



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Report

AGENDA ITEM 6

Date: 1st November 2023

Title: LAF members' report

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1. Buckinghamshire Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Strategic Transport Team are leading on the production of a county-wide plan for future walking and cycling provision. A high-level briefing session was held for external stakeholders on 17th October 2023 at which some members attend. It is hoped to bring further details of the LCWIP to the LAF next in 2024 as the draft and consultation plans emerge.

2. Ridgeway 50th Anniversary celebration

The National Trust hosted a celebration at Coombe Hill on Friday 29th October 2023 marking the national trails anniversary at the same location 50-years ago. The event attracted good media coverage and was attended by invited LAF members Brian Worrell, Gavin Caspersz and Chairman Neil Harris; and invited council members Martin Tett [Leader] and Patricia Birchley [Chairman]. The National Trust kindly loaned the event a Tramper Mobility Scooter for demonstration. Speeches drawing attention to the positive and enduring impact the Ridgeway has on people and suggestions were made for visions of the trail in 50 years' time.



3. Natural England

Natural England have announced the Local Access Forums (England) SharePoint site is available via the following link:

[Local Access Forums \(England\) - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](https://www.sharepoint.com/Local-Access-Forums-England)

The aim is to provide support and guidance; to facilitate sharing information and ideas between the Local access Forums and Natural England; and draw members' attention to consultations. Can members let the secretary know if they do not wish their email to be put forward for registration in the site's directory to gain access?

4. Centre for Outdoor Accessibility Training (COAT).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/opening-access-to-the-countryside>

It has been proposed that members attend a morning's training course at COAT, Aston Rowant, in Spring 2024. Members views are sought to register interest in the council organising such an event. A visit would be free of charge where it involves roaming the gate installations and barriers and possibly the use of Trampler Mobility Scooters. There are additional classroom training courses available to organisations for a fee.

5. Chiltern Society Annual meeting

The annual meeting between Society's rights of way group members, area secretaries, path maintenance volunteers and Donate-a-Gate organiser took place at the White Hill Centre, Chesham on 13th October 2023 with 14 in attending. The main outcomes of the meeting were: 1] a plea for more work; 2] for the council to balance work that's technically a landowner's responsibility with giving it to the PMVs to get the job done quicker; 3] requesting the PMVs report issues that are no longer a problem to help clear the backlog; and 4] the volunteers were content to continue with BVPI surveys, providing they were thanked.

6. Widening the Welcome Workshop – Chilterns Conservation Board

The Buckinghamshire LAF was represented at the 'Widening the Welcome' access workshop by Gavin Caspresz, Andrew Clark and Neil Harris, at Missenden Abbey on 25th September 2023. Presentations on accessibility were made by Visit England, COAT (See item 4), The National Trust [Neil Harris] and Visit Bucks. DEFRA Access for All Funding was discussed, and expressions of interest encouraged by early January 2024. Professor Church Randhawa from University of Bedfordshire advocated the need to include diverse communities in green spaces as England will be the most diverse country in the world by 2050.

7. East West Rail – passenger link to Aylesbury station [standing item].

Prior to the July 2023 LAF meeting, representations were made by the council to the rail minister and the Department for Transport for the Aylesbury links to be included, especially as this forms part of the Transport & Works Act and considering Aylesbury's housing growth and the new station at Winslow. This has been supported by Aylesbury MP, Rob Butler, who has asked questions in the House of Commons and Greg Smith through his role on the Transport Select Committee.



Alongside the East West Mainline Partnership, the council are joint funding work, outlined below in italics. The full output report for this work is due by end November 2023 and will be reported to the March 2024 LAF.

Outline of scope of work

2.1. The Board agreed in March that further work by the Partnership should be focussed on a strategic economic narrative which highlights the opportunities of better rail connectivity to Aylesbury would add the most value at this stage. Up to £30,000 of funding towards work on the Aylesbury link had already been supported by the Partnership in 2022/2023. The scope of work was agreed by the Board in June 2023.

2.2. Following the Board, consultants Cambridge Econometrics were engaged to review how the link (and associated wider rail connectivity benefits) could support development of new and improved innovation clusters, and enhanced linkages between and within business sectors and labour markets. This work builds on previous technical work that these consultants have undertaken for central government and others.

2.3. Buckinghamshire Council is co-funding the project. Page 2 of 5 2.4. The agreed scope of Cambridge Econometrics work includes a literature review, analysis of relevant economic data, and looks at the synergies associated and between different innovation clusters, business sectors and labour markets. It commenced in July 2023, and is due for completion in November 2023.

8. Venue and dates of next meetings

Venue: Paralympic Room, The Gateway, Gatehouse Rd, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF.

Dates: Early March 2024 [TBC], 10th July 2024 & 6th November 2024.