



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

# Report

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### AGENDA ITEM 6

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> November 2016

**Title:** LAF members' report

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#### Open Access

1. Advice was sought from members at the July meeting on how the council should proceed following complaints to the parish council regarding fencing on a small piece of common in Frieth without permission under section 38 Commons Act 2006. The Forum offered to help resolve the case and Andrew Clark attended site and met with the owner on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016. Having been briefed on the matter, and with some background from Hambleden Parish Council clerk, members decided that county enforcement action was not a good use of resources, particularly considering the size of common land (0.12 acres), that has no commoner's rights and most of which is classified as 'excepted' land under CROW Act 2000 open access legislation (i.e. within 20 metres of a dwelling). However, advice suggested that an officer should write to the owner and parish council to outline the historical background and law (Appendix 2). It is now the owner's obligation to resolve the matter, or provide evidence the land was incorrectly registered as a common, but while the matter remains unresolved, potential new owners of the property will be made aware of the issues through an alert on the Land Charges Register.

#### Restoring the Record Project

2. This LAF project aims to progress work towards achieving better access in the county before the definitive map is closed for new applications on the basis of historical documentary evidence. A total of 54 people have now volunteered, mainly from parish councils, to research lost rights of way before the definitive map cut-off date on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026. The spatial spread of volunteers is outlined in Appendix 3, showing about 50% coverage. Following LAF advice at the July meeting a letter has been written to neighbouring LAFs inviting new volunteers (see example in Appendix 4) to address boundary routes and attract new people. A volunteer in Cherwell District has already come forward in order to co-ordinate cross-boundary research. More volunteers are continually being sought by the Co-ordinator, Ross Osborn. A suggestion was also put forward that a web-based electronic database of information could be provided - see below.

### **Website**

3. A draft website has been provided by Stephen Thorns, member for cycling. This website could host electronic information from volunteers to share. A suggestion put forward at the Restoring the Record training day included, for example, canal and railway map evidence in order to save time and money, with the added benefit of reserving rare documents. It also provides an added opportunity for the Forum to increase its profile as an independent body or use it to share information, such as training course notes.

### **Correspondence**

4. British Horse Society have written to the Forum regarding monitoring the List of Streets (Appendix 5).

### **District Council Local Plans**

5. Wycombe and Aylesbury Vale consulted on their draft local plans over the summer. These strategic documents shape growth and development over a long period and enable hooks for disciplines such as rights of way to seek gains for walking, cycling and horse riding on the back of development. Appendix 6 and 7 are the formal LAF responses. Chiltern and South Bucks districts are combining to produce a joint Local Plan covering the period 2014 to 2035 and the public consultation on the draft is likely in early 2017. There is currently a Preferred Options Consultation focussing on 15 possible Greenbelt release sites to provide about 5,000 houses from the overall 14,700 to be provided within the two districts. A LAF response to an emerging Local Plan can be addressed through correspondence or at the March 2017 meeting.

### **Disabled Access**

6. LAF member for disabled access, Gavin Caspersz, secured £500 from Wingrave with Rowsham parish council to undertake installation of two new gates, drainage works and levelling a Thames Water manhole cover to improve disabled access on Wingrave Footpath 1, located at the end of Castle Street, Wingrave. This has now been completed and photos are shown in Appendix 8. Gavin has also successfully negotiated replacing 5 stiles for disabled accessible with several landowners along a route connecting Rowsham with Hulcot. Orders are now with the Ramblers volunteers (rRIPPLE) and donations possible through their donate-a-gate scheme. If ultimately successful, and combined with existing achievements to Wingrave, this will create an improved route to Aylesbury. Gavin has also met members of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM), Mid and West Berkshire and Slough LAFs and invited them to a scooter and disabled access demonstration day at Rowsham. Members will be invited in due course.

### **Training**

7. Stephen Thorns, Gavin Caspersz and Ross Osborn, the Restoring the Record volunteer co-ordinator) attended a joint LAF training session on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016 at Maidenhead Town Hall. The course was run by the Institute of Public Rights of Way Management and covered:

- PROW basics and the role of LAFs
- Impact of the Deregulation Act 2015
- Access for disabled users and requirements of the Equality Act 2010
- Right of way claim process and investigations

### **LAF dates for 2017**

8. Dates of the next meetings are at 10am in Mezz 1, on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017; 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017; and 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017.