

YEAR 3 End Of Year Report - (2015 / 2016)

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great
lifestyles



Your countryside

The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2013 to 2031

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Your Countryside

Year 3: 2015-16 Highlight Report

Connecting Spaces



New volunteer group

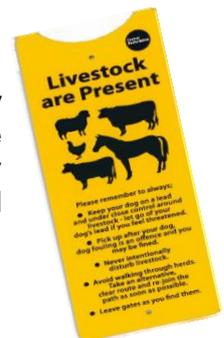
The ROW team has worked hard with the Chilterns Society to set up a new group that undertakes monthly tasks across the north east corner of the Chilterns. A core band of around a dozen volunteers have completed clearance of scrub, erection of waymark posts and creation of a barrier to illegal motorbike access in Totterhoe and Sundon parishes.

Livestock Guidance

Working closely with the National Farmers Union, this guidance sets out for both landowners and path users their respective responsibilities on land crossed by public rights of way and where stock is kept.



The ROW team sent all registered stock holders a copy of the guidance and a number of farmers have subsequently taken up our associated offer of a newly developed waymark disc that can be adjusted according to whether their stock are on the land or not.



Developer Standards

These standards were finalised in collaboration with Planning colleagues and give definition and advice so that all involved in the planning and development process consider public rights of way at an early stage and they are designed into a development proposal to deliver the most sustainable and viable scheme.

Ease of Use – National Benchmark Indicator

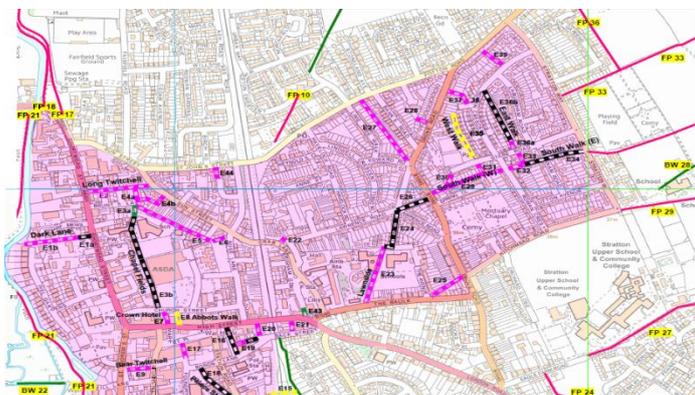
2015's whole year figure of 73.6% is made up of 78.0% in May and 67.6% in September. This is down on last year's (2014) 82% figure but still high when compared to authorities of similar size and make up. Obstructions of varying types were the main reason for failures and were addressed on a case by case basis by area officers.



Definitive Map and Statement work

The team has commissioned to varying degrees for Definitive Map work for Cambridgeshire County Council and Bedford and Luton Borough Councils in terms of consolidation, staff cover and formulation of strategy.

A suite of legal orders that came out of the research and consultation on Biggleswade Excluded Area will be advertised in June.

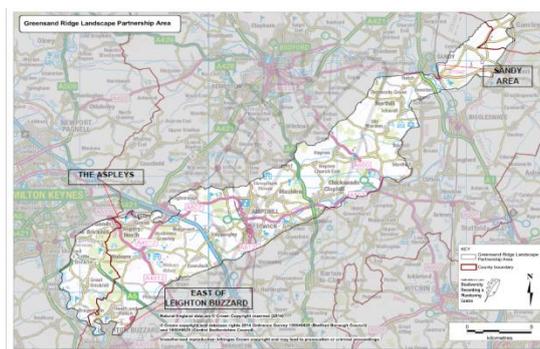


Legal Orders

- 22 Public Path Orders [PPOs] were processed through to confirmation of which three were under the Town and Country Planning Act [in conjunction with planning colleagues]
- 5 Definitive Map Modification Orders [DMMO] were processed through to confirmation

Secrets of the Sands Landscape Partnership

The team has developed a scheme termed Destination Plus aimed at areas of growth along the Greensand Ridge, to provide distance and destination signage as well as bespoke mapboards on circular routes for new residents and the section of the existing population less confident about accessing their local countryside. The scheme will form part of a finalised bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund with a decision expected on funding towards the end of this calendar year.



Breathing Spaces

Dogs in the Countryside – Flagship Project

Since last years work with the Council's Community Safety Team in developing and producing Dog Control Orders, ongoing works have taken place to try and encourage responsible dog ownership in the countryside including a successful spraying campaign at Tiddenfoot Waterside Park. Working with the 'Friends of Tiddenfoot' the campaign saw a reduction in weekly offences from 89 to 32.

Dog Control order signage has been erected at all countryside sites entrances and on rights of way finger posts; this was completed by CAS staff and some of our P3 volunteers. Refresher 'Enforcement' training for CBC and partner organisation staff (Greensand Trust, National Trust, Forest of Marston Vale and RSPB, as well as Dunstable Town Council and Leighton-Linslade Town Council) has been completed. Working with partners (Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Greensand Trust) we continue to promote a consistent messages for dog walkers for all sites across CBC. We continue to engage with dog owners promoting responsible dog walking.

We continue to explore the opportunity to appoint a jointly funded part time Countryside Dog Warden to promote responsible dog walking and educate owners about specific site needs.

Centenary Wood Coppice Project

We have undertaken a trial with local woods workers Wassledine to try and establish a regular coppice regime for the wood, as intended when it was planted. Guy and Jane from Wassledine worked very hard through the winter to clear an area of hazel – they are using the material harvested for firewood, charcoal, faggots and stakes. Hopefully the coppice stumps will generate healthy new growth which can be harvested in 5 -7 years.



Etonbury Wood

Etonbury Wood continues to be a site of development and discovery, where we have been observing the ground flora and fauna, to assist in the development of site plans for future management and improvements to the site.

We have installed two new bridges crossing Pix Brook, and along with the existing culvert, increased connectivity throughout the site. One is linked to a new Bridleway, the other allows visitors to circulate around the site. New notice boards and a litter bin have been installed. Installed new sculptured and wooden benches on site, built Kingfisher nesting areas, built a otter holt, woodland bulb planting activities with the local school and BRCC.

Jubilee Wood

Work continues to ensure establishment of the wood, leaving it to grow with minimal maintenance input regarding weed and grass control. Work to replace losses and re-stand guards will be continuous as the trees grow over the coming years, regrettably, the site has suffered from vandalism and officers have needed to undertake repairs to damaged equipment installed.





The project provides for a number of improvements at the park, including:

- the recreation of the historic Kitchen and Ornamental Gardens for use by local volunteers and schools;
- actions to restore historic vistas through appropriate clearing;
- an oral history project to collect and archive the memories of older residents who have memories of the park in its heyday; and,
- the construction of a Heritage Centre to host exhibits about the park, as well as a café and retail space to provide local employment opportunities

Landscape restoration work is now underway; most tree work has now been finished. Continuation of consultation events with local residents. Sites staff attend Board and MAG meetings. Much involvement with ecological surveying and advice during felling, clearing and restoration works.

Rushmere Country Park

Continues to develop as a high quality countryside destination for residents and visitors alike. Owned by Central Bedfordshire Council and the Greensand Trust, and managed by the Trust, the number of visits broke through the 280,000 mark in 2015/16. The Country Park includes woodlands, heathland, meadows and lakes and includes trails for walkers, horse riders and cyclists. The Treetops Café provides a wide range of hot and cold refreshments and spectacular views from the Herons View Visitor Centre.

During 2015/16 the historic tree avenue was replaced, as a result of the original horse chestnut trees succumbing to disease. It was replanted using a mix of small-leaved lime, which will mature into magnificent avenue trees, alternated with rowan trees to bring early structure and autumn colour to the main entrance route for visitors. A new sculptural feature was added, adding to the existing and extremely popular sculpture trail, and rumour has it that the local fairies have been active in the woods, building new homes! The site once again played host to a production company filming the Sky 1 prime time gameshow 'Wild Things', and the Summer Fayre and Concert, Fairy Festival and Christmas Fayre all proved to be a big success, drawing in many new visitors.

A regular weekly 'Park Run' has been established at Rushmere that is regularly attracting over 100 participants every week.



Flitton Moor.

The Friends of Flitton Moor secured funding from Biffa Award for a fantastic new barn at Flitton Moor Local Nature Reserve. We supported them by removing the old barn and gaining the necessary planning consents. The barn is now up and is being kitted out with information boards and seats, and will be a welcome stop off point for all visitors to the reserve and also those walking through – all credit to the friends of Flitton Moor!



Old – New



Site Welcome Boards

We are continually providing / refreshing site information boards. These include information about the site as well as safety information. New additions this year include new boards at Etonbury Wood, Jubilee Wood and Henlow Common & Langford Meadows Local Nature Reserve.

Water Safety

We continue to be involved Bedfordshire Drowning Prevention Advisory Group and we have a 1st draft 'CBC Approach' to managing water safety in the countryside across Central Bedfordshire, we are working towards a unified 'Approach' throughout the whole of Bedfordshire. It is likely that we will host future water safety events on our sites.

Tree Safety

As part of our ongoing programme of tree safety works, preventative works have taken place at sites including Campton Wood, Linslade Wood, Flitwick Wood and Clophill Nursery. Where necessary we have commissioned detailed surveys on individual trees and carried out all recommended works. We also undertook restorative works including repollarding of willows at Langford Meadows, Baulk Wood and Gannock Castle.

Site Improvements

We have used contractors to keep our sites robust for the future. Improvements include a new footbridge at Henlow Common, culvert repair at Linslade Wood, natural play enhancements and path widening at Baulk Wood and access improvements and path widening at Centenary Wood. We have completed the legal transaction of securing 27 hectares of Public Open Space in Leighton Buzzard at Grovebury Quarry / Southern Meadows, we are now working on installing interpretation panels, walking routes, tree / hedge planting and circular walking routes to make these sites connected to Tiddenfoot by a permissive path agreement across British Engineering Aerospace (BEA) land – this will give a great open space.



New Bridge at Henlow Common



Volunteers and other events

Our Friends Groups continue to do sterling work, meeting regularly to carry out management tasks at sites including Flitton Moor, Tiddenfoot, Studham Common, Knolls Wood and Linslade Wood. The Ivel Valley Conservation Volunteers (BRCC) have been working hard across our sites with a huge range of tasks including harvesting the osier (*willow*) bed, installing new benches and widening paths at Saxon Gate Pocket Park, coppicing hazel and replacing play logs at Baulk Wood, scrub clearance to improve habitat at Blunham Railway, osier harvesting at Langford Meadows, and GST Volunteers undertook willow coppicing at Centenary Wood along with hedgerow planting and hedgerow layering at Tiddenfoot Waterside Park, Dormouse monitoring, habitat creation, hedgerow layering and management at Studham Common.

Events

The team attended events including the Canal Festival at Tiddenfoot, Rushmere Summer and Christmas Fayres and a very wet Kite Festival at Dunstable Downs. We spoke to people about the countryside sites and rights of way near to them, circular walks and site and general countryside issues.

Local Spaces

Cycle Route Development – Cycle Central

The new 38-mile Greensand Cycle Ride is now signed on the ground and a leaflet exists as PDF only. There are also 6 on-road circular cycle rides and 7 off-road circular cycle rides are available for download from the CBC website.

P3 - People, Projects, Partnerships

P3 continues to support CBC through local volunteers, who work with us to help improve our sites, green spaces and Rights of Way. Volunteers are encouraged and supported through a wide programme of walks, talks, workshops, events and other training activities. Site 'Friends of' groups



help us to look after and manage our sites. Volunteers are trained to use certain tools to make their work easier and safer. Currently there are 39 P3 and 16 Friends groups, with over 650 volunteers, supporting the work of Central Bedfordshire's Countryside and RoW Teams. Two key Friends volunteers have been entered into the Central Bedfordshire Council 'Cheering Volunteering' awards scheme 2016.

Central Bedfordshire and Luton Joint Local Access Forum

Our ongoing partnership with Luton Borough Council met four times and held a number of sub group meetings during 2015-16. Meetings are well attended and JLAF members are keen to improve access opportunities within Central Bedfordshire and Luton. Agreement has been reached with Luton to extend the partnership for a further three years to 2017-18.

Healthy Spaces

Cycling Development

All 12 circular cycle routes are now available to download via CBC's website and are receiving much recognition amongst local cyclists.

The 38 mile Greensand Cycle Ride now has downloadable PDFs available from the CBC website and has also received praise for its mix of on and off road routes.

Simply Walking - Health Walks

The 'Simply Waking' project continues to prove successful and is fundamental to helping people to improve their health in a structured and social manner. Regular walks now run from 5 Central Bedfordshire towns/villages – all are led by trained volunteer walk leaders and are aimed at all sectors of the community from mums with buggies to elderly retired people (some with health issues) who are referred on from Doctor's surgeries. Over the last year 1,390 people have taken part in the Health Walks scheme.

Several guided walks were carried out at CBC sites during 2015/16 in partnership with other agencies ie; Bedfordshire Carers and MIND.

Growing Spaces

Green Infrastructure S106 - funding wins

In the 2015 Green Infrastructure s106 bid round, a number of schemes were submitted by the councils delivery partners. Successful projects included:

Etonbury Green Wheel (£57k)

- Access enhancements to Etonbury Wood, to include planting, wildlife watching area, natural play
- Bedfordshire reference orchard
- Mill Meadows Nature Reserve, to include dipping platform and wildflower extensions
- Blue Lagoon – path creation
- Centenary Wood – to include willow pollarding, seating
- Common Road Orchard, to include additional fruit tree planting and interpretation board

Flitton Moor GI link (£55k)

- Linking in to / upgrading surfaces as part of the Flit Valley trail



Ongoing delivery of these projects will take place during 2016-2018.

Green Wheels.

The establishment of various 'Green Wheel' development groups, including Biggleswade, Sandy and Etonbury (inclusive of Stotfold, Arlesey, Fairfield and Astwick). Adopted master plans for Biggleswade and Sandy, and developing a vision plan for Etonbury, there are on-going discussions with various landowners to enhance the PRoW / cycle networks to fulfil these plans. We are attending various steering groups, working with partners, include surface enhancements, range of habitat and landscape planting, public art installation, installing benches, supporting volunteer tasks.

Totternhoe Vision Plan

The Steering Group continues to meet and work on project development with partners. Illegal off-road motorcycling continues to be the major issue in the area. Recent work has included; putting up Motorcycle control order signage along the Green Lanes to make clearer where users can and cannot legally use motorbikes and other vehicles.





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