

AGENDA ITEM 10

SOUTH BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RIGHTS OF WAY LIASION GROUP 14TH MAY 2003

Peter Barnard	Chiltern Ramblers Association
Iain Burgess	Buckinghamshire County Council
Jonathan Clark	Buckinghamshire County Council
Sara Clark	Buckinghamshire County Council
Deborah Dobson	Naphill Riding Club
Chris Dutton	Chesham & Chesham Byways Association
John Elfes	Local Access Forum
Margaret Freeman	Buckinghamshire County Council
Chris Hurworth	L.A.R.A
Sarah Golding	Buckinghamshire County Council
John Illenden	Iver & District Countryside Association
Ollie Kelly	Wycombe District Council
Pete Peters	Chiltern Society
Mike Walker	Buckinghamshire County council

1. Apologies for Absence

Viv Lynch
Audrey Hughes
Francis Gomme
Simon Pratt
John Shippley
Chris Marchand

2. Introductions

The South Buckinghamshire Liaison Group has been set up to replace the old County Liaison Group. The group has been created to give people the opportunity to work together and share ideas and interests. IB drew the groups attention to the county map attached to the agenda showing the areas covered by the Rights of Way Officer and their contact details.

3. Rights of Way South Area Progress Report (IB)

The Parish Council returns for P3 (2002/03) were circulated.

Once again the number of reported problems exceeds the current resources of the Rights of Way group. However a large number of fallen trees have been cleared this year and there has been a particular thrust on signing the urban areas of the south. This programme of signing is being completed in 2003 and will hopefully remove uncertainty regarding the status of urban paths.

CD queried if lack of funding is a major restraint on the group and suggested a central body could be approached for extra funding. IB assured him that all

the funding bodies have been approached and MW commented that extra funds had been secured from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) but that unfortunately this money can't be used for maintenance work.

CD said that other councils have persuaded the Highways department to take responsibility for bridge maintenance. MW replied that capital money has been bided for bridges and some has been given this year, £25,000 for south area. IB added that some of this money would be used to fund a post with the role of examining the condition of all the bridges in the area. A report would then be put together of the work required and a bid made for further funding.

Capital funding is also available via Sustrans for the creation of cycleways on rights of way. In addition the Chiltern Society are interested in working on projects in the area, they are prepared to contribute 75% of the funding required. The LAF will also be looking to secure further funding for the group.

CD asked how work would be prioritised bearing in mind the budgetary constraints. IB replied that those problems that received frequent complaints or are a health and safety concern are dealt with first. The group also prioritises work to open up village networks and is flexible to changing demands. Extra money has been allocated to annual clearance this year due to the amount of complaints received. PP requested that the Chiltern Society were given a list of those paths on annual clearance so that they don't report them as overgrown every year.

The BVPI figure for the county is high, showing that a lot of work has been done and that generally the network is well maintained, waymarked and signposted. The county appears to be performing well in comparison to the surrounding counties.

3.1 Definitive Map Update (MF)

The definitive map team have recently produced a consolidated map, accurate at 31/3/99 and are aiming to issue a new edition in the summer/autumn that updates the map to 31/3/02. The annual progress report was distributed listing all the orders currently being dealt with by the team.

PP asked what progress has been made on HUG/42 at New House Farm, it has been reported regularly since 1994 that there is no sign of the path on the ground. IB replied that no progress has been made as there is a reasonable alternative route, however as the landowner has not contacted the definitive map team regarding a modification/diversion order, they will therefore be asked to reopen the route on its correct line.

With regard to the recent splurge of claims for Byways, IB assured the group that any claims will only be considered on the basis of historical evidence and that if a claim was successful and an order confirmed the County Council doesn't have any plans to make major changes to the routes such as tarmacing and hedge removal. It is thought that the Trail Riders have fifty

applications in the pipeline and no doubt others will come in from 4x4 groups. MW commented that claims have already been received for Featherbed Lane and Kings Street.

The Rights of Way group's policy for the management of Byways will be implemented in three steps:

1. Physical improvement
2. Voluntary constraint
3. TROs

PP commented that Old Oddly Lane is currently too narrow for users to pass each other safely. IB is aware it requires further clearance to widen it and some surface improvements, he will be consulting Babbie regarding the ecological issues of the site and a balanced solution will then be found that considers Babbie's findings and the need for vehicular access. MW added that the council does take up opportunities to widen routes, for example at Lacey Green the rights of way group are currently in discussions with the landowner regarding the widening of BW3, the hedge that runs along the route needs removing.

MF distributed the new 'Walks and Rides in Buckinghamshire' leaflet.

4. Feedback from the Local Access Forum (JE)

There has been one LAF meeting to date at which house keeping issues were dealt with and the future agenda of the forum discussed. It was decided that the forum had two key roles:

- To introduce the new access rights in the county.
- To develop the rights of way improvement plan.

Mapping – Buckinghamshire is in region seven (out of eight) and the draft maps will be out in the second week of June, in time for the next meeting.

The forum will be seeking input into the rights of way improvement plan from the liaison group and any strategic matters will in future be forwarded to the forum. The routine maintenance issues will however continue to be dealt with by the liaison group.

The members of the forum represent an interest and not individual organisation, they are working in the best interests of the general public, local residents and visitors. A good balance of people have been selected and all interests are thought to be represented.

The next meeting is on the 11th June 2003.

5. Report on Works Projects 2003 (IB)

£25,000 has been assigned to the resurfacing of Great Marlow BW52. There have been several accidents and complaints about the badly gullied surface. Oxfordshire County Council have recently completed a similar job and IB will

be visiting the site to see how the works stand up to time/usage. The National Trust are also trialing a new surface at Clifton Woods that could be of use in areas with poor drainage.

A bid has been put forward for the surfacing works on the Ridgeway National Trail, a third of this money is to be used in Buckinghamshire for erosion problems in the chalk sections and water logged areas in the clay sections.

This year is the European Year of the Disabled and in an effort to improve access to the countryside the Chilterns Project is supporting work projects to replace stiles with gates in livestock areas (potential projects should be forwarded to James Littlewood for consideration). DD made a complaint that on Sustrans routes the posts are too close together for mobility vehicles (battery cars), which are wider than wheel chairs, posts need to be further apart or removed altogether. MW commented that cycleways that are left open tend to experience problems with motorcycle use. IB suggested that if DD informed him of the locations of these posts he would pass the complaint on to Sustrans.

6. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan Report (IB)

Improvement plans are currently being piloted in several areas and it is expected that these will consist of a written document and a timetabled plan.

In Buckinghamshire improvements will be sought to improve access, create links between rights of way and to create new paths (JE). The creation of bridleway networks and cycling routes will be a major area for improvement (MW). The improvement plan will also assist in applications for capital funding from LTP.

There is currently a local Rural Traffic Management Project underway in Buckinghamshire (advert circulated) in which the County Council is heavily involved. Questionnaires have been distributed to local residents and although the project's main emphasis is on traffic calming, cases need to be made for horse and cycle use of roads. IB urged members to attend, as some money will be made available for creating quiet lanes and new bridleway links (some using UCRs). OK offered to take any views/ideas the members have back to Wycombe District Council. JI highlighted the Colne Valley as an example of a successful traffic scheme, the project brought about the creation of a network of rights of way. Regular reports will be made back to the group on the progress of the project and members will have further opportunities to make comments.

7. Any Other Business

OK – PPG17 was published by the government in July 2002, this document offers guidance on open space recreation provisions for local planning authorities, the rights of way improvement plan needs to inform/input into the PPG for Buckinghamshire, this includes examining;

- Assess/audit open spaces

- Recreational needs of rural community
- Opportunities to look to developers to contribute to projects.

Members were asked to come up with some well thought out projects for consideration.

IB – Attended Hertfordshire's PPG and Improvement Plan event and felt the emphasis should be on improving rights of way links between urban areas and open spaces.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting will be after Local Access Forum meeting in September, some time in October?