

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL RIGHTS OF WAY AND ACCESS GROUP NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 - Summer 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our first newsletter for Parish Councils. Our aim in producing this newsletter is to keep Parishes up to date with some of the work the County Council's Rights of Way and Access Group undertakes.

We would welcome your comments on this newsletter; let us know what you think:

- Is this a good way of keeping you up to date?
- What information would you find useful?
- How frequent would you like to see the newsletters published on the website? Our aim will be to issue quarterly

We would also like to publish a regular section which details 'Parish News' providing parishes with an opportunity to share news and information or ask questions. We would welcome any articles and pictures that you would like us to include in a future edition.

Email us with your comments, to row@buckscc.gov.uk

Contact:

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Website useful links

List of Current outstanding issues on the path network

All current outstanding issues on the County's Rights of Way network can be found on the link below, which provides a way for parish councils and others to see what is happening in their area. Any outstanding issues and recently resolved issues (during the last 6 months) are shown under each parish in alphabetical order. The lists are updated monthly. They summarise the problems that have been reported to us in your parish and the attempts to have them resolved. These might include maintenance issues such as stile repairs, gate installations, new bridges or annual summer clearance of paths; or enforcement issues, such as obstructed paths or those covered with crops.

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/current_issues.page

The Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum (LAF)

The Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body providing strategic advice to the Rights of Way and Access Group. The link below allows you to view the Forum's Annual Review, which provides a background to its work over the last 12 months, setting out some of its achievements and those of the Rights of Way and Access Group. The Forum currently has 14 members representing a wide range of bodies with an interest in rights of way and access to the countryside in Buckinghamshire. It is balanced between those who use the countryside and those responsible for its management.

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/local_access_forum.page

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) sets out plans for improving the network of public footpaths, bridleways and byways in the county. It is a statutory requirement and an important part of the process of making the countryside more accessible for everyone. All Parish Councils were sent a copy of the Plan last year and a version can be found on the website together with a summary of the first year's progress since March 2008 can be found on the link below.

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/row/improvement_plan.page

The screenshot shows the Buckinghamshire County Council website. The header includes the council logo and the text "Buckinghamshire C". Below the header is a navigation bar with "Home | A to Z | FAQ | Contact us" and a search box. The main content area is titled "Rights of way" and "Mapping the network". It contains several sections: "Environment" with a list of topics like Biodiversity and Green infrastructure; "Rights of way" with a list of topics like Information about the Definitive Map and Rights of Way; "Future of Rights of Way" with a list of topics like Rights of Way Improvement Plan; "Responsibility and maintenance" with a list of topics like Responsibility, maintenance and enforcement of rights of way; and "Walks and Rides" with a list of topics like Walking for health - Simply Walk Project. There are also several images of countryside scenes.

‘Donate - a - Gate’ within the Chilterns AONB

The Rights of Way Group continues to support the work of The Chiltern Society and the Chilterns’ Conservation board, with involvement in the Chiltern Society’s Donate-a-gate project.

The project replaces stiles in the central Chilterns area with more accessible gates funded by members of the public. Gates cost £250 on a buy-one-get-one-free basis, with volunteers doing the installation and the Council providing a second gate. 120 donors have had gates installed and inscribed plaques mounted, with more coming forward. This work contributes to the council’s annual target to remove at least 250 stiles per year to encourage easier access for those with mobility difficulties. Donors get to choose the gate material, the wording on a dedication plaque and the gate location. Great assistance is provided by a Chiltern Society volunteer who manages the people, payments and plaques.

The benefits that this scheme brings are seen in achieving stile free walks and local people being able to improve their local network. This adds great value and purpose to the work we do.'

If you would like any more information on this scheme, or would like to become a donor, please contact Stuart Gulliman, from the Chiltern Society, on 01494 721467.

‘Sponsor - a - Gate’

The success of the ‘Donate-a-Gate’ scheme has prompted us to consider running a similar scheme beyond the Chilterns AONB. One method of doing this might be to inform Parish Councils where we have secured agreement with landowners to remove stiles and by inviting individuals, organisations or parishes to sponsor their replacement with gates.

We would welcome any thoughts you have about a ‘Sponsor-a-Gate’ scheme; or any suggestions on how such a scheme could be managed outside of the Chilterns area. If you would like to get involved or if you would like to give us your ideas, please Email us with your comments, to row@buckscc.gov.uk or phone 01296 387695



Funding Opportunities

There are a number of ways of attracting funds for access improvements, available to Parish Councils and we would be happy to assist you in developing your area. These include:



Leader Funding - Chilterns and Aylesbury Vale

The LEADER programme is a source of funding for rural businesses. The Chilterns and Aylesbury Vale are two of 13 Local Action Groups which have been awarded funds, available for rural businesses within the proscribed geographical area between 2008 and 2013.

Those eligible to apply for funds include Farmers, Foresters, Growers, other rural businesses and community organisations; with the maximum size grant being £50,000.

The Chilterns and Aylesbury Vale grants programme is managed by 'Ngage Solutions Ltd'. To find out more, or to submit an 'expression of interest' for funding a project, please visit on the link below:

<http://www.ngagesolutions.co.uk/leaderprogramme>

Sustainable Development Grant - Chilterns AONB

The Sustainable Development Grant Scheme (SDF), administered by the Chilterns' Conservation Board, is available to support projects which bring environmental, social and economic benefits to the Chilterns AONB. Individuals, groups and organisations can apply, for work which must be completed by 28th February 2010.

Eligible projects will help to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB, increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB, bring environmental, social and economic benefits to the AONB, or have the demonstrable support or involvement of communities.

The grant could help to develop stile free routes or help to produce promotional literature that details local walks.

For more details of funding criteria, size of grants available and the application process, please go to: <http://www.chilternsaonb.org/caring/sustainabledevfund.html>

Parishes Fund – Chilterns AONB Parishes

The Chilterns' AONB Parishes Fund provides grants of up to £500 to local parishes for projects which help to conserve part of the AONB and enhance people's enjoyment of it. The grant could be used to help improve pedestrian access for local walkers. To find out more please contact the Chilterns' Conservation Board at its Chinnor Offices. Tel: 01844 355500.



Parish News

Using £3000 from the Sustainable Development Grant, Chesham Town Council has developed six new circular walking routes, of varying length, in and around the town. Five follow rights of way out into the Chilterns countryside, visiting pubs and passing through local villages, whilst the sixth is a two mile route around Chesham itself. Some of the walks are partly or wholly stile-free.

A partnership between the Rights of Way Group, Chepping Wycombe Parish Council and the Chiltern Society Path Maintenance Volunteers helped to install 14 new gates creating a stile free walk around Pigeon House Farm and the Crooked Billet at Flackwell Heath. The Parish raised £1750 to pay for gates through the Chiltern Society's donate-a-gate scheme and this work has now stimulated a new 'Simply Walk' Group.

Lane End Parish Council has submitted an application to the Chilterns' Conservation Board's Sustainable Development Fund to provide a missing link in their bridleway network that will help connect the village with Frieth School as a cycling link. Local contractors have quoted to resurface the route. In addition, the Parish Council is negotiating with a local landowner to provide a permissive path alongside the Marlow Road that will connect two networks of paths cut off by busy traffic on the B482.

Simply Walk

The Simply Walk project, hosted by Buckinghamshire County Council, is aimed at giving relatively inactive people an opportunity to improve their health within their local community, get some fresh air, meet new people and improve their sense of well-being.

Buckinghamshire's Rights of Way network is an asset that everyone can use and the Simply Walk project has helped to increase the use of the existing access networks and impact positively on levels of health. In particular, walking helps reduce levels of obesity and coronary heart disease, with positive effects on mental health and social well-being. Walkers are encouraged to walk at their own pace and being in a group provides a safe environment for people who might otherwise have worries about accessing the countryside or simply going for a walk.

Walks are led by trained volunteer leaders, many of whom are retired. All events are free and no booking is required for anyone wishing to join in. Anyone wishing to find out where and when the walks take place or if you are interested in becoming a walk leader, please go to:

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/simplywalk> or contact
Fiona Broadbent on 01494 475367
simplywalks@buckscc.gov.uk



Rights of Way & Access Group

With 3300km of public rights of way network in Buckinghamshire, this is what we do ...

- We hold a Definitive map and Statement of all known public rights of way.
- We have powers to make changes to the network.
- We have a duty to maintain all public rights of way, and as far as possible to prevent their obstruction. To do this as efficiently as possible, a Problem Management Matrix has been developed to prioritise issues on paths according to the nature of the problem and its location. This can be viewed on our website, together with details of all path issues that we are aware of.
- We make strategic improvements to the network, and these are implemented where resources are available and agreements can be reached with landowners.
- We work in partnership with local communities and parish councils to identify improvements to the rights of way network.
- We aim to deliver access for everyone, targeting improvements to specific routes so that they are easier to use, removing barriers and obstacles to provide least restrictive access.
- We publicise and promote access to the Buckinghamshire countryside, providing information about the location of routes.
- We aim to ensure that all public rights of way are easy to follow by providing adequate signposting and way marking of all routes.
- We lead regular walks, mainly on public rights of way, through the Simply Walk programme.

More details on any of the information provided can be found on our web page at:

www.buckscc.gov.uk/rights_of_way

Alternatively contact us on 01296 382171 or e-mail row@buckscc.gov.uk

