



Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum held on Wednesday 3 November 2021 in The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.03 am and concluding at 12.00 pm.

Members present

Mr D Briggs (Vice-Chairman), Mr G Casperz, Mr A Clark, Mr N Harris, Ms A Heath, Mr C Hurworth, Mr R Jennings, Mr A Lambourne, Cllr P Martin, Mr R Pushman (Chairman), Mr G Thomas, Cllr A Turner and Mr B Worrell

Others in attendance

Mr J Clark, Ms R Binstead, Mr B Feeney-North, Mrs E Hackling and Mr R Johnson

Apologies

Cllr S Broadbent and Mrs H Francis

Agenda Item

2 Declarations of interest

None.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting / matters arising

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 July 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4 LAF site visit: Bridleway WEN/1/1, Bacombe Hill SSSI & Grangelands SSSI

Jonathan Clark, Strategic Access Officer, began by thanking members who attended the Local Access Forum site visit. Members' attention was drawn towards Appendix 1, displaying the resurfaced Ridgeway and Ridgeway Riding routes at Bacombe Hill, Wendover. The limestone surface was tested by a horse rider, walker, cyclist and user on a mobility scooter, and was found to be suitable for horse riding, cycling, and disabled use. A couple of issues included the downhill section causing cyclists to go too fast and horse riders unlikely to utilise the route as it leads out onto Ellesborough Road, which was too dangerous. Alternative routes were discussed and the possibility of links through to Bacombe Lane or a safer route into Wendover. To encourage good user etiquette, the Forum noted some examples of signage included in the report. Mr Clark welcomed any ideas or comments for signage that could be used on the Ridgeway.

The Forum were then informed of the site visit to the Grangelands SSSI, where a member of the British Horse Society gave feedback on two gates. It was agreed that these need to be replaced with Worcester Gates. These gates contain a closing mechanism that shuts the gate in fourteen seconds, to allow a horse to move through. It was also decided to relocate signage that horses were banging their heads on.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- Mr Clark informed members that Mr Rod Black has been looking into the possibility of receiving funding and support from HS2. This would go towards creating a link alongside the Ellesborough Road. Cllr Peter Martin suggested organising a conversation outside of the meeting to take this up directly with HS2.
- The site visit was extended to review Bacombe Hill, which identified more work that needed doing to improve accessibility. It was suggested that Bacombe Hill to Ellesborough Road footpath link be upgraded to bridleway so it doesn't have to go through the town. Mr Clark explained that this would be taken up with HS2.

5 Buckinghamshire Cycleway

This item was presented by Ben Feeney-North, Transport Strategy Officer for Planning Growth and Sustainability. The Forum noted the development of active travel routes in Buckinghamshire and the progress towards the Buckinghamshire Greenway. The latter relates to the development of a continuous walking and cycling route running the length of the county from the Colne Valley, connecting to routes in Hillingdon, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. The aim was to achieve the same, if not similar, standard as the Waddesdon Greenway. The purpose of the Buckinghamshire Greenway was to improve connectivity between towns and villages, making it easier for people to make short trips as well as being an asset for leisure and tourism.

Mr Feeney-North referred to a presentation and the slides that would be appended to these minutes. Following the conclusion of the presentation, the following points were raised during the discussion:

- A new route from Winslow to Buckingham had been established. It had not yet been considered as part of the Buckinghamshire Greenway, but it was suggested that a route from Winslow to Aylesbury would be well used and sought after. Mr Feeney-North explained that the Greenway could be considered as a strategic spine that routes can be added to and they were keen to explore opportunities to incorporate other routes.
- It was mentioned that there was little consultation with horse riders in the development of the Waddesdon Greenway and it could be of great benefit to horse riders. It was emphasised to include horse riders in the development of

the Buckinghamshire Greenway. Mr Feeney-North explained that landowners generally only accept a permissive route and were sometimes not willing to allow riders to use it. It was noted that this was frustrating, but the aim was to have as much of the route as possible be a bridleway and accessible for all users. It was highlighted that a large section of the south route, such as the South Bucks Way, utilised existing rights of way. It was hoped that developing these southern sections will make it more accessible for horse riders.

- The Planning Growth and Sustainability team were working on links with Hertfordshire. One such being the Grand Union Canal Triangle. The Aylesbury Arm had received funding to upgrade sections up to the border with Hertfordshire. Mr Feeney-North stated that they were keen to engage with Hertfordshire to continue to improve the Aylesbury Arm. Regarding the Wendover Arm, Buckinghamshire was working with the Wendover Arm Trust to get the path upgraded.
- The issue was raised of heavy traffic deterring cyclists on the A4010, between Aylesbury and High Wycombe via Princes Risborough. Members were informed that the team were working on the county-wide local cycling and walking infrastructure plan. This would be developed at a strategic level, with the Buckinghamshire Greenway at the heart of it. It was hoped that problems would be captured and highlighted for future development.
- Regarding the consultation process, Mr Feeney-North explained that the route between Wendover and Missenden was led by Sustrans. The main consultation had been completed through them, working with the Chiltern Society. To develop routes moving forward, it was stated that the Council were looking to develop more detailed consultation. A Regional Access Field Officer for the British Horse Society was present and offered their help in the consultation process, as they could provide more of a national perspective building from their experiences working with other authorities. In particular, their experience with advising on controlled crossings was highlighted.
- The timescale of the Buckinghamshire Greenway was reliant on factors, including financial support from the government and developers, landowner consent, and HS2. There were locations of the Greenway which intersect with HS2. It had been agreed with HS2 and the Department of Transport that at those locations, the HS2 design would incorporate the Greenway. However, this would be reliant on the timescales of HS2.
- A forum had been established to help develop the northern routes with two Northamptonshire authorities, Oxfordshire, and England's Economic Heartland. This is to ensure that the routes were connecting outside of Buckinghamshire. England's Economic Heartland were looking at what interventions could be made to the Varsity Way from Oxford to Cambridge.

6 ROWIP Action Plan Year-1 Report (Themes 3 – 6)

The Forum were informed by Mr Clark that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) Action Plan Year-1 Report would be available for March 2022.

7 Rights of way group report

Mr Clark presented the Rights of Way Group Report, to summarise progress on the Gardenway. A final report, expected in December 2021, would give a design specification and detail of the route. The team were beginning to parcel up the routes around Aylesbury and had put in funding bids to deliver a new bridleway. It was expected to be completed in 2030.

A planning application had been submitted to the Aylesbury Area Planning Team for the Quarrendon Path through Berryfields and Buckingham Park. Mr Clark informed the Forum that the application was live and available for comments. The Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum would be consulted on the High Wycombe Cycling, Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Ms Taylor updated members on the Rights of Way (RoW) operations over the previous six months. The team was comprised of one RoW Team Leader, two RoW Officers, 1.6 Assistant RoW Officers, and 1.5 Bridge Structure Inspectors.

The BVPI Condition Survey was carried out largely using volunteer effort during February / March 2021. The results were that 75% of paths were easy to use. The RoW Team were looking to carry out the 5% survey later in the year, due to the additional workload from COVID restrictions. Ms Taylor explained the importance of the condition survey, as it provides a benchmark on the state of the network against previous years. Ms Taylor invited members to give feedback on the survey.

The Forum were informed of the ongoing capital projects. Ms Taylor highlighted the work regarding bridge improvements and surface work that had been completed. This included Fawley Bridge and Ms Taylor explained that the team were still in negotiation of the replacement of the bridge structure and the annual clearance. The summer clearance had been completed, using two additional clearance crews for twelve weeks. Autumn clearance of bramble and side growth would be completed. Several projects would run through the winter, as it cannot be achieved in summer due to the nesting season.

In reference to Appendix 5 on the Rights of Way Group Report item, Ms Taylor welcomed comments from members and explained that it showed an average for April to October in comparison to previous years. The results for the last financial year were quite low, due to the limited work that could be achieved during COVID lockdowns.

Ms Taylor gave feedback on the priority matrix, on how issues were categorised into priority A, B, C, and D to work out a target time. Figures were also provided for the beginning of the 2021 Condition Survey. Ms Taylor welcomed comments on whether

they should continue the Condition Survey or postpone the survey for a year. The reasoning provided was that the team had a large backlog of issues, as a result of increasing usage on the network over the previous two years. More individuals were reporting issues, as people were using the network for recreation during lockdown.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- Ms Taylor explained that the workload was due to it being easier for people to report issues through the reporting website. Moreover, volunteers were unable to work due to restrictions. Staff were also redeployed to community work to cover the pandemic and there were restrictions on site visits. In combination, this had resulted in a backlog.
- Feedback from members regarding the Condition Survey was that it should continue, without the year break. This would avoid issues mounting up and the importance of knowing the state of the network was emphasised.
- Concerns were raised over the RoW Team being under resourced. Cllr Peter Martin said he would speak to Cllr Steve Broadbent on this concern.
- The target times of resolving issues were published online, on the same pages as the Report It page. This allows individuals to see how their issue is prioritised.
- There was a set of core issues that may be difficult to resolve due to an enforcement issues, for example. The effort to resolve them might be quite intensive so one solution was to put a notice or informative on the land charge layer. Therefore, if the property is sold, it notifies the potential purchaser that there is a defect on the land. This had resulted in a history of problems left unresolved, but they would be monitored and reviewed.
- Parish surveys were useful in enabling volunteers to go out in the field and check to see what is outstanding in their parish against the database. This aids in clearing out old data.

8 LAF members' report

Neil Harris, National Trust, informed members on ash dieback and clearance. The work had been prioritised by usage, to combat issues with potential risk to ash trees dying and falling. The focus had been on medium to very high usage zones. Ash dieback is a fungal disease causing the timber to become brittle. The longer the tree has the disease, the more brittle they become and more likely to fall over. To avoid this risk when clearing, the National Trust had used a contractor with mechanical equipment, such as a walking excavator, to clear the edges of the footpath. This is safer than manual clearing and the timber is turned into wood or chipped for wildlife. Roughly £160,000 was spent in the last year to clear sites including Pulpit Hill and Aston Wood. The next site to be looked at is Hughenden, which would be closed for two weeks to clear diseased ash trees on the main visitor route. Work was also planned for Coombe Hill this winter 2021/22, which was delayed due to the

nesting season. Where there was a lot of felling, the National Trust were also replanting, particularly at Bradenham. About 11,500 trees would be planted this winter. Funding had been provided by the National Trust Plant a Tree Campaign. £60,000 had been granted for the replanting, about six hectares of ash dieback. A large proportion of the money would go towards on-site preparation, such as deer fencing.

In response to this update, the following points were mentioned:

- The main issue of ash dieback is that the trees become unpredictable. The National Trust review their trees in June and assess them on a percentage of crown die back. 50% and greater crown dieback signals for the tree to be removed the following winter. Less than 50% dieback could mean that the tree can recover.
- To avoid ground shrinkage, the National Trust were replanting and replace with hedges and shrub layers.
- At Pulpit Hill on the edge of the Byway GLK/40A, a tree stump in the middle of the byway had been removed.
- Landowners had a duty of care to anyone on their property. Mr Harris suggested prioritising trees based on usage and the target, e.g. the target is greater if the tree is next to a house rather than a field.
- Trees in the Hughenden Valley were raised as a concern near the highway. Mr Clark requested details on the site so it can be inspected. The Forum were informed of a regular programme of inspection for trees in the county that should pick up any issues.
- Regarding the work on Naphill Common, Mr Harris explained that a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) would be protected by Natural England and the Forestry Commission. To apply to do work on a SSSI, you have to give a statutory notice of operations (SNO).
- Mr Clark informed the Forum that the Council RoW Team could organise free RoW closures for charities.

The Forum noted the letters on the Wayside Farm and Chawley Manor Farm Open Access Restriction consultation and the 2026 cut-off date introduced by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

Mr Brian Worrell, British Driving Society Beds, Bucks and Herts, gave an update from the Ridgeway Delivery Group. The report would be appended to the minutes of this meeting.

9 Any other business

Mr Clark informed members that John Elfes has offered his resignation and Mr Clark would draft a letter of thanks for his long service as former chairman and more

recent member on behalf of the LAF. Mr Roy Johnson, Ramblers Association, has been offered and has accepted an invitation to join the Forum in his place.

10 Date of next meetings

Wednesday 2 March 2022; Wednesday 13 July 2022; and Wednesday 2 November 2022.

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Buckinghamshire Greenway

The **Buckinghamshire Greenway** is an accessible, high-quality active travel route that will connect people and communities running the full length of the county.

It will be the walking and cycling backbone for everyday trips in Buckinghamshire, connecting with both existing active travel routes and other new routes currently in development. The Greenway will also link up with rail and bus services.

The Greenway will:

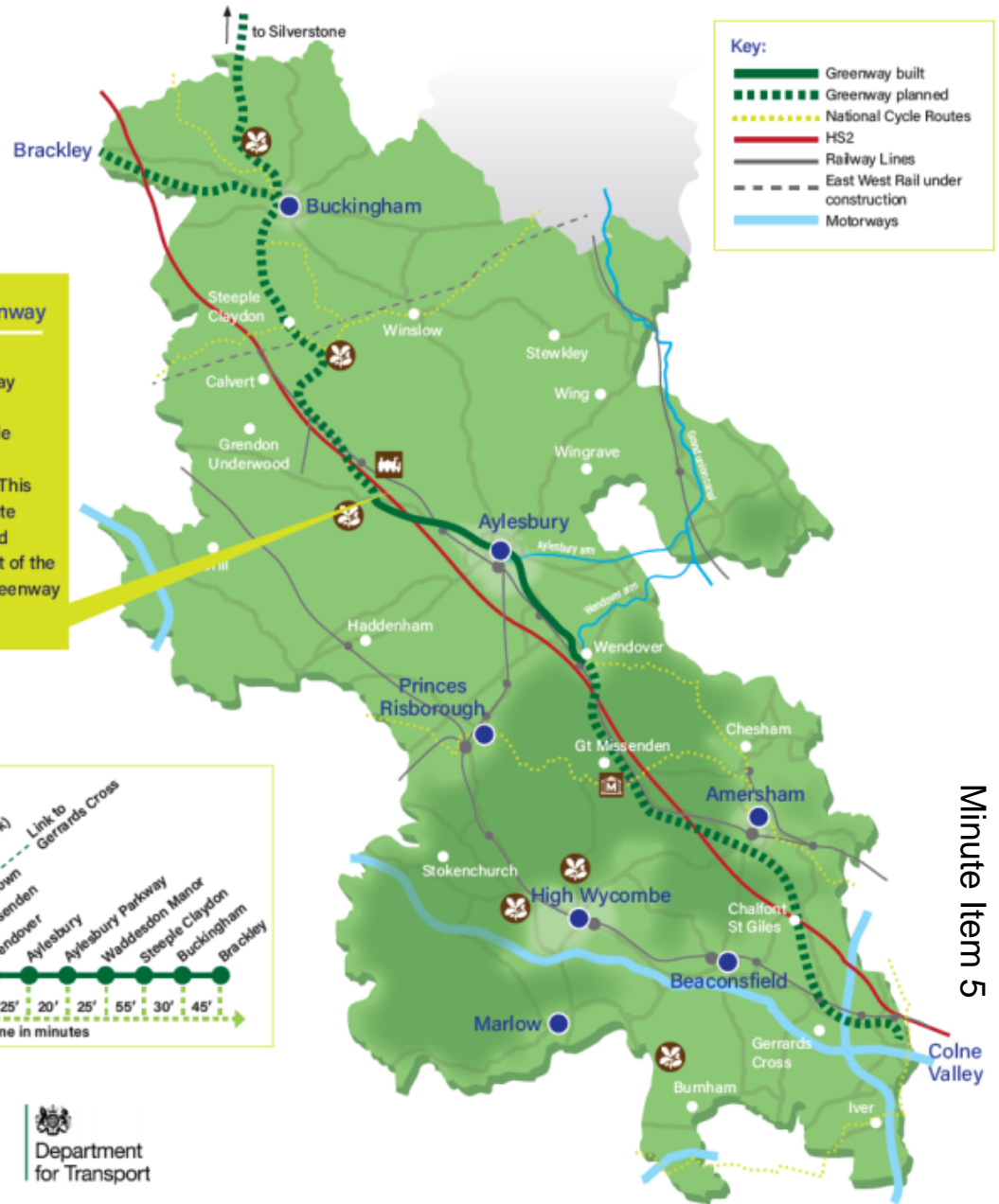
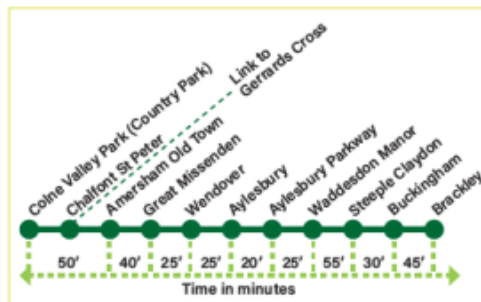
- Open up new opportunities for the people of Buckinghamshire to access education and employment;
- Provide an attractive and safe active travel alternative to local car journeys;
- Be a local leisure and tourism asset for Buckinghamshire, running through the Chilterns AONB and to key tourist destinations.

The Greenway also supports the vision for a north-south National Cycleway connecting London and the West Midlands, and communities in between.

Buckinghamshire Council is working with communities and local organisations, Sustrans and the Department for Transport to bring the **Buckinghamshire Greenway** vision to life.

Waddesdon Greenway

The award-winning Waddesdon Greenway was opened in 2018, linking Aylesbury Vale Parkway station with Waddesdon Manor. This 4km active travel route sets the standard and aspiration for the rest of the Buckinghamshire Greenway to follow.



Waddesdon Greenway

Aylesbury Vale Parkway 



Waddesdon Manor 



Westcott Venture Park  
(planned)



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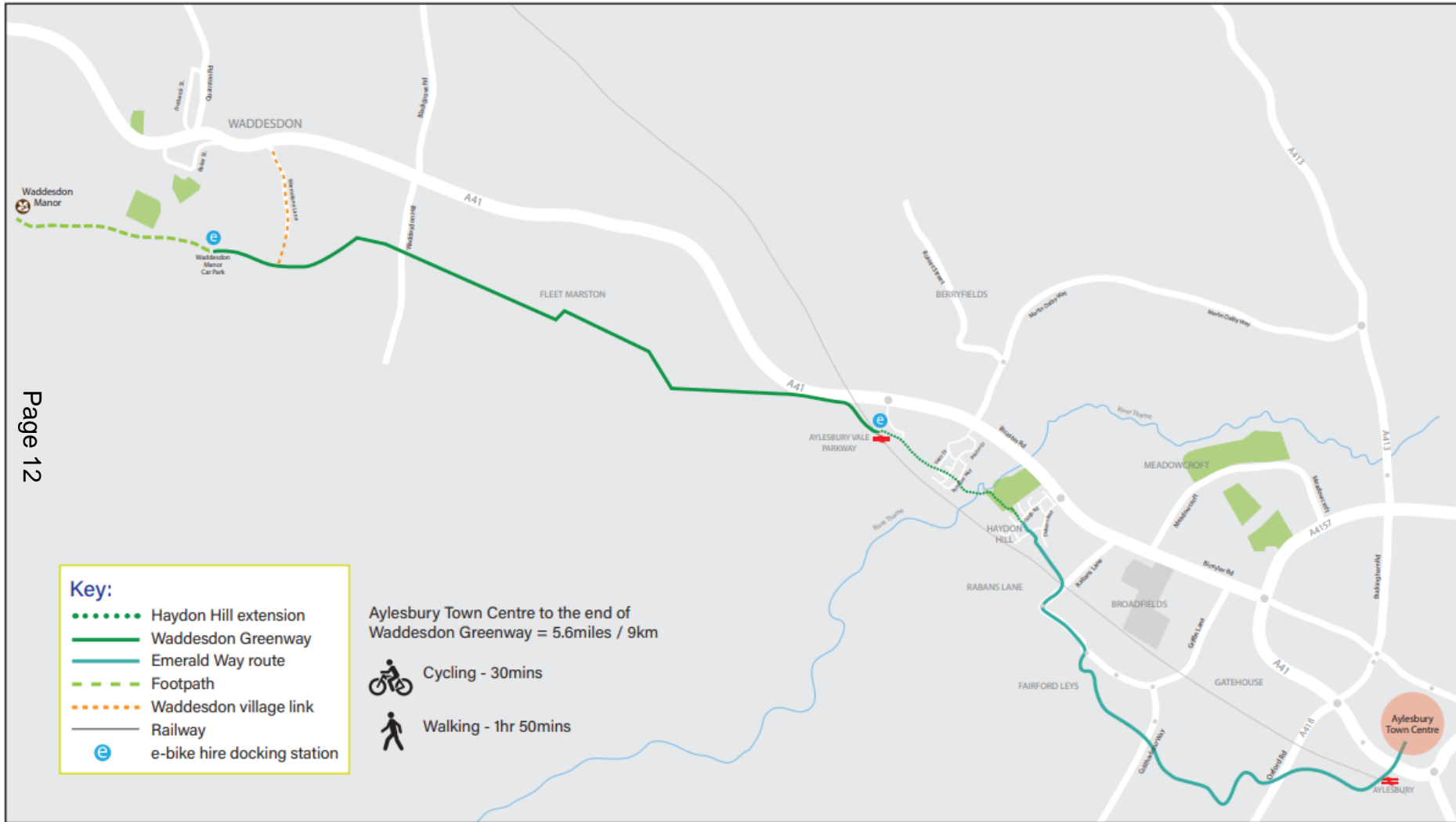
160,000+ trips in 2020

**165% growth in usage since
2019**

**Extension to Westcott Venture
Park planned**



Aylesbury to Waddesdon Active Travel Route



Misbourne Greenway (North)

Wendover      



Great Missenden       

- Enabling works commenced, main construction starting early 2022;
- Opening due Summer 2022.



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Buckingham-Stowe-Silverstone

Buckingham     



Stowe Gardens 



Stowe School 



Silverstone   

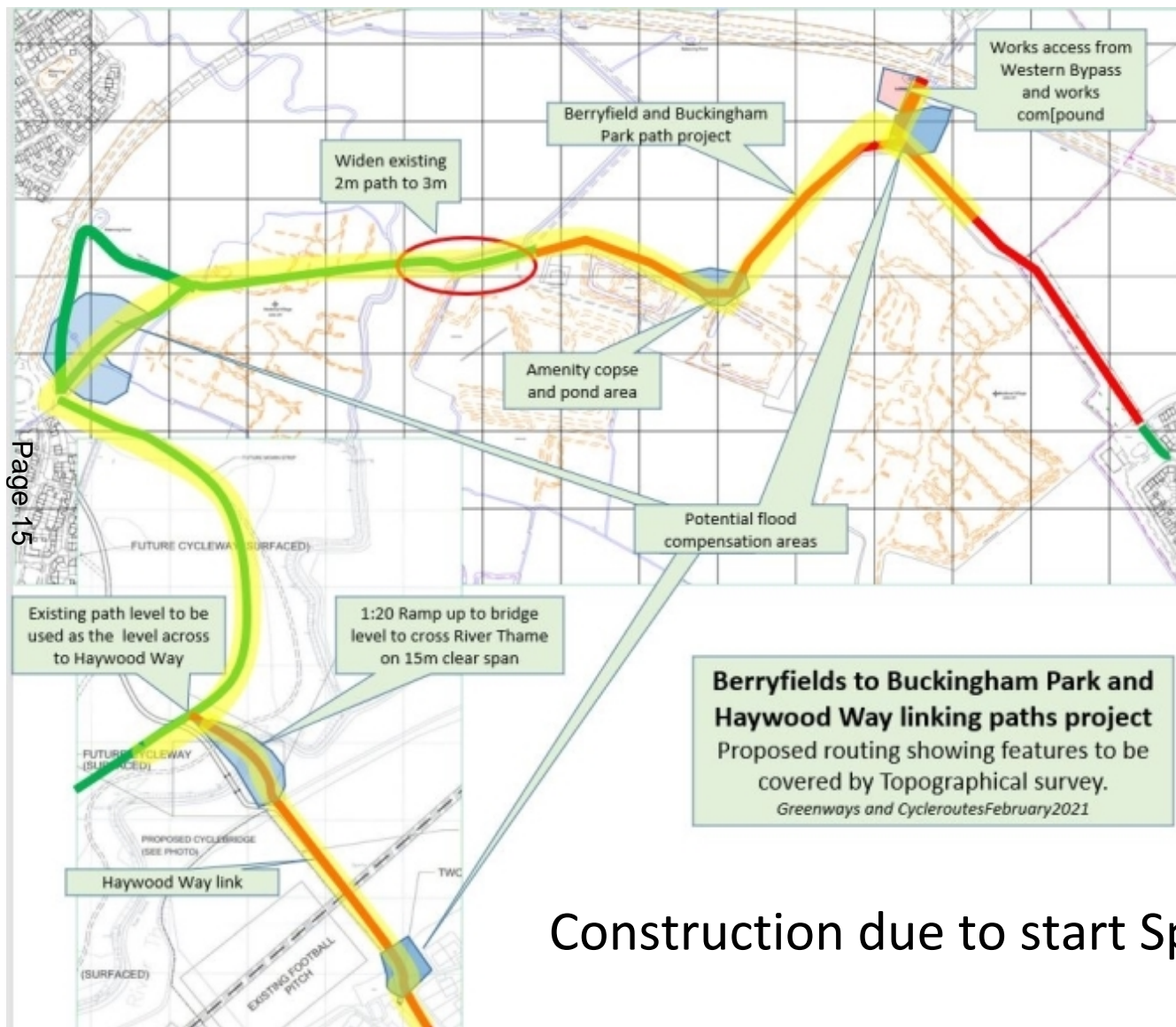


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Quarrendon Link – Berryfields-Buckingham Park



Construction due to start Spring 2022.

High Wycombe Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

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Public
consultation
starting in
November, dates
TBC



Notes from Ridgeway Delivery Group Zoom meeting 13th September 2021

1. Managing vehicles on the Trail

Discussion on Poacher Blocks recognised that landowners required effective barriers to illegal use by motorised vehicles. However, there was real nervousness in their use on the Trail. There is the danger of walkers tripping and possibly injury from the solid and sharp edges of the concrete. Interestingly this hazard is one of the key reasons that the Kent Gap is now not recommended. It seems people don't look where they put their feet these days.

For equestrians the issues are similar, plus the reluctance of some horses not wishing to cross the concrete. For the carriage driver, the concrete poses an unwelcome 'bump' in the surface as well as the height of the central blocks. The BHS is very much against them on a public Right of Way used by ridden or driven horses.

2. Ridgeway Driving Leaflet

The final version was discussed and approved. It is aimed at the motorised user and provides best practice. Printed copies will be used by the police to hand out. However the general consensus was that whilst having a leaflet was better than nothing, it is unlikely to have a great impact as the irresponsible won't read it. The Ridgeway Delivery Group will distribute it to trail rider organisations etc. PDFs for electronic distribution is favoured as the leaflet can then be attached to electronic communications across several social media platforms. One thought was the leaflet itself should be bigger than the folded A4 version.

3. Ridgeway Riding Route and Wendover HS2 re-surfacing issues.

The discussion was in praise of the work being done and moved to signage to mitigate against poor behaviour on the steep hill and blind bend, particularly by speeding cyclists and their lack of consideration of other users. A number of signs were reviewed and a number chosen to take forward.

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