

**Countryside Access
Oxfordshire County Council
Speedwell House
Speedwell Street
Oxford
OX1 1NE**

**Bev Hindle – Strategic Director
for Communities**

RIGHTS OF WAY MONITORING GROUP

A meeting of the Rights of Way Monitoring Group will be held on Friday 13th October 2017 at 10.00am.

VENUE: Meeting Room 2, County Hall, Oxford

Chair: Hugh Potter – Team Leader – Area Operations Hub

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies and Introductions**
- 2. Minutes** To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 7th April 2017
- 3. Matters Arising**
- 4. Communities Restructure** – An update on impacts on CA delivery
- 5. Definitive Map & Commons** - Report by the Interim Senior Rights of Way Officers
- 6. Countryside Access and Information** – Report by Countryside Access Team Leader
- 7. National Trails**
 - 6a Thames Path** - Report by Thames Path Manager
 - 6b Ridgeway** – Report by Ridgeway Officer
- 8. OCAF papers** Draft minutes of 24 May 2017 meeting
NB. Next OCAF meeting is 1 November @ County Hall, Oxford
- 9. Monitoring Group ToR** – Draft Terms of Reference for comment
- 10. Any Other Business**

Please note:

If you cannot attend the meeting **please advise**, and if possible send someone else to represent your organisation. If you no longer wish to receive these papers, or they should be sent to someone else, please let us know so we can make the necessary amendments the mailing list.

Future meeting dates: 06.04.2018 & 12.10.18 TBC

RIGHTS OF WAY MONITORING GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on 7th April 2017 at County Hall, Oxford

PRESENT

Members

Nick Moon	Oxford Fieldpaths Society/Chiltern Society
Jim Parke	Oxford Fieldpaths Society
Gordon Garraway	CPRE
David Godfrey	Ramblers
Stuart McGuinness	Witney MTB – OCAF
Chris Blomfield	Trail Riders Fellowship
Ian Clarke	Trail Riders Fellowship
Chris Bell	Oxford City Council
Chris Hall	Open Spaces Society
Troth Wells	British Horse Society & OCAF

Oxfordshire County Council Officers

Hugh Potter	Countryside & Records Manager (Chair)
Eleanor Hazlewood	Senior Rights of Way Officer (Interim)
Sarah Cotton	Countryside Access Admin Support Assistant
James Blockley	Countryside Access Team Leader

1. Introduction and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and members introduced themselves. Apologies were received from Dave Scott - CVWA, Alan Futter & Stephen Fox - Chilterns Society, & Jeanette Hinton- Smith - South & Vale DC HP reported to the group that the teams previously based at Signal Court had moved to Speedwell House in central Oxford and the directorate title had changed from Environment & Economy to Communities. In addition there was a further restructuring of the directorate currently underway affecting all areas but he could not give details of the proposed changes at the time of the meeting. NM enquired if the DMC team would move to a different location. HP responded that discussions were in progress and there were no plans to separate teams at present.

2. Minutes of meeting 14th October 2016

Minutes were agreed with the following amendments:

- 2.1 Correction to the spelling of *Charles Wrench* BHS
- 2.2 Item 3, correction to *“the problems become difficult to walk around”*
- 2.3 Item 5.5 correction to *“who is responsible”*
- 2.4 Item 6b correction of spelling to *“Ridgeway”*

3. Matters Arising.

3.1 Item 2.3 – HP reported he had not yet actioned the Terms of Reference, it will be a topic for discussion at the next meeting. It had previously been agreed that

changes implemented to the MG format at the time [October 2015] would be reviewed at two years [October 2017]. HP to circulate again the final review report with the minutes of this meeting **Action HP**

3.2 NM enquired if dates for future meetings could be included on the Agenda. HP agreed this would be done. **Action HP**

3.3 Item 2.5 NM enquired if anything was happening on the diversion package for Cuddesdon & Denton. EH responded as far as she was aware Andy Sylvester had not heard anything. CH commented that he did not want the diversion at all.

3.4 Item 2.9 Oxford Cruisers, JB reported he did not have a written statement prepared but he and Arthur McEwan-James [Field Officer], had met with the owners who were now moving various vehicles etc. off the definitive line with the aim to have the route clear by Easter. JB will arrange a follow-up visit to ensure this work is completed and report back at next meeting. GG responded he was happy now that action had been taken and thanked the team for ensuring the matter had been followed up. **Action JB**

3.5 Item 3.2 NM reported that further to the discussion topic at a previous meeting the fencing at Dorchester was a useful illustration of the impact of enclosing PRow with fencing can have; regardless of being legal it was still undesirable.

3.6 Item 4.4 HP to discuss with Charles Wrench what the issue was. **Action HP**
Post meeting note: HP has now located the relevant correspondence and replied to CW directly

3.7 Item 5.1 JB reported that communications with the landowner at Marcham Mill were ongoing, but responses to OCC's letters are often considerably delayed. HP is trying to arrange a meeting with the landowner and expressed his frustration that the two parties now seem quite close but there is now yet a further delay on a minor matter. TW enquired if can we get the contractors to stop driving vehicles, HP responded this is part of the discussion. GG enquired if there was any legal action we could take against the landowner if he is obstructing the PRow, HP responded we have looked at all options, but Bridges law is complex and it is not as easy to pursue this course of action as it is with other matters relating to PRow. CB enquired if the landowner owned the property and surrounding area, HP responded he does.

3.8 Item 5.3 CH enquired if the autumn cropping letter had been sent with the last minutes, HP responded he understood it had. This was confirmed by JB & other members

3.9 Item 5.6 HP reported he had not heard anything from Harry St John regarding the CLA approach to cycling on Fps. TW enquired is it worth getting representation from Strava, HP stated it could be considered although as discussed previously they only collate information, the issue is how riders conduct themselves. GG had similar concerns and enquired if anything could be done in the form of leaflets to cycling groups/shops. TW enquired if signage could be changed. SMG reported that a lot of routes were dis-jointed due to housing developments, busy roads & historical anomalies and cyclists use footpaths to make the missing links in the network. CB

enquired if it was a behavioural issue of not wanting them there at all, GG responded he thought it was behavioural. NM reported in the Reading area there were large volumes of cyclists and the problem was worse on narrow routes e.g. a towpath. HP responded this was a national problem and a challenge for both users and professionals. TW enquired if Scotland had changed their rules, SMG responded that anyone can use a right of way in Scotland and suggested a Code of Conduct or signs. HP will take this away and raise the issue at the next regional ADEPT [Regional PRow managers meeting] to see if anyone has any Codes of Conduct, best practice, or measures that had proved successful that might assist Oxfordshire's approach to the issue. However, the activity was very likely to continue with status becoming less of an issue for the 'digital' generation **ACTION HP** JB suggested working through local groups that represent the cyclists as any code of conduct would have more weight if seen to have been developed by cyclists for cyclists. He suggested working closely with SMG and OCAF to develop a draft.

4. Definitive Map and Commons - Presented by Eleanor Hazlewood

4.1 GG enquired if the Culham FP to be extinguished was the one that goes across the railway bridge, EH confirmed she understood it was. NM commented he was not happy about extinguishing it and thought it should be diverted instead. HP responded that there will be the opportunity to comment in due course.

4.2 TW raised concerns about how long it was taking to process DMMO's and enquired if in the Statement of Priorities [SoP] processing DMMO's should come before updating the map? HP responded that they are looking at updating the SoP but as the team were working with significantly reduced resources this had not been possible. It would also need to [if possible] include any changes brought about by the Deregulation Act [DeReg] 2015. We also need to look at the ROWMP which is our principal policy document to ensure it aligns with policy objectives and consider how other authorities do things bearing in mind the 'cut-off' date of 2026. The DMC team are currently looking at restructuring the team to better deliver their work, they now only have 2 full time members of staff and others are all part time. He confirmed there were no resources from central government to support this work directly. EH commented that they need to look at it with revised priorities and different ways of processing applications and the group will have the opportunity to comment on any proposed changes. SMG commented that routes need to join up. CH commented he was pleased to hear matters were being looked at and suggested that consideration should be given to the potential loss of witnesses in cases where witnesses were too old by the time the cases came up for processing/orders made. EH responded they were aware of it and recommended obtaining a signed witness statement sworn as a statutory declaration which could be a way to overcome this problem.

HP responded that while any revisions are likely to be affected by DeReg there was a growing need to press ahead and we would aim to have something in draft form for the autumn. SMG enquired if this could be brought to the next OCAF meeting? HP responded May would be too soon but we would aim to get something in draft to the autumn meeting.

TW enquired as to why there was a backlog, NM commented it was his recollection the significant backlog stems back to the 1990's when the process was within OCC Legal Services. DMC inherited the backlog, which had remained at roughly the same

level as it was then due to resources available. HP responded that they were seeking to consolidate posts in the restructure of the team to ensure capacity was retained for this work, however this is still subject to approval.

TW enquired if anyone could appeal to the Secretary of State and had anyone done this. EH responded yes they had including a recent case but Planning Inspectorate were usually satisfied provided the authority has a SoP in place and is applying it consistently. But the process detracts from the work being done on other cases in progress.

CH commented that the applicant in Chippinghurst had been appealed applied twice and was turned down on both occasions.

HP closed the item by stating the team remained committed to the task and by undertaking a thorough review of the process efficiencies could be made. However, as we got closer to 2026 pressure and number of applications were likely to increase, so the demand on resources was unlikely to subside.

5. Countryside Access and Information - Presented by James Blockley.

5.1 JB drew attention to recent progress and success, alongside challenges, contained in the written report. He reported that the cessation of the two vacant posts (Assistant Field Officer and Assistant Countryside Tasks) was intended to meet saving targets, but had presented a real challenge to team caseload and operational delivery.

5.2 In addition to the caseload outturn stats contained in the report, JB offered the following summary: Over the 2016/17 financial year:

- 1580 issues were received
- 1240 issues were resolved (excluding repeat maintenance jobs)
- 274 km of soft vegetation clearance carried out (975 individual jobs)
- 7.1 km of hard vegetation clearance (24 jobs)

The hard vegetation clearance was significantly down on the previous period, primarily due to a delay in commencing caused by staff shortage and worksheet backlog, but JB highlighted that demand for this service has far outstripped ability to respond for many years, and that a firmer approach to the programme is being explored.

5.3 DG thanked the teams for the work done on recent issues, which were carried out very quickly while the team were on site.

5.4 DG reported that a number of paths in the Sunningwell/North Aston areas in particular had had traffic closure orders on them for some considerable time. JB responded that Sunningwell was making progress; Hardwell Lane - there was no timescale and recommended that any particular issues were submitted in advance.

5.5 JP commented that the teams do need to remain together in the proposed restructure. JB responded that he is working to ensure this happens. CH enquired if use could be made of the representatives here today to report back to the councillors. HP responded this is an internal restructure and now was not the time to do this. However, he acknowledged and thanked JP for the offer and the support expressed by others for the work of the team[s] and undertook to update the group should circumstances change

5.6 TW paid thanks for everything the Countryside team[s] are doing. HP & JB acknowledged and thanked her for her kind words

6. National Trails

Thames Path & Ridgeway Reports presented by Hugh Potter.

6.1 NM commented that he would like to see something done about designation of the Thames Path on the riverside path at Lower Shiplake. HP responded that the matter is with Natural England to decide but not a priority, there are 2 alternative routes in discussion and he will ensure it is raised at the next Thames Path Partnership meeting – **ACTION HP**

7. Oxfordshire Way & Circular Walks

Presented by Hugh Potter/James Blockley

7.1 JP commented that quite a few recreational routes are owned by different organisations but there are a number of routes where groups have not taken ownership or actively managing them e.g. Shakespeare Way/Macmillan Way. JB responded that all high quality routes require a degree of active management that cannot be exclusive to CAT in isolation and that the concentration should be on quality as opposed to quantity. JP enquired if there could be a role for the PPW's for the paths in their parish. JB agreed that the PPWs are uniquely placed to assist with this work and he would discuss this further with JP.

7.2 JP enquired who looked after the Shakespeare Way and added that there appeared to be no active management and its historical significance was tenuous.

7.3 HP stated that there was a portfolio of walks on the OCC website but no dedicated budget or capacity to run things. JB reiterated that whilst there is no dedicated budget, promoted access remains a function of the CAT, but that its role is more one of information maintenance and coordination as opposed to active management. CAT is ideally placed to bring different groups involved with key routes together, to direct to funding opportunities, and to coordinate action, whilst providing advice.

7.4 JB stated that the future capacity of CAT to be actively involved with these routes is uncertain, but it is inevitable that if a core 'family' of quality long and short distance promoted routes is to remain, that voluntary input will need to increase.

7.5 JB mentioned that there is scope for a secondment or graduate internship to review the Oxfordshire promoted access 'offer', carry out an audit of information available, work with volunteers to create an inspection programme and develop an action plan for the future. He will explore the potential with a view to reporting back at the next meeting **ACTION JB**

7.6 NM commented the cuts meant OCC could only concentrated on their statutory duties so other things should be taken back by the organisations to ensure the

routes in place. NM advised that there was a meeting taking place shortly about the Oxfordshire Way and a new guidebook.

7.7 JB drew attention to the questions put forward to members in the paper. There was open discussion on these, but no firm conclusions / actions. JB asked members to give these questions further consideration for discussion at the next meeting. Promoted access may warrant a standing item on the agenda (MG or OCAF) in future if CAT is to provide a county-wide coordinating role. Any thoughts or questions could be addressed to him in the meantime.

8. OCAF Papers

Presented by Hugh Potter- ROWMG members were reminded they can attend these meetings as observers.

9. AOB

9.1 TW reported that it was BHS 'Ride Out month in May and any issues on the network could be reported.

9.2 CH requested clarification regarding the processing of a Public Path Order diversion by a consultant in Didcot and comments they had made about the suitability of the path surface about which the OSS had concerns. He requested assurance OCC would ensure the surface was appropriate for its intended use as/when the order was confirmed/certified. HP confirmed OCC would inspect the route prior to any confirmation and asked CH to provide details of the case. CH will provide further details of the incident. EH to discuss with Andy Sylvester

Action CH/EH

HP closed the meeting after confirming the dates of the next two meetings and thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution

NEXT MEETINGS:

Friday 13th October 2017
Friday 6th April 2018

Rights of Way Monitoring Group

Communities Restructure – An update on the delivery of Countryside Access

1. Background

This briefing note is intended to update members of the Rights of Way Monitoring Group [MG] and the Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum [OCAF] on the recent internal restructure of the Infrastructure Delivery Service and its impacts on Countryside Access [CA], Definitive Map & Commons [DMC] and National Trails [NT].

The following refers to the outcome and impacts of Phase 1 of the Infrastructure Delivery restructure. The DMC team while included below are part of Phase 2 which will commence this autumn but about which no details are yet known.

The strategic direction of the council has changed and is now driven more by the need to be more efficient and locally accessible by working in partnership across the county, not just delivery of services in isolation.

As part of the recent unitary council debate it was made clear that Oxfordshire CC as a strategic authority was not as accessible or responsive to public needs and requirements as it could be, and in order to succeed in delivering services more effectively and to engage more directly with local communities, changes were required.

The restructure seeks to realign the way the wider Highways service is delivered by reintroducing multi disciplinary teams in area offices covering the north and south of the county supported by a centrally based 'Hub' team covering specialist functions..

The key principles driving the restructure were:

- Simpler – More efficient allocation of resources by linking similar functions together
- Better Services – A more effective service that is able to react to local needs, allowing more local input where appropriate
- More local – Area based working enabling closer working relationships with local people including Town and Parish Councils whilst promoting and enabling local councils to deliver services themselves through agreement with OCC
- Lower costs – Seek efficiencies and closer working by removing barriers, perceived or otherwise, between teams in the Highway service
- Share expertise - Enable staff to work in/across multi-disciplinary teams thereby sharing expertise and covering some inspection activity more effectively.

2. Impacts

The Countryside & Records group no longer exists. The teams within it have been split across two areas, with the Countryside Access professional lead and National

Trails now within the Area Operations Hub, of which I am the Team Leader, and Technical Intelligence group within which the DMC team now reside. Please see the structure plans at annex 1-4.

For existing staff these changes have presented considerable challenge, both to understand, accept and to make work in practice. It is important to stress we are still at an early stage and the full impacts and potential benefits have yet to be seen or appreciated. It is however a radical change from previous ways of working. The teams continue to be based in a single location at Speedwell House except for the Field Officers who are now based in the depots.

2.1 Countryside Access

The restructure has had a significant impact on the CA team. The grouping that has remained relatively unchanged for 28 years has now been split into four functional areas:

Area Operations Hub [AOH] – James Blockley's role has changed but he remains the professional lead for Countryside Access leading high level work including setting policy, monitoring performance, consistency of delivery across the north/south areas, enforcement and is the key point of contact for the Principal Officers in the north/south areas teams*. He no longer directly line manages the Field Officers – see below. He also has additional responsibility for effective delivery of the county Tree function with a specialist officer reporting to him as well as overseeing the hosting of the National Trails team. I continue to act as host and lead partner representative and remain actively involved in the management of NT staff and overseeing the county Tree function.

Field Officer – AOH - Jackie Smith's previous role as Assistant Field Officer has now been deleted but a new developmental Field Officer role has been created working alongside James in the AOH group. Jackie has been successful in securing this role through competitive interview.

Tasks Team – Remain at the Signal Court workshop and under the direct control of James in the AOH. Their work continues unchanged.

Field Officers – The four posts have been relocated within the north/south groups based at Drayton/Deddington depots and have been retitled Officer – Countryside Access. Their day to day work is managed locally by a Principal Officer* [PO] responsible for a number of highway disciplines. Their priority remains countryside access, but in the new model they will be expected to be first point of contact for all highways related issues within a small defined area. James is working closely with the PO's in the areas to ensure that PRoW management is sufficiently understood and resourced and that officers are suitably supported.

Adam McQueen – who manages the CAMs system is now part of the Highway Systems team who manage all the IT systems used across the Highways Service. Adam has worked very closely with this team in the past and he remains the lead for CAMs and this will continue as the delivery of the Countryside Access function relies heavily on this system. Consequently Adam maintains close ties with CA colleagues

Paul Harris – His role has moved to a combined policy group with a number of other specialist roles. At this point he retains all his previous roles and leads on supporting OCAF, strategic planning, web page updates & development and the recreational brief. Further consideration of this group and individual roles will be made clear in Phase 2 of the restructure.

2.2 National Trails Team

The NTT remain unchanged other than an alteration in line management although in practice this is being shared between James and I.

2.3 Definitive Map & Commons

As indicated above they are once again in a separate group to the AOH Countryside Access function. They were not part of Phase 1 of the restructure and have still not been able to recruit to vacant posts as there is a pending internal restructure of the team so they are better resourced to deal with their considerable workload. There is an appetite to address the pressures in the team and we should know shortly what is proposed in Phase 2. Lisa and Eleanor have continued to do a sterling job in very challenging circumstances and it will be good to have some clarity, finally, around the future of the team.

3. Work in progress

This is a very different model to that which we've known before and existing staff are working hard to make it a success. James and I are working hard to ensure the role of the staff is clearly understood, they are supported and service delivery remains effective. Representations were made as part of the consultation highlighting the risks associated with splitting up a small specialist team and which to many was already delivering against the new objectives. However we are now in a position where we seek to mitigate any impact and ensure the teams remain as a visible and effective unit even if they are managed and work from different locations.

We remain committed to the Rights of Way Management Plan objectives, the roll out of the Priority Caseload Approach will continue and we are securing further development of the CAMs system to enable remote and more efficient working. So on many levels its business as usual, it's just the staff are not structured in the same way as before.

We are also fortunate that our new Portfolio Holder, Cllr Yvonne Constance, is a keen advocate of the CA team and its work. James' report features recent activity in the SW of the county which has attracted some high profile acknowledgement and thanks for the team. This is something James, Lisa and I are keen to cultivate as she has considerable influence and we are all encouraged by her positive interest and endorsement for this work.

At the time of writing the restructure has only been in place since 1st September, so we are still at a very early stage and like all changes it will take time for things to bed in and there will be issues which arise. There are potential benefits in terms of

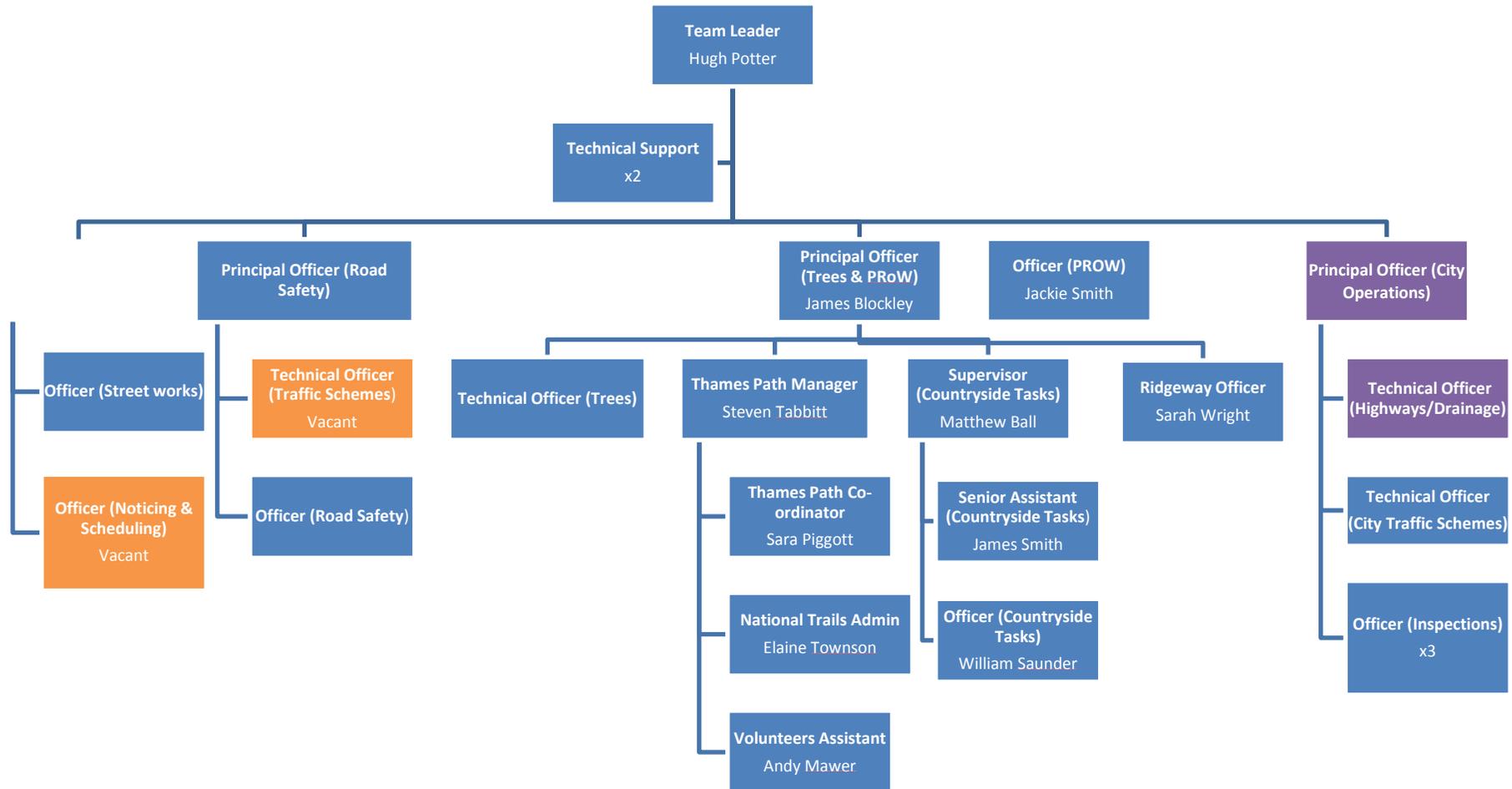
understanding between colleagues, increasing awareness and understanding around what Countryside Access is and does and potentially broadening the potential of more inspection and activity on the PRow network. Only time will tell whether the proposed benefits and intention of the restructure will succeed.

We continue to monitor the effectiveness and impact of the changes and welcome your experience of how this is working for our external partners. This structure has been designed with the express purpose of delivering services more effectively in partnership and locally. We need to know if you have seen any evident benefits or improvements or if due to the way in which it is currently being administered it is having impacts that give cause for concern.

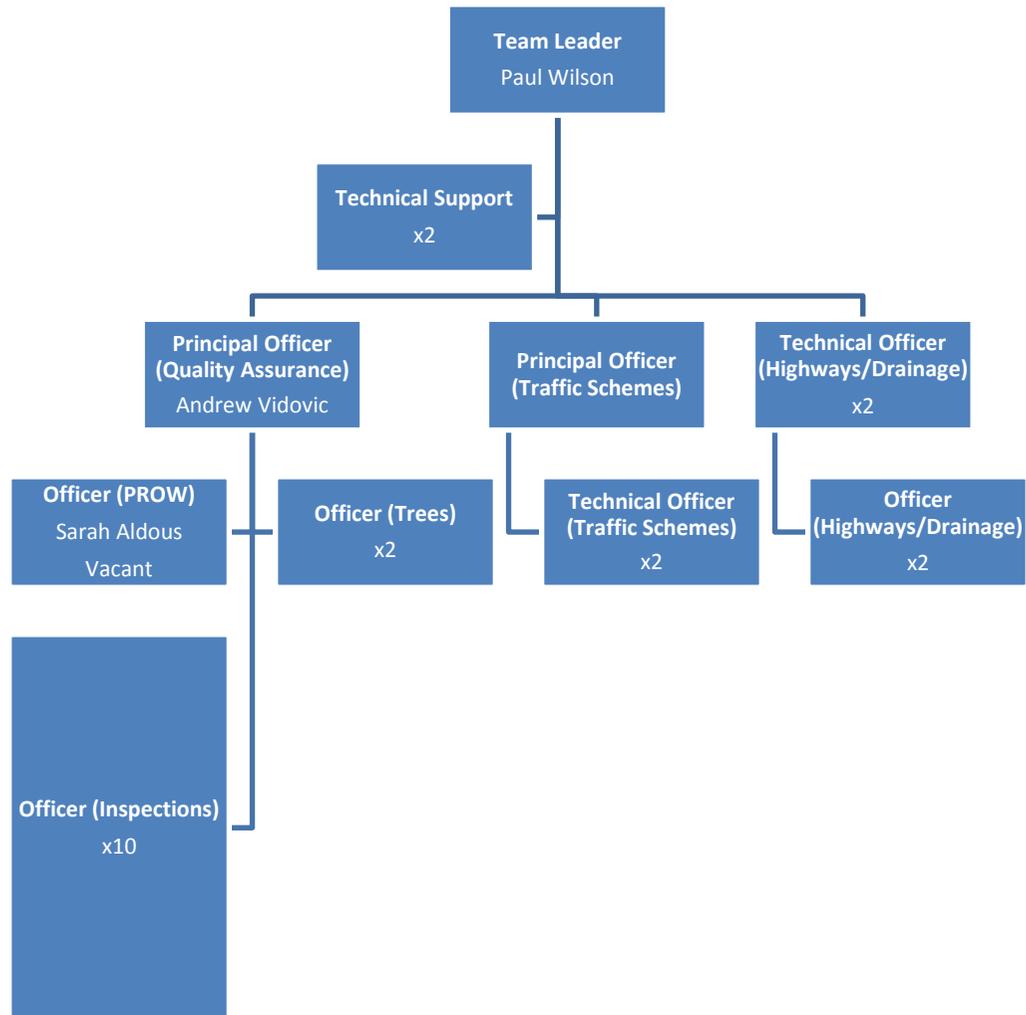
The reality is resources and capacity were already stretched before the restructure, and in this model there remains limited capacity available to support your work. However, the partnership and understanding we have nurtured over many years remains vital to the successful management of the PRow network across Oxfordshire. Cllr Constance has paid tribute to that partnership in her statements both publically and to staff. Therefore we value your comments, observations and feedback on your experience at this point as service users, our partners and supporters of the work of the wider Countryside Access team.

Hugh Potter
Team Leader – Area Operations Hub
October 2017

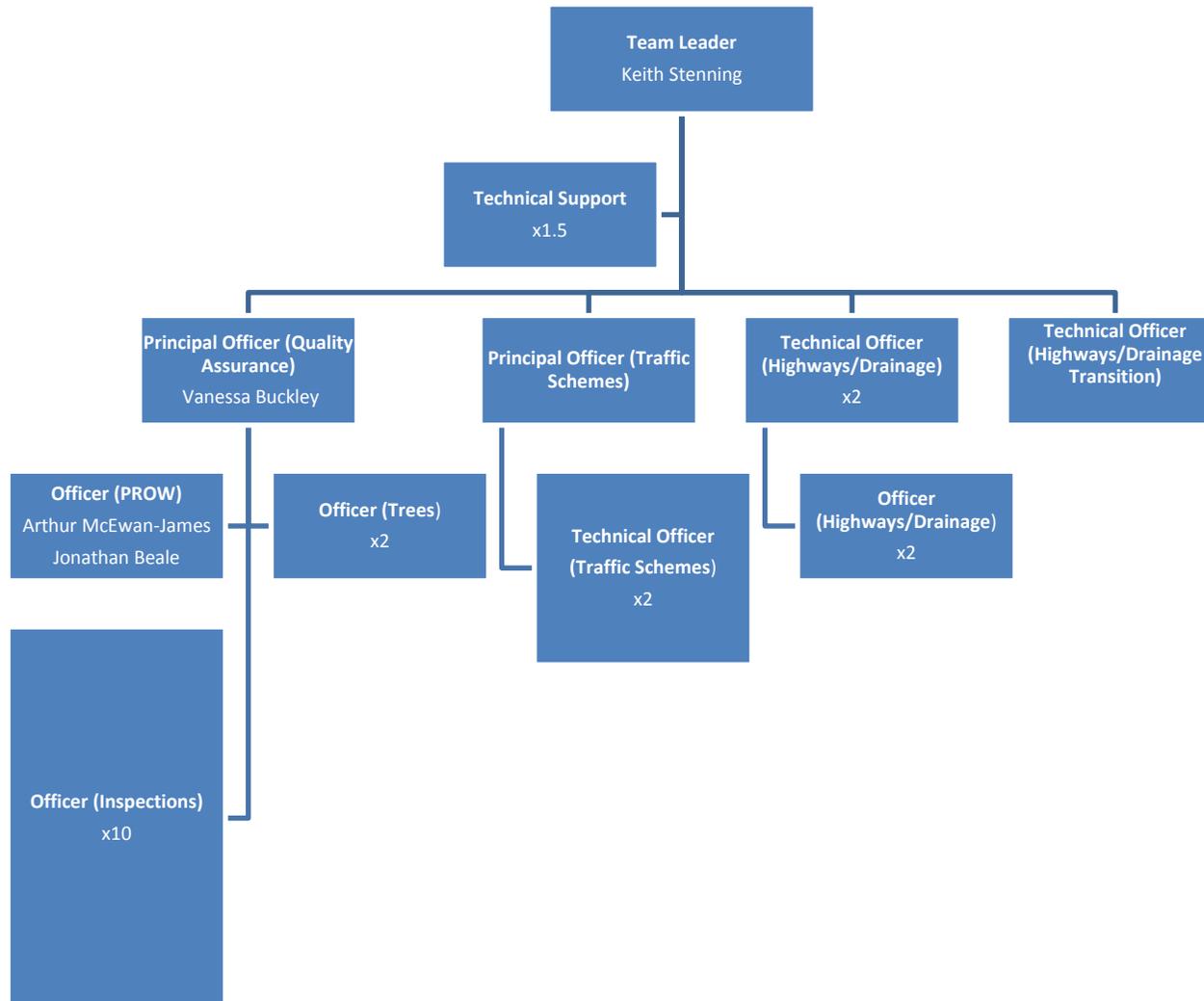
Slide 1 - Infrastructure Delivery Group - Area Operations Hub – October 2017



Slide 2 - Infrastructure Delivery Group - Area Operations North [covering West/Cherwell] – October 2017



Slide 3 - Infrastructure Delivery Group - Area Operations South [covering South/Vale] – October 2017



Slide 4 - Infrastructure Delivery Group – Technical Intelligence – October 2017

TBC – No slide currently available

**Rights of Way Monitoring Group
13th October 2017**

Interim Senior Rights of Way Officer’s Report

Introduction

This report sets out progress in this period according to the different areas of Definitive Map work as follows:

1. Definitive Map Modification Orders - Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
 2. Definitive Map and Statement
 3. Public Path Orders - Town & Country Planning Act 1990
 4. Public Path Orders - Highways Act 1980
 5. Public Path Agreements - Highways Act 1980
 6. General
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1. Definitive Map Modification Orders and Applications - Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 s53

95 cases are pending countywide.

The latest position is given below.

More detail can be found in the “Pending DMMO case list” report which is updated monthly, and the statutory “DMMO Register” which lists all cases, both pending and complete, received since 31 December 2005. Both reports can be found at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/modificationsanddiversions.

New Applications

Parish	Effect	Location	Status
Hailey	Upgrade to bridleway	To upgrade Hailey Footpath No.7 to a bridleway	Received 17 Mar 2017
Chalgrove	Add RB	To Add a Restricted Byway from High Street to St Mary's Church	Received 29 Mar 2017
Hailey	Add FP	To Add a Footpath from Hatfield Pits Lane, north of Jobs Copse (SP 36272 13058) to New Yatt Lane (SP 36734 13346)	Received 06 Jul 2017
Hailey	Add FP	To add a Footpath from Hatfield Pits Lane at Gigley	Received 06 Jul 2017

		Green (SP 36485 13762) to New Yatt Lane (SP 36996 13260).	

Non Application case

Parish	Effect	Location	Status
West Hanney	To determine the width of BOAT 2 (part)	From East Hanney Restricted Byway 17 to School Road / the Causeway	Informal consultations issued 14.08.17

Applications at pre-determination stage

Parish	Effect	Location	Status
Checkendon/Stoke Row	Add FP	From Neal's Lane/Busgrove Lane, corner of Busgrove Wood, Stoke Row, to Common Wood	Informal consultations issued 12.05.15
Didcot, East Hagbourne, Harwell, East Hagbourne	Add 6 FP's	A: E Hagbourne-Park Road at SU51518891 to East Hagbourne FP1 at SU51228889 B: Harwell BR1 at SU49899071 to Harwell FP23 at SU50259068 L: Didcot/W Hagbourne-B4493 (Wantage Rd) at SU51138979 to FP 'M' at SU5079389504 M: FP'L' at SU5079389504 to B4493 at SU50608963 P: Didcot FP35 at SU50869091 to meet Didcot FP34 (proposed) at SU51189091 R: Didcot FP35 at SU50619074 to SU50739060 (An additional 8 routes were also applied for, but have since been dedicated)	Informal consultations issued 23.08.16
Chinnor	Add FP	From Greenwood Avenue to St Andrew's Road, Chinnor	Informal consultations issued 28.7.15
Sutton Courtenay	Add FP	from All Saints Lane to Churchmere Road, via the Millennium Common.	Informal consultations issued 21.9.15

Shenington with Alkerton	Add FP	To add a footpath from Stocking Lane (SP37034283) to Kenhill Road at the Bell Inn (SP37124286)	Informal consultations issued 06.04.16
Wallingford	Add FP	To add a footpath from the corner of paddock Road/Wormald Road to a gate on Squires walk at the back of 18-18 Reading Road.	Informal consultations issued 17.08.16
Various locations across Oxfordshire	All 32 NERCA affected RB to BOAT applications	To upgrade RB to BOAT – various locations	Applicants contacted for evidence of exceptions 10.02.17. No evidence submitted

Applications determined

Parish	Effect	Location	Status
South Newington	Add FP	From the ford at the east end of Moor Lane, along the south bank of the river Swere for approx. 175m, to a field boundary at grid ref: SP 4138 3339	Determined in favour 10.08.17.

Orders made***Orders concluded***

Parish	Effect	Location	Status
Blewbury	Add BR & upgrade part of FP19 to BR	From London Road along part of FP19 and the track known locally as Pilgrim's Way to re-join London Road	An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs confirmed the Order on 7.04.2017. We advertised the confirmed Order on 20.07.2017.
Blewbury	Add FP	From FP19 along the track known locally as Pilgrim's Way to London Road	As above.

2. Definitive Map and Statement

A PDF copy of the Definitive Map and Statement, relevant date 21.2.2006, plus a list of all changes made to the Definitive Map and Statement up to 14.10.2016 is available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/definitive-map-and-statement-online>

All changes up to October 2016 are also incorporated in the interactive Countryside Access Map at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/countrysidemap

The public rights of way data is also available on our website for download under the provisions of the Ordnance Survey Open Data. Note that this data is indicative only and is not the legal record.

There has been an ongoing problem with delays in getting changes updated on our website. There is an update to our Countryside access Management system due before Christmas which we hope will solve this, and more details will be available at the next Monitoring Group

3. Public Path Orders

There are a total of 28 public path order applications throughout the county outstanding at various stages. For further information on cases please refer to the monthly 'Pending PPOs Case List' available on our website at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/modificationsanddiversions

a. Town & Country Planning Act 1990

New Applications - none

Applications in progress at pre-order making stage

Parish	Effect	Path	Location	Status
Ardley	Divert	BR27	Ardley Quarry, Ardley OS Grid Ref SP541253 TCPA 90 s257 Diversion	Informal consultations July 2017. Due to be advertised October 2017.

Orders confirmed

Parish	Effect	Path	Location	Status
Finmere	Divert	BR4(part)	Finmere Quarry, OS Grid Ref SP626326	Confirmed 20.12.16
Harwell	Divert	BR12	Didcot Road B4493	Confirmation

		(part)	Harwell, OS Grid Ref SU499893	advertised 09.02.17
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b. Public Path Orders - Highways Act 1980

New applications

Parish	Effect	Path	Location	Status
Wiggington	Divert	FP1 (part)	South View Farm, Wiggington, OS Grid Ref SP395338	Received 31 May 2017

Applications in progress at pre-order making stage

Parish	Effect	Path	Location	Status
Great Haseley/Teatsworth	Divert	FP13 &30 ; 33,34,36,6 9 &70	The Oxfordshire Golf Hotel Spa, OS Grid ref SP681042	Pre Order consultation issued 14.02.17
Gosford and Water Eaton	Divert	BW5	North of railway line, OS Grid Reference SP508130	Pre Order consultation 20 th Sept 17
Culham	Extinguishment	FP1 (part)	Part of FP 1 across Nuneham rail Crossing. Alternative route – Thames Lane/Culham Restricted Byways	Pre-Order consultation 12 th Sept 17

Orders made

Parish	Effect	Path	Location	Status
Bucknell	Divert	BW1 (part)	Yew Tree House, OS Grid Reference SP560256	Order made 12 th April 2017 Order advertised 27 th April 2017
Sonning Common	Divert	FP 11 (part)	Blackmore Farm, OS Grid Rference SU716802	Order made 10 th July 2017 Order confirmed 27 th July 2017

Orders confirmed/concluded

Parish	Effect	Path	Location	Status
Rollright	Divert	FP15 (pt) & FP19	Manor Farm, Little Rollright	NOT CONFIRMED following recommendation at P&R committee
Stanton Harcourt	Divert	BW12 (part)	East Of River Windrush, OS Grid reference 402050	Order confirmed and effective 10th July 2017 Advertised 14 th September 2017
Highmoor	Divert	FP2 (part)	Highmoor Park, OS Grid reference SU698850	Order confirmed and effective 10 th July 2017
Weston on the Green	Divert	FP22 (part)	Stoneyfield, North Lane, OS Grid Ref SP531189	Order confirmed and effective 19 th May 2017 Order advertised 7 th September 2017
Souldern	Divert (part)	FP1 (part)	Lower Souldern Grounds Farm, Souldern Parish OS Grid Ref SP504306	Order confirmed and effective 11 th September 2017 Advertised 21 st September 2017
Denchworth	Divert	FP2	Denchworth Level Crossing, OS Grid Reference SU377908	Order made 8 th Aug 2017 Order advertised 17 th August 2017 Due for confirmation
Great Hasely	Divert (part)	FP1	Lobb Farm, Tetsworth OS 66770 02439	Order made 21/03/17 Order confirmed 19/05/17
Launton	Divert	FP4	Launton Level Crossing SP603220	Order made 22/03/17 Order confirmed 10/07/17
South Leigh	Divert	FP15	Stow Cottage, South Leigh OS Grid Ref 39250845	Order Made 07/10/16 Order confirmed 22/06/17
Sonning Common	Divert	FP11	Blackmore Farm, Sonning Common	Order Made 10/07/17 Confirmation due
Souldern	Divert (part)	FP1	Lower Souldern Grounds Farm, Somerton	Order Made 22/06/17 Confirmation due

			SP50902 30794	
Uffington	Divert (part)	FP4	Rail crossing order SU 30777 90456	Order Made 18/02/16 Order Confirmed 31/03/17

Orders to be forwarded to Secretary of State

Parish	Effect	Path	Location	Status
Idbury	Ext/Create	FP4	Idbury House, Idbury OS Grid Ref SP233197	To be forwarded to SoS following P&R committee
Nuffield/ Stoke Row	Divert	FP25 (part) ; FP24 (part)	Nuffield, Howberrywood Farm, OS Grid Ref SU6885	To be forwarded to SoS following P&R committee

4. Public Path Agreements - Highways Act 1980

Parish	Location	Status	Name
Marcham	Hitch Copse, OS Grid Reference 4599	Agreed 6 th July 2017	FP22
Didcot & Harwell	Great Western Park, OS Grid Reference SU5090	Agreed 18 th January 2017	Didcot FP37 & Harwell FP24

5. General

Finally, the following general matters are for information:

- *Deregulation Act 2015*: We are still waiting for secondary regulations and guidance to bring everything into effect. At the time of writing, we still have no word of when this is likely to occur.
- *DMC staff changes*: The Senior Rights of Way Officer position is still being covered on an interim basis by Lisa Gray-Wright and Eleanor Hazlewood. We have a temporary assistant, Dawn Mills, and hope to recruit another temporary member of staff soon
- The DMC team is now part of the Technical Intelligence group.
- There is a restructure of certain OCC teams due to be announced before the end of the year, which will affect DMC and should hopefully allow us to recruit permanent staff.

**Lisa Gray and Eleanor Hazlewood
Definitive Map and Commons
September 2017**

Principal Officer (Countryside Access) Report

31st March 2017 to 30th September 2016

1. Introduction

The first part of the 2017/18 financial year has been a challenging time for the officers that made up the Countryside Access Team. The process of organisational change has accelerated as we transition to a new model and new ways of working within the revised Communities directorate.

At the start of the period, the office base relocated from Signal Court to Speedwell House in Oxford which whilst bringing financial efficiency has brought its own set of logistical challenges. The Countryside Tasks Team retained the workshop space at Eynsham, but operations had to temporarily relocate whilst changes were made to the building (see below). The fact that this was achieved without a noticeable impact on delivery is testament to the ingenuity, resilience and commitment of the team.

Whilst the first phase of the restructure has been concluded, full implementation is still underway and further changes are around the corner which may have further impact on the team. Despite this uncertainty, the service remains committed to management of Oxfordshire's path network and continues to make extremely efficient use of the resources available. These resources have declined however, which leads to a necessary concentration on highest priority issues in line with the priority caseload approach. As a result, certain lower priority issues inevitably receive less attention than the team, our partners and all path users may wish.

Throughout these challenging times, one constant certainty is that the positive working relationship between the team and the network of volunteers and stakeholders across the county is absolutely essential to the provision of quality countryside access. The hundreds of thousands of Oxfordshire's residents and visitors that benefit from the path network owe a huge debt of gratitude to these groups for their ceaseless hard work, commitment and cooperation.

2. Personnel

Dan Weeks unfortunately resigned as Field Officer for West and City earlier in the summer to take a full time position with the Fire and Rescue Service. Dan was a highly valued member of the team for sixteen years and his positive, committed approach to countryside access will be sorely missed by colleagues and partners alike.

Approval to recruit to the vacancy was recently granted and is currently being pursued. For the time being, Sarah Aldous is covering both Cherwell and West and City with extra support from colleagues. Once recruitment is complete, Sarah will be first point of contact for West and City in order to best advise and guide the new officer.

The recent restructure has resulted in some significant changes to the makeup of the team:

- Field Officers were 'assimilated' into the new structure as 'Officers (Countryside Access)'. They now work directly out of the new Area Operations (North and South) groups, reporting directly to two new posts of 'Principal Officer(s) Quality assurance'. They will be expected to integrate

more closely with other highways operations, but will remain focussed on countryside access and guided / coordinated centrally [*Sarah Aldous, Jon Beale and Arthur McEwan-James*]

- The Countryside Access Strategy and Development Officer post now forms part of a new highways strategy & infrastructure group in the Asset Renewals team pending full review in the second phase of the directorate restructure. This mini-team includes the County Bridge Engineer, the Strategic Flood Risk Manager and Principal/Lead Officers for highways. [*Paul Harris*]
- The Countryside GIS and Data Management Officer post is now part of a new 'Technical Intelligence' group, but will retain oversight and development of the Countryside Access Management System [*Adam McQueen*]
- The Assistant Field Officer post has evolved into a centrally based 'Officer (Countryside Access)' post. Whilst recruitment is ongoing (as above), the post will still act as a support function for the north and south Officers (Countryside Access). The longer term intention however is for the role to take on county-wide access functions such as volunteer coordination and proactive surveying whilst retaining an element of support for the area Officers [*Jackie Smith*]
- The Countryside Tasks Team remains unchanged and will continue as before [*Matt Ball, James Smith, Andy Mawer and Will Saunder*]
- The Countryside Access Team Leader role has been changed to 'Principal Officer (Trees and Countryside Access)' and is part of the new centrally-based Area Operations (Hub) group. It is now responsible for the centrally based countryside access officer, the Countryside Tasks Team, both National Trails teams and a centrally based 'Technical Officer (Arboriculture)'. The post will also act as professional lead for the other countryside access / rights of way posts above and four area-based 'Officers (Arboriculture)'.

These changes are substantial, but every effort is being made to ensure that there remains a county-wide consistency in rights of way management and that a unified countryside access function is a key part of the new structure well into the future.

3. Operations

Despite current challenges and future uncertainties, the work of the team continues to achieve great results. A few updates and examples from the Field and Tasks Teams are as follows, which as ever sit alongside day-to-day work such as work programming and execution, planning responses, stakeholder relations, issue processing and site inspections. Full caseload statistics for the county are included at Appendix 1.

3.1 Tasks Team

- As mentioned above, in March and April 2017 the capacity of the Tasks Team was severely disrupted by planned work undertaken by our landlord at Unit 6 (Signal Court Eynsham). The Team were relocated to a temporary workshop facility in nearby Sutton. Almost all equipment and materials were physically lifted and shifted by the team to and from Sutton and every effort was made to provide the highest possible level of business as usual to colleagues.

- Whilst the TT has not been directly affected by the first phase of the departmental restructure, the current and future uncertainty surrounding the links into and out of the wider team will involve redesign of established business process and workflow in order to maintain efficiency.
- Formal adoption of the Priority Caseload Approach by the wider team has developed into a planned shift in the deployment of the TT towards a greater proportion of Worksheets that are aimed at resolving Issues of higher importance and / or significance on short time leads.
- The unforeseen withdrawal from the Soft Vegetation Clearance Programme at short notice by a principal and experienced contractor resulted in a short and intense period of rescheduling and re-planning of this important area of summer work.
- Some key worksheets / projects delivered:
 - Restoration of damaged surface (Green Road – Letcombes)
 - Oversight of surface repairs (Idbury Bridleway 11)
 - Oversight of emergency work in connection with East Hanney 7
 - Completion of SVCP in West Oxfordshire (Priority 1 and 2 works)
 - Freezing of SVCP costs for contract works for two seasons.

3.2 Tasks Team Statistical Data (01 March to 31 August 2017)

- At the time of writing, no figures are available for the Soft Vegetation Programme for 2017. These may be available in time for the meeting.
- 245 Worksheets were prepared for delivery; the bulk of these by the TT followed by other agencies (Contractors / Volunteers)
 - Approx. 30% of these Worksheets were prepared by the TTS based on requirements for cyclical maintenance work across the network
 - Since 2007 – an average of 289 Worksheets would normally be created in the same period.
- 182 Worksheets were completed – predominantly by the TT but also by other agencies.
 - 255 individual tasks (Jobs) were completed within this body of work (excluding Jobs carried out on the SVCP).

3.3 Improvements and key site-based issues

- *Launton footpath 4*: A path in Cherwell was diverted (under section 119 Highways act) from a level crossing over the Birmingham to London line to meet with a pre-existing route using a tunnel under the railway. The original path being used to cross was on a non-definitive line, but the diversion now provides a safe footpath from Launton into Bicester without the need to cross the railway tracks.

Work was carried out by the Tasks Team to clear the definitive route and install a new bridge while negotiations were carried out with Network Rail who improved the route from Launton

to the tunnel by installing three pedestrian gates and carrying out some clearance on an existing route that would provide access to the new section of path. An excellent example of how a unified Countryside Access Team works closely with the Definitive Map and Commons team for real and lasting access improvements:



New gates installed by NR on Launton FP3 (existing route)



Clearance and new bridge to open up previously unused part of existing route of Launton FP4

- *Idbury Bridleway 11 (Oxfordshire Way):* A priority project undertaken on the basis that the route was waterlogged all year round and users were diverting on to adjacent farmland to avoid it. Based on assessments, it was deemed unsafe and therefore a Priority 1 issue to address. Furthermore, Bridleway 11 at this point forms part of the Oxfordshire Way which brought forward complaints not only from users but also the landowner.

OCC worked with the landowner to negotiate access for and permissions to install drainage on the only route available to discharge surface and sub-surface water to the nearest watercourse via a series of land drains. This work very quickly re-established a stable surface and revealed a

substantial amount of subsurface water that was being discharged from a spring at or near to this location.

The route was quickly reopened to all users within a matter of weeks of the work being completed by White Horse Contractors. All negotiations and agreements overseen by OCC Field Officer and all practical works overseen by Tasks Team Supervisor:



Short section of bridleway completely waterlogged making access difficult along this stretch of bridleway all year round

Works undertaken by White Horse Contractors to install drainage across an adjacent field to drain the waterlogged area.



Bridleway surface levelled and drained



- *East Hanney BOAT 7:* The bridge known as Lower Mill Bridge crosses the Letcombe Brook in East Hanney, and is the sole means of access to Poughley Farm, a private livery yard and stables. The farm exercises public (not private) rights along this section of the BOAT to access their business and property.

The bridge was not listed on OCC records, and was only brought to our attention early in the year by a public report following the bridge being cleared of vegetation by persons unknown. We subsequently confirmed through desktop research by the Definitive Map and Commons Team that it would come under OCC responsibility and maintainable at public expense.

Based on the original report and CAT assessment, a Principal Inspection (PI) was commissioned which confirmed that the bridge was “in very poor condition and in danger of collapse”. Acting on advice of the PI, it was decided that the bridge must be closed to vehicles in order to protect public safety and to avoid flood risk. A TTRO was confirmed which stipulated a width restriction of 5’, to restrict vehicles but to allow access to bridleway status.

As the bridge is the sole means of surfaced access to the farm and business and carries its water supply, we remained in close communication with the owners and the Parish Council whilst pursuing a range of possible means of alternative access, including temporary / parallel structures, underpinning the existing bridge, temporary track over private land which were all discounted due to practicality and cost.

The most favourable option was to provide temporary surfacing of BOAT to the west leading to a private track to the farm. 330m of the BOAT were surfaced with accompanying vegetation clearance at OCC cost. A similar length of the private track was surfaced at the same time and to the same standard at landowners’ cost. This was accompanied by ‘hard’ closure of the bridge with concrete blocks and additional signage whilst full replacement / repair is urgently pursued under the capital programme.

This particular issue is another pertinent example of the operational effectiveness of CAT and how we regularly meet very contentious and complex issues with pragmatic and highly cost-effective solutions. As opposed to a third party solution which could have resulted in OCC being liable for insurance / legal claims for loss of business and potentially serious injury, we were able to talk constructively with all parties, and mobilise quickly to deliver an excellent value temporary solution.



South parapet west side in danger of collapse



South elevation – wall on the west side in danger of collapse



Surface before



Surface after

- **Waterstock FP2:** The Oxford Fieldpaths Society and local Parish Council agreed to cover the cost of four gates (three kissing and one pedestrian) in Waterstock on the Oxfordshire Way to conclude a project that saw a number of gates previously installed in the area. The volunteers also identified the requirements and spent considerable time negotiating permissions with landowners, before passing to OCC for installation.

The installation is a good example of how the new priority caseload approach can work in practice. The gates were allocated a 4c priority ('opportunity') in the new system, as they were 3rd party funded, were on the Oxfordshire Way, and also allowed the path to be realigned to the definitive line. Installation was programmed by the Tasks Team in between higher priority jobs under the new approach which states:

"Lower Priority (3 and 4a-c) workload issues will have their own processes to maximise outputs and make the most of available finance, staff, volunteer or community resources. This may result in them being worked on with greater urgency. Examples of when this might occur include:

- *When the issue is part of the same path or close by a higher priority issue receiving attention*
- *When the issue is part of work being funded and delivered by the landowner, volunteer group, parish council or community group*
- *When the issue can benefit from external funding such as TOE2 or s106/CIL*
- *When action is linked to seasonal or cyclical issues – e.g. installing bridges outside of flood periods and arable cultivations, or cutting vegetation outside of bird nesting period*
- *When a likely rapid deterioration could be prevented by swift action*
- *When a sudden change of circumstances makes it possible to resolve a long standing problem, e.g. minor misalignment".*



Before



Before



After



After

5. Countryside Access Strategy and Development

As mentioned above, for the time being the role carries out countryside access functions exactly as before, apart from line and operational management by highways lead officer and additional work to develop highways infrastructure strategy and funding bids. Close working is maintained with all countryside access/public rights of way functions. A summary of recent activity is as follows:

- *Major planning:* Oxfordshire has a number of larger developments (300+ dwellings) coming forward, particularly around Didcot and the surrounding ‘Science Vale’ area. Recent/current major development proposals include Abingdon North, Dalton Barracks, Didcot Garden Town, Grove Monks Farm, Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme. Securing consideration of existing rights of way and securing s106 funds for offsite measures and commitment to onsite measures is the first step in achieving access benefit / mitigating impact. It also needs the development to reach various trigger points before funds are actually made available – and then we need to make the case internally to secure those funds and then be able to spend the money effectively. This is still the case for the Ardley Energy from Waste site, plus RAF Upper Heyford, Grove Airfield, Grove Monks Farm, Didcot Northeast, Didcot Harwell Valley, Wallingford ‘B’, Banbury Canalside, Barton Park, Bicester Eco-town etc.

- *OCAF* : The Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum (OCAF) held its first meeting of 2017/18 on 24th May. Its next meeting is on 1st November. OCAF is currently looking at advising OCC on the management of vehicles on public rights of way using current practice by other authorities to see what works best, as well as looking at priorities for definitive map areas of working.
- *Partnerships*: The Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment continues its excellent work to support and enable communities and groups to improve access to the environment. They have recently entered a partnership with Network Rail to look at offsetting impacts of railway electrification scheme and also have a partnership with Brakspear Brewery to improve access near to their promoted pubs. Countryside Access officers continue to support applicants by advising and assessing projects when requested. Within the county council an active travel partnership has recently formed and it is hoped that this can be influenced to take more account of recreational cycling, walking and riding needs in the future.
- *RoWMP development*: It is hoped that the aims of the RoWMP can be taken forward as part of active travel and other strategies to enable a strategic path infrastructure improvement approach to be developed.
- *Influencing strategies*: Inputs have been made into district council local plans as well as some neighbourhood plans. The new strategy sub-team will be looking at bidding for highways infrastructure maintenance and improvement funding and steps are being taken to try and influence this by making the case for public rights of way and recreational use of the roads and rights of way/green infrastructure networks.
- *Project delivery*: The work to try and negotiate access improvements for community links in the Science Vale area has had to pause. whilst a different approach to negotiation is explored. The initial positive consideration by landowners for the scheme between Wantage and Harwell using public rights of way has hit a snag linked to the lack of planning opportunity at a site. Other negotiation options are possible and these will be explored over the coming weeks so that the route can move forward. For the other development sites with funds available a new approach to project delivery has recently been explored and it is expected that this will resolve some uncertainty about capacity to deliver projects and will mean that Ardley and Heyford Park schemes can start to roll out.
- *Access Land management*: All south and vale areas of downland access land were surveyed in early summer 2017. Access points were cleared of vegetation and the signage was replaced and minor repairs made. Defects were very few in number and there was clear evidence that many of the areas were being well used as part of an integrated countryside access network.
- *Promoted routes*: The Thame & Wheatley Ramblers and the Oxford Fieldpaths Society have done a superb job of surveying, snipping and waymarking the entire Oxfordshire Way in recent months which we very grateful for. Walk directions from south to north may be produced soon and a revised guidebook is forthcoming. Suggestions for route revisions have been made, which are currently being considered.

7. Voluntary groups

As mentioned above, central to a well-managed countryside access network is a close working relationship between officers and voluntary groups. The many groups we work with contribute hundreds of hours and many years of expertise to maintenance and development of Oxfordshire’s

paths. Their efficacy however is concentrated and enhanced through the involvement of officers in terms of technical advice, landowner negotiations, work programming, training and funding support / advice. This symbiotic relationship results in many long-lasting improvements to the network that would otherwise be well outside the reach of available staff and financial resources.

Regardless of the practical contributions, community involvement is an aim in itself. Encouraging a sense of ownership through volunteering is key to protecting the network and the landscapes to which it provides access. As such working alongside countryside access volunteer groups will remain a priority for the service as it moves into its new structure within OCC.

Around 400 active volunteers are directly involved with the countryside access network, not including those working directly with the two National Trails hosted by OCC. Groups we work with include:

- South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers (SCPMV)
- Cotswold Voluntary Wardens
- Vale Path Volunteers
- Blitz and Klean (NE Oxon)
- Parish Path Wardens (PPWs - county-wide).

Most of these groups have seen an increase in capacity during 2017. For example, some current statistics and highlights from the SCPMVs and PPWs are as follows:

7.1 SCPMVs

- Summary of outputs for six months January to June:

	2016 Q1 – Q2	2017 Q1 – Q2
Total volunteer-hours onsite. Excludes prep and planning time	866	924
Total distance of paths and bridleways cleared and mown	3,320m	10,345m
Fallen Trees cleared	11	9
Gates installed (all types) installed predominantly to replace styles	13	15
Waymark posts installed	38	27

- Funding obtained for five gates on a path in Berrick Salome, and two more for the Oxfordshire Way in Bix.
- Further work was carried out by SCPMV in Lambridge Woods as part of an extended programme to bring the woodland paths back onto the Definitive Line.
- Considerable work carried out on the National Trust Greys Court Estate Walk: Following reports of many visitors getting lost on the Walk the SCPMV proposed a major improvement

project which saw 13 waymark posts installed, with paths cleared and put back on the definitive line.

- Work completed on a 28 gate project funded by Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment which creates a significant number of new stile free paths. Over 100 gates have now been installed and 90% of those paths are now stile free.
- Two gates installed on Kidmore End Footpath 10 funded by Sonning Common Health Walks as the start of a stile free route between the villages.
- Gate funded by Henley and Goring Ramblers installed on the Chiltern Way which is now almost stile free throughout the Oxfordshire Chilterns.

7.2 Parish Path Wardens

- PPWs (established by the Ramblers and the Oxford Fieldpaths Society) regularly monitor paths within allocated parishes, reporting issues and carrying out minor maintenance work
- 263 of Oxfordshire’s 320 parishes now covered by PPWs
- Since January 2017:
 - Increase in coverage from 80.4% to 82.2%
 - Good recruitment in the Vale saw increase in PPWs from 53 to 62
 - Recruitment programme planned for West Oxfordshire which has highest PPW Vacancy (22 parishes).

Finally, acknowledgment must be given to Mr Dave Scott who retired from the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens after 41 years of hard work, commitment and good humour. Dave led the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens East District workparties that cover the west of Oxfordshire, and was responsible for many of the access improvements in the area. The area’s path users, residents and visitors, and indeed Oxfordshire County Council, owe Dave a huge debt of gratitude.

8. User feedback

A selection of user comments from the previous six months:

- April: *“Your team has done a really excellent job on footpath 12. Please thank them so much from the many residents who use it. In future years I should be able to keep the track strimmed so shouldn't need your help again. I am sorry that I only learned of their work after the event so wasn't able to take them any refreshments.”*
- May: *“The bridleway re-built by the Council is holding up very well. [I] borrowed a horse called Noddy, a sprightly 25-year-old, went both up and down the steep slope easily. The Council’s improvements are brilliant!”*
- June: *“We rode along the new improved bridleway by Diamond farm yesterday and it was terrific. Tidy, easy to ride along and ...safe! You have no idea how much it cheered us up to have a much loved viable track back. A big thank you to you and the team for persevering with this.”*
- July: *“Just to say a big thank you for sorting out the resurfacing of the BOAT. I can't tell you how nice it is to be able to actually use the track again and without fear of breaking your neck! Your contractors have done a sterling job and it seems to be holding up well thus far.”*

- August: *“Just a note to thank you for organising your men to clear our footpath again. It's been a particularly productive growing year and your efforts have made our dog walking all the more pleasant. Cheers.”*
- September: *“I would like to make a complaint regarding delay poor quality of service, undue delay, and general incompetence, ie failing in the duty to enforce public rights of way.”*
- September: *“I am very, no extremely, pleased to report that the track has been ‘dug’ over and levelled and is currently very good! [The officer] has been a star and so helpful. The track was horrendous and I am afraid I bombarded him with photos which were positively gruesome! The end result is that we have a couple of miles of Green Lane which can currently be used by cyclists, walkers and horse riders alike. [He] has been very supportive and I believe if he had more money in his budget would be able to do more!”*

ENDS.

Appendix 1: End of season caseload statistics


OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL End of Season Report : Oxfordshire

Caseload at start of reporting period (1st March 2017) :

By Type (top 10) :	Total : 3,849	By Priority :	
Stile/Repair or Replace	528	Priority : 1	21
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	228	Priority : 2	52
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	206	Priority : 2a	299
Def Map CAT/Alignment on ground incorrect	199	Priority : 2c	565
Waymark/Waymarking Required	197	Priority : 3	957
Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair	170	Priority : 4	44
Surface Improvement Request	169	Priority : 4a	1267
Finger Post/Request	157	Priority : 4c	371
Fence/Fences	151	Priority : 5	269
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	148		
Others	1,696		

Issue added during reporting period
(1st March 2017 - 31st August 2017) :In this season the total number of reports
including duplicates was : 1,210

By Type (top 10) :	Total : 823	Issues reported by: (Top 10)	
Tree/Fallen Tree(s)	93	Public	386
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	82	Ramblers Parish Paths Wardens	36
Stile/Repair or Replace	70	The Chilterns Society	34
Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair	56	Oxfordshire County Council	32
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	56	Ramblers' Association	7
Finger Post/Request	55	Others	17
Finger Post/Repair or Replace	42		
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	39		
Def Map CAT/Alignment on ground incorrect	27		
Gate/Repair or Replace	26		
Others	277		

Issue resolved during reporting period (1st March 2017 - 31st August 2017) :

By Type (top 10) :	Total : 610	By Priority :	
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	88	Priority : 1	26
Tree/Fallen Tree(s)	73	Priority : 2	67
Stile/Repair or Replace	43	Priority : 2a	64
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	42	Priority : 2c	59
Finger Post/Repair or Replace	39	Priority : 3	215
Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair	38	Priority : 4	48
Waymark/Post Repair or Replace	21	Priority : 4a	92
Waymark/Waymarking Required	21	Priority : 4c	15
Fence/Fences	19		
Tree/Fallen bough(s)	19		
Others	207		

Current caseload at end of reporting period (31st August 2017) :

By Type (top 10) :	Total : 4,149	By Priority :	
Stile/Repair or Replace	559	Priority : 1	34
Vegetation/Undergrowth Removal Required	255	Priority : 2a	326
Def Map CAT/Alignment on ground incorrect	222	Priority : 2c	624
Ploughing Cropping/Cropping Cross Field Path	213	Priority : 3	1,086
Finger Post/Request	207	Priority : 4a	1,377
Waymark/Waymarking Required	200	Priority : 4c	410
Crossing/Bridge or Culvert Repair	193	Priority : 5	278
Surface Improvement Request	171		
Vegetation/Overgrowth Removal Required	170		
Fence/Fences	158		
Others	1,801		

Thames Path NATIONAL TRAIL

Report for Oxfordshire Monitoring Group

- All grass cutting contractors West, Central and East along with the farmer cuts on the Gloucestershire/Oxfordshire border have now been completed. Please note in Oxfordshire the whole of the Thames Path is cut via the National Trail Office. This may have to change next year due to funding and time allocation. Enclosed reaches receive 2 cuts per year. We received seven complaints about over grown vegetation, along areas that had already received a first cut.
- A new boardwalk has been installed along a stretch of low lying trail near Hannington Wick, Swindon. Standing water sits on the trail during wetter months forcing users to walk out onto the farmer's crop.
- A number of meetings have taken place with the landowner to discuss running the trail over his land via a creation agreement and so taking the trail off the busy A361 highway verge, near Inglesham. This final section will link the existing trail with the newly created sections and allow for an extra 5km of river side walking. The landowner has now signed the agreement and we are working to get the new section of trail open for October.
- Further meetings have taken place with West Berkshire, Landowners representatives and the Parish Council to discuss further a number of access improvement works including surfacing and boardwalks between Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames. EA permits and contractor quotes have been received. We are currently waiting to hear back from the landowner regarding access and further contributions from the landowner.
- Two sections of eroded Thames path have been revetted using weld-mesh and stone through Pangbourne meadows, in preparation for further access improvement works.
- A meeting took place to finalise the re-submission of the Thames Upper Landscape HLF bid. This has now been submitted on time. We will hear if the bid has been successful late Autumn. Part of the bid includes setting up a series of circular walks based around the Thames Path in West Oxfordshire.
- A project plan has been sent to Google in a bid to acquire a Google Trekker for the Oxfordshire Fire Brigade Thames Path walk May 2018. The project Plan demonstrates what information can be captured along the Thames Path.
- As part of The Chiltern walking Festival and in partnership with Hobbs of Henley, two boat trips and guided walks along the Thames were planned.
- A meeting took place with the landowner to gain a permissive route along the riverbank from Old Wharf Lane, Shillingford to where the Keen edge Ferry used to run, finally linking to Shillingford Road Bridge. Unfortunately due to a recent boathouse break-in the land owner will not allow the permissive route.
- A bridle bridge has been repaired by Wiltshire Council, downstream of Cricklade.
- Complaints came in about the poor condition of a track the Thames Path follows near Cerney Wick. Term service contractor for Gloucestershire Amey

have confirmed it is a class 5 road and their responsibility to maintain to an agreed standard. Amey are investigating further.

- Quotes have been supplied to replace a bridge that crosses the Thames near South Cerney Gloucestershire and replace steps with ramps. Funding has been agreed with Gloucestershire.
- Oxford City Works. With project funding secured, meetings have been held with Oxfordshire County and its term service contractor Skanska to assistance with liaison on Phase two of the riverside routes project along the Thames through Oxford City. The works will include widening and resurfacing the complete Oxford City reach, major scrub clearance, including 'sucker' growth from the river walls, destination signage, new seating, and solar lighting in the surface of the trail. There have been a number of complaints about erosion, surfacing, cycling (and widths) as well as anti-social behaviour along this reach in the past. Meetings are scheduled with the EA, Oxford City Council and University Colleges. The relevant Councillors have been made aware and are on-board with the project.
- Full review of the Volunteers registration, joining and Information pack is underway, in a bid to simplify and cut administration whilst at the same time reviewing health and safety information provided to our existing and potential volunteers.
- The new events calendar is now live on the Thames Path National Trail website, which is proving popular with event managers; to date this year £1,500 has been pledged by event organisers. The Partnership is encouraged to upload all known events in their area onto the calendar.
- A consultation from Reading Borough Council to change the status of the Thames Path from Public Footpath to Cycle Track was responded to. Comments to the borough about site lines, erosion, and minimum widths form part of the policy and the Borough were referred to part B of the guidelines of the now adopted Thames Path Cycle Policy. We are awaiting the outcome of the consultation.
- An online petition has been received complaining about the poor condition of the trail and erosion issues near Marlow town. This reach was included in the proposed works programme for 2017/18 prior to the petition taking place. Quotes have been received for the works and we now need to work out the funding split with Buckinghamshire.
- Bourne End Buckinghamshire Sailing Club surfacing joint funding project to resurface the trail around the sailing club which will also aid boats slipways. Waiting to hear back from the Sailing Club.
- **The London Working Group meeting** took place hosted by the Thames Estuary Partnership at UCL, Russell Square The abridged minutes are as follows:
 1. It should be a general priority for the group to find more effective ways to communicate with the disparate Highways teams of various Borough Councils. This is to ensure more unified signage branding with the 'acorn' National Trail symbol, and to encourage more strategic deployment where needed.
 2. PLF suggested coordinating an event with relevant mayoral and local authority staff, including Cabinet Leads. This should be an effort to raise the

programme profile and reinforce its Mayoral and PLA priority status and help local authorities to resist development pressures.

3. Update the formal objectives of the Thames Path programme where needed, and complete our London Working group paper prepare a report for the Thames Path Partnership meeting to formally adopt this meeting as a working group of the overall meeting.
 4. It would be excellent to further advance plans on distributing the stock of signs already in storage with London Boroughs. Specifically, advancing to a stage where some councils agree to deployment. This should be accompanied with awareness that sign securement strength must be sufficient to prevent distortion by vandalism, as is currently found in some areas.
 5. Further coordinate with charity groups and NHS representatives to clarify the status of the Health Walks programme and promote their uptake on the Thames Path. A new feature on the interactive map, presenting clear advertisement of Health Walks on the Thames Path is an end goal here.
 6. Complete the Thames Landscape Strategy wish-list work and share with partners for assessment. Potential additions to this may be provided by other borough representatives.
 7. Further clarify funding opportunities for Thames Path ferry crossings at the River Darent and other select locations. Here, communications with relevant local stakeholders and Environmental Authorities may also provide opportunity to discuss a formal extension of the Thames Path to the Thames Barrier.
 8. Need to communicate with central Tideway representatives to ensure best practice, unified branding and greater planning clarity with Thames Path enhancements. Furthermore, enquire with Tideway about the possibility of further funding contributions to wider Thames Path enhancements. Finally, suggest improvements to the Tideway hoardings appearance/signposting where work is being done.
-
- The consultation period for Transport for London's walking and Cycling strategy has begun and concludes on October 2nd 2017. The trail manager will respond on behalf of the Thames Path National Trail.
 - A meeting took place with Tideway to discuss further current and future diversion signage and future access including Thames Path acorn signage through sites once building works are complete. Tideway requested Thames Path logos and acorns along with signage policy. This has all now been provide to Tideway
 - The West London Rivers Group meeting was attended at The Ship in Mortlake. This group cover organisations from the Surrey through to the Chelsea reach and include Richmond and Kingston Council and Thames Landscape strategy Kew to Chelsea representing the relevant London Boroughs. The main topics of discussion were signage, vegetation management but especially tree management along the heavily wooded Richmond reaches. The group were supportive of the National Trail and its acorn signage. Discussions are on-going on how we can move this forward.
 - West London Tow Path group meeting. Following on from the West London Rivers Group, the Tow Path group meeting was attended in Hammersmith Town Hall to present a proposal to create wooden signage for the south bank

around Richmond, the signage to include Thames Path acorn and distances to each bridge. (One of the original aspirations for the Thames Path through London).

- Discussions took place for Thames Path National Trail inclusion into a new Interpretation board proposed by Thames Strategy Kew-Chelsea.
- Richmond and Kingston's first grass cuts along the trail have been completed.
- Thames English Coast Path site visits have taken place with Natural England English Coast Path Officer, Thames Path Manager, Bexley and Greenwich Councils along the Thames Path extension from Woolwich foot tunnel through to the Dartford Borough Boundary on the River Darent. For the immediate future of the Thames English Coast Path, the trail will have to run inland along the River Darent and then the Cray to cross inland next to the A206 and then follow the banks of the river back to the Thames Estuary as there is no river crossing point by the confluence of the Thames/Darent at this stage. This may change in future with the possibility of a Sustrans bridge at the crossing point, although this is very much at an early stage of scoping.
- A 'gap' will still exist between the Thames ECP and existing Thames Path National trail between the barrier and the Woolwich Foot Tunnel. (currently signed inland as Thames Path Extension interim) There currently is no access along the tideway around PLA landholdings for the first part of this Thames Path extension (interim). Further discussions with Natural England and landowners are required.
- Bids have been sought for a complete London Thames Path condition survey.

THAMES PATH NATIONAL TRAIL VOLUNTEER WORKS

(Each section represents one day's work with between four to ten volunteers per day.)

Wokingham

Sonning - Grass Cut Strimming, Littler Pick, bramble clearance using hand tools.
SU754756 to SU745747 = 1,550m

Oxfordshire

Chimney Meadow - Grass cut SP334004 to SP353995 = 5,300m.

Grafton - Grass Cut, Mowing and bramble clearance using hand tools

SU272993 to SU284994 = 1,750m. SU270992 to SU265988 = 650m

Newbridge - Grass cut, strimming and mowing. SP379016 to SP381016 = 200m

Mowing. SP389011 to SP394012 = 560m Strimming.

SP405013 to SP407013 = 200m Mowing.

Swinford - Grass cut strimming and mow SP442085 to SP443086 = 70m.

SP445086 to SP454092 = 1,120m. SP442075 to SP442076 = 130m.

SP444074 to SP443073 = 120m. Tree Clearance = SP443086.

Wallingford - Grass cut – strimming and light clearance where encroaching, using hand tools, SU606867 to SU606872 = 480m.

Clifton Hampden - Grass cut and strimming SU547953 to SU549955 = 300m.

Kelmscot - Grass Cut, mowing. SU252988 to SU244984 = 1,110m

Shiplake - Grass cut, strimming, SU768781 to SU771783 = 400m.

SU776787 to SU776789 = 220m. SU776797 to SU776799 = 220m.

SU775804 to SU777808 = 530m

Chimney Meadow - Grass cut mowing, SP334004 to SP353995 = 5,300m.

Oxford City

Fiddlers Island, grass cut, strimming. SP497074 to SP503065 = 1,200m

Osney - grass cut, mow. Litter pick and bramble clearance using hand tools
SP503058 to SP508055 = 1,000m.

Osney, grass cut, mow, litter pick and bramble clearance using hand tools
SP503058 to SP508055 = 1,000m.



Gloucestershire

Lechlade grass cut – Mowing Strimming SU222950 to SU225988 = 330m

Lechlade grass cut – Mowing SU222950 to SU225988 = 330m.

Swindon

Inglesham grass cut – Strimming and mowing SU196965 to SU194964 = 200m.

Inglesham grass cut – Strimming and mowing SU196965 to SU194964 = 200m.

Wiltshire

Cricklade - Grass Cut Strimming, SU094941 to SU096940 = 180m,
SU099939 to SU100939 = 100m SU103938 to SU104937 = 100m.

Buckinghamshire

Marlow - Grass Cut – Strimming and light bramble clearance where encroaching
on path - using hand tools, SU847857 to SU838844 = 1,720m.

Marlow - grass cut mowing SU847857 to SU838844 = 1,720m.

WORKSHOP TASKS

Six days – repairing and servicing mowers, move back into workshop and
reorganising, truck checks and making Thames Path signage x eight.

Other Projects

Schools Project- Introduction to the Thames Path:

Year 3 classes St Mary and St John Primary school, East Oxford.

For two sessions in April and in May the Trails Team gave an introduction to the Thames Path National Trail to Year 3 classes at St Mary and St John Church of England Primary School, East Oxford. St Mary and St John School is a larger-than-average sized primary school. About half of the pupils come from White British backgrounds and the rest come from a wide range of multi-ethnic groups, the largest of which are Pakistani and 'Any other White' background. About a quarter of pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language, which is higher than the national average.

The introduction involved leading a 2 mile walk along the local stretch of Trail and all that it offers access to - the Iffley Lock, the birds and flowers, and the ancient

meadows. The sessions were designed to fit within the Geography curriculum for that term:

- study the local area and use maps to locate streets, fields and rivers.
- identify main physical and human features of the local and wider area.
- take a local walk exploring land use and how it is represented on a map.

Each class of between 28-30 children aged around 7-8 years old was accompanied by a Class Teacher, a Teaching Assistant, 3 or 4 parent helpers. On the walk the children were involved in looking for natural and human made landmarks using a map and identifying these as they walked along the Trail. They walked through the Iffley meadows - an ancient meadow which is a BBOWT reserve and a SSSI. The children were really engaged in their search for local landmarks and keen to identify the main physical and human features represented on the maps. Each session brought a different experience. The children were lucky to have the opportunity of seeing the lock at Iffley in action as a boat went through and the lady boat owner allowed children to press the button to open and to shut the lock gates!



Back at school, a quiz provided a lively session. The children undertook some simple mapping tasks with the teacher the following morning based on map/worksheets. Staff and parent feedback about the sessions was very positive and the children's feedback was that it was 'awesome'! Although some children were familiar with the path, most did not previously know that it was a National Trail and some had never walked along it at all or explored the meadow.

We would like to discuss further with Partners how this project can be replicated along the trail, but especially along its urban reaches.

Steve Tabbitt
Thames Path Manager
September 2017

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL

Project officer report

10th February to 7th June 2017

Part 1: Work programme

Part 2: Volunteer update

Part 3: Counter stats

1. Work programme

National Trail Team work programme and events 2017-18

- Ridgeway Officer focus is upon income-generating work, introducing volunteer help into new work areas and joint projects that pool resources.
- Natural England grant-aided work dominated RO and task diary activity for much of February and March. The Chiltern gates project will continue into 2017-18 since the purchased gates now need to be installed.
- Other key areas of work for the RO include: Strategic Links Project, Companion guide update, circular walks and rides review, working with event organisers, and promotion (linked with national efforts).
- Areas of work continuing to receive less attention than perhaps they should: Ridgeway theme projects; looking after Ridgeway volunteer monitors; public transport information for visitors; engaging accommodation providers.
- The team's office location remains uncertain in the medium to long-term and this will affect the work programme.

Key dates/events (see latest newsletter for partner events)

- 16th Feb 2017 – talk for Friends of The Ridgeway
- 22nd Feb 2017 – Ridgeway Officer to talk at Oxon LAF
- Feb – March – University of Oxford student project
- 10th March 2017 – Ridgeway event organiser forum
- 14th March 2017 – National Trail Officer meeting
- 22nd April 2017 – Wessex TREC fundraising event for Ridgeway
- 15th – 29th May 2017 – Chilterns Walking Festival
- 24th May 2017 – visit to Cotswold Way
- 31st May 2017 – Trail report due to Natural England
- 5th July 2017 – Ridgeway Officer to talk at Bucks LAF
- 18th Oct 2017 - joint forum event with North Wessex Downs AONB
- 21st Feb 2018 – Ridgeway Officer to talk at West Berks LAF

Fundraising by Trail Team

- RO attended the Bucks Funding Fair in March to make contacts and gather information. An event organised for the Chilterns Walking Festival in May raised £51 through ticket sales.
- Natural England grant of £16,000 for two capital projects were successfully spent and a claim was submitted at the end of May.
- Eight event organisers have formally indicated that they will donate for their 2017 events. Donations have been promised at £1 per head, with a total estimated value of £4,250. (Actual figure will be determined only when number of participants are known). Last year was our first year of receiving such donations and we raised

£1,105 from 4 events. It is important that the RO has enough time to provide a adequate time to these event organisers.

- North Wessex Downs AONB awarded us £6,500 in March 2017 for 4 Strategic Links in the AONB. A bid will be made to TOE2 for match funding for the Letcombe Regis/Wantage link.
- HS2 remains a promising source of funding for the Trail around Wendover but RO has not been able to make any material progress. The Chilterns Conservation Board are liaising to establish any potential for joint projects/bids.
- Bids to be submitted over the next 6 months:
 1. Bid to TOE2 for Strategic Links work.
- Bids to be submitted over the next year:
 1. Bid to North Wessex Downs AONB SDF for promoted routes leaflet design.
 2. Bid for Disabled Rambler joint project with Cleveland Way National Trail.

National Trail maintenance contracts

- The annual mowing contract was let to Buryhook Countryside Management. This is the same contractor as last year – we do not get competitive quotes from other contractors. The first cut has already been completed.

Major Trail maintenance projects

- Workshop move – Sara Piggott and Andy Mawer worked out of a workshop in Sutton for a few weeks whilst the Eynsham workshop was refurbished. This was disruptive to the task diary (see below).
- Chiltern gate project – RO has surveyed over half the old black metal gates and is preparing to contact landowners to negotiate replacement gates or gaps.
- RO joined West Berkshire contractors to survey the Trail in May. This was a useful learning exercise.
- Avebury – The byway opened to traffic on 1st May. RO is undertaking fixed point photography every month along the Trail in the WHS. RO met with the volunteer monitor for this section in May to ensure information about vehicle use and surface damage is recorded. Awaiting public consultation to be launched by Wiltshire Council.
- M4 crossing – no further progress.
- Ridgeway visitor counters – battery was replaced on 22nd Feb. This should prove a useful source of data.
- Vehicles on The Ridgeway – all HAs have provided information to RO about TROs on The Ridgeway. Oxfordshire County Council has provided GIS information about related furniture on the Trail, e.g. TRO signs. RO is producing an overview paper. RO and Chairman are listed as consultees for the review of the status of The Ridgeway in Oxfordshire to confirm if it should or should not be a byway.
- Parking areas at Scutchamer, Sparsholt Firs and Ashbury have been improved. The surface has been levelled at Sparsholt and Ashbury, with parking bays for disabled drivers and horse boxes identified with new signs. This work was carried out by White Horse Contractors Ltd. Parking fingers have been added to Ridgeway fingerposts at all three locations. Three new display cabinets designed and made by two Trail volunteers have also been installed, with the event calendar posted up. A gate into a private field off the Trail at Sparsholt was also moved so as to bring associated vehicle traffic off The Ridgeway – we received help from the White Horse Model Flying Club to do this work. This work will inform improvements at other parking areas along the Trail.

National Trails Website and publicity/communications

- There has been limited progress with the Companion guide work.

- The 2017 event calendar has been circulated to hundreds of people on the Trail Team mailing list and posted on the website. Information presented in this calendar reflects the growing engagement of event organisers. The new national Trail Family guidance for event organisers has also been put onto the website.
- Event organisers promising a donation for their 2017 events have all been sent Ridgeway logos and a special national Family 'supporter' logo. This will lead to greater exposure of the Ridgeway brand.
- We took ownership of the TripAdvisor account for The Ridgeway. Work is ongoing to attract reviews.
- A volunteer is producing material to place on the Chiltern Railways website.
- Unfortunately, a Spring newsletter was not produced.
- New event webpages were launched in March, making The Ridgeway pages better than any other Trail's pages! This is a huge improvement and should help attract visitors and encourage third parties to advertise their events. Event organisers attending the annual event organiser forum were shown the improvements.
- Twitter followers increased from 420 to 523. Tweets were scheduled to promote events including those which are donating to the Trail and the Chilterns Walking Festival.
- RO organised an event to contribute to the Chilterns Walking Festival in May. This Stone Age Woman walk event at Ivinghoe attracted coverage from BBC Three Counties and BBC Berkshire radio.

Engagement with user groups and new audiences

- A new online survey for visitors was created as part of an Oxford University student project and is now available through the Feedback page of the website. This will gather data to compliment what we receive from end-to-end users submitting feedback forms in return for completion certificates.
- Oxford University student project produced a report about the potential of mobile phone apps for The Ridgeway. RO and Rowan Whimster attended a site visit to test out an app at Avebury.
- Delivery Group have identified 22 promoted routes that will be improved and promoted for the Trail.
- The joint annual forum with the North Wessex Downs AONB has a theme of access/recreation. It is being held in Uffington and speakers are being sought.

Ridgeway 5 development themes

- See Development group update for details of work involving RO.
- Natural Ridgeway - Oxford University PhD project is progressing well. RO was involved in interviews to select a student. This student will start in October. It is hoped that a drone will be flown over a stretch of The Ridgeway to produce images to inform an assessment of the ecological function of the Trail. The RO helped the university make an application to the Friends for match funding for this work.
- Ancient Ridgeway – work to provide an event about the prehistory of the Ivinghoe area for the Chilterns Walking Festival has produced useful information that could be formatted into a walk leaflet.
- Creative Ridgeway – RO attended a Chilterns Walking Festival event led by Anna Dillon. The walk explored The Ridgeway near Monks Risborough in relation the art of Paul and John Nash. Anna was receptive to creating a walk leaflet based on the event materials.

2. Volunteer update

- 48 volunteers carried out work on The Ridgeway 10th Feb to 7th June 2017. The number of tasks in March are heavily reduced as a result of the workshop move.
- Two new volunteers have been recruited to monitor The Ridgeway.

- There continues to be a delay in sending out updated information to volunteer monitors – improvements to the maps are taking much longer than expected.

February (20 volunteers)

20th Grimm's Ditch = 8

21st Watlington = 3

22nd Smeathe's Ridge = 6

23rd Lodge Hill = 3

March (1 volunteer)

28th Workshop = 1

April (15 volunteers)

3rd Streatley = 1

19th Sparsholt = 6

24th Ashbury = 3

25th RW carparks = 5

May (26 volunteers)

10th Ogbourne = 5

17th Snap = 5

22nd Ashbury = 5

23rd Princes Risborough = 3

30th Workshop = 3

30th RW carparks = 3

31st Workshop RW carparks = 2

June (6 volunteers)

1st RW carparks = 2

5th South Stoke = 1

6th Grimms Ditch = 2

6th Workshop = 1

Total tasks 10th Feb to 7th June 2017: 20

Total volunteers 10th Feb to 7th June 2017: 48

0 Partner volunteers

0 corporate events

3. Website stats

No review undertaken this period.

4. Counter stats (nr. Ogbourne St George)

Batteries were replaced by RO and volunteers on 22nd Feb. Awaiting more data before confirming their reliability.

Sarah Wright - Ridgeway Officer
September 2017



News for everyone who enjoys and cares for The Ridgeway

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The Return of Bill Bailey

You can always hope to meet friendly people along The Ridgeway and this summer you may have bumped into the well-known comedian Bill Bailey.



Bill walked The Ridgeway in July to raise over £9,000 for Stand Up To Cancer. This is a Cancer Research UK initiative to turn scientific discoveries into new game-changing treatments and tests for patients.

Bill started his walk some distance north of The Ridgeway so that he covered 100 miles by the time he finished

at Avebury. It was his second visit to the Trail, having walked it for charity in 2015. The Ridgeway Officer met Bill on his way to Goring to find out more about his interest in The Ridgeway and walking.

Bill's connection to the Trail dates back to his youth when his family would visit Wayland Smithy, Uffington White Horse and Avebury. Walking is one of his past-times and he has completed other long-distance trails, including the South Downs Way National Trail and trails abroad. Bill gets his legs trained for long-distance walking by doing circular walks and swears by good walking shoes and an ice bath to keep him going day after day. It seems a 'support crew' driving a Winnebago camper van also revives him and his band of friends and family with tasty food and drink at occasional points!

Bill's tips for long-distance walking include the importance of preparation. Organising where to stay and how to travel around has taken him months. He recommends the 'distance calculator' tool on the National Trail website and says that the good signage on the National Trail is a real help. Bill also shared a tip for booking taxis to collect you from the Trail – check they take muddy boots and dogs!

Hear more from Bill at our forum event in Uffington!

Wednesday 18th October 2017

Be inspired to make more of the outdoors, with talks from Bill Bailey, Cycling UK, MIND mental health charity and more.

Booking essential. See page 7 for details .

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



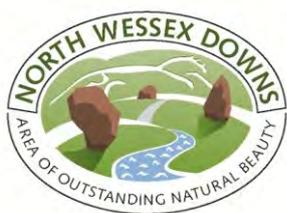
Living Ridgeway

The Ridgeway is an 87 mile (139km) signed trail open to the public to enjoy walking, cycling, horseriding and events in attractive countryside.

The route lies to the west of London, passing over the chalk hills of the Chilterns AONB and North Wessex Downs AONB, taking in rural villages and market towns. Visitors come from near and far, including tourists from the United States and Europe, and are served by numerous local accommodation providers, shops, eating places and visitor attractions.

The Ridgeway is popularly known as Britain's oldest road - parts of the Trail follow tracks used by travellers, herdsmen and soldiers over the centuries. The landscape is dotted with historic features and chalk grassland flowers, butterflies and farmland wildlife are a highlight too.

SIA A T The Ridgeway is one of 15 National Trails in England and Wales. It is also part of an international network of trails called the International Appalachian Trail.

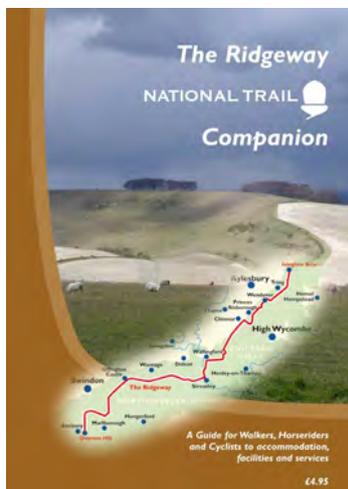


The Ridgeway is managed by a group of organisations called The Ridgeway Partnership. Day-to-day work is led by the National Trails Team hosted by Oxfordshire County Council. The Partnership works with user groups, landowners, local councils, local communities and others to realise social, economic and environmental benefits from The Ridgeway.

Plan your Visit

Plan your day visit or holiday to The Ridgeway using our interactive online map: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway> Our website also lists events along the Trail and there are circular walks and rides leaflets to download for free.

The Ridgeway Companion guide lists details of campsites, B&Bs, hotels, self-catering cottages and inns around the area. Other useful contacts, such as taxis, hospitals, vets, are provided as well as car park locations. It costs £4.95 and is available from our online shop: <http://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk>



Enjoying The Ridgeway in style



As part of the **British Horse Society's Ride Out Month** in May, four horse and carriage combinations and one donkey pair drove along The Ridgeway. Horse-drawn carriages can be driven along stretches of restricted byway and byway. Wide stretches of the Trail provide space for everyone to carefully pass by. They are a great sight to see.

Living Ridgeway

Leading the Way New Chairperson needed April 2018

The current Chairman of The Ridgeway Partnership, Ian Ritchie, is stepping down in March 2018 at the end of the standard three year term.

The Partnership is looking for a successor for the next three years. Working with an ambitious group of partners and a committed Trail team, this is a great opportunity to help shape the future of one of the country's National Trails. The Ridgeway is used by thousands of walkers, cyclists and horse riders every year and the Partnership aspires to ensure every visitor enjoys a world class experience. There is also ongoing work to move towards a new financial model and to conserve the Trail's natural and cultural heritage.

**For more details or to express interest,
please contact the current Chair
Ian Ritchie: ian.ritchie1@btinternet.com**

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Eating and Producing

Villages and towns near the Trail offer a range of



For the gastronomic visitor, one of the highlights along The Ridgeway is [The Miller of Mansfield pub](#) in Goring, Oxfordshire. The pub was awarded ‘The Good Food Guide Readers’ Restaurant of the Year 2016’ by Waitrose. More casual but good quality offerings are available, including [The Blueberry in Blewbury](#), Oxfordshire, which specialises in wood-fired pizza and also does take-

away. There are of course many country pubs to choose from, with [The Greyhound at Letcombe Basset](#) being a favourite as it was awarded 'Country Pub of the Year 2017' by the local CAMRA club.

For those who want snacks or food to go, there are food shops in the area including some lovely delicatessens. [The Granary Delicatessen in Watlington](#) is a small deli specialising in cheeses and sells drinks and take-away sandwiches. For those with a sweet tooth, [Rumseys in Wendover](#) is locally famous for its chocolates which you can watch being made on the premises!



For the full Ridgeway experience, visitors can look out for food and drink that has been produced or manufactured locally. There are farmers’ markets held in major towns along The Ridgeway, but also in less obvious places such as the village of Aldworth’s Saturday Market.

Farmshops dotted along the Trail are also a treasure trove of local produce and serve refreshments. These include the [Three Trees in Chiselden](#) (Wilts), [Savages in Blewbury](#) (Oxon), Dunsley Farm Shop in Tring (Herts) and [Buckmoorend Farm Shop near Butlers Cross](#) (Bucks).

Visit our website to discover places to eat and drink along The Ridgeway – find the

Food along The Ridgeway

of pubs, cafes, restaurants, food shop and markets.

Living Ridgeway

The farmshop at Buckmoorend

opened 18 months ago and conveniently lies directly on The Ridgeway. It has already become popular with Ridgeway walkers seeking out hot drinks and also their home-



made sausage rolls and scotch eggs made with meat from the farm. Small tubs of local ice-cream also proved popular on hot days this summer!

Farmshops and farmers' markets reveal the range of food grown and made along The Ridgeway.

Buckmoorend Farm Shop is run by the Hares family who farm the surrounding fields to produce bacon, sausages, pork, lamb and beef to sell in their shop. Next door, at the Prime Minister's country retreat, Chequers, the chef makes the shop's novelty chocolates in the shape of tractors and sheep! A little further afield, cakes and Chiltern Brewery beer are made in villages that you can see from The Ridgeway on top of Coombe Hill. Towards the north in Hertfordshire, chutneys and jams are made in Cheddington near Ivinghoe Beacon at the end of the Trail. To the south in Oxfordshire, wheat is grown near The Ridgeway at Wallingford to make flour for Wessex Mill flour and grapes are grown and made into wine at Brightwell Vineyard.



Bon appetite!

See the interactive map under '[Plan your visit](#)' and select the 'Food and drink' tick-box.

Events along The Ridgeway

Enjoy events on The Ridgeway. Visit our website for more details and more events. Many events require booking in advance.

Join an event or seek solitude

There's something for everyone along The Ridgeway. Check out what's on and plan to either join in or find a quiet spot! Our most comprehensive events listing is on our website but there are some events we are not aware of. Many event organisers work with us to keep local communities informed.

Until 1 Oct *Sculpture in the garden*

[Avebury, Wilts \(National Trust\)](#)

Enjoy a variety of sculpture in the garden at Avebury Manor, including ceramics in the borders, a glass mosaic and a stylised head in stone.

Fri 1 Sept-Sun 5 Nov *Coronation of George VI*

[Nuffield Place \(National Trust\)](#)

A display in the house celebrates the 80th anniversary of the coronation of George VI, attended by Lord and Lady Nuffield.

Sat 16 Sept *Chiltern Wonderland 50*

[Starting in Goring \(Centurion Running\)](#)

50 mile trail run through the south Chilterns.



Sat 16 Sept-Sun 1 Oct *Chilterns Walking Festival - Autumn*

[Various locations in the Chilterns](#)

Explore a host of places, landscapes and lifestyles across the Chilterns AONB. Numerous events on and near The Ridgeway, including ramblers for mobility scooters.

Wednesdays 20 Sept, 4 Oct, 18 Oct, 1 Nov, & 15 Nov

Welly Wednesday at Tring

[Tring Natural History Museum, Herts](#)

Outdoor activities for 3-5 year olds. Explore a UK animal through play, storytelling and creating an outdoorsy craft to take home.

Sat 23 Sept *My Wild Chilterns*

[College Lake, nr Tring, Herts \(Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust\)](#)

Walks, talks, demos, workshops and more about the landscape and wildlife.

Sun 1st Oct & various dates into Jan 2018 *Illuminated woodland walk*

[Basildon Park \(National Trust\)](#)

As the sun fades see the woodland walk lit up, and enjoy the changing colours of the trees through the seasons from autumn to winter.

13,14,15, 20, 21, 22 October *Deer Rut walks*

[Ashridge, Herts \(National Trust\)](#)

Join the Ashridge ranger for an early morning walk to search for fallow deer during the rutting season. Breakfast is included following the walk.

Sun 8 Oct *Ridgeway Run*

[Tring, Herts \(Tring Running Club\)](#)

Long-established annual trail run in the north Chilterns.

Events along The Ridgeway

Thurs 5 - Mon 9 Oct Swindon Poetry Festival

Various venues around Swindon

Poetry performances, workshops, open-mic sessions, films, bring your own poetry and more in the Richard Jefferies Museum, Tent-Palace of the Delicious Air and other spaces.

Thurs 14 - Fri 15 Oct Apple celebrations

Avebury, Wilts (National Trust)

Visit Avebury and celebrate the apple harvest. Apple tastings, apple pressing and children's activities in the Orchard at Avebury Manor.

Wed 18 Oct Autumn walk at Pulpit Hill and Grangelands

Longdown Hill, nr Princes Risborough, Bucks (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, National Trust)

Guided walk to enjoy autumn wildlife at two Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Sat 21 Oct Autumn 100

Starting in Goring, Oxon (Centurion Running)

100 mile run involving four loops around Goring, taking in the Thames and Ridgeway.

Sat 21-Sat 28 Oct Wantage (not just) Betjeman Festival

Various venues around Wantage, Oxon

Range of events for all ages, from drawing with a kid's illustrator to hearing from the adventurer Sarah Outen.

Sun 22 Oct White Horse to Ashdown guided walk

Uffington, Oxon (National Trust)

See signs of autumn and spectacular views on this ranger-led bracing eight mile circular walk.

Sat 4 Nov Wallingford bonfire display

Wallingford, Oxon

Celebrations on the Kincroft, with a huge bonfire and enormous firework display attracting thousands of people.

Fri 10-Sun 12 Nov Druid's Challenge

Starting at Ivinghoe, Bucks (XNRG)

84 mile ultra-marathon along the full length of The Ridgeway.

Fri 24 Nov-Sun 21 Jan Wildlife Photographer of the Year Highlights

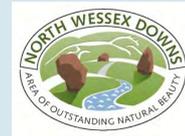
Tring Natural History Museum, Herts

Stunning annual exhibition of 16 awe-inspiring winners from the international photography competition.

Thurs 30 Nov, Thurs 14 Dec Winter warmer walks

Avebury, Wilts (National Trust)

Join archaeologist Dr. Nick Snashall for a winter ramble around the stone circles. Festive refreshments, free parking and discount in the shop included.



The Ridgeway Partnership &
North Wessex Downs AONB
Annual Forum

The Great Outdoors!

Wed 18th October

Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall,
Uffington, Oxon

Everyone welcome

Talks, discussion and field visits about how we can enjoy the outdoors. Look forward to Bill Bailey, Cycling UK, MIND mental health charity, Nordic Walking and more.

Book your place:

info@northwessexdowns.org.uk

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL 

Volunteer Task Diary

Living Ridgeway

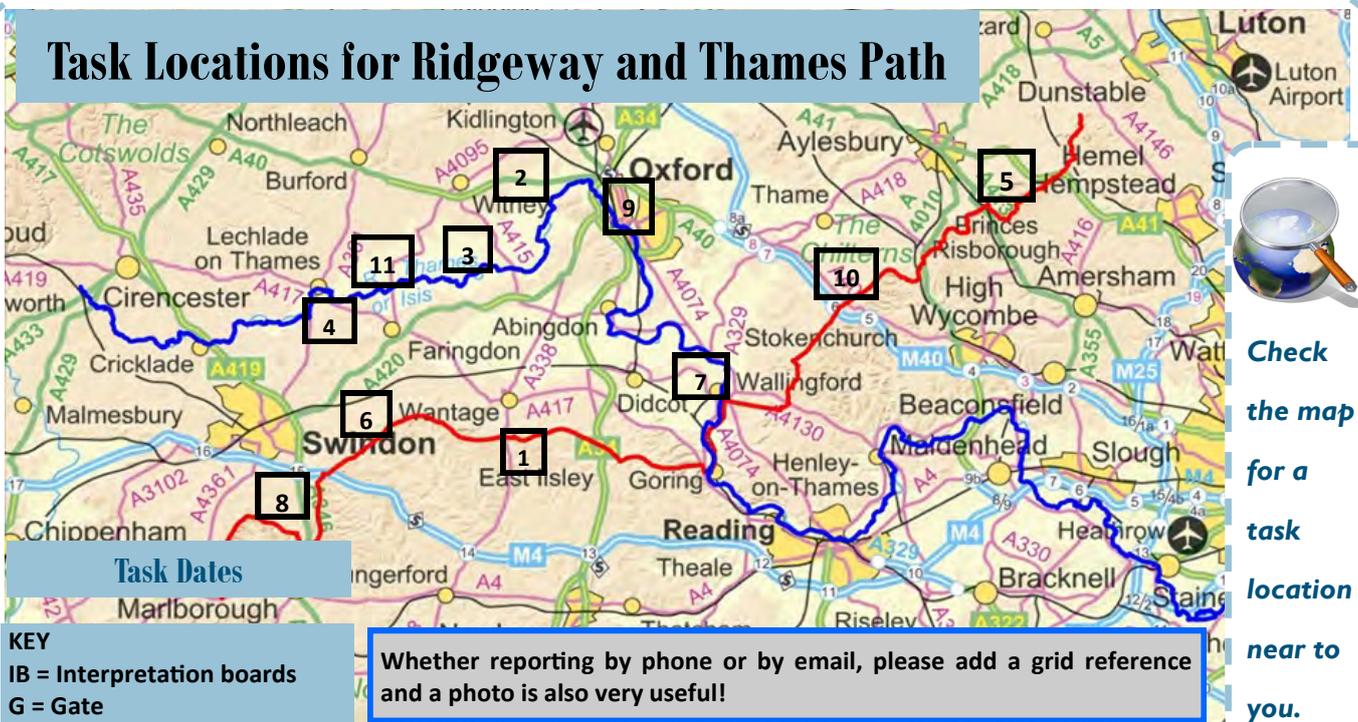
Practical work is carried out along The Ridgeway to ensure walkers, cyclists and horseriders enjoy using it. Work is carried out by the National Trail Team, local highway authorities, land-owners and contractors. The Chiltern Society do occasional work on The Ridgeway in the Chilterns. Volunteers are welcome to help maintain The Ridgeway and Thames Path by joining the task team led by the National Trail Team. The location and activities for the next 3 months are shown below. Please ensure that you book early as the practical tasks are popular. Locations for tasks may change and volunteer numbers can be limited due to type of task.

Volunteer to help with a task by contacting the National Trail Team.

Book in advance and as soon as possible.

E: nt.volunteers@oxfordshire.gov.uk T: 01865 810211

Task Locations for Ridgeway and Thames Path



Check the map for a task location near to you.

Task Dates

KEY

- IB = Interpretation boards
- G = Gate
- S = Signage
- ST = Steps
- TBC = To be confirmed
- BBQ = :-)

SEPT

- 4th RW - Scutchamers IB 1
- 4th TP - Workshop S 2
- 5th TP - Northmoor G 3
- 6th TP - Inglesham S 4
- 7th TP - TBC
- 11th TP - workshop S 2
- 12th RW - Wendover ST 5
- 13th RW - TBC
- 14th TP - Inglesham S 4
- 18th RW - Bishopstone S 6
- 19th TP - Swinford BBQ 2
- 25th RW - Bishopstone 6
- 26th TP - Inglesham S 4

Whether reporting by phone or by email, please add a grid reference and a photo is also very useful!

OCT

- 2nd RW - West S 6
- 3rd TP - Workshop S 2
- 4th RW - West S 6
- 5th TP - Inglesham S 4
- 9th RW - Watlington W/C
- 10th TP - Inglesham S 4
- 11th RW - South Stoke W/C 7
- 12th TP - Inglesham S 4
- 16th TP - Dorchester W/C 7
- 17th RW - Snap W/C 8
- 18th RW - Wallingford W/C 7
- 19th TP - Northmoor G
- 23rd RW - Princess Risborough W/C 5
- 24th TP - Cholsey W/C 7
- 25th TP - TBC
- 30th RW - Snap W/C 8
- 31st TP - Dorchester W/C 7

NOV

- 1st TP - Lechlade W/C 4
- 2nd TP - Osney W/C 9
- 6th RW - Snap W/C 8
- 7th RW - Wallingford W/C 7
- 8th TP - TBC
- 13th RW - Snap W/C 8
- 14th RW - Watlington W/C 10
- 15th TP - Lechlade W/C 4
- 16th TP - Osney W/C 9
- 20th TP - Chimney W/C 11
- 21st RW - Watlington W/C 10
- 22nd Workshop 2
- 27th TP - Fiddlers W/C 9
- 28th RW - Snap W/C 8
- 29th TP - Dorchester W/C 7
- 30th RW - TBC

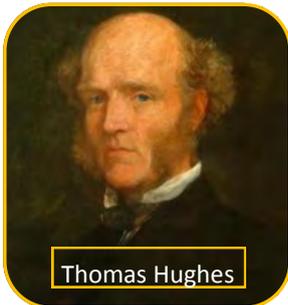
400 Years at School!

Autumn brings the start of the new school year and this is a particularly special year for one of the oldest schools in the country, in Uffington near The Ridgeway.



Ancient Ridgeway

Uffington's chalkstone School House was built 400 years ago in 1617, founded by Thomas Saunders who lived at Hall Place in Woolstone. Schools developed in most places through the provision of a Sunday School during the 1800's, so the school in Uffington was a very early example of education for ordinary villagers.



Thomas Hughes

The school has literary associations, featuring in the well-known book 'Tom Brown's School Days' by Thomas Hughes, first published in 1857. Hughes was the son of Uffington's vicar and his book offers an insight into what life was like in Uffington in Victorian times.

Today, the school building is listed and is open to the public as a small museum. This year's special exhibition describes how education has evolved over the past 400 years since the school was founded. Another exhibition tells the story of the local landscape, including the famous Bronze Age chalk horse overlooking the village.

The museum, picturesque village, chalk horse and local pubs make Uffington a great place to explore next time you visit The Ridgeway.



Tom Brown's School Museum
Broad Street, Uffington, Oxon, SN7 7RA
 Open April to October weekends & Bank Holidays, 2-5pm. At other times by prior appointment with Curator.
Admission free
www.museum.uffington.net



Do you love The Ridgeway or know someone who does?
Buy a gift and support National Trails too!
<http://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk/collections/ridgeway>

A BIG
THANK YOU for
recent donations from:
Marlborough Running Club,
SENSE Ridgeway,
Wessex TREC, Cycle Classics,
Race to the Stones,
Trail Running Association
and Cycle-tec.

Winter Edition

We'd love to hear
your feedback and
stories for the
next edition!

Latest News



Follow us on Twitter

@TheRidgeway1972

For more detailed news, visit

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/news

Thanks to all our volunteers helping us look after The Ridgeway. We host a BBQ in their honour each September. This year, the local rescue service joined in - they were training nearby and smelt the sausages!



The Ridgeway National Trail



Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, Oxford, OX1 1NE

General enquiries: 01844 810224

General email: ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk Volunteer email: NTvolunteers@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Social media: @TheRidgeway1972 Website: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF 2017/18
Wednesday 24 May 2017 County Hall, Oxford

2017 (1)

Attending:

Members and their interest areas:

Stuart McGinness, Chair (SMG) - User - Off-road cycling and leading youth cycle training
Troth Wells, Vice-chair (TW) - User - Equestrian access
Dave Cavanagh (DC) - User - Walking and practical voluntary action on paths
Gordon Garraway (GG) - Other - Green space protection and recreational trails
John Griffin (JG) - User - Cycling, walking and protected areas
Andrew Hawkins (AH) - Landmanaging - woodland owner and ecologist
Matthew Judson (MJ) - User - 4x4 use and leading youth outdoor hiking training

Oxfordshire County Council Officers attending to support OCAF

Hugh Potter (HP) - OCC Countryside and Records Group Manager
James Blockley (JB) - OCC Countryside Access Team Leader
Paul Harris (PH) - OCAF Secretary/OCC Access Strategy & Development Officer

1. Annual election/re-election of Chair and Vice

HP opened the meeting by inviting proposals for Chair and Vice-chair. Stuart McGinness was proposed by JG, seconded by GG and elected to Chair. Troth Wells was proposed by DC, seconded by SMG and elected to Vice-chair.

2. Welcome

SMG thanked members for his nomination and welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

3. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Anne Luttmann-Johnson, Harry St John, Philip Chamberlain, Sarah Martin, Nigel Fisher and regular Mid and West Berkshire LAF observer Chris Marriage. PH added that since the local elections both Rodney Rose and David Nimmo-Smith had lost their seats and he would inform the group when an elected member had been nominated to attend OCAF. There were no declarations of interest.

4. Confirm Minutes of 22 February 2017 (2016/3)

Signed as a correct record with three minor typos on pages 2, 3 and 4.

5. Matters Arising

PH confirmed that there were no actions from the last meeting.

2016(3)(6) Science Vale Cycle Network. PH informed the group that he had opening discussions with landowners and had got a reasonable level of positive feedback. He needed to hear back from one landowner before more detailed negotiations and works planning could begin. There were also internal discussions about project delivery capacity linked to the other funds available for Milton, Ardley and Upper Heyford. TW raised the issue of additional incinerator capacity at Ardley and asked if there was a plan to ask for a Pegasus crossing. PH responded that the current developer funding monies obtained for this development had not included a crossing but agreed to see if this could be included as the project progressed. For the community route in Science Vale JG asked about ongoing maintenance. PH confirmed that the funds wouldn't pay for this but by ensuring a fit for purpose specification it was hoped to resolve some current issues and ensure a long life facility. GG and AH raised the issue of shared use conflicts. PH said that this route was going to be designed as a community link rather than a black top fast commuting route so the opportunity for

speeding would be limited by design and he expected some community acceptability discussions as part of project development. DC asked what the expected timescale was. PH responded that he hoped initial ground works could begin this autumn but it depended on how negotiations progressed.

6. Restructure of the OCC Communities Directorate

Hugh Potter said that the Environment and Economy Directorate had become the Communities Directorate and this change and subsequent stages are part of making Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) less remote and driving the debate to be able to meet the needs of local people. The focus was on building partnerships and working more effectively through the OCC corporate priorities of 'Thriving Communities, Thriving People and Thriving Economy'. The first phase of the highways restructure included countryside access functions. The structure has been created but not the detail about delivery of functions. HP stressed that the way that the Countryside Access Team works with local communities, landmanagers and user groups is a good example of local accountability and that key posts still had to be recruited to over the coming months, including the principal officer covering Countryside Access.

James Blockley outlined the new structure for Countryside Access with a principal officer leading and coordinating access, tree management and National Trail functions from a central hub with field officers based in each of the area stewardship centres. Definitive Map & Commons, Access Strategy and database systems management officers were being moved across to different team areas. The intention was that there would be closer integration with highways functions and more local accountability as well as more effective and efficient use of resources.

SMG stated that he was unhappy with closer integration with highways as in his experience highways do not listen to the public and so it was better to keep what we have. HP said that the team and individuals had worked hard to communicate the value of functional relationships as a team including definitive map functions and the structure was now firm. The sub-structures and functions still needed some work but the teams would ensure that the new arrangements worked. The unitary debate was still open and if implemented would mean more change is likely. SMG repeated his point that he didn't feel that highways were interested in anything that wasn't roads related. JB replied that the intention of having field officers in areas is to increase integration and understanding of different issues and perspectives which is anticipated to mean that issues on the rights of way network were likely to be able to be escalated within area highway teams more easily.

DC asked for an explanation of the split of the teams. HP explained that the new area stewardship teams were to be split north and south, with a 'hub' stewardship team for cross-county or non-geographic functions. The area teams would have a much wider remit than roads maintenance and they would now include bridges and structures, drainage, tree management, rights of way etc. JG said that a selling point of unitary councils is that there is greater efficiency and people know where to go. He expressed his concern that the restructure is taking place internally without service users being involved and knowing who to contact about particular issues and although existing team members would probably carry on maintaining the same way of working it was more of an issue for when new staff members came into the new structure. JB said that they needed to include all the elements of a job's role going forward and that OCAF etc would continue to be supported. PH clarified to GG that the new team leader role replaces the old group manager positions, and the new principal officers replace the old team leader roles. DC asked if field officers are going to do more jobs as part of the new structure. JB said this wasn't clear for the future but the new roles were the same as the old ones. JB undertook to keep the group updated as more detail emerged.

The Chair thanked HP and JB for their update.

7. Oxfordshire policy for the management of motorised vehicles on Public Rights of Way

Troth Wells introduced her paper and said that this came up in local area rights of way meetings about a particular byway in Letcombe Bassett where use by off-roaders had damaged routes – but that this issue has widespread relevancy. Her first step was to look for OCC policy as guidance but there wasn't one and although there were positives and negatives of having a policy it was good for the public to be able to see how an authority addresses the issue. PH outlined how the council processes work for developing and getting policies through to adoption. He suggested that OCAF could answer the questions posed in the agenda item as part of this process. He also advised that

there was nothing to prevent OCAF producing its own draft policy and then putting this to OCC with a recommendation to take it forward to adoption and it would then be up to OCC to decide on how to act on this advice. In terms of the questions in the paper, members felt that a policy gives transparency and shows the thinking behind TRO processes and improve them by for example making sure information about the reasons for the closure are included in any signage. Members were also of the view that there is a need for procedures as well as enforcement and cooperation, as the TRO by itself will not resolve surface damage. DC said that the use of TRO also raises a breach of it to a criminal act. MJ added that any policy and process document needs to be easy to find.

AH stated that the approach of having a policy seems sensible and proposed using the Hampshire model. DC agreed that there should be a policy but was concerned that an authority could hide behind this and was not sure if a detailed or a short policy was best. JB expressed his view that clarity and consistency were important but there were disadvantages in being too detailed and including procedures. He added that other areas of work were not covered by policies but this could be actioned in order to help public understanding, as could the development of internal procedures. SMG said that he liked parts of the Hampshire one and agreed that there was a need to have a policy. TW welcomed the agreement around the need for a policy and also the strain of pressures of work on the team but felt that if this was developed it will help. TW suggested that a mix of Surrey with Somerset's bullet points would work best, possibly with an appendix explaining the basics of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). MJ said that there needed to be a policy of sufficient detail so that officers don't have to be unnecessarily engaged to find out the detail as this could use up their time so appendices may be useful.

HP said that in his experience it would be good to have a policy but a pragmatic approach had been applied up until now, and this included control measures and limitations. JB added that it was important to have user group and community involvement and any policy would need to reference and be read alongside the team's Priority Caseload Approach.

AH asked if OCC officers needed more support as if the current approach was working there shouldn't be pressure on officers to develop policy. SMG proposed that OCAF develops a document and leave it up to OCC to decide. TW agreed with this and said that this gave OCAF a clear advisory role

Action 1: The Secretary to work with Chair to develop a managing vehicular use of rights of way draft policy.

8. Statement of Priorities for definitive map related activities

The Chair opened up the item by suggesting that the top priority for the definitive map areas shouldn't be keeping the map up to date – although it was important that Ordnance Survey maps were reasonably accurate. TW agreed with this and also suggested that the priorities for DMMOs should be swapped especially as we were now in 2017 and a message needed to be sent out. HP said that the team were keen to look at reviewing processes. The Deregulation Act still needed to come into force and impacts assessed but he wanted to make progress where possible. TW cited examples of people who have moved away before their application was processed and said that some authorities prioritised user evidence claims due to the risk of a loss of an applicant. DC expressed his view that chronological was fair but thought that increasing the priority of those applications with user evidence may be beneficial. It was also noted that there wasn't a SoP for Public Path Orders. HP gave an example of an applicant providing a sworn affidavit when they got too ill to attend a public inquiry but that had cost issues for them. PH reminded members that the 'cut-off date' for the definitive map applied only to applications based purely on historical documents.

PH asked members if they felt processes for modification orders should be looked at or should there be a whole- definitive map review of functions. Members shared their understanding that the team were managing pressures in the short term by identifying and focusing on the top priority issues across all DM functions, but felt that a complete review wasn't expected when staffing numbers were so reduced. Members appreciated the issues caused by reduced staff numbers and hope that they can all be replaced. AH wanted OCC to provide more money for the review and for OCC to record the group's concerns. GG asked if Deregulation Act would streamline any processes. HP

responded that there could be but aspects may also increase workloads. AH suggested that volunteers could help to investigate unrecorded ways etc. TW said that it was a matter of political will rather than a lack of resources as she understood that the vacant posts had not yet been cleared for recruitment. PH added that with such a backlog of DMMO applications it wasn't the research that was the challenge as much as the processing of the existing ones. He reminded OCAF members that the 2026 deadline affects only historical claims, not those based on User Evidence. TW offered to contact the new OCC Cabinet Member, Yvonne Constance directly in her OCAF and BHS capacities and that was agreed.

PH referred the group to the questions in the agenda paper. DC highlighted Surrey's approach that includes caveats and the ability to be flexible as well as the direct link to the aims of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan which he supported. HP said that it was an intention to be able to show the direct link to Oxfordshire's ROWIP as part of any review. SMG offered to contact Surrey LAF to understand how they saw their approach was working. TW said that the lack of resources was the biggest issue that meant much policy was hot air and some processes could be time limited. HP informed the group that there was an awareness of the resourcing and backlog issue which is why a focus was being put on the review of DMMO processes as some may consider Oxfordshire takes an excessively risk averse approach. There was a balance to be found and it was good to have stakeholders express their views to help inform reviews.

AH said that development related definitive map related issues had to be a priority to process given the potential effect on a housing or other scheme. SMG added that wholesale changes to rights of way through development sites needed to be controlled. GG pointed out that in the Vale a priority approach took place for discretionary functions for example for the Harwell Link Road bridleway diversion. JG said that it may be a difficult triaging process to identify public interest or benefit and the consequences if an application is not processed. This makes categorisation challenging as it needs a case by case approach. SMG said OCAF was happy to help OCC teams to improve outcomes as much as members could.

Action 2: Troth Wells to contact OCC Cabinet Member for Environment to press for recruitment to vacant Definitive Map Team officers

Action 3: Secretary to re-circulate statement of priorities and members to send their suggestions through before end September

Action 4: Chair to contact Surrey LAF about their views on how the statement of priorities works in practice

9. Access and 'Brexit' *[agenda item swapped to after the promoted route discussion]*

SMG introduced his note and explained his view that he felt there should be access to more types of land in addition to the public rights of way network in England and how public money for agriculture should enable this access. AH said that this could be asking rather a lot from landowners and that it wasn't practical in the UK. JG reminded the group that OCAF had been heavily involved in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act access to new areas of open country and felt that a more sensible objective should be to protect rights of way and find a way to replace the incentive farming for permissive access. PH explained that as well as access permissive payments it would be important to try and keep the 'good agricultural and environment' compliance condition for Basic payments and farm stewardship schemes as this had been very effective in protecting public rights of way, especially in relation to ploughing and cropping. AH pointed out that any increase in right to roam could harm biodiversity. SMG said that increased people pressure also increased pressure on access networks for recreation. AH identified the value of the excellent rights of way network especially in south Oxfordshire. TW offered to circulate the West Berks paper on Brexit and access and DC offered to send the Ramblers' paper too.

Action 5: Troth Wells and Dave Cavanagh to circulate Access and Brexit papers

10. OCC promoted routes

PH introduced the agenda item and encouraged members to consider the questions in the paper.

DC said that he thought the priority should be the route on the ground and its signing which he thought were fundamental items of work. GG said that it came down to local groups promoting routes such as the Oxford Green Belt Way where volunteers replaced signs and monitored condition but were still stretched to keep it up to a reasonable standard. DC identified that the role of volunteers does replace some statutory functions to solve problems on promoted routes. JB replied that OCC was keen to have some level of volunteer ownership and involvement for promoted routes and the wider rights of way network that added value to what OCC was able to undertake. This might mean secondary clearance or mowing work by volunteers using hand tools after the first machinery cut by OCC or lower priority works including those batched together under the new Priority Caseload Approach. DC said he felt it was the responsibility of the promoting organisation to maintain routes in the long term. GG replied that this may be OK for minor works but not bridges or flooded areas and he hoped that OCC would be able to undertake these works and assign works on agreed promoted routes a higher priority.

11. TOE2 Improving access to Oxfordshire's Countryside – for information only

12. Oxfordshire Historic Landscapes Walks and associated project – for information only

13. Questions or any other business - none

14. Agree dates of next meeting

Meetings were agreed for 1 Nov 2017 and 7 Feb 2018 for the remainder of 17/18 and 16 May 2018 for the first meeting of 18/19. All Wednesdays 9.45 for 10am location probably County Hall or Speedwell House

The meeting closed at 12.40pm

Oxfordshire Public Rights of Way Monitoring Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Status

1. The Oxfordshire Public Rights of Way Monitoring Group (“Monitoring Group”) is a liaison group, managed by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), with a complementary but non-statutory role alongside that of the statutory Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum (OCAF).

Role/function

2. Monitoring Group’s role is to bring representatives of organisations and other parties with an interest in public rights of way and officers from OCC together to receive and discuss reports and associated matters related to public rights of way. These may include:-
 - a. *Policy, procedural and performance matters relating to the maintenance, protection, recording and development of public rights of way in Oxfordshire*
 - b. *Any other matters relating to public rights of way which the Monitoring Group attendees or OCC considers can be usefully discussed, including the invitation of local agencies/voluntary groups to specific meetings to discuss specific proposals and schemes*
 - c. *Seek collaboration and support through volunteering and benefit in kind for ongoing maintenance & development of the PRoW network and to exchange information, ideas & good practice*
3. During discussions, it is expected that attendees will play an active role by raising questions, points of concern and offering alternative suggestions. OCC will attempt to respond to these at the meeting or in follow-up communications or at a future meeting. The dialogue should be open, inclusive and invite debate but promote collaborative and agreed solutions to issues where possible
4. Monitoring Group has no executive or voting functions and any discussions or advice in meetings is non-binding.

Meeting and group management

5. Monitoring Group meetings will be held twice a year in the spring/autumn but may be cancelled or postponed at the discretion of OCC. There is no quorum for the group and meetings may only proceed if an officer of OCC is in the chair
6. A senior officer of OCC will chair the meeting and OCC will be responsible for arranging meeting administration including agenda setting, note taking and the preparation and circulation of minutes
7. Attendance is by invitation only and is limited to groups/organisations agreed by OCC as providing opportunity for useful representation on the group. OCC will seek to be inclusive in extending invitation to attend the group. Invited groups/organisations may send a representative of their choosing or substitute but they should wherever possible send someone to observe and contribute to the meeting
8. Members will represent the interests of their group rather than attend as individuals and will use their local knowledge or experience to contribute to items for discussion
9. Observers from OCAF are welcomed and reciprocal attendance by MG members at OCAF is also

encouraged.

10. Ground rules for behaviour at the meetings are there to ensure meetings run smoothly. Currently these include:
 - Mobiles, smartphones and other recording devices should be off during the meeting
 - All attendees to behave in a courteous & respectful manner. Aggression or rudeness will not be tolerated
 - Appropriate challenge or disagreement is welcomed especially when they can help improve outcomes, outputs or understanding
 - The Chair's decision on participation, appropriate conduct and when to close a discussion point is final
11. No organisation or individual other than OCC, shall publish or distribute agendas, reports and meeting notes. No organisation or individual has authority to represent the views of the Monitoring Group.
12. Attendance/participation in Monitoring Group meetings and related activities is taken as acceptance of these Terms of Reference.

September 2017