

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

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

County Councillor Ruth Vigor-Hedderly
Buckinghamshire County Council
County Hall
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire

29th July 2014

Dear Councillor,

We understand that a review is under way of the contract between Bucks County Council and Ringway Jacobs, which covers a range of services including those in which we have a special interest. Our main concern is the Rights of Way network, and in a letter to Councillor Blake, before the contract was let, we outlined our concerns about the contract as we understood it.

We posed the following principal questions on the transfer of the Rights of Way Group:

- **What safeguards does the contract give on maintaining expertise?**
- **What safeguards are there on maintaining standards?**
- **How does the contract ensure that the Council's statutory duties are honoured?**

It is now clear that there are no safeguards on these issues at all. The continuing failure to staff the transferred Rights of Way group fully, and the reduction in the already inadequate budget, can only dilute expertise and reduce standards, and make it highly unlikely that the Council's statutory duties will or can be honoured.

To prevent further deterioration, and to enable you to address these issues more easily, we urge you to consider the immediate withdrawal of the Rights of Way group from the contract and re-forming it within the Council's structure. This would have the further benefit of flexibility and cross-working with the retained staff in the Definitive Map team.

The Local Access Forum urges that these issues be properly taken into account in any review of the contract and that you ensure that expertise is maintained, that standards do not slip further, and that the council's statutory duties are indeed honoured.

Yours Sincerely,

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