



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 JULY 2017, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.15 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.50 AM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr R Pushman, in the Chair

Mr J Elfes, Mr N Harris, Mr C Hurworth, Mr A T A Lambourne, Mr G Caspersz, Mr G Thomas, Ms A Heath, Mr A Clark, Mr B Worrell and Mr W Chapple OBE

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr J Clark, Ms J Taylor and Ms C Beevers

OTHERS PRESENT

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

- Mr S Thorns

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MATTERS ARISING/ ACTION NOTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 08 March 2017 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Mr B Worrell gave an update on Item 4- Kent permit system

Kent's Permit System for Byways Open to All traffic (BOATs)

Administered by the Rights of Way department. There was no charge as they don't want any excuse for not applying. Permit Applications were available online via Kent's website. They generally use combination locks with a physical barrier. What was interesting is that physical barriers still allow track bikes to get through, but as they are perceived to cause no more damage than horses, a blind eye is turned, unless

they go off the track line and cause damage. It is recognised that the track bikes and quad bikes are still illegal and the PCSO (see below) will have a word.

There were some minor issues of locks being ground off and reports of permit holders giving out the combination code to other users. People had to sign a Code of Conduct attempting to prohibit misuse. Permits can be rescinded following infringement of the Code, including not keeping to the track, etc. There had been an improved detection rate of abuse and users are respecting the Permit system. More users are again using the route including walkers, cyclists and horse riders. There is some policing of the specific Rights of Way: in one case there is a PCSO funded through partner contributions (including the police themselves) who carry out other duties and applies the Road Traffic Act to offenders.

The Rights of Way department will perform occasional inspections usually at a time when there is likely to be unauthorised use. Also the Permit Application System is undergoing a revision to allow sharing of information with the police, particularly as they are involved in the policing of the routes. There are three specific routes which have been the subject of abuse. The first one initially started with an ETRO as an experiment. There were 107 landowners along this route and the fields and woods had been sold off in 'leisure plots', several who were no longer alive, and so there was no control or stewardship. The 4x4s were all over land, fly tipping was the norm, burnt out stolen vehicles, and real damage to the surfaces. The Permit system allowed the reporting of misuse and a large majority of the landowners got together and became a community with control and stewardship. Many other users are using the route again and the Council spent some money re-instating the surface to withstand legitimate users/permits.

The second was part of a National Trail and had residents at one end who were fed up with the anti-social behaviour. The permit system stopped fly tipping and users now keep to the route. I think this is the one with the funded PCSO.

The third site had a clay undelay and was remote. The 4x4s caused real damage to the under-surface with large deep ruts full of water, both on and off the route. There were a large number of YouTube clips recording the 'fun' the drivers were having. The permit system brought back control and is now an area patrolled by a PCSO. The Council spent nearly £100,000 in repairs to improve routes, with some improvements to the surface to withstand the permitted use. There is now a wider community use and is seen to be very successful on what was a difficult remote site.

It was agreed the scheme is not 100% successful, but is a major improvement for all concerned with the exception of 4x4 vehicular users who have faded away, including a regular contingent from the continent. Horse carriage drivers largely accept the improvements which include Kent Gaps along with combination locks where required. In addition, disability users are now using the routes, some with RADA keys. Graham Rusling, Team Leader, made the point that they tend not to exclude quad and track bikes on the basis that they cause no more damage than a horse. Also, the community now have control and the permit system gives them that legitimacy.

The Chairman thanked Mr Worrell for the update.

4. CONSULTATION: WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCIL PROPOSED CLOSURE OF FOOTPATH HWU/80 IN HIGH WYCOMBE

Ms J Taylor gave an overview of the written report. The following points were raised by Members in discussion:

- It was asked if Wycombe District Council (WDC) would have the power to

make this decision with or without the forums input. It was advised they would have the power to proceed regardless of any feedback.

- It was asked if the area was for pedestrians or vehicles, it was advised there was currently access for public pedestrians and private vehicles.
- The Chiltern Society stated they were rejecting recommendation as they felt it would be setting a precedent for the District Councils and the County Council to be able to shut public rights of way as they wish.
- The member representing the Trail Riders' Fellowship pointed out it was a relatively short additional length along the alternative route. .
- It was asked if the statistics of the issues were available as the report states there were issues at all times of day and night and that an alternative timed closure might be acceptable. It was felt that a full closure would be over the top- a "sledge hammer to crack a nut" and by closing the footpath you would simply move the issue from one area to another.
- It was asked that if people/groups object but WDC choose to take the proposal forward, would there be an appeals process for people to follow. MS Taylor was unaware but said she would look into it and feedback to the forum.

ACTION: Ms J Taylor

- It is felt by the forum there were too many issues that had not been addressed by the report.
- The forum are objecting the proposal on the grounds of-
 - o May set a precedent for closing footpaths in other areas;
 - o Closing access penalises legitimate users;
 - o The alternative footway is close to noise and fumes from traffic;
 - o The number of complaints seemed relatively low and mainly from one property;
 - o There are inherent weaknesses in a locked gate – it relies on the system working 100% of the time, with too many variables leading to it breaking down.

The Chairman thanked Ms Taylor for the update.

5. CONSULTATION: THE RIDGEWAY: NEXT STEPS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Ms S Wright gave a presentation on The Ridgeway - Next Steps for Buckinghamshire. It was agreed to circulate the presentation to members with the minutes. The main consultation was on the proposed new strategic link from the Ridgeway to Princes Risborough town centre to promote visitor spending in local businesses. The second part was looking at how the visitor experience at Ivinghoe Beacon could be improved, together with signage more generally along the route.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Mr B Worrell was trying to lobby for the Ridgeway to be set to the highest status possible to allow for carriage drivers use. It was recognised that there was the need and the demand for cycles and horses, but the Trails Team were looking at parallel routes to allow this where the status along the Ridgeway was only bridleway or footpath.
- Signage could include QR code with links to websites informing the public on accessibility for different levels of disability. It is unfortunate for less able users to find out half way down the path that the route is blocked. Ms Wright felt this would be useful information to provide via a QR code.
- Ms S Wright asked for suggestions for stone that could be used to put plinths in at Ivinghoe Beacon, the forum suggested:
 - o Denner Hill Stone

- Pudding stone
- It was raised there is no representative the AONB on the Forum.

The chairman thanked Ms Wright for the update.

6. RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP REPORT

Definitive Map Team - Mr P Turner updated members on some items from the Definitive Map Team's workload. There were no further questions.

Strategic Access update - Mr J Clark summarised his written report. There were no further questions.

Rights of Way Operations update- Ms J Taylor

- Ms Taylor took members through her written update.
- Ms Taylor said the team was now part of the county council having been brought back in-house from Ringway Jacobs. It was asked who's decision it was to bring external services back? Ms Taylor advised it was the previous Cabinet Member for Planning & Environment. The Forum thought this was an excellent decision.

The Chairman thanked the officers for the updates.

7. LAF MEMBERS' REPORT

The Chairman noted the report, the following points were raised in discussion:

- It was asked when East West Rail would be operational? Mr J Clark said the official start date for trains is 2019, but he thought that seemed ambitious. There were no further questions.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr G Thomas felt there was some confusion around the registering of footpaths with local parishes as part of the Restoring the Record Project. He thought there was a need for clarification to the Parishes around what needs registering. An email needs to be compiled and sent out to parishes to ensure everyone is aware of the process. Mr J Clark said they already had the information, but agreed to write to remind parishes of the process he thought a link to the Restoring the Record website may help clarify the situation.

ACTION: Mr J Clark

9. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

10am Wednesday 8 November 2017. Mezzanine Room1, County Hall, Aylesbury.

Chairman



THE RIDGEWAY – NEXT STEPS FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Buckinghamshire LAF

Wed 5th July 2017

Sarah Wright
Ridgeway Project Officer
Working for The Ridgeway Partnership

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL

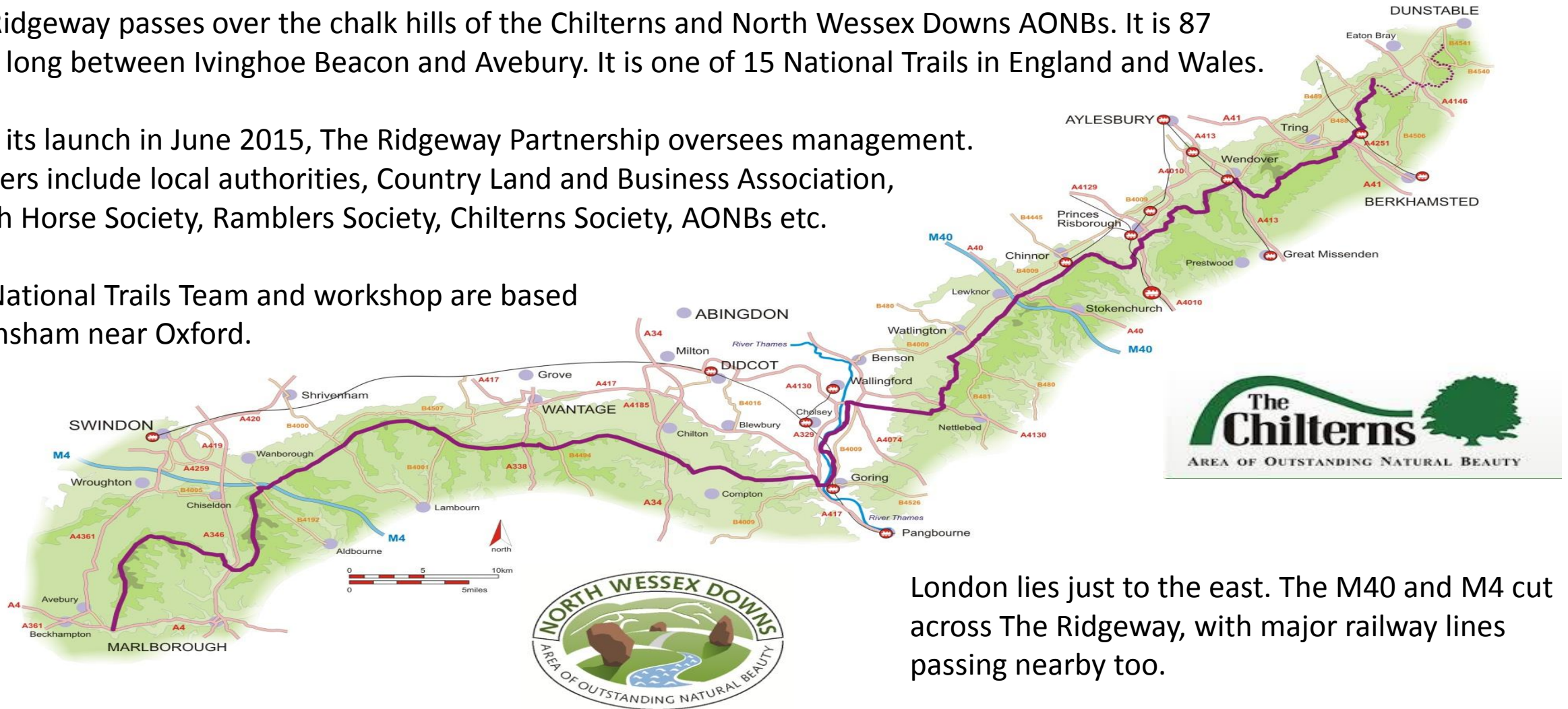


The Ridgeway passes over the chalk hills of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs. It is 87 miles long between Ivinghoe Beacon and Avebury. It is one of 15 National Trails in England and Wales.

Since its launch in June 2015, The Ridgeway Partnership oversees management. Partners include local authorities, Country Land and Business Association, British Horse Society, Ramblers Society, Chilterns Society, AONBs etc.

o

The National Trails Team and workshop are based at Eynsham near Oxford.



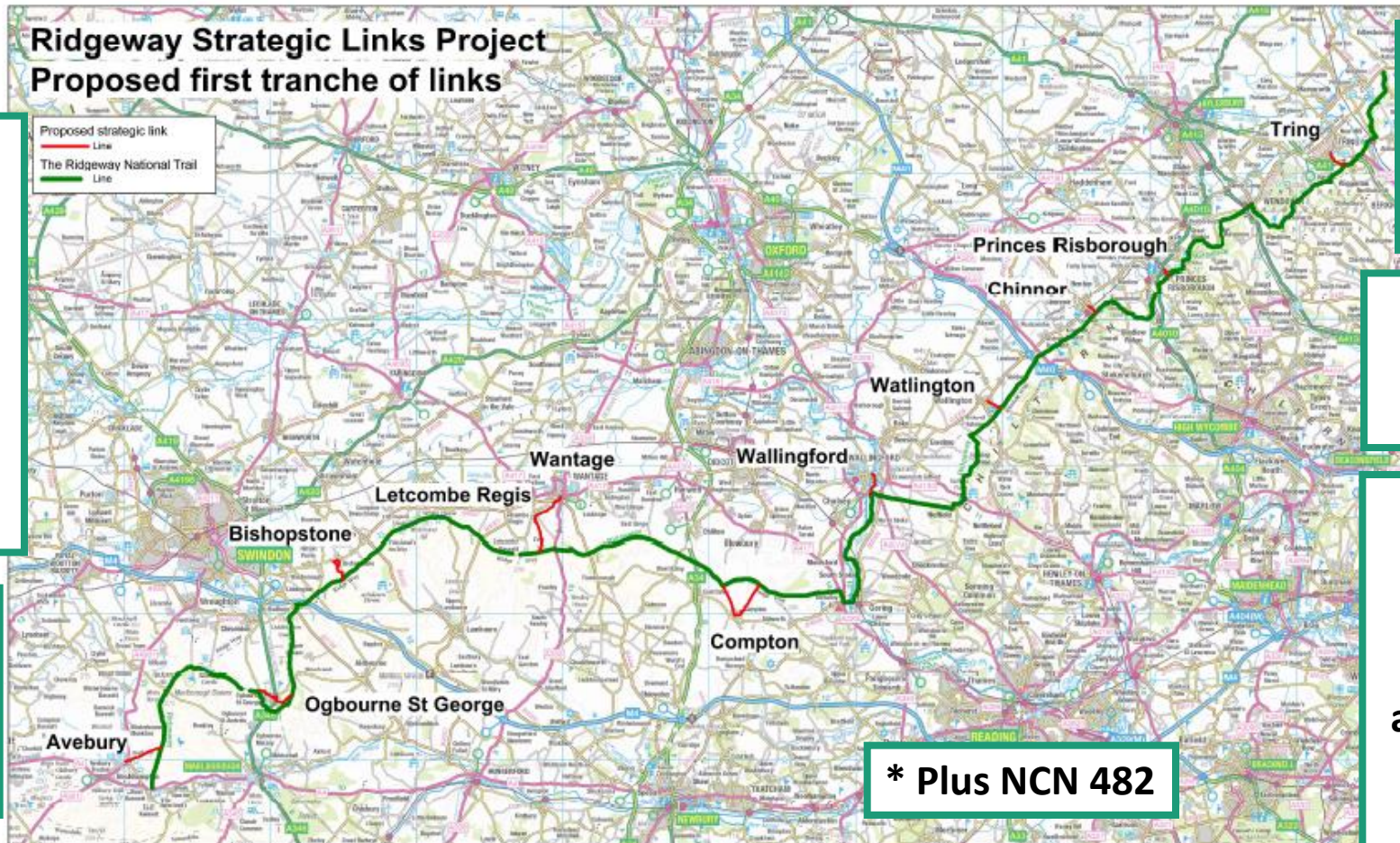
London lies just to the east. The M40 and M4 cut across The Ridgeway, with major railway lines passing nearby too.

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



Ridgeway Strategic Links

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



2017 priorities

- Bishopstone
- Compton
- Ogbourne St George
- NCN 482
- Wantage
- Princes Risborough

Total population in these settlements:
51,524
(2011 Census data)

24 accommodation providers listed in Companion served by these links

Links serve stop-off points recommended in Arum guide

14 visitor attractions served by these links, including Tring Natural History Museum, Vale and Downland Museum, Chinnor Railway, Wallingford Castle

* Plus NCN 482



Ridgeway Strategic Links



What is the proposal? What are 'Ridgeway strategic links'?

The Ridgeway National Trail brings benefits to lots of people. Local residents and visitors can enjoy some of the best walking, cycling and horse riding experiences in the country. Businesses can draw customers from The Ridgeway and work together to develop 'packages' for visitors.

Such benefits would be better secured if it was made as easy as possible for people to walk or ride between settlements and The Ridgeway National Trail. The proposal is simple and we hope it will attract local support. The Ridgeway Partnership aims to –

- provide clear signage along the 'Ridgeway strategic link' so that people can confidently and responsibly find their way to and from nearby settlements and The Ridgeway. Integrate with existing signage as appropriate.
- where necessary and practicable, improve the surface, gates etc along the 'Ridgeway strategic link' so that legitimate users find it as accessible as possible.
- attract grants, sponsorship, donations and other help to resource capital items and longterm maintenance.

This project addresses the entire 87 mile length of The Ridgeway National Trail (see map on next page). The Ridgeway Strategic Links Project was launched in Spring 2016. Similar examples from elsewhere, including the South Downs Way National Trail, can offer inspiration and lessons.

The Ridgeway Partnership is now inviting landowners, parish/town councils, councillors, grant-giving bodies and other key stakeholders to provide local comment and support us in taking this proposal forward.

Ridgeway Strategic Links: South Downs Way case study

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



South Downs Way NATIONAL TRAIL

Hassocks Link



Scan me for map and more info

<http://goo.gl/VqG4su>



You are at TQ 315 128

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK



The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



Ridgeway Strategic Links

We will engage with stakeholders to integrate signage of a Ridgeway link with existing local signs in villages and towns. Elsewhere, rights of way along the links can be signed with standard Ridgeway signage to make it easy for the public to associate the route with The Ridgeway.

10



Local sign designs
Wantage (above)
Bishopstone (left)

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



Location markers on Trails elsewhere

South Downs Way marker in Winchester unveiled in May 2017 (right)

North Downs Way terminal sculpture unveiled in Summer 2016 (below)



Viewpoint plinth along Cotswold Way points to places of interest in the distance (left)



The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



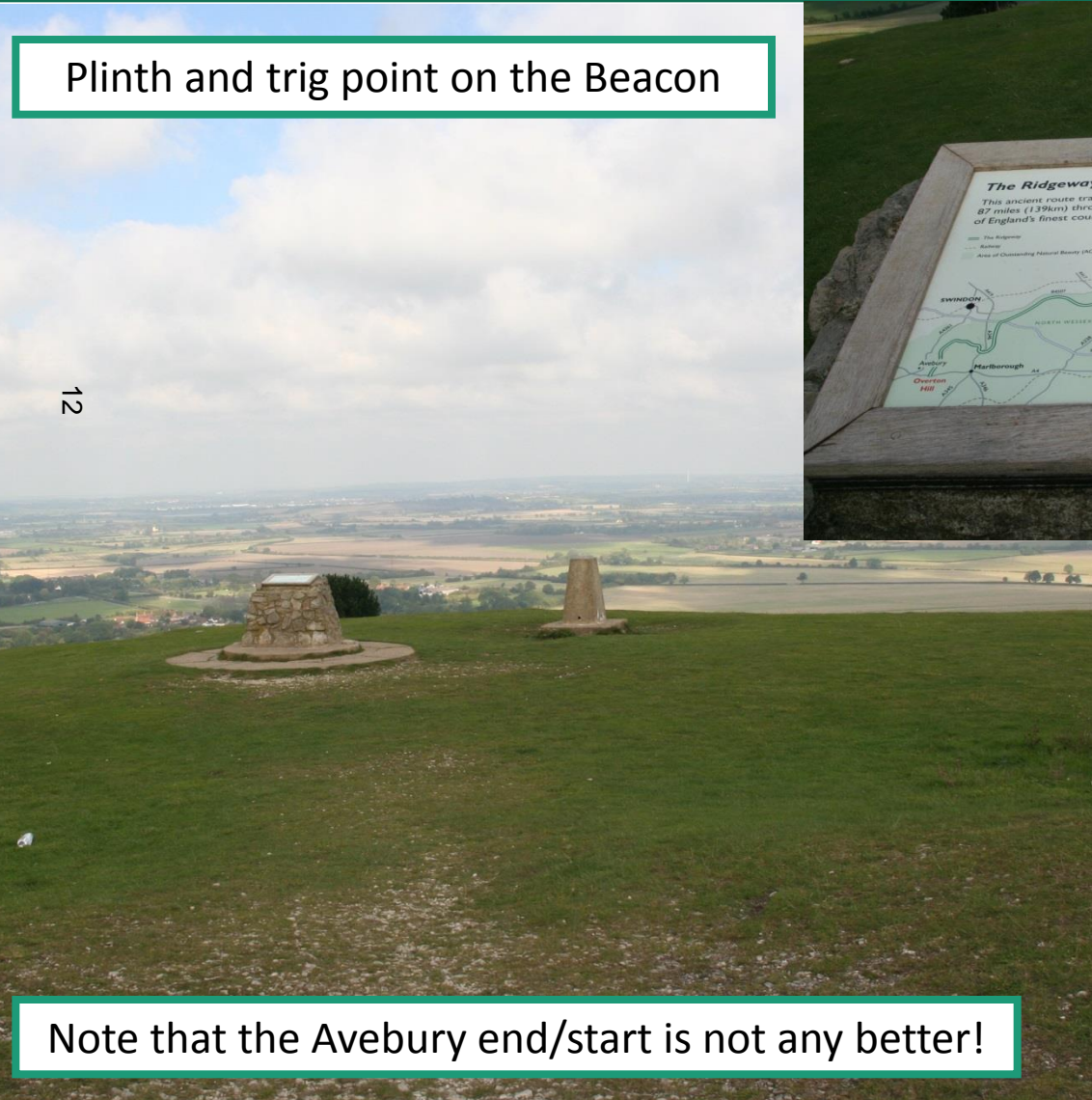
End/start of The Ridgeway at Ivinghoe Beacon

Plinth and trig point on the Beacon

Mapboard on the plinth

People recording/celebrating their visit to the Beacon...and wanting a place to sit too!

12



Note that the Avebury end/start is not any better!



HS2 and The Ridgeway

To consider during construction

- Suitable temporary diversion during construction.
- Impact upon visitor experience during construction/diversion – noise, views.

To secure as part of HS2 changes

- Safe road crossing for walkers, cyclists and pedestrians.
- Safe and accessible pavement (for walkers and also cyclists and horse riders?) through Wendover to Bacombe Hill.
- Visitor information in Wendover and at train station.
- Improved bridleway up Bacombe Hill for cyclists and horse riders.
- Improved entrance/parking area for Bacombe Hill to welcome visitors.

Note that The Ridgeway crosses the HS2 route at Wendover on the Ellesborough road.



Current road crossing on Ellesborough road, with entrance to Bacombe Hill ahead.



Financing The Ridgeway



Please spread the word to gather support and resources for The Ridgeway and other National Trails. Together we can ensure The Ridgeway is here for everyone to enjoy now and for years to come.

Since its designation in 1972, The Ridgeway has benefitted from government grants. But the economic downturn and public sector cuts puts government financial support of National Trails at risk, and at the very least makes the future look uncertain. A new campaign pack is available to help people seek out support from their MPs and others.

Whatever the future of government funding, we need to attract more investors and build support from as many as people as possible so that The Ridgeway isn't at risk if one source of funding/support falls away.

The Ridgeway is fortunate in having a charity dedicated to its preservation – The Friends of The Ridgeway, established in 1983.

Other organisations are helping The Ridgeway Partnership by pooling resources to deliver mutually beneficial projects, e.g. Trail Running Association is funding new gates to replace less accessible old-style gates.

*It is estimated that around 400,000 people live within 5 miles of The Ridgeway.
Imagine if each person donated a £1!*



Friends of The Ridgeway

For as little as £8 per year for an individual, members know they are helping to preserve The Ridgeway year after year – go to www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/join-us

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



15

Ridgeway Project Officer - Sarah Wright

sarah.wright@oxfordshire.gov.uk

07825 314791

To report a problem on The Ridgeway, tell the National Trail Team and/or the local highway authority -

ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk

01865 810224

If urgent, call 07825 314791

If you see a crime in progress on The Ridgeway, call 999. Otherwise, call 101.

For visitor info and other enquiries:

ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk

01865 810224

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway

Twitter: @TheRidgeway1972

