



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## *BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM*

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2017, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.45 AM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr R Pushman, in the Chair

Mr D Briggs, Mr J Elfes, Mr C Hurworth, Mr A T A Lambourne, Mr G Caspersz, Mr G Thomas, Ms A Heath and Mr B Worrell

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mr J Clark, Mr J Dixon, Mrs H Francis, Ms J Taylor and Ms S Taylor

### **OTHERS PRESENT**

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

Apologies were received from Mr N Harris. Mr S Thorns had tendered his resignation.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. ACTION NOTES/ MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2017 were agreed to be an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **4. NEW BARRIERS TO DISABLED ACCESS**

Mr J Cuthbertson, Chairman of the Disabled Ramblers, attended the meeting to provide an update. During discussion key points were highlighted as follows:

- The County Council, along with other organisations, had been working to improve disabled access across the County. The Disabled Ramblers group had assessed routes for the County Council.
- Mr Cuthbertson outlined examples of barriers to access such as steps, narrow bridges, stiles, kissing gates, horse stiles, motor bike inhibitors and chicken wire which caused punctures. However, it was noted that some gates

required padlocking by farmers to prevent stock escaping.

- The Disabled Ramblers attended the bridle gate trials to test out various gates; the results had been incorporated into BS5709 which was the British Standard for gaps, gates and stiles.
- Mr Cuthbertson explained that although the Disabled Ramblers predominantly catered for people with mobility issues; a person with a disability such as blindness would be able to go on a ramble if they had someone to accompany them.

The following questions were raised:

- It was queried why there was no mention of the Disabled Ramblers using routes in the New Forest, which was an area that was well equipped with good pathways. Mr Cuthbertson agreed that the pathways were ideal and that rambles had been run in the area.
- A member of the forum asked if charging the scooters was an issue. Mr Cuthbertson explained that a scooter would normally run for up to 30 miles on flat surfaces and 10-12 miles on difficult terrain. The scooters (Trampers) were transported in wheelchair accessible vehicles and charged at accommodation overnight.
- It was noted that high visibility jackets were worn by people at the front and back of the column and that the group avoided roads where possible and kept well away from horses.
- It was noted that the Trampers could generally get through gaps a metre wide.
- It was queried why disabled people were unable to use a quad bike. Mr Cuthbertson advised that it was illegal to ride a quad bike on a public right of way. The Trampers were very stable and easy for new people to learn how to use but did cost approximately £7,000.
- Mr G Caspersz added that he had recently led some disabled rambles during the Chilterns Walking Festival. He highlighted that Coombe Hill, The Ridgeway, canal tow paths and many other local footpaths were all accessible by a normal disability scooter. Any work done on gates and paths would form a legacy and Mr Caspersz encouraged everyone to support the work.
- It was queried whether the Disabled Ramblers had worked with other organisations. It was confirmed that they had worked with Trail Riders and other routes were being explored.
- The membership of the Disabled Ramblers was approximately 200 people. .

The Chairman thanked Mr Cuthbertson for the update.

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

Ms H Francis, Definitive Map and Land Charges Team Lead, attended the meeting to provide an update on the Rights of Way Group. During discussion key points were highlighted as follows:

### **Definitive Map Team report**

- Item A; CAMSWEB was moving ahead.
- Item B; New Statement of Priorities. A member of the group commented that in paragraph 1, it mentioned “reduced staff resources”. It was clarified that the team leader was on maternity leave and that one member of staff was currently on long term sick which had caused the reduction in staff.
- It was noted that A new Statement of Priorities (Appendix A) should read Appendix 1.
- Item C; Matters Previously Determined by Committee. Edgcott; the public enquiry had been held and it was hoped that the application would be successful.
- Item D; Definitive Map Applications to be investigated and reported to Committee. Two further definitive map applications had been received for Stokenchurch and High Wycombe, making 21 outstanding applications for claimed routes.
- It was asked if the date of 2020 would slip. Ms Francis advised that this was possible but that any new applications received had been prioritised.
- Item E; Public Path Orders. The Public Path Orders were mostly the same although it was noted that Number 5, Weston Turville, was currently in consultation.
- Public Path Orders; Item 7; The Chairman noted that the application to extinguish the footpath had gone ahead by Wycombe District Council, despite the previous feedback from the Local Access Forum.
- Item F; Village Green Applications. It was noted that one more application had been received.

**Strategic Access Update** – Mr J Clark, Strategic Access Officer, asked for any questions on his update. The following points were raised:

- **Appendix 2, Buckinghamshire Public Rights of Way – Planning and Development advice.** A member of the group commented that there was no mention of carriage drivers and others users in paragraph one. It was agreed that the sentence should include “all legal users’ rights of way”.

**ACTION: Ms H Francis**

- **Item 25 – North Bucks RIPPLE group.** It was queried why all the gates were not now pedestrian gates. Mr Clark clarified that the County Council was beholden to landowners who were within their rights to keep the stile. Some landowners were nervous about pedestrian gates without a refuge due to the possibility of stock escaping.

**Rights of Way Operations Update**

- Ms J Taylor, Rights of Way Team Leader, provided an update on the current staff structure of 6 FTE.
- Internal candidate had been appointed as Rights of Way officer.

- Ms A Heath noted that repairs to bridleways were being left until they posed a danger, in particular one of the bridleways in Marlow and Wexham 26. Wexham 26 had been raised as an issue and had now resulted in an accident where a horse had been badly injured. Ms Heath advised that the rider was proposing to pursue legal proceedings against the County Council. Ms Taylor explained that there was a limited budget for these types of works and that a bid for money for capital improvement works had been submitted and that Wexham 26 was included in the bid. Ms Taylor clarified that the accident did not occur on the bridleway, but on land owned by the County Council. The claim was being dealt with by the insurance team. Ms Taylor advised that the problem in Marlow had been identified; the surface had eroded and this was on the list for repair. It was noted this could be carried out in a couple of years if it became a capital project.
- Concern was expressed over the high number of outstanding issues detailed in Appendix 3 – Rights of Way Summary of Maintenance Carried Out. Ms Taylor advised that the highest number recorded was 4,000, and the lowest was 800. It was agreed that the number was rising.
- The low number of paths rated easy to use was commented on as being disappointing. Ms Taylor explained there had been difficulties issuing the surveys to volunteers, but it was important that the surveys were carried out as it benchmarked the quality and condition of the rights of way work.

## 6. LAF MEMBERS REPORT

Mr Clark, provided the following updates;

- Item 2, the closure of Footpath 80 in High Wycombe. This had been consulted on by Wycombe District Council and that, despite objections to the closure, it was decided that the anti-social behaviour was a greater concern.
- No appeal against the decision had been received.

Following discussion the Chairman agreed that this would not be taken any further.

Item 4; East West Rail; Mr Clark clarified that the categories were parishes.

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr D Briggs made a plea for more cycle ways across the County which the Chairman endorsed. It was highlighted that a cycle route was planned to run alongside the HS2 route.
- Mr Clark apologised for not posting out the meeting papers and agreed to send out future papers.

**ACTION: Mr Clark**

- Mr Clark agreed to look into possible routes for funding by Sustrans.

**ACTION: Mr Clark**

## 8. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS – 21 MARCH 2018.

Date of Next and Future Meetings – 21 March 2018.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

**Chairman**