



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 MARCH 2018, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL,
AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.03 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.42 AM.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr R Pushman, in the Chair

Mr W Chapple OBE, Mr D Briggs (Vice-Chairman), Mr J Elfes, Mr C Hurworth,
Mr A T A Lambourne, Mr G Caspersz, Ms A Heath, Mr A Clark, Mr B Worrell and
Mr C Harriss

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr J Clark, Ms S Bradley, Ms J Taylor and Ms S Taylor

OTHERS PRESENT

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from:

- Ms H Francis
- Mr N Harris
- Mr G Thomas

Ms J Taylor, Team Leader, Rights of Way (ROW), introduced Ms S Fradley, as the new Assistant Rights of Way Officer for the southern part of Buckinghamshire.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. ACTION NOTES/MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman asked the Forum to look through the previous minutes; the following point was raised:

- Page 4, item 7, second paragraph. The meeting papers had not been received; Mr J Clark, Strategic Access Officer, apologised for not posting out the agenda pack and said he would send them to the members for the next meeting.

There were no other matters arising.

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2017 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4. REVIEW OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2008-18

Mr J Clark highlighted that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan was a 10 year plan and Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required the County Council to assess and review the plan by 1 January 2019. Mr Clark explained that a large proportion of the plan would remain the same; however, when it was written there was no austerity and it was important to scrutinise how well the County Council had done and what lessons could be learned. Mr Clark thought the Local Access Forum was the best committee to review the plan.

Mr A Lambourne, Parish Councils, said the existing plan had been ambitious and many objectives had not been met and suggested that the next plan not be made too ambitious. It was noted there was no capacity in the ROW team to write the plan; a person would be employed to work on the plan. Time needed to be factored in for the plan to be presented to the Rights of Way Committee and for Cabinet Member approval.

Mr B Chapple, BCC, updated the Forum on the announcement that Buckinghamshire could become a unitary authority and that the decision was open to comments by all until 25 May 2018. The Secretary of State would then make a final decision and, if Buckinghamshire became a unitary authority, it would come into effect on 1 April 2020. Mr Chapple made the following positive points:

- No capital money had been put into ROW for five years, but there was £900,000 for financial year 2018/19.
- Aylesbury Town had been made a Garden Town and the blue and green infrastructure would be protected.
- Simply Walks had been a major success and should be reflected in the new plan.
- Mr Chapple said he wanted the Forum to own the plan and add their comments.

Mr G Caspersz, mentioned that the Ramblers' Association had already discussed a proposal that farmers should be paid for making the countryside and farmland more accessible and that the money to be paid should be linked to the number of stiles, footpaths etc in the area. Mr Chapple added that the plan would cover a period of major development in Buckinghamshire and stressed the need for the plan to be strong enough to protect accessibility.

Mr C Harriss, BCC, said that the way paths were used now was very different due to the use by mountain bikers. Ms A Heath, British Horse Society (BHS), thought the plan should include how bridleways link up.

It was agreed that there should be a short Local Access Forum meeting on 25 July 2018 followed by a brainstorming session to review the existing Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Mr J Clark was asked to email the link to the current plan to the forum, but pointed out the link was already on the agenda item briefing.

Mr B Worrell said he had been involved in the Hertfordshire ROW plan and offered to have a meeting with Mr J Clark to discuss points he felt were of value.

Action: Mr J Clark/Mr Worrell

5. RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP REPORT

Mr A Clark, Chilterns Society, asked for clarification on the headings in the Definitive Map update and when the orders went out for public consultation. Ms Taylor said it would depend on the stage of the investigation as there would be an initial gathering of evidence/assessment, followed by any necessary consultation before publication of an order. He also asked whether he could discuss the ROW report with the Chilterns Society. It was confirmed that the ROW group report was a public document as it was published in the agenda pack and the Chairman agreed the parishes should be made aware. Mr J Clark said he would ask Ms Francis to provide a definitive answer.

Action: Mr J Clark

Section A - Matters Previously Determined by the Committee

Mr A Lambourne asked about Item 1 – Edgcott. Ms Taylor said that the application to record Lawn House Lane as a public footpath was not confirmed due to lack of evidence. Mr J Clark said he would send a copy of the determination to Mr Lambourne.

Action: Mr J Clark

Section E - Strategic Access Update

Mr J Clark highlighted the following points:

- HS2 – the ROW closures were being kept to a minimum and to date there had only been one closure of a bridleway next to the M25; other routes had been slightly diverted.
- Mr J Clark had resolved the issue of using metal protective matting on bridleways due to the danger to riders.
- Heathrow third runway – some of the access around Heathrow would be displaced out to other areas, particularly around Iver. Heathrow Airport Limited was looking to improve the existing routes and have short diversions where possible.
- Oxford to Cambridge Expressway – a linear project and concerns had already been raised around the ROW crossings, bridges and diversions. A decision on the route would be made in the summer 2018.
- Mr J Clark advised that “higher rights” mentioned at the end of item 4 meant the change from a footpath to a bridleway.
- Mr J Clark highlighted the great work the RIPPLE group continued to do.
- East/West Rail – there was no further update but it would be included in the report for the next meeting.

Section F – Rights of Way Operations Update

Ms Taylor highlighted the following points:

- The team was now at full strength.
- Appendix 1 – The interim survey results showed 76% of paths were rated as easy to use; 91%, structures were rated as easy to use; and 92% routes with roadside signs.
- The matrix target times had shown a slight dip due to staff numbers.
- The number of volunteer jobs completed was slightly lower than last year but was still good. This was mainly due to the Chiltern Society being involved in helping with the devolved services and therefore losing some hours from the

volunteers.

- Currently, there were approximately four bridge closures but they should be open in the near future.
- The list of paths the Capital work money would be spent on.
- Over 300 bridge inspections would be undertaken in financial year 2018/19 which was slightly less than anticipated due to staff restrictions.
- Reed's Bridge in Iver, which had been closed for three years, would be replaced by the Canal and River Trust in the summer of 2018.
- Camsweb - There had been a slight delay but the order should be placed imminently and be in place by May/June 2018.

In response to a comment by Mr Hurworth who said that Hampshire County Council had two staff dedicated to liaising with volunteers and asked whether this could happen at BCC; Mr Chapple said that BCC worked well with their volunteers and Ms Taylor added that working with the volunteers was a priority for everyone in the ROW team.

6. LAF MEMBERS' REPORT

Mr J Clark highlighted the following:

- Item 1 - If anyone had any follow up comments to the paper entitled "How can public access be improved post Brexit"; these would be passed to the Defra Minister via Mr J Clark and the Bucks Local Access Forum.
- Item 2 - Mr J Clark apologised for not consulting with the BHS regarding the surfacing along a bridleway in Haddenham called Green Lane. Mr Clark explained that there would be a grass area set aside for horses on the route. Flexi-pave surfacing was being treated as an experimental surface at the moment. Ms Heath said the Haddenham bridleway came to a dead end and she understood it was part of a planned cycle track from Thame to Aylesbury and that it would be beneficial if the route could be accessible to riders as well. Mr Clark said that unfortunately there was no funding available to extend the route at the moment.
- Item 4 – Proposed Public Space Protection Order in Chiltern District owned car parks. Mr Clark advised he had commented that the use of cycling in their car parks should be removed or reworded to prevent inappropriate cycling. The Forum had nothing further to add and agreed to Mr Clark's proposal.
- Item 5 - Pulpit Wood byway closure – 4x4 owners could still access their field but bollards had been installed to prevent other 4x4 users. Ms Taylor confirmed there was a Kent gap between the bollards so carriage drivers could use the paths. Any issues to be reported to Ms Taylor.
- Item 6 - Annual report – any comments to be passed to Mr Clark.
- Item 7 - Mr G Thomas had asked Mr Clark to find out how funding could be obtained for the renewal of the surface of the section along New Road to provide a seamless connection for walkers and cyclists between Weedon and Aylesbury. The Chairman recommended a bid be made to the Greater Aylesbury Local Area Forum; Mr J Clark agreed to inform Mr Thomas.

Action: Mr J Clark

7. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

- 25 July 2018 at 10.00 am
- 7 November 2018 at 10.00 am
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8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr Briggs, Vice Chairman, said he had received complaints from Country Land and Business Association (CLA) members in Buckinghamshire about the new walking and jogging mobile phone apps which provided a route from one point to another; without using rights of way and created problems from the farmers point of view due to the legalities being unclear. Mr Briggs felt the apps should be looked into. Mr Chapple agreed it was worrying as it encouraged trespassing and advised Mr Briggs write a letter which he would pass to the relevant minister. Mr A Clark said the Chiltern Society had also had similar experiences with an app called "Strada".
- Mr B Worrell asked the Chairman if there had been any response to his letter to the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Development team regarding the encouragement of volunteers from the Buckinghamshire Restoring the Record project engaging with their project. The Chairman said representations had been made to the parishes to act as a register point and emphasised the need for paths which were not registered to be registered and that this should be picked up.

Chairman

