

Chepping Wycombe Parish Council

**Our fabulous network of
footpaths and bridleways in the
Chiltern AONB needs our support.**

Through successive budget cuts Bucks County and now the Unitary has effectively abandoned any more than is legally required of them to maintain statutory Rights of Way.

In a nutshell their legal obligations are to:

- Maintain a register of statutory Rights of Way, i.e. footpaths and bridleways
- Take action if landowners block or impede access to them
- Maintain and install signposts where paths meet metalled highways
- Control plants and natural vegetation growing from the surface of paths
- Build and maintain bridges over natural watercourses and ditches

As a consequence a fabulous resource has steadily declined and will continue to do so.

Could we, should we help improve the network to the benefit of our residents?

Some 10 years ago we approached the RoW Team and flagged up with them issues of concern and asked if we could help and work with them.

We found we were pushing at an open door.

We built up a very good relationship with the RoW Team at Bucks Highways and the many issues we flagged up were steadily addressed and significant resources came our way.

Way more than we perhaps deserved.

Notable were:

- In Loudwater, replacing the failed bridge over the back stream and replacing the fencing along the Back Stream
- In Tylers Green the King's Wood circular disabled footpath from Cock Lane
- In King's Wood developing, over a period of time, a circular Queen's Ride bridleway around the perimeter which involved major works to re-engineer dangerous sections of the bridleway and the provision of a bridge
- Also, in King's Wood addressing a major section of a footpath inundated with spring water and run-off after rain
- Funding, where landowners were amenable, the replacement of over 30 stiles with kissing gates and 10 open gates by the Chiltern Society 'Donate a Gate' Scheme promoted by Bucks RoW



Left: Stile removed, clearly redundant. Post with waymarker left in place
Right: Galvanised kissing gate, but we also sponsored wooden gates and kissing gates

There were many other smaller and not so smaller projects which cumulatively made our footpaths and bridleways more attractive and safer to use. Some:

- In Loudwater we were able to have a footpath taken off a steep bank and with the help of the landowner moved further up the hill onto a much better route
- In Fennels Wood from Loudwater towards Flackwell new flights of stairs were built and the route along the Railway Land improved
- On Sheepridge Lane, a fast 60mph busy road, an off-road green footpath was, with the support of Little Marlow PC, constructed which also joined up several 'orphan' footpaths, including some along part of the Chiltern Way

Are we done or is there more that we could do?

Our original ambition, besides improving our footpaths generally was to see them stile-free and well signposted.

We achieved the first goal.

There is still work that we can do to achieve that original ambition.

But make no doubt about it, it's a marathon not a sprint.

Right now we have a budget of £10,000 so it's a matter of will and perseverance.

Not of a lack of immediate resources.

From this ...

An information
board on
Sheepridge



To this...

A cased and weather protected information board, but there are many styles available



**A suggested parish programme starts with a meeting
with our local Rights of Way Officer to find out:**

- What plans Bucks RoW have for the footpaths and
bridleways in our parish, now and over the next few years
- How they assess priorities, given their budget constraints
- What support they might welcome from us

A plan of action

Low hanging fruit, with immediate impact

Replacing and improving directional signage, both on our properties and along the other footpaths used by our residents

Signage that reflects poorly with residents



In the medium and longer term

These projects are likely to take longer to plan and bring to fruition.

Improvements to the surfaces and stairs of definitive footpaths are inevitably longer-term projects. They will be led by the RoW Team who will need to be the main source of funding.

We can however look to the RoW Team to provide guidance for improvements and suppliers on our property, e.g. King's Wood and Derehams Park

Parish Walks

Our focus should be developing and promoting circular 'Parish Walks' by publishing them on our website and by information boards at start points or other appropriate spots.

We could do this independently or working with local groups.

The Chiltern Society have published a series of stile-free and circular walks

Chiltern Walks

Holmer Green Stile-Free Walk

This walk is all on the flat apart from a small steep valley near the start. It passes through some intricate landscape before crossing open fields in the second half of the walk.

Distance: 2.5 miles

Time: Allow up to 1 hour 15 Minutes

Start: Park at The Common, Holmer Green, High Wycombe HP15 6TB.

Access Information: An easy-going walk with some gentle slopes and one steep climb. The section from waypoints 3-4 below can get very muddy in wet weather.

Refreshments: There are a number of pubs and a café in Holmer Green.

Route:

Cross the recreation ground and leave to the right of the playground. Cross over into Sheepcote Dell Road and walk along to a footpath on the left between Nos. 19 & 21.

1. Turn left along the path to the wooden fence directly ahead at the end. Turn left to follow the fence out to a road. Cross the road, turn right along the pavement and round to the left to the end of the cul-de-sac.

2. Take the path on the left just before No. 36 and continue along it into the countryside for 450m to the edge of a wood. Drop down into the wood where there is a lovely display of bluebells in Spring, climb up the other side and through a gate into the field. Turn left uphill to the electricity pole and keep straight ahead to the right of the hedgerow to leave the field through the gate onto a lane.

3. Turn left, follow the lane round to the right and go through the gate to the right of the entrance to Oakland Farm. Walk along the path to a major track (Toby's Lane). Turn right along the often muddy track for 250m to a crossing path with gates either side.



4. Turn right through the gate and walk straight across the field towards a house (Finchers Lodge). Go through the gate and keep straight ahead along the path to a road at Beamond End. Cross to the path opposite and follow it to a busy road (Sheepcote Dell Road).

5. Cross, go through the entrance to Blairavon Farm and bear right to a footpath to the right of the farm building. Continue straight ahead to the left of the hedgerow and along the edge of two fields to a lane (Hogg Lane). Continue forward to the junction with a busy road (Earl Howe Road).

6. Turn right along the pavement past the Methodist church and The Earl Howe pub to a major crossroads. Turn right past the pond, go over Clementi Avenue and turn left into The Common to finish the walk.

This walk was updated in 20

To progress the programme we should:

- Set up a small working party with a rep from each ward who has strong interest in their local footpaths
- Survey our paths and list improvements we could make
- Determine short term and longer-term opportunities and likely costs to achieve a result
- Start with the low hanging fruit...and move on steadily
- We should endeavour to have a project 'live' in each of the three wards
- Ensure that results are noticeable to our residents and that the council reaps the PR benefits, e.g. by affixing suitable labels 'CWPC working with...' and in the parish newsletter and village publications

Re-ignite the King's Wood Project

We started a programme with the then Friends of Kingswood to mark and signpost the major footpaths, providing information boards at some entrances and at major junctions within the wood. One route was completed but the project stalled for lack of volunteer resources.

Have an overall plan, then get started. If necessary one route at a time Bit by bit.



Thank you for your time.
▀ Suggestions & questions?

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