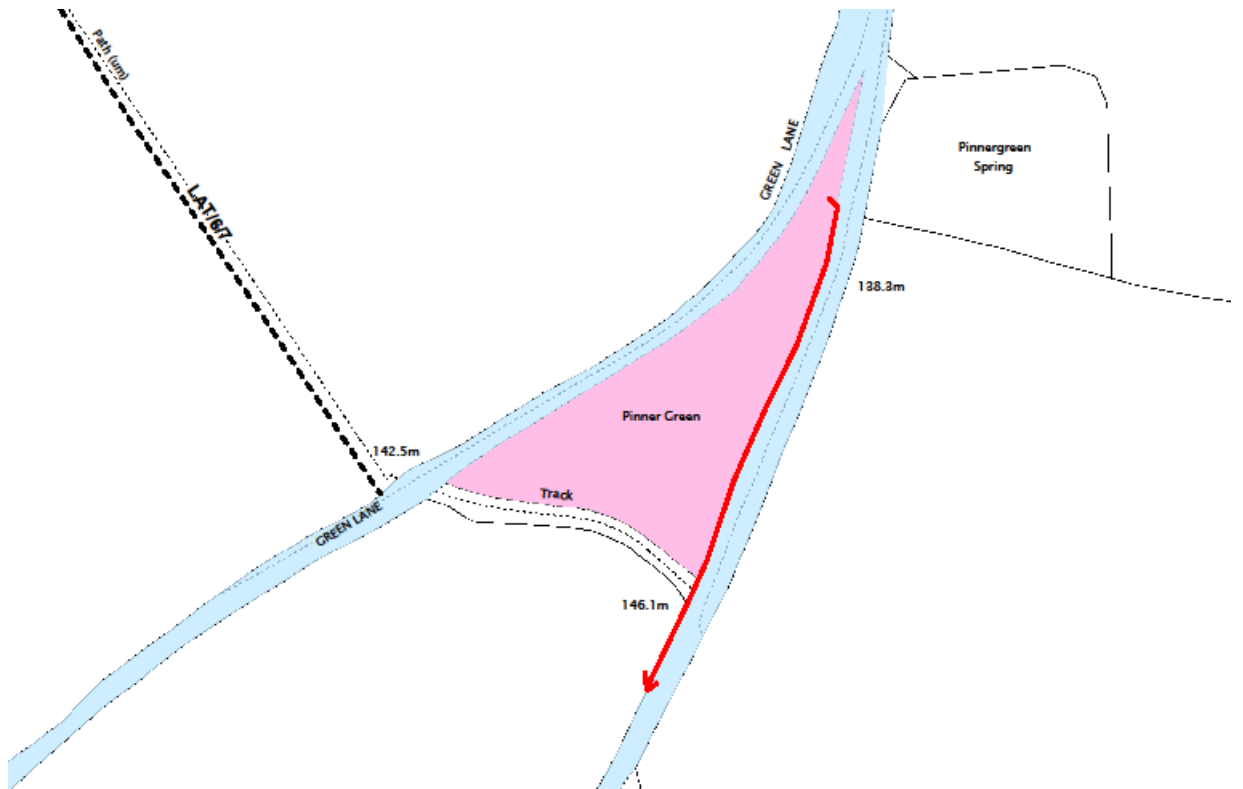
Gating orders		Local transport plans and traffic management schemes	
Cycle projects		Disabled access	
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders		Housing development schemes	
Planning applications		PROW network and projects	
ROWIP planning and objectives		Local development frameworks and planning strategies	
Local Nature Partnerships		Recording of paths and promoting use	
Expiring permissive agreements under Higher Level Stewardship schemes - assessing the value and future of and liaison with landowners to improve access		Flood defence works - Environment Agency consultations and planning applications regarding	
Slipways and landing stages - public access to		Improvement of access through the Paths for Communities (P4C) scheme	
Disposal and development of land owned by the Council		Parish Council or local improvement grant schemes	
Shoreline management plans		Rail freight interchange strategic development	
Network rail and rail crossing closures		Access and nature conservation	
Horse routes and equestrian provision		Multi user routes	
National Parks		Coastal access	
Motorised vehicle access		Access to MOD land	
New town & village green registration government consultation		Natural England consultations	
Defra consultations		Commons grazing proposals	
Highways Agency consultations		Department for Transport consultations	

**Other (please specify):** We have not provided the statistical information in this section because we have not kept suitable records. For example several forum members have each attended several public meetings during the HS2 consultation period. These have included Community Forums, Bucks County Council meetings, and ad hoc public meetings called by various groups. In the case of DMMO's, all are reported to the forum, and we are free to comment on any of them. The same is true of other items in your list. We have been consulted on one P4C application.

**8 - Final comments from Appointing Authority:** Two county council members have been appointed after the May 2013 elections, but it appears unlikely any representations from the Districts will be secured. We are struggling to appoint more landowners, farmers and members of the NFU at present. Some member attendance issues remain, but on the whole meetings are well-attended, productive, frank and positive. LAF working group meetings with HS2 were encouraging, despite HS2 adopting a varying amount of their advice, as evidenced in the Environmental Statement. The LAF becoming more vocal, but at the same time frustrated with the severe rights of way staff and budget cuts. Despite this the Forum are engaging and discussions at meetings are excellent, though further cuts may have an effect on moral.

**9 - Final comments from LAF Chair:**

LAF business in the year 2012 - 2013 was dominated by involvement in local discussions on the HS2 project, and in particular with its impact on the Chilterns AONB. From January onwards bi-lateral meetings between the forum and HS2 were held. The forum continued to express its concern over Bucks CC policy on Rights of Way and the heavy cuts to the Budget. We also expressed concern over the nature of a contract to outsource RoW staff, believing it to be too long and unnecessarily restrictive, indeed exclusive. The forum continues to discuss items very thoroughly and any disagreements have been resolved amicably.












 NATURAL  
ENGLAND

Sculpture on the Reivers Route National Cycle Route 10 Nr Cramlington

# LAF NEWS

## Quarter 3 2013/14

Issue 3

### Welcome

Thank you for all your contributions to our 3rd LAF News which really shows what LAFs can do when they find a way to bring their skills and knowledge together to address local access needs.

In this edition of the newsletter you can read how LAFs have played an important role in securing access benefits on Common Land and in reducing the impacts to access of fencing open access land by getting involved in the discussions and influencing key players.

Discover how 'best practice whiteboards' help to both clarify understanding and trigger debate, with a particular example of debate arising from the Ramblers recent report 'Paths in Crisis'.

The Environment Agency can often have a major impact on local access issues, so it's great to read about their own Access for All Design Guide and to introduce the officers charged with its overview.

And finally, from a Natural England perspective, we reflect on how LAFs have played a critical role in helping to set up and deliver some of our Paths for Communities projects. We are also pleased to introduce the rest of our team to you!

Don't forget, the aim of this newsletter is to share and showcase what LAFs are involved in and topics of interest, so if there's anything you would like to see or contribute, please let us know.

Martin Shaw  
Senior Advisor, LAF and Paths for Communities

#### In this issue...

[Paths in Crisis](#)

[Sustaining the Commons](#)

[Peterborough LAF and Paths for Communities](#)

[Cornwall LAF and Paths for Communities](#)

[Fencing woodland](#)

[Design Guide - Environment Agency](#)

[Huddle Update](#)

[Who's Who in Natural England](#)

## Paths in Crisis

By Rob Leek - Lead Advisor, Natural England

Over summer 2013 the Ramblers contacted every local authority in England using a freedom of information request, asking for information on rights of way budgets and the work they're doing. This has informed their recently published report called 'Paths in Crisis'.

To alert LAFs to the report, a Huddle Whiteboard was created. This has sparked a series of informative comments from LAF Huddle members about the report and the issues it covers. Peter Hughes writes:

**"I commend the RA for saying that they want to work with the Local Authorities to repair path problems. The best way they can do this is not by just reporting problems so that they have available horror statistics such as the ones quoted in the report. But much more usefully those who use the network can get out there and do some work to maintain the network either as formal volunteers or just a person who uses the network, with a pair of secateurs or a slasher, cutting back the brambles, branches or nettles, or with a spade digging grips where there are wet areas**

**I know that many Ramblers do this already but I am equally sure that there are lots of members who could do more to help ."**

Other commentators refer to Horse riders and maintenance, raising awareness of landowner's responsibilities and how different users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders) can work together clearing public rights of way routes.

If any LAF Huddle Workspace members would like to join in and contribute to the comments they can be found just below the whiteboard with the 'Add a Comment' link at the bottom of the page. If you are a LAF member but not currently on Huddle please contact your Regional Coordinator or Rob Leek and they can arrange for you to be given access to the workspace.

## Sustaining the Commons

By Tom Bolton (Durham Local Access Forum)

County Durham LAF was represented at "Sustaining the Commons", a one day conference held at Newcastle University on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

The conference concluded the "Building Commons Knowledge" project, funded by The Arts and Humanities Research Council, which ran from 2012 up to June 2013 and was a partnership between Lancaster and Newcastle Universities, the Foundation for Common Land and The National Trust. The aim of the project is to create an online 'Commons Knowledge Resource Bank', containing both a comprehensive database of research resources on common land and new material on the history of commons in England and Wales. A key aim of the conference was to explore how we can best recognise, protect and celebrate the cultural heritage of modern commons.

## Links

To view the Ramblers report online follow this link

*Huddle specific link*

**Paths in crisis  
Whiteboard**

To join the huddle workspace please contact your regional coordinator or Rob Leek

[rob.leek@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:rob.leek@naturalengland.org.uk)



The Conference explored a wide range of issues, including the statutory protection of common land; tackling encroachments; registration and regulation of commons; reconciling conservation and farming; the growth of leisure and recreation on commons (including the CROW Act 2000); providing ecosystem services; capturing commons stories; sustaining common land; and the importance of commons in relation to biodiversity, archaeology, health, tourism and local businesses.

One of the major themes to emerge from the conference was that sustainable governance of common land is needed if it is to survive and meet the needs of stakeholders and the public benefit. This includes governance that reconciles public access and recreation on the one hand, with economic resource use (eg agriculture) and also with nature conservation and other environmental demands. Governance needs to involve all interest groups and good communication is key.

One of the issues for local authorities to consider is what role they play in relation to commons in their areas. Commons Registration Authorities, such as Durham County Council, have a statutory duty to maintain the official registers of common land and village greens, but should they have any role beyond this (such as the Open Spaces Society advocates)? For instance, are there any local forums (commons councils) where the Registration Authority should engage with commoners groups, or landowners? Should Registration Authorities police commons in relation to unauthorised works or encroachments? What are the resource implications of so doing? Are there any policies in planning or other documents concerning Common Land and its importance to the countryside and landscape and/or as a recreational resource? And also, just as with public rights of way, how do we link commons into the health agenda (possibly via Health and Wellbeing Boards)?

Whilst some Registration Authorities might take a very limited view of their role (particularly in these cash-strapped times), some councils actually own common land themselves, such as Durham County Council in the case of Waldrige Fell, which is operated along the lines of a country park. There are also provisions in the Commons Act 2006 (Section 45) whereby Local Authorities (at all tiers) can exercise powers to protect registered common land against unlawful interference where no owner is registered or can be found. However, it must be remembered – (a) that these powers are discretionary, not mandatory and (b) the commoners themselves have powers in some situations.

Another area where local authorities may play a role is in seeking to register land in their ownership as common land or village green. In the case of common land, this would probably require a grant of rights of common over the land to one or more individuals. Finally, Schedule 2 of the Commons Act 2006 allows for de registration of common land in certain circumstances on application to the Registration Authority. Although such instances are very rare, this potentially could remove land from public access and the County Durham LAF has suggested to Durham County Council that it should be consulted if the County Council receives any such applications in future. The County Durham LAF is currently consulting with Durham County Council on some of the above issues.

## Links



To view the Foundation for common land website follow [this link](#)

The conference was held in July of 2013 but for information you can still [view the brochure here](#)

## Peterborough LAF support two P4C grants

By Fiona Taylor, Lead Advisor - Natural England

Two successful Paths for Communities (P4C) bids have been awarded to projects in Peterborough: Pilsgate Path in Burghley and the second, a project in the Parish of Peakirk.

A theme common to both projects was strong leadership from a determined and enthusiastic main contact (a P4C must-have!); but both projects also benefitted from advice and support from their LAF.



The Peakirk project was born and bred in the LAF itself: the main contact, Highway Authority representative, landowners and technical experts ALL sit on Peterborough LAF.

Together they worked on the Maxey Cut to River Welland link path

proposal. The bid was recognised by the Grants Panel as being particularly complex and the main contact, Sally-Ann Jackson, was commended for steering the project through. "Everyone has been so helpful," says Sally-Ann. "This footpath has been an aspiration in our community for over 50 years!"

The range of partners includes multiple landowners: small private farmers, a large private estate, the Environment Agency, Network Rail and Internal Drainage Board, local volunteers and charitable trusts, Parish Councils, two Highway Authorities, Planning Authorities, private businesses and many more!

When complete, the path will provide an off-road link from Peakirk village and will form part of a new circular walk.

Peterborough LAF is a small, informal (and highly productive!) group which meets regularly in the Fitzwilliam Arms in Marholm, Peterborough.

## Working with Paths For Communities

By Adrian Bigg (Cornwall Countryside Access Forum)

Cornwall Countryside Access Forum's (CCAF) involvement in Paths For Communities (P4C) has been key to realising successful projects. The first project by West Penwith Bridleways Association together with the British Horse Society will complete a bridleway link, over a boggy area, from Chapel Carn Brea to Brane via St Euny Well, in a beautiful prehistoric landscape with one of the best preserved ancient villages, near Lands End

The second is a major project by the National Trust working with the British Horse Society, the CCAF, Cornwall AONB Partnership and a broad range of community and user groups to create a new 10 mile bridleway network around the National Trust coastal property at Penrose, near Helston. An important factor was the previous good liaison between the National Trust and the British Horse Society and

# LAF News

the trialling of horse and cycle access that had given the Trust much confidence in developing the forward thinking plans that are now being implemented and importantly to provide a definite bridleway network.

A very important part of the conception and planning for both these projects was engagement with local communities and future users

Adrian Bigg of CCAF and BHS liaised closely with the National Trust Head Ranger, Mike Hardy, to help develop the plans on its property to maximise the benefits to all users and local communities. The CCAF membership made a site visit to Penrose and offered advice on the day and its full support to the project.



At West Penwith, again the CCAF through Adrian Bigg was able to give day to day advice and support to the applicant to help smooth the grant application process to a successful outcome.

Most of the project work is now complete and a fantastic newly constructed 200 metre section over a previously boggy area provides a superb bridleway for all and also enabling wheel chair users access to the St Euny Well. A local farmer generously donated a brand new section of bridleway along the boundary of his field, which enabled this project to proceed.



## Fencing of New Woodlands on Open Access Land

by Ken Taylor and Geoff Wilson (Lake District Local Access Forum)

Over the last few years, members of the Lake District LAF have become increasingly concerned at the number of new fences being erected on Open Access Land within the National Park. These were almost all associated with planting of new native woodlands, where it was judged necessary to exclude livestock and wildlife (particularly deer) to improve establishment rates. The incentive to landowners to plant new native woodlands comes from the Higher Level Stewardship and Woodland Creation Schemes administered by Natural England and Forestry Commission respectively.

The LAF's concerns centred around two key points:

- the location of the fences were being determined by factors which had little regard for public access considerations;
- terms of grant excluded specific arrangements for removal of fences. The fences were supposedly 'temporary' (usually up to 15 years) but, based on previous experience with fencing used to assist re-hefting of flocks after Foot and Mouth in 2001, are at risk of becoming permanent fixtures. On open access land which is not common, this might influence the land's future inclusion on revised Open Access maps.

## Links





Newly planted trees on ghyll sides on Blencathra

In response, the Lake District LAF:

- drew up some guidelines which are sent to anyone in the process of developing planting plans (and have made them available to LAFs and officers in neighbouring authority areas);
- are consulted by NE and FC so that we can have an input into scheme design;
- are developing a database (with NE and LDNPA support) for recording attributes of temporary fences on Open Access land so that, in future, we will be able to ensure their removal as soon as possible.

## The Environment Agency's Access for All Design Guide

By Connor McIlwrath - Senior Environmental Project Manager  
Environment Agency

In 2012 the Environment Agency published their access for all design guide. The guide was produced with the help of a number of organisations who have an interest in the provision of inclusive access such as Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales and the Centre for Accessible Environments.

Within the Environment Agency we wish to encourage more people from all backgrounds to enjoy the natural environment and its benefits. One of our corporate commitments is to make more of our operational estate accessible to people and communities for their discovery and enjoyment so the creation of this guide will help us to achieve this aim.

Between April 2008 and April 2009 more than 32 million people visited a river, lake or canal that we have influence over so we are in a key position to promote the provision of inclusive access. We can improve people's enjoyment of these spaces by providing better and appropriate access for as many users as reasonably possible and by removing barriers that restrict both disabled and non-disabled people. The hope is that this guide will help designers to make an informed decision about the standard of access that

Download the guide for free:  
[The Environment Agency's Access for All Design Guide](#)



# LAF News

can be achieved.

When the idea of a design guide was first conceived it was decided, rather than replicating the valued research and guidance already out there, this guide would be different. It would be highly illustrative and include real life case studies, highlighting both good and bad examples.

The guide is made up of three sections:

**Background:** provides an introduction to the provision of access in the external environment and a summary of the legal duties placed on us as a public body. It also introduces the design element sheets which form the core of the guide.

**Design Element Sheets:** highly illustrative using diagrams and images to demonstrate the key points. There are a total of 15 sheets covering a range of common access features such as steps and ramps. Most projects will need to consider a number of these access features so collating them into one document will provide an efficient and effective approach.

**Management and Maintenance:** the final section discusses the internal and external consultation that needs to be undertaken when considering access proposals and the future management to ensure the standard of access is maintained.



Looking along the top of a refurbished flood embankment near Blackpool. The existing footpath was widened and resurfaced as part of the scheme to provide access for wheelchairs, cyclists and horse riders. Since completing the scheme the local authority have extended the new bridleway along the coast to Fleetwood.

The guide is intended to promote the provision of inclusive access so that it becomes a key consideration from the outset. This is important in helping us promote sustainable development and providing an equality of access to our assets, which is a commitment we have made in our corporate strategy 'Creating a Better Place'. The guide will play a central role in the future development of our capital works programme and will help us promote access for all in the external environment.

## Huddle Update

Over the last few weeks the Natural England Local Delivery Team with assistance from the LAF Regional Coordinators have been developing a series of "Best Practice Huddle Whiteboards". Each Whiteboard collates information and links on a particular theme of relevance to LAFs and they will be continually monitored and updated over time.

The intention is to develop more "best practice" whiteboards and for the convenience of Huddle users, a direct link to access them has been added to the introduction text in the Overview section of the LAF Huddle Workspace.

## Links

For further information please contact:

Connor Mcilwrath

Senior Environmental  
Project Manager  
Environment Agency

[connor.mcilwrath@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:connor.mcilwrath@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Comments and suggestions on how the Whiteboards could be improved are welcomed – please contact Rob Leek

[rob.leek@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:rob.leek@naturalengland.org.uk)

*Huddle specific links*

**Best Practice whiteboards**

**Workspace  
overview section of Huddle**

## Who's Who in Natural England



**Jane Yates** is lead advisor for the Access Local Delivery and Paths For Communities team, covering the SW of England. She has longstanding experience working with LAFs. Jane has worked on large-scale Green Infrastructure delivery schemes, the National Character Areas programme, National Access Policy and guidance and led the National ROWIP programme for Natural England as well as major research projects including the England Leisure Visits Survey series. Her main interests

outside work are mountain biking.

**Jim Milner** is the lead advisor based in the North East - My role has been through, and continues to go through, many changes and during this time I have developed my interest in access. I have worked with permissive access in CSS/HLS. This developed into an interest in the public rights of way network, and permanent access. My childhood was spent on a farm in the Durham Dales where I developed a love of mountain bikes and landscape and this spilled over into my work. The mountain bike has been replaced by a road bike and I tend to explore the landscape on that, or on foot with my partner Sarah (who also works for NE!) and my two children. As they get older I look forward to long walks along the beautiful Northumberland Coast, or Hadrian's Wall.



**Fiona Taylor** is the East of England's Grants Officer for the Paths for Communities grant scheme and is the Natural England contact for LAFs in the region plus the South Lincs and Rutland LAF. Her roles within Natural England have included working on the national evaluation programme in Walking for Health. Fiona has previously worked as an Outdoor Pursuits instructor, and a Public Rights of Way officer for Essex County Council. Outside of work, she enjoys

walking, running (slowly), reading and travelling with her family.

**Angela Smith** is the West Midlands Grants Officer for the Paths for Communities grant scheme and is the Natural England contact for LAFs in the region plus the Leicester City, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire LAFs. Her roles within Natural England have included working as the Lead Advisor in the West Midlands for Walking for Health. Outside of work, she enjoys walking and enjoys travelling with her family. She volunteers to promote the Retired Greyhound Trust the national greyhound re-homing charity for ex-racing greyhounds.





# LAF News

**Phil Robinson** is the Natural England Lead Advisor responsible for the LAFs in the Yorkshire and the Humber, Lincolnshire and East Midlands regions. Phil is based in the Natural England office in Queen Street Leeds. Phil began his public service career in the State Veterinary Service working on the Tuberculosis and Brucellosis testing programmes. In 2001 he moved to the Rural Development Service where he helped deliver farm business diversification schemes. Since the formation of Natural England in 2006



Phil has been responsible for helping develop Educational Access opportunities within the Yorkshire and Humber Region. He is now, along with his LAF responsibilities, one of the Natural England team that is delivering the Paths for Communities Scheme.

**Kevin Haugh**, based in the Natural England office in Ashford, is the Paths for Communities and LAF contact for South East England. His previous roles in Natural England, and previous to that: the Countryside Agency, have included the HLF funded Local Heritage Initiative, Parish Plans, Affordable Rural Housing, and the Walking for Health programme. Outside work he is beginning to recapture travelling and a host of outdoor pursuits but in the meantime enjoys playing music, swimming and running, and striving to keep up with two teenage children.



## Links

[Contact us](#)

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





## Problem Management Matrix

### MANAGING REPORTED RIGHTS OF WAY PROBLEMS

Any problem arising on the network is currently addressed according to its severity. The Council has defined 4 main categories of problem (A to D) as outlined below. High Severity issues (category A) are considered to be problems of an immediate or potential danger to the public. Levels B and C are both medium priority and level D represents a lower priority for action.

PATH STATUS				
		1	2	3
<b>PROBLEM SEVERITY</b>	<b>A</b> (High)	Within 5 working days	Within 10 working days	Within 15 working days
	<b>B</b> (Medium) <small>(Ploughing/cropping and maintenance items)</small>	Within 3 Months	Within 4 Months	Within 6 Months
	<b>C</b> (Medium) <small>(Other enforcement)</small>	Within 3 Months	Within 5 Months	Within 6 Months
	<b>D</b> (Low)	Within 3 Months	Within 6 Months	Basic maintenance Within 12 Months; position statements with monthly website updates

## PATH STATUS DEFINITIONS

### CATEGORY 1

- The Thames Path and The Ridgeway National Trails
- Routes formally promoted by the County Council
- Canal Towpaths
- Paths known to have high-volume usage

### CATEGORY 2

- Other promoted routes
- Routes within 0.5km of settlement boundary
- Health Walks and promoted Parish routes
- Other routes within the Chilterns AONB

### CATEGORY 3

- Routes more than 0.5km from edge of settlement
- Dead end paths
- Duplicate routes currently not being used
- Low use routes

## PROBLEM SEVERITY DEFINITIONS

### HIGH SEVERITY (A)

Problem reported or identified by BCC as an immediate or potential danger or nuisance to the public requiring priority action or other action that is time-limited

- Hung up tree or branch
- Potentially dangerous structure
- Electric fence across path
- Fallen tree completely blocking path or partially blocking bridleway
- Dangerous animal
- Aggressive landowner / intimidation
- Shooting near to or across path

### MEDIUM SEVERITY (B) Ploughing/Cropping and maintenance items

Problems reported or identified by BCC that do not present a danger to users

- Path obstructed due to undergrowth or overgrowth
- Missing signpost / replacement signpost / Waymarking
- Routine structure repair / replacement
- Disturbance of surface of a path
- Path obstructed due to growing crop
- Path reinstated but to less than minimum requirement

### MEDIUM SEVERITY (C) Other enforcement items

Issues where action may be commenced quickly but may take longer to fully resolve

- Complete obstruction of path
- New or recent erection of fence across path
- New or recent encroachment
- New or recent unauthorised structure on path
- Electric Fence / Barbed Wire adjacent to path uninsulated / not signed

### LOW SEVERITY (D)

Issues that can be classified as having minor impact on BVPI 178, technical infringements often reported only by user group survey, issues that can be addressed as and when resources available / in the area

- Path being used by public not on definitive line
- Horses on footpaths not causing damage
- Cycling on footpaths not causing damage
- Surface out of repair (non-specific danger)
- Signpost repair
- Structure improvement
- Requests for dog access
- Fallen tree on path where public are deviating around
- Path diversions, except where formal applications submitted
- A long-standing obstruction with the public happy to use alternative.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### OUR TARGETS ARE TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUE AS FOLLOWS

1. No of cat A1 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 90%
2. No of cat A2 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 80%
3. No of cat A3 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 75%
4. No of cat B1 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 80%
5. No of cat B2 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 70%
6. No of cat B3 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 75%
7. No of cat C1 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 80%
8. No of cat C2 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 70%
9. No of cat C3 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 70%
10. No of cat D1 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 70%
11. No of cat D2 issues reported / % addressed within timescale – target 70%
12. No of cat D3 issues reported / No outstanding / Reduce by 10% annually

