



# Little Chalfont Nature Park

## The Issue

- The Little Chalfont Charitable Trust (LCCT) is delivering the Nature Park as a community project, funded by private donations and grants.
- The Parish Council will take over the operation and maintenance of the park on opening.
- Before doing so, it requires confirmation that it will not open itself to a claim for discrimination under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

## The case for the situation being reasonable

1. The project has, from the outset, been one that provides access to all, irrespective of age, mobility or other disability.
2. It had been the intention that an access road through the woodland, leading to the rare meadow, together with tarmac paths around the meadow, would be laid before the park was opened but, as insufficient funds have been raised and the project has been running for 3+ years, it has been decided to open this year (late Spring) with all proposed features installed, except the paths around the Park.
3. Many individuals in the community have donated and we do not wish to deprive them of this very special amenity.
4. The LCCT is to give an absolute commitment to the Parish Council that the tarmac meadow paths will be laid as soon as the money has been raised.
5. The access road, gates and fencing are currently being installed. They facilitate access and the gate for public access has been designed for wheelchairs, mobility scooters etc. **Access to all is therefore available – and encouraged.**
6. A potential downside is that there will be only be mown grass paths within the meadow to guide people around (and avoid damage to the grasses & wild flowers) during the Spring and Summer, until such time as the funds are raised. The mown paths (and the meadow itself in the autumn & winter) may be more difficult to navigate for those less able.
7. It planned to have a suitable notice at the entrance to make those with disability aware that, pending the funds to create tarmac paths, care needs to be taken in navigating around the meadow and through the woodland. (No hard-surfaced paths are planned for the woodland).

## Other information

- An extensive web site is available at [www.naturepark.littlechalfont.org.uk](http://www.naturepark.littlechalfont.org.uk)

- This is a balanced amenity that will both conserve & protect the semi-natural ancient woodland, plus the rare meadow (unimproved land designated as MG5 grassland with wild flowers) **and** provide a tranquil area for the whole community to use.
- On opening, there will be a picnic area on a part of the park which does not have the rarity of the meadow, with wheelchair friendly picnic table, together with carved benches (with birds/animals), display boards to describe a) what can be seen on the meadow and b) the history of the site and a mushroom seating + ‘throne’ as a storytelling area.
- Together with a Learning Zone on the web site, the Nature Park will be promoted, initially with local primary & secondary schools, for learning field trips. Preparations are well advanced and we are working with Dr Challoner’s High School, an immediate neighbour to the park.
- Recent applications to BIFFA & SITA Trust for the balance of the money to deliver the project have not been approved – mainly it is understood, in view of the large number of other applications. The trustees continue to actively pursue all other fundraising opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

It is the conclusion of the trustees of LCCT that everything is being done that is **reasonably** possible, including the commitment to lay the paths as an improvement to the amenity and that no-one is being precluded from accessing the park.

## **Sought**

Formal confirmation from an ‘expert in the field’ of the DDA & other linked legislation that the Parish Council will not open itself to a claim by being in breach of the DDA.

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