

REPORT TO RIGHTS OF WAY AND HIGHWAY LICENSING PANEL

Title: **PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY: 6-MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT**

Date: **21st September 2009**

Officer Reporting: **Anthony Hurst, Principal Rights of Way Officer**

Wards affected: **All**

1. SUMMARY

This report updates the Panel on progress made with Public Rights of Way issues during the 6 months from February to August 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel notes the Public Rights of Way 6-monthly Progress Report attached at Appendix 1.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Council's public rights of way team produces a 6-monthly Progress Report on public rights of way issues. The Report is submitted to the Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel in March and September each year, and is also sent to all members of the borough's Local Access Forum.

Background Papers: none

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY: 6-MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT**

FEBRUARY 1st 2009– JULY 31st 2009

1. ENFORCEMENT

1.1. Problems closed and problems reported

Approximately 29 enforcement problems have been closed during the period from **February 1st to July 31st 2009**, and approximately 28 new problems were reported during that period. A statistical summary of reported, closed and outstanding problems is included in Annexe A.

1.2. Reported enforcement problems currently being investigated

The list of cases below has been extracted from the Council's public rights of way database and shows unresolved cases that have been actively investigated during the report period. Further details of the status of specific cases on this list are available on request.

Path	Date Reported	Problem
Bray Footpath 16	07/11/08	Farm gate blocking footpath
Bray Footpath 20	18/12/08	Stile issues along path
Bray Footpath 28	13/10/09	Stile step loose in ground
Bray Footpath 34	13/01/09	Horse use along footpath
Bray Footpath 38	27/01/09	Stile issue
Bray Footpath 39	17/02/09	Horse use along footpath
Bray Footpath 43	17/02/09	Horse use along footpath
Bray Footpath 49	04/03/09	Gate issue
Cookham Footpath 60	02/05/08	Planting issue
Eton Footpath 12	27/11/02	Derelict stile
Eton Footpath 2	29/10/07	Stile issues
Hurley Footpath 28	07/11/06	Report of obstruction
Hurley Footpath 28	03/09/08	Unauthorised stile installed
Hurley Footpath 8	27/11/08	Overgrowth
Maidenhead FP 83	07/01/08	Encroachment onto footpath
Maidenhead FP25A	23/07/08	Overgrowth
Old Windsor FP 4	20/08/08	Overhanging tree
Sunninghill Footpath 8	26/11/08	Mud, fencing, horse use and gate issues.
Sunninghill FP 29	26/11/08	Overgrowth
Walt.St L. FP 13	04/06/99	Stile issue
Walt.St L. RB 30	11/03/09	Motor cycle use
Walth. St. Law. FP 40	14/01/08	Unauthorised barrier
Walth. St. Law. FP 40	18/06/08	Squeeze stiles difficult to use
Walth. St. Law. FP 41	09/02/04	Sub-standard stile
Walth. St. Law. RB 20	19/01/09	Vehicular use of Restricted Byway
White Waltham FP 20	08/10/07	Stile and surface issues.
Wraysbury FP 11	02/06/07	Path encroachment /enclosure issues.
Wraysbury FP 8c	08/08/98	Various obstruction issues

1.3. Reported enforcement problems that have been closed Feb 1st – July 31st 09

Path	Date Reported	Problem
Bisham Footpath 18	03/07/2008	Report of electric fencing adjacent to path. <i>Closed: Confirmed temporary fence is not electric and does not encroach upon path.</i>
Bisham Footpath 32	09/06/2009	Crops growing on path. <i>Closed: Path cleared by farmer</i>
Bisham Footpath 8	30/12/2008	Report of metal strut causing trip hazard on path. <i>Closed: Metal strut cut down by adjacent landowner.</i>
Bray Footpath 41	11/09/2008	Path obstructed during water company works. <i>Closed: Path now reinstated by water company</i>
Bray Footpath 52	03/12/2008	Report that gate has been bolted shut preventing access. <i>Closed: Gate issues resolved with landowner.</i>
Cookham Footpath 42	11/05/2005	Report that path is not suitable for disabled access. <i>Closed: No longer an issue following site inspection Spring 09.</i>
Cookham Footpath 49	03/09/2008	Headland path ploughed. <i>Closed: Path not cropped and kept available for use.</i>
Cox Green Footpath 10	01/10/2007	Farm machinery placed on footpath. <i>Closed: Machinery removed by landowner.</i>
Cox Green FP 8	04/03/08	Horse riding on path. <i>Resolved; no further evidence of horse use, no further action required.</i>
Eton Bridleway 17	01/05/2009	Crops growing on path <i>Closed: Path cleared by farmer</i>
Eton Bridleway 18	01/05/2009	Crops growing on path <i>Closed: Path cleared by farmer</i>
Eton Bridleway 19	16/03/2009	Path ploughed and not reinstated / Crops growing on path. <i>Closed: Path cleared by Council's contractor, costs charged to landowner</i>
Eton Footpath 1	16/10/2008	Horse riders using newly surfaced footpath. <i>Part resolved: Signs installed to direct horse riders onto adjacent permitted bridleway.</i>
Eton Footpath 2	29/10/2007	Stiles in poor condition. <i>Closed: Stiles have been repaired.</i>
Eton Footpath 4	01/05/2009	Crops growing on path <i>Closed: Path cleared by farmer</i>
Hurley Footpath 33	11/12/2007	Report of trees planted on footpath. <i>Closed: Confirmed trees are not planted within path width.</i>
Maidenhead Footpath 44	20/02/2008	Rat infestation on verges. <i>Closed: Rat treatment carried out by Council Contractors.</i>
Sunninghill Byway 18	07/10/08	Report of hedge overgrowth. <i>Closed: No further action required. Letters sent to residents to remind them to maintain boundaries.</i>
Sunninghill FP 25	04/12/08	Chain link fence out of repair. <i>Resolved: Landowner removing fence, no further action necessary.</i>
Sunninghill FP 30	26/11/08	Overgrowth. <i>Resolved: Landowner agreed to cut hedge.</i>
Waltham St Lawrence Footpath 15	15/04/2008	Report of aggressive horses in field. <i>Closed: No aggressive horses discovered on site inspection and no further complaints received.</i>
Waltham St Lawrence Footpath 41	31/10/2008	Barbed wire adjacent to footpath. <i>Closed: Barbed wire removed by landowner.</i>
Waltham St Lawrence Restricted Byway 30	16/10/2008	Report of warning signs deterring users of the path. <i>Closed: No signs visible upon site inspection.</i>

2. MAINTENANCE

2.1. Problems resolved and problems reported

Approximately 43 maintenance problems have been resolved during the period from February 1st to July 31st 2009, and approximately 66 new maintenance problems

were reported during that period. Additionally, approximately 265 items of routine maintenance have been carried out during the period.

The following major projects have been completed over the reporting period:

Cookham FP 55 (Thames Path)	Riverbank repair/protection, surface improvements (phase 1)
Old Windsor FP 3 (Thames Path)	Surface repairs
Bray BR 44 Gays Lane	Surfacing improvements
Hurley BR 15 Hodgedale Lane	Surfacing improvements
Walt.St.L. RB 30 (Downfield Lane)	Surfacing improvements
Waltham St Lawrence RB 7	Surfacing improvements
Sun'hill RB 24 (St. Georges Lane)	Gate replacement

2.2. Works due to be carried out

The following projects are scheduled to be carried out in the next 2 to 3 months:

Cookham FP 55 (Thames Path)	Surface improvements (phase 2)
Sunningdale FP 13	Drainage and ditch clearance works
Bray FP 72	Replacement of vandalised gate
Wraysbury FP 11	Replacement of two stiles with gates, and surfacing works
Datchet FP 6	Replacement of stile with kissing gate
Bray FP 38	Replacement of stile with kissing gate
Waltham St. Lawrence FP 38	Footbridge replacement
Maidenhead BR 46 (Muddy Lane)	Bollard to prevent unauthorised vehicular use
Various paths	Signposting works

3. REMOVAL OF STILES

During the period **February 1st to July 31st 2009** stiles were removed from the following footpath:

Bray FP 61	4 stiles replaced with kissing gates
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The Rights of Way officers are liaising with the Ramblers Association regarding priorities for further stile removal projects, as a result of discussions at the Local Access Forum on 30th June.

4. DEFINITIVE MAP AND STATEMENT

There are currently 16 outstanding 'claims' for paths to be added to the Definitive Map and Statement, as shown in Annexe B.

Claims currently being investigated

4.1 Eton claimed footpath 505

The footpath runs from Common Lane to Bell Lane, across an area of public open space owned by Eton College. Discussions are taking place with the College about dedication of the footpath as a public right of way.

4.2 Shottesbrooke claimed footpath 501 (Pundles Lane)

A Definitive Map Modification Order application was received on 30th May 2007. The claimed footpath runs from Shottesbrooke FP 12 to Waltham St Lawrence FP 38

4.3 White Waltham claimed footpath 501

A Definitive Map Modification Order application was received on 22nd August 2008. The claimed footpath runs from White Waltham Restricted Byway 4 (School Lane) southeast to and around a small copse, then north to join White Waltham Footpath 9.

4.4 Wraysbury claimed footpaths 501 to 505

Five Definitive Map Modification Order applications were received on 15th June 2009. The claimed footpaths cross land at Thamesfield, north of Wharf Road, Wraysbury.

4.5 Cox Green claimed Footpath 501

A Definitive Map Modification Order application was received on 8th July 2009 to add a footpath running from Culley Way to Farmers Close.

5 PUBLICATIONS

5.1 Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2005-2015

The Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan is part of the Borough's Local Transport Plan 2006-2011.

The Improvement Plan was published in 2005 as a requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Plan was produced following wide ranging consultations, and identifies a range of potential improvements to the public rights of way network. Annual updates are published as part of the Milestones Statement.

5.2 Milestones Statement 2009/10

The Milestones Statement & Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan review for 2009/10 was approved by the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel on 16th March 2009. The document reviews progress made on public rights of way work in the previous year sets out a range of targets and objectives for the current year.

5.3 Borough Website

The Public Rights of Way pages on the Borough website contain comprehensive information about public rights of way in the borough, including problem report forms, contact details, public notices and consultations, downloadable leaflets and registers of Definitive Map Modification Order applications and Highways Act declarations. The website Parish maps are at the present time unavailable pending a new system being implemented, however, all Public Rights of Way are included in the Council's "Maps Online" interactive mapping service.

Further planned improvements include developing the Easy Going Route information on the website, and improving the links in and around the website to make it easier for users to find information about Public Rights of Way.

The following publications are now available on the website:

- Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2005-2015
- Milestones Statement 2008/09
- Public Rights of Way information booklet
- Public Rights of Way: gardens, hedges and trees leaflet
- The Green Way
- Knowl Hill Bridleway Circuit
- Ascot and Sunninghill Circular Walks
- Cookham Bridleway Circuit
- Foot and Cycle Paths in and around Datchet
- Holyport Health Walk
- Cookham Easy Going Route
- Waltham St Lawrence Parish Paths and Circular Walk Leaflet
- White Waltham Parish and Paths Leaflet

The public rights of way web pages can be found at:

http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/prow_index.htm.

6. PARISH PATHS INITIATIVE

The Royal Borough continues to operate the Parish Paths Initiative (PPI). All parish and town councils in the borough are members of the scheme. The British Horse Society, East Berkshire Ramblers Association and National Trust are also members. Grants are provided to Cookham and Old Windsor Parish Council's who organise path clearance works in their parishes. So far this year the Initiative has arranged for some major clearance work to be carried out in Waltham St Lawrence. It has also given a grant to the National Trust towards the cost of producing a promotional leaflet, and Sunningdale received a grant towards the cost of organising a parish walk. Smaller reactive projects have also been carried out and further improvements are planned.

7. LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

The Local Access Forum was set up in 2003 to advise the Council on improvement of public access to land in the Royal Borough for open-air recreation, as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Forum has adopted the following vision statement: *"a partnership to promote and develop sustainable access for the growing benefit of the environment and all in our community"*.

There is a maximum allowable membership of 22, and the Forum currently has 18 members: see membership list at Annexe C. The Forum currently meets twice a year, with additional informal meetings or site visits scheduled as required. The minutes of the meeting held on **30th June 2009** are included in Annexe D.

A list of Forum members, and downloadable minutes, agendas and annual reports are available on the Local Access Forum web pages at:

http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/prow_local_access_forum.htm.

Anyone interested in applying to join the Forum should contact the LAF Secretary, Andrew Fletcher (01628-796122).

8. THAMES PATH NATIONAL TRAIL

8.1 National Trail Quality Standards

Attached at Annexe E is a copy of the “*Quality Standards for National Trails in England*”, produced by the Countryside Agency and since adopted by the Agency’s successor, Natural England. The standards have been produced as a guide to good practice in the management and maintenance of National Trails throughout England.

8.2 Thames Path at Ray Mead Road

At a meeting held on 3rd August 2009 the Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel decided to proceed with the installation of road crossing facilities at Bridge Gardens, subject to the outcome of a road safety audit and consultations with the local ward Councillors, and to pursue any opportunity that may arise to create a continuous riverside route, for example in association with future redevelopment of the site or area.

8.3 Cookham Footpath 55 (Cliveden Reach) bank erosion problems

Riverbank repairs, erosion control and path reinstatement works were carried out in March 2009.

The improvement works included the installation of stone gabions, revetments, and coir rolls to control future erosion, together with bank side planting. The works, carried out by specialist contractors, have been approved by the Environment Agency, and included 9 sections of riverbank, totalling approximately 75 metres.

Further works to improve the path surface are planned for later in 2009, part-funded by a £15,000 grant from Natural England.

8.4 Old Windsor Footpath 3 (opposite the “Bells of Ousley”) path erosion problems

Repairs have been carried out to an eroded section of the Thames Path at Old Windsor FP 3, together with improvements to the safety barrier between the footpath and the river.

ANNEXE A

Reported problems on Public Rights of Way in the Borough

	Outstanding at 31 st Jan 2009	Reported 1 st Feb 2009 to 31 st July 2009	1st Feb 2009 to 31st July 2009 Resolved	Total Outstanding
ENFORCEMENT				
Ploughing and lack of marking	1	1	1	1
Obstruction by crops	4	7	9	2
Fence encroachment	44	0	1	43
Fence obstruction	10	1	2	9
Building obstruction	3	0	0	3
Other obstructions	35	6	0	41
Stiles	61	5	8	58
Gates	12	0	0	12
Bulls/ other animal problems	2	0	2	0
Unauthorised use by horses	6	2	1	7
Unauthorised vehicular use	4	2	0	6
Electric fencing	3	0	1	2
Misleading notices	2	0	1	1
Intimidation	0	0	0	0
Overhanging vegetation	34	2	1	35
Other Enforcement Problems	44	3	5	42
				-
TOTAL ENFORCEMENT:	265	29	32	262
MAINTENANCE				
Vegetation	42	0	7	35
Rutting	5	4	2	7
Drainage	27	4	4	27
Fallen trees	8	5	2	11
Erosion	46	2	5	43
Tree problems	15	4	6	13
Bridges	28	3	0	31
Safety barriers	14	4	2	16
Steps	3	0	0	3
Roadside signposting	43	11	4	50
Signposting at path junctions	68	5	4	69
Waymarking	46	6	0	52
Rubbish/ waste	7	5	2	10
Other Maintenance Problems	55	13	5	63
TOTAL MAINTENANCE:	407	66	43	430
TOTALS OF MAINTENANCE AND ENFORCEMENT	675	95	75	695

Routine maintenance: work items completed 01/02/2009 – 31/07/2009:	265
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ANNEXE B

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 OUTSTANDING CLAIMED PATHS AUGUST 2009

Parish	Claim no	Claim date	Path description		Comment
			From	To	
Shottesbrooke	FP 501	2007	Shottesbrooke FP 12	Waltham St Lawrence FP38	Claimed Footpath
Eton	FP 505	1977	W end of Common Lane	Bell Lane at entrance to Bell Farm	Claimed for DRM
White Waltham	FP 501	2008	White Waltham RB 4	White Waltham FP 9	Claimed Footpath
Cox Green	FP 501	2009	Culley Way	Farmers Close	Claimed Footpath
Wraysbury	FP 501-505	2009	Various paths at Thamesfield		Claimed Footpath
Eton	FP 502	1977	N of Somerville Rd between numbers 23 and 25	FP 8 Eton	Claimed for DRM
Eton	FP 506	1977	Bend in FP46	Common Lane	Claimed for DRM
Maidenhead	FP 508	1977	Moorfield Terrace	FP 4 Maidenhead	Claimed for DRM
Maidenhead	FP 506	1977	Ray St	FP 4 Maidenhead	Claimed for DRM
Maidenhead	FP 523	1977	Castle Hill	The Crescent	Claimed for DRM
Maidenhead	FP 524	1977	Fane Way, through Desborough Park	Rixman Close and FP56	Claimed for DRM
Wraysbury	FP 500	1977	Staines Road	River Thames	Claimed for DRM, currently 'permitted' by Ankerwycke

Shaded sections indicate claims currently being investigated

Note: DRM = Draft Revised Definitive Map of Berkshire (1976) No evidence or formal applications have been received in respect of these paths, however the paths were included in a list of paths submitted to Berkshire County Council by the Ramblers Association when the Draft Revised Map was produced in 1976.

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

AUGUST 2009

Name	Main Interests
Peter Thorn (Chair) (BCA Burchetts Green)	Land management
Dorothy Allard (Shottesbrooke)	Land management
Guy Badman (Maidenhead)	Cycling
Councillor Malcolm Beer (Old Windsor)	Old Windsor Parish Council, walking, cycling
Margaret Bowdery (Maidenhead)	Walking
June Brayne (Hawthorn Hill)	White Waltham Parish Council
Mike Bruton (Maidenhead)	Disabled rambling; access for disabled
Curly Carver (Cookham Dean)	Land management, common land, National Trust
Bill Cathcart (Crown Estate, Windsor)	Land management
Margaret Cubley (Bisham)	Bisham Parish Council, CPRE, walking, open spaces
Loren Eldred (Princes Risborough, Bucks)	Land Management, Woodland Trust
Hillary Essen (Maidenhead)	Walking for Health, Footpath Warden.
John Foulger (Fifield)	Bray Parish Council, walking
Christine Gadd (Sunningdale)	Sunningdale Parish Council, walking, cycling
Harry Hancock (Burnham, Bucks)	Walking, open spaces
Gordon Harris (Cookham)	Cookham Parish Council, Footpaths and open spaces
Councillor Asghar Majeed (Maidenhead)	RBWM Councillor
Councillor John Stretton (Cookham)	RBWM Councillor

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
30 JUNE 2009
MINUTES**

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Interest area
Peter Thorn	Chairman, Land Management
Guy Badman	Cycling, Sustrans
Malcolm Beer	Walking
Margaret Bowdery	Walking
Bill Cathcart	Land Management
Margaret Cubley	Walking, Open Spaces
Ann Darracott	Maidenhead Civic Society
Loren Eldred	Woodland Trust
Hilary Essen	Walking
John Foulger	Walking
Christine Gadd	Walking, Cycling
Harry Hancock	Walking, Open Spaces
Gordon Harris	Footpaths, Open Spaces
Cllr. Asghar Majeed	RBWM Councillor
Andrew Fletcher	Local Access Forum Secretary
Hollie Andrews	RBWM Public Rights of Way Assistant
Karen Williams	Clerk to the Forum

APOLOGIES

Name

*Councillor Stretton
June Brayne
Curly Carver
Dorothy Allard
Geoff Hill (Vice Chairman)*

ACTION

1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions, Declarations of Interest, Minutes

Peter Thorn welcomed everyone to the nineteenth meeting of the Local Access Forum.

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Stretton, Dorothy Allard, June Brayne, Curly Carver, and Geoff Hill (Vice Chairman)

There were no Declarations of Interest.

The Forum approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 January 2009.

Margaret Bowdery reported that she had received no input to her comments regarding the number of outstanding path claims, some of which were on Council-owned land. Reassurances that such paths were safe had been undermined when one had been dug up in March 2009. **Andrew Fletcher** agreed to discuss the issue with Margaret Bowdery outside of the meeting.

**Andrew
Fletcher**

In relation to the item 'Path Improvement Plan' **Margaret Bowdery** suggested that it would have been useful if the date of the Council resolution (28/9/09) had been included in the minutes as this would have provided some context. Members had been unaware that the presentation had been made after the decision to go ahead with a creation order had been made.

Actions Arising: **Andrew Fletcher** introduced the item and read through the actions taken from the last meeting.

[5.1] **Margaret Bowdery** expressed concern that officers were not currently able to process outstanding paths. **Andrew Fletcher** reported that Parish Councils had been advised that if they owned the land in question, they could dedicate a path themselves.

[6.2] **Margaret Bowdery** commented that she did not understand why £25,000 from the capital budget had been allocated to Network Rail.

[8.1] **Margaret Cubley** highlighted to the Forum that a number of paths along the River Thames, for example in Cookham, were at real risk. Such paths had been used since the end of horse-powered barges, but may never have been properly registered. **Andrew Fletcher** advised that, by statute, paths used for over 20 years became rights of way.

It was AGREED that the Chairman should write again to the Parish Councils to ask if they wished to claim any paths not already on the definitive map. The letter should request that the Clerk refer the matter to the Chairman of the Parish council for attention.

Peter Thorn

[9.1] **Margaret Bowdery** stated that she had not been satisfied with the letter sent to the Chief Executive, which she felt had been worded as though the issue was moving forward, but that this was not the case. The reply had been inadequate and misleading to Forum Members. She reported that she would be attending a meeting on the issue later in the month.

2 LAF Fast Response Team Terms of Reference

Members considered the draft terms of reference for the LAF Fast Response Team. The FRT was designed as a balanced group to deal with consultation and other issues that arose between LAF meetings.

Margaret Bowdery commented that she felt there was a lack of consultation with the LAF, for example in relation to the Waterways plan, the Steiffel Laboratories planning application and the Kinghorn planning application.

In relation to Northtown Moor, **Andrew Fletcher** reported that he had met with the leisure department who ran the consultation and agreed that all future public consultations would include the LAF. The issues raised by **Margaret Bowdery** in relation to planning applications were part of an ongoing debate, as the planning department chose who were the appropriate consultees. He agreed to pass on the LAF's concerns to the planning department. **Peter Thorn** suggested that if officers were notified of any applications with footpath issues, they could be directed to the FRT.

Andrew Fletcher

The Terms of Reference for the FRT were AGREED.

3 Millennium Walk Progress and Constraints

Members received an update on the progress and constraints regarding the establishment of the Maidenhead Civic Society's Millennium Walk project.

In relation to the section between Widbrook Common and Hurley, **Margaret Bowdery** stated that she was exceptionally disappointed when she had read that a decision had been taken to abandon the recommendation of the LAF on the grounds of safety

concerns. She reiterated the request for a site visit.

Peter Thorn explained that there were three key issues hindering progress:

- Crossing the railway line
- Crossing private land at Widbrook
- Crossing the Henley road

Andrew Fletcher reported that discussions were currently underway with the Maidenhead Civic Society and East Berks Ramblers in relation to alternative routes if these issues proved insurmountable.

Ann Darracott stated that there was a clear difference of opinion between the amenity societies and the Highways department regarding the location of electricity cables and speed on the Henley Road.

Harry Hancock suggested that a crossing be installed similar to one already in place on the A24 south Downs crossing. He suggested that a raised island would improve visibility and a mirror would increase the length of vision. **Guy Badman** suggested that an island would also help to slow cars as it would narrow the road. Margaret Cubley stated that the golf club had indicated they would welcome an island to slow traffic.

It was AGREED that a site visit would be arranged. Andrew Fletcher and Peter Thorn would undertake a risk assessment in preparation.

**Andrew
Fletcher /
Peter
Thorn**

4 Annual Report 08/09

Members received information about the preparation of the Annual Report for the activities of the LAF over the past year. **Andrew Fletcher** reported that an extra £185 had to be added to the budget to cover the subscription to the Byways and Bridleways journal.

It was noted that Mike Bruton was no longer a Councillor and that this should be reflected in the membership list. Andrew Fletcher agreed to amend the wording in relation to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan to read 'It also discussed proposed *realignments* of the Thames Path at Bridge Gardens in Maidenhead.....'. He would also remove the section about Permitted Path Packs as this had been discussed the previous year.

**Andrew
Fletcher**

5 Work Programme for the coming year

Members suggested the following items should be included in the work programme for the coming year:

- Two full meetings of the LAF
- Health walks to include: circular walks/community walks/cycle routes for families
- Consultations
- Millennium Path
- A joint project with Bracknell Forest in relation to new and existing cross-boundary routes.

6 Stile Removal Priorities

Members received information about the number of recorded stiles in the Borough and considered which would be a priority for removal or replacement with more suitable furniture.

Margaret Bowdery commented that the Ramblers Association (RA) had undertaken a detailed stile survey every six months since 1999. Prior to 1980 the RA had been involved in the upkeep of stiles but the policy had then been amended as it was realised that stiles were obstructions to some groups. The RA had started a campaign in 2005

for stile removal and was willing to contribute money for this purpose, based on the most used paths and worn stiles. She urged the Royal Borough to adopt the policy of other local authorities that if a stile was found to be in disrepair, the landowner was required to maintain to the local authority's specification.

Andrew Fletcher reported that the obstructed stile in Bisham had now been cleared by the landowner, following the adoption of a more stringent policy by the Borough.

Margaret Bowdery was asked to provide **Andrew Fletcher** with a list of stiles in order of priority for removal.

Margaret Bowdery

7 **National Trails – Quality Standards, Management Policy, Aims and Objectives, S,106 Funding**

Margaret Bowdery stated that National Trails were the flagship of the Public Rights of Way Network and the needs of users should be considered foremost. She expressed concern that without proper funding for maintenance, they could be lost. The Thames Path attracted tourism spending which had as yet not been properly valued. She believed that the LAF deserved an explanation as to why its two requests for Path creation Orders had been refused. She believed that no Councillors had been made aware of the quality standards for National Trails and urged the Forum to recommend this should be done. She also asked why the LAFs's two main projects had not been included in the Stieffel Laboratories planning application. **Ann Darracott** had negotiated to get money allocated to the Millennium Link.

Councillor Majeed supported the suggestion that Councillors on the Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel should be provided with information on quality standards for National Trails.

Peter Thorn suggested that the letter should be resent and that it be passed to the Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel by way of a report. The issue should also be added to the work programme for the coming year.

Andrew Fletcher

8 **Disabled Access – Priority Routes**

Margaret Bowdery suggested that there should be full liaison before paths were upgraded because of the limited funds available, to ensure that only appropriate routes were given full access.

It was AGREED that Margaret Bowdery should discuss the priority paths for full access with Mike Bruton, and report back to Andrew Fletcher.

Margaret Bowdery

9 **Path Maps on the Borough Website**

Andrew Fletcher referred to path maps previously available on the Borough website which were pdf documents of a parish. These maps were degraded in light of Ordnance Survey copyright laws and restrictions on file size. The Borough's new Maps Online services offered new opportunities, but would not allow for the traditional A4 parish maps. With GIS support, the definitive map at a scale of 1:10,000 would be available on the web in the same quality as on paper.

The Forum received examples of maps available on other local authority websites.

It was suggested that any map on the Royal Borough website should include:

- Stiles, gates etc.
- The ability for footpath wardens to annotate to warn of a recent obstruction etc.
- Different colours for disabled routes, bridleways, cycle routes.
- Links to other websites to enable you to plan your route, for example parking and transport and weather forecasts.

Members were reassured that the paper copy of the definitive map would remain

available.

It was AGREED that Parish Councils and the relevant amenity associations should be asked to provide feedback to Andrew Fletcher by the end of July 2009. All Members should also look at other local authority websites and provide feedback to Andrew Fletcher. All

10 Membership Update

Andrew Fletcher reported that there had been no membership changes since the last meeting of the Forum.

It was noted that **Hollie Andrews** had joined the team as the Public Rights of Way Assistant. She was currently conducting a relationship survey.

It was noted that Members who had not sent in their renewal would be contacted. Eton College, the Forestry Commission and the Royal East Berks Agricultural Association had been invited to send a representative to join the Forum, as the Council had a duty to balance the LAF between landowners and users. Members of the Rural Forum would also be invited. Any further membership suggestions should be sent to **Andrew Fletcher**. All

It was noted that recent consultation on coastal change would be considered by the FRT.

11 Any Other Business

The Forum received no items under this heading.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Local Access Forum was provisionally scheduled for **Tuesday 1 December 2009**.

Quality Standards for National Trails in England

BACKGROUND

National Trails cross some of the finest landscapes in England. They provide a nationally and internationally recognised series of walks and rides. We at the Countryside Agency select the Trails using the criteria set out in *Paths, Routes and Trails: Policies and Priorities (CCP 266 1990)*

Our over-arching goal is the maintenance of National Trails to a standard that is consistent and sympathetic to the landscape through which the Trails pass, which meets the needs of users and which is appropriate to their use. This does not mean that we want them to all look alike: each National Trail has its own character and should reflect the distinctive scenery through which it travels. However, certain values are constant and should always be applied.

THE PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL TRAIL QUALITY STANDARDS

These quality standards have been devised to provide better value for money in planning, management and maintenance of the National Trail network, and application of these standards should increase the enjoyment of those who use the Trails.

It is not intended that any one organisation should be responsible for the provision of every item outlined in this document as the delivery of high quality National Trails relies upon a partnership between many organisations and individuals including the Countryside Agency, the local authorities, voluntary bodies, landowners and occupiers, private sector companies, local individuals and communities. These quality standards will ensure that we all work with consistent aims.

The Acorn logo is the recognised symbol for National Trails and also represents a hallmark of high quality provision and management.

PROMOTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The attractions of individual Trails should be promoted in a sensitive manner that echoes their unique qualities using the Brand Guidance that has been developed for this purpose. *National Trails Brand Management, Countryside Agency 2003*

Each of the component parts of a National Trail – path surfaces, furniture, signing and waymarking, interpretive material and ancillary developments – needs to be designed to a consistent style which still reflects local distinctiveness and be built to a high standard that respects the integrity of the surrounding countryside.

Fully trained or supervised people should carry out all work – whether volunteers or contractors – on a scale appropriate to its use as a footpath or bridleway. The work should blend sympathetically into the landscape, taking account of the character of the local countryside

THE STANDARDS

These standards are based upon three main principles:

- Enabling as many people as possible to enjoy access to National Trails
- Protecting the ecological, cultural and landscape features of the areas through which each Trail passes
- Providing sufficient information about the facilities and services that people need to enjoy the route, however long they wish to stay.

The national standards in this document should assist the selection of a suitable management and maintenance regime for each particular Trail and for each section of a Trail. The goals are expressed in terms of what the user should expect to find and this should be used as a guide to good practice. The document has been informed by work designed to increase access to the countryside by people of all abilities.

Categorising the Trails in terms of accessibility will always be subjective but the standards can be facilitated by thinking about the types of experience that users may find in each section of a Trail. Using the duration of a journey on a National Trail as a starting point, we have broken these experiences down into three categories:

****Ambling***

An experience, which can be enjoyed by the short stay visitor, typically involving a short walk/ride either from a recognised and secure car park or public transport access point with facilities such as food and drink available or to a site of interest.

All visitors could enjoy this experience. Detailed audits may be necessary in these areas to assess what changes need to be made to provide least restrictive access.

****Rambling***

This experience is likely to be for longer, typically half a day, involving more strenuous walking/riding on more varied terrain. Access points are still likely to be frequent and signage detailed enough to give the user confidence. Resting places may be required and Trail furniture should be managed appropriately to provide the least restrictive options.

****Scrambling***

A day or multi-day visit that is likely to involve challenging terrain or more strenuous activity such as steep gradient or remote, open country. Visitors need less reassurance (including less signage and

less management of the physical terrain.) Least restrictive options must still be considered in managing these areas.

(NB – these terms should also be taken to mean the experiences enjoyed by horse-riders, cyclist and disabled people.)*

Our aim is to ensure that the National Trail network provides an appropriate balance of different experiences for different users.

Regular user and non user surveys will be used to inform the review of these standards, assess the satisfaction of visitors and steer the setting of local priorities. The User Survey Questionnaire will record the profile of each National Trail user; the duration of their stay and their motivation for the visit along with other questions designed to test both the achievement of these standards and their suitability. Non-user surveys will identify the barriers that are perceived to restrict use of National Trails and ask what else can be done to encourage more visits.

This document also includes information on how we will measure achievement of the standards but full compliance should be seen as a target to be achieved over time as opportunities and resources become available. Those responsible should seek to implement the standards as soon as the need is evident since delay will detract from the quality of experience for Trail users.

THE ROUTE

Our Goal – to provide a path, routed through the finest landscapes, which is easily passable for as many people as is practical, which is safe and maintained sympathetically to its terrain and surroundings, and appropriately for its use

Given the nature of the landscape through which National Trails pass, an entirely level, firm network of paths will not be appropriate or reasonable but the user should expect to find:

A. Alignment

1. A continuous linear route (except where a ferry is required to cross a river or estuary);
2. A route on legally defined public rights of way;
- ↪ 3. A route which is aligned to provide the user with the best views of the surrounding scenery and access to notable viewpoints and places of interest.

Measure 1. The percentage of each Trail that is legally defined.

Measure 2. The percentage of each Trail in the 'best' position..

B. Roads and Crossings

4. A minimum use of metalled roads (i.e. only where there is no alternative);
5. No sections on busy or dangerous roads;
6. Safe crossing points where the route crosses metalled roads or railways;
7. A waiting area is provided where a bridleway crosses a metalled road and "Horse Crossing" signs are erected to warn motorists;
8. Crossings of trunk and "A" roads by footbridges and underpasses where traffic levels and speeds require them;
9. Provision of necessary ferry services to cross rivers and estuaries and services which operate from April to September as a minimum (alternative routes for use when ferry is not operating being indicated). Where local circumstances dictate, ferry services should be accessible for disabled people. Where ferry services link sections of bridleway the ferry must be suitable for horses and pedal cycles;
10. Bridges on bridleways which do not have steps at either end, are constructed of non-slippery and non-echoing materials and are equipped with parapets (high parapets where the bridge carries a bridleway over a road);
11. Fords and bridges constructed so they are not hazardous to a walker or rider.

Measure 3. The percentage of each Trail that is traffic free and off road.

Measure 4. The number of road, rail, river and sea crossings on each Trail that are considered safe.

Measure 5. The percentage of each Trail that has appropriate fords, bridges and ramps.

C. Obstructions

12. A readily passable and unobstructed route (including freedom from undergrowth and over growth);

Measure 6. The percentage of each Trail with an acceptable width.

D. Surfaces

13. A well-managed, sustainable surface which is sympathetic to the landscape (a green sward is the surface of choice but we recognise that this is not always possible);
14. Minimal engineered paths in remote and wild locations;
15. Natural materials, used in places where artificial surfaces are unavoidable, that have been chosen so that they blend sympathetically in colour and texture with their setting, and ideally have been obtained locally – or, where other

- materials, such as geotextiles, have to be used, they are not visible even if erosion has started to occur;
16. Verges are managed, where roads are a necessary part of the route so there is an adequate refuge for a walker or rider encountering traffic;
 17. At no point on a bridleway is the ground soft enough to allow a horse or cycle to sink deeply into it;
 18. That, where it is legally permitted, off road vehicle use is regulated (using suitable management techniques) if it has a significant adverse impact on non-motorised trail users or on the path surface;
 19. That, where there are no off road vehicle rights and where there are demonstrable problems, efforts are made to prevent illegal use by motorised recreational vehicles.

Measure 7. The percentage of each Trail that has an acceptable surface.

Measure 8. The percentage of each Trail where off road vehicle use is causing demonstrable problems

E. Steps

20. The use of steps is kept to a necessary minimum (graded slopes are preferred);

Measure 9. The percentage of each Trail that has appropriate steps and gradients.

TRAIL CORRIDOR

Our goal – to ensure the corridor through which the Trail passes is of the highest quality, with land adjacent to the Trail managed for the full benefit of the landscape and its habitats and heritage features and where inappropriate development is kept to a minimum

The user should expect to find:

F. Corridor Management

21. Intensive agriculture and forestry is kept to a minimum;
22. Historic features conserved and well-managed;
23. The use of adjacent fencing only where essential for agricultural or security needs (wherever possible hedging and banking should be used instead of fencing);
24. Their view unobstructed by inappropriate development or eyesores.

Measure 10. The percentage of each Trail corridor that is of the highest quality.

TRAIL FURNITURE

Our goal – to ensure that Trail users have a safe, enjoyable experience that reflects the landscape in which they are travelling

The user should expect to find:

G. Quality Design

25. Consistent high quality design, style and use of materials to suit the character of the local landscape with historical features maintained where possible;
26. Furniture that is well-maintained, safe, comfortable, easy and convenient to use;
27. Least restrictive options used at all gaps (eg gaps where no stock control is required, but where stock or illegal use requires control then gates rather than stiles.) Kissing gates should allow sufficient clearance for a user with a backpack but should not be used where people using personal mobility vehicles or wheelchairs can access the path. Where stiles are unavoidable they should be accessible for dogs in accordance with agricultural needs;
28. Gates which can be opened and closed without the need for lifting and which are equally easy to open and close from either side. For bridleways, self-closing gates are preferred with catches which can be operated with one hand and reached from the saddle;

Measure 11. The percentage of each Trail that has appropriate furniture.

SERVICES

Our Goal – to help ensure that people using a National Trail have access to relevant services which complement their enjoyment of the Trail

The user should expect to find:

H. Access points

29. Principal starting, stopping and finishing points accessible by public transport;
30. Small, unobtrusive, informal car parks located close to the Trail at principal starting/stopping/finishing points which are not served by public transport;
31. Well-managed rights of way or permissive routes connecting the Trail to nearby settlements and services and usable for circular routes;

Measure 12. The percentage of access points on each Trail that are accessible by public transport and appropriately connected.

I. Accommodation

32. Accommodation (also for horses where appropriate), camp sites and refreshment facilities available generally within one mile, but not more than 3 miles of principal starting, stopping and finishing points (a variety of accommodation – campsites, bunkhouses, hostels, bed and breakfast, hotels – should be available);

Measure 13. An assessment made of how well serviced each Trail is, including an understanding of the average accommodation capacity of each Trail within a one-mile corridor and the percentage of available accommodation that is “graded”.

J. Other Services

33. Drinking water for public consumption and for horses and dogs available at convenient locations along each Trail or, in areas where this is not possible, information on distances to next watering point;
34. Parking for horseboxes, equipped with hitching posts, available near Trails which are available to horses (at farmsteads or other secure locations);
35. A Trail free of litter and dog mess (if receptacles are provided at honeypot locations they should be emptied regularly and frequently);

Measure 14. Percentage of each Trail that is litter and dog mess free.

INFORMATION

Our Goal – to ensure that easily identified information is available for each National Trail to enable people to enjoy and plan their experience

The user should expect to find:

K. Branding

36. Information that is accurate, relevant, interesting and co-ordinated, carrying a consistent message presented in an appropriate form;
37. Details of contact points on all media to enable faults and incidents to be reported and to enable users to feedback comments on the Trail and its management.

Measure 15. The percentage of officially produced Trail information that is currently accessible and branded in accordance with national guidance.

L. Mapping

38. The line of the Trail, including the location of refuge huts, marked accurately on Ordnance Survey maps;

Measure 16. The number and percentage of official guide books and maps that mark each Trail accurately.

M. Print

NB Information should be made available in different languages and formats as local demand dictates.

- 39. Printed material for each Trail which includes an official guidebook, a Trail summary leaflet (which includes safety information and the location of other necessary services), an accommodation guide, a public transport guide, and a guide to circular walks based upon the Trail;
- 40. A guide to the location of farriers, saddlers and vets if the Trail is promoted to horse riders;
- 41. A guide to the location of cycle repair and hire facilities if the Trail is promoted to pedal cyclists;
- 42. On sections of Trail legitimately used by motor vehicles, information warning other users of the likelihood of encountering them;
- 43. Guides to local history, geology, wildlife, archaeology and environmental education opportunities;

Measure 17. The availability a Trail summary introductory leaflet for each trail

Measure 18. The availability of a Trail public transport guide for each Trail

Measure 19. The availability of a series of promoted circular walks/ rides for each Trail.

O. Online Promotion

- 44. A fully accessible website presence for each Trail and for the family of National Trails;

Measure 20. The provision of accessible, complete and up to date online information including a fact file and accommodation for each Trail.

Measure 21. The provision of a complete database against the national criteria. (Covering accommodation, services etc) for each Trail

SIGNING

Our Goal –to ensure the Trail is easy to follow with unobtrusive but clear signing

The user should expect to find:

P. Quality way marking

45. The Acorn logo on all signs
46. Waymarking is colour coded in accordance with national guidelines to indicate the status of the route
47. Directional posts, signed in both directions, bear the name of the Trail (abbreviated if necessary), the Acorn logo, the status of the route and, where they are located at principal access points, additional information about destinations and accurate distances;
48. Adjoining link paths signed “from” and “to” the National Trail in appropriate locations;
49. The design style is consistent and the materials used are sympathetic to the local landscape;
50. On remote sections of Trail, where the principal use is long-distance walking or riding, signing is provided only to the extent necessary to ensure public safety and guide users at key locations;
51. In honey pot areas, signing as recommended above is supplemented by additional signing at all starting, stopping and finishing points indicating villages, car parks, public transport links, other rights of way and other services;

Measure 22. The number and percentage of signs that meet the standard on each Trail

Measure 23. The number of information panels in comparison to the number of access points on each Trail and the percentage of these that refer to the National Trail appropriately.

Q. Other signs

52. No misleading notices;
53. Temporary diversions clearly marked in advance and at the point of the diversion. Diversions should also be publicised on the Trail website and at local Tourist Information Centres;
54. Where there is a temporary diversion, the information is user-friendly and includes the length of time for which the diversion will apply;

Measure 24. The number and percentage of highway authorities on each Trail that comply with temporary diversion procedure best practice.