

# CAPtion



ISSUE 3 SPRING 2010

## WELCOME to the latest news update

on progress with implementing the Countryside Access Plan (CAP) for Hampshire – the first since the completed CAP was published and adopted as Hampshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

### Read all about it!

Andy Smith, Head of Countryside, HCC

A lot has happened since the last edition of 'CAPtion' was published. During 2008, each of the series of CAP consultation drafts was revised, taking account of nearly 200 individual responses to consultation. The resulting **Hampshire Countryside Access Plan (CAP)**, comprising 7 local area Plans and a strategic 'County Overview', was endorsed by the Executive Member for Countryside and published later that same year. This Plan is now the basis on which we plan and

prioritise our work to improve access to Hampshire's countryside, enabling us to focus effort and resources on addressing the issues that people have told us are most important to them.

Three Area Countryside Access Manager posts have been created with responsibility for implementing these Plans: in the North area, Matt Beal is taking the lead for the Forest of Eversley and Hampshire Downs CAPs; in the South, Denise Hewlett is responsible for the New Forest & SW Hants and Solent CAPs; David Marshall (job-sharing in the Central area) is in charge of the South Downs (Hants) CAP; his new 'other half' (currently being recruited) will oversee the Test & Itchen CAP; responsibility for the Forest of Bere CAP is shared by David and Denise. Our thanks go to Steve Bailey, returning to his substantive role as Manager of the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, for all his help in managing our access work in the Test Valley over the last year.

As you'll see from the following pages, consultation and partnership are key aspects of our approach to implementing these Plans. Local working groups of user and landowner representatives are being recruited and are under way to guide and advise us (see 'The view from the Chair' inside), and we are becoming increasingly successful in teaming-up with other organisations such as parish councils, landowners, user groups and other local authorities to coordinate our work and make best use of resources.

We've listened to what people want – now we're doing all we can to achieve it. Your support, whether it be through advice or practical help on the ground is therefore more important than ever!



## The view from the Chair...

*Alan Marlow, Chair, Hampshire Countryside Access Forum*

The task of taking the CAPs from paper reports to real improvements in the rights of way network was never going to be easy, but I sense that there is a real enthusiasm in the Countryside Service to 'make something happen' on the ground. This enthusiasm is strongly supported by the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF).

In the last year or so there have been some significant positive steps towards getting things moving.

Firstly, and probably most importantly, several of the CAP areas have seen initial meetings of their CAP implementation working groups. These groups – organised by HCC Countryside Service staff and consisting of a mixture of volunteers of all interests (including users and landowners), district and parish council representatives and others – have met to start the process of converting the issues and action plans identified in the plan documents into specific proposals for network improvements. Early meetings have raised some interesting procedural and practical issues, but the momentum is gathering.

Also in the last few months there have been a number of developments that will contribute further to the overall initiative. Very significant amongst these is the government's Marine and Coastal Access Act, which will bring a coastal route along almost all of the county's shoreline within the next 10 years. In anticipation of this Hampshire County Council has prepared a complementary scheme of network improvement proposals to give better access to the coast which have been incorporated into the relevant CAPs (for the New Forest & SW Hants and Solent areas).

Also likely to influence the Plans is the arrival of the new South Downs National Park and the focus this will bring on providing high quality access to the countryside.

As always, funding of any improvement is likely to prove challenging, particularly in the current financial climate. However, initiatives such as the county's own Small Grants Scheme, Landfill Tax scheme grants, Defra's Higher Level Stewardship scheme and even the Heritage Lottery Fund are just some of the sources that have funds available.

Time to get out there and CAPitalise!!

## News from the New Forest

*Sarah Manchester, Countryside Access Officer, New Forest National Park Authority*

Here in the New Forest the role of the CAP working group has been taken on by the New Forest Access Forum. Since 2006, the Forum has been holding annual workshops to consider the access provision within its area. Each year the Forum invites representatives from local parish councils, user groups, landowners and other interested parties to look at the access within a discrete section (approximately one fifth) of the New Forest area.



*New Forest Access Forum Workshop, July 2009*

The objective of the workshops is to compile a list of suggestions for improving access to the countryside – delegates are encouraged to put forward as many ideas and requests as possible, ranging from the very localised to something that could affect the whole area. All suggestions made are considered at a full meeting of the Forum, and those that are agreed by Forum members to be achievable and desirable are added to a 'Workshop Actions Table'.

A sub-group of the Forum has been established to take forward the Actions Table. Since the Forum's statutory remit is to advise (it does not hold any budget, nor does it have any legal powers), taking forward actions largely consists of making recommendations to the most appropriate body.

One of the most significant achievements made through this process has been the progress made by Hampshire County Council, working closely with both the local Parish Council and Footpath Society, towards establishing a new publicly accessible route along 2 miles of disused railway at **Breamore**. The northern half of this route will shortly be open for use by walkers, with the southern half to follow in the spring of 2011. Once opened this will provide a valuable off-road link, and will open up a number of options for circular walks in the **Fordingbridge** area and across the Avon Valley.

The National Park Authority supports this work by facilitating both the Access Forum and the sub-group. It is also able to provide funding to assist with CAP-related access improvements – for example the Authority funded the provision of a new bridge on the Breamore route.

# Northern update

Matt Beal, Area Countryside Access Manager, HCC

Last year's review of the Countryside Service re-shaped both management areas and teams. The North area now encompasses Basingstoke & Deane, Hart and Rushmoor Districts. This includes all of the Forest of Eversley and a major part of the Hampshire Downs CAP areas.

The team has made great progress in addressing issues identified in the CAPs. There has been a focus on working with local partners to make best use of resources, to improve and promote key local routes and to make the network more accessible. Our achievements include:

- Working with Hampshire Museums and Galleries Trust, parish councils, landowners and the Borough Council, and using Lottery funding, we've launched 3 Heritage Trails around **Basingstoke**.



These are signposted circular routes both for local residents and for walkers from further afield, with unique local interest along the routes and good public transport connections. Approximately 30 kissing gates have been installed to improve the access, together with a new bridge at **Laverstoke**.

- We have completed 2 major vegetation clearance projects at **Overton** and **Candovers** using contractors on HCC promoted off-road cycling and riding routes. Surfaces of both routes will now be improved so that they are accessible to all legitimate users. Whilst our main objective is to provide good quality access for the public, the routes are also being managed to protect and enhance biodiversity.

- Two new bridges have enabled us to lift formal path closures. One was on a route promoted by **Ecchinswell** Parish Council, who provided funding for the new structure. Three other bridges which are currently unusable will be replaced shortly and 2 further replacement bridges will restore another locally promoted route at **Whitchurch** (also a 'safe route to school'). Several smaller bridges have also been installed by our Access Ranger Team.
- With funding from the 'Stiles to Gates' project and after negotiation with landowners and other partners, we've replaced 15 stiles with kissing gates and secured the removal of 3 stiles to leave gaps; 3 more kissing gates will go in this Spring.
- The popular footpath 36 in **Tadley**, which provides a safer, more direct and enjoyable alternative to roadside pavements, was becoming quite muddy during wet weather. £18,000 was secured for contractors to re-surface the path before an opportunity arose to use surplus sub-base material through trustees of the adjoining allotment. Using our own team and equipment, we laid the new surface and capped it off with a finer-grade recycled material. The total cost of the project was around £1,000 – a fine example of what can be achieved through local partnership.

Tadley Footpath 36 before...



...during...



...and after the Area Team's work

## Jane and the forgotten Path

Emma Noyce, Map Review Officer, HCC

"I am almost entirely cured of my rheumatism" wrote Jane Austen to her niece in 1816. "I took my first ride yesterday, and liked it very much. I went up Mounter's Lane and round by where the new cottages are to be, and found the exercise and everything very pleasant". Nearly 200 years later, those new cottages are looking decidedly old and Mounter's Lane has finally been recorded as a public right of way; one of the most recent additions to the County's Definitive Map. Following an application by a member of the public, who believed that a sorry looking, overgrown, muddy path in **Chawton** should be formally recorded, promoted and available to all, the Access Team investigated the history of the path and found a number of maps and documents which suggested that this route was indeed an ancient road, shown on maps from as far back as 1740. After a legal process, the route is now on the Definitive Map and work will soon be taking place to improve the quality of the surface and cut back the vegetation (with funding from the Local Transport Plan and help from Future Jobs Fund volunteers). It won't be long before the route that Jane Austen 'liked very much' is once again open and available for everyone to use, providing a safe route to cycle, ride a horse or walk along.



Jane Austen's donkey-carriage

This is one of the many additions which have been made to the map in the last year, providing a total of 3646 metres of new public paths, not including all of diversions and permissive path agreements which have helped to make existing public rights of way more accessible and convenient to the public, and increase our off-road access network.

## Growth and the Green Grid

Jo Hale, Strategic Development & Funding Manager, HCC

Many readers will be aware that Hampshire is set to experience significant housing growth over the next 16 years, particularly in South Hampshire where around 80,000 houses are planned.

New housing developments present both a challenge and an opportunity to provide green spaces and places for people to visit and actively enjoy. Green spaces provide for active recreation and also contribute to a sense of place and appreciation of landscape and cultural heritage, enhance biodiversity and help with climate change mitigation. Most green space performs more than one such function and is therefore classed as 'multi-functional green infrastructure'.

The role of the rights of way network as a key multi-functional green asset is often overlooked. Rights of way do, however, provide opportunities for active recreation, act as important corridors for wildlife and can enhance biodiversity, as well as being a cultural asset in their own right. Furthermore, they occur right across the county and have the ability to link the towns into countryside.

Over the past few years we have been raising the profile of the rights of way network and influencing green infrastructure planning particularly in South Hampshire. Informed by the Hampshire Countryside Access Plan, the recently-published Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (which can be found at [www.push.gov.uk](http://www.push.gov.uk)) includes an initiative called the Green Grid.

The Green Grid extends across the whole of South Hampshire and aims to provide a network of interconnected green corridors that will enable people and wildlife to move between green spaces. The intention is that these multi-functional routes will be barrier-free, have a high quality surface and be well signposted, to encourage use by people who may not habitually use the rights of way network.

Using information from the Hampshire CAP we have prepared an indicative map of these routes across South Hampshire, based mainly on existing rights of way. We are now working with the local planning authorities to ensure that the proposals will meet their requirements. A lot more work is needed to identify the potential biodiversity enhancements, and other benefits, of the network – and that is before we move onto actually making them happen on the ground!

It is an aspirational project but one that has a lot of support and potential to meet the long term needs of people in Hampshire.

## Stiles to Gates at Worldham: “not everybody can negotiate a stile..!”

David Marshall, Area Countryside Access Manager, HCC

The South Downs (Hampshire) CAP identifies a limited supply of easily-accessible, inviting routes in some parts of the path network. Effecting improvements to physical accessibility is key to CAP delivery and this can often be maximised through opportunity rather than design. In most cases progress depends not only on funding but also on the co-operation, goodwill and agreement of all concerned. This was achieved recently in **Worldham** Parish where, in East Worldham, 4 stiles have been replaced with kissing gates.

It all started at a site meeting with parish representatives about The Hangers Way. Because of local concerns about other routes, the discussion soon turned to the possibility of replacing certain stiles with gates to overcome difficulties that some parishioners had in using a small network of footpaths close to the church and village centre. The removal of the stiles would give these people new access and provide a number of circular walks of varying lengths. Landowner consent, which of course was essential, was successfully sought by parish representatives and in February 2010 the 4 stiles were replaced with kissing gates. Funding was provided

through ‘Stiles to Gates’, a targeted project funded by Hampshire County Council’s Director of Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs.



One of 4 stiles...

The project has been a rewarding one for all concerned, as the following thoughts from the Worldham Parish Council Footpaths Representative show:



...and the gate that replaced it!

*“The first improvement has seen several stiles replaced with kissing gates, giving 2 circular walks around the village which can now be accessed by almost all, whereas previously only the fittest could negotiate the stiles. Now families with young children, older folk and dog walkers can all enjoy these walks and I have received some very pleasant feedback from villagers regarding these improvements”.*

## Working together

Sam Jones, Senior Access Ranger/Petronella Natrass, Countryside Access Development Officer, HCC

Partnership is a recurring theme for our work across the South area these days, whether we’re improving existing paths or developing new ones.

In the New Forest & SW Hants CAP area, the HCC access rangers have been working with the New Forest National Park to improve drainage and upgrade the surface of footpath 8 at **Minstead**, which forms the ‘spine’ of the local network. It was the parish council that singled this out for attention – a key route which was virtually impassable from late Autumn to early Spring. The aim is to make it a year-round route that is sympathetic to the aesthetics of the area and the sensitivity of the adjacent SSSI.

Other collaboration with the New Forest National Park Authority includes a successful supplementary ‘Stiles to Gates’ project. This is an ongoing project run in addition to HCC’s county-wide programme, which focuses on improving ‘access for all’ on key routes across and into the National Park. To date, the three parishes of **Godshill**, **Boldre** and **Hordle** have been surveyed and 15 gates are scheduled for installation.

In the west of the area, Ringwood & Fordingbridge Footpath Society is helping to pinpoint and prioritise issues on the network in its area. A large number of stiles have been earmarked for potential replacement by gaps or gates, alongside more routine maintenance works. One recently-completed example can be found at **Breamore** on footpath 4 which provides a popular link past Breamore House to the Saxon church.

Another key partnership has been established with Groundwork Solent, the environmental regeneration organisation. One of Groundwork’s ‘Future Jobs Fund’ teams has done magnificent work clearing vegetation on the future Breamore railway walking route and is set to continue assisting the area maintenance team with its routine cutting programme during 2010. Another Groundwork team has completed major clearance along Witherbed Lane, **Segensworth**, in the Solent CAP area. This route across HCC-owned land was identified by the BHS as a valuable potential bridleway link. Preparatory works by the area maintenance team and Groundwork have now been completed. County Estates have authorised dedication of the route as a bridleway, establishing an important element of a future riding and cycling route to **Whiteley**.



Newly-cleared Witherbed Lane

Which goes to show that a problem shared can turn into something else altogether.

## Local Transport, too...

Emma Kemp, Senior Access Projects Officer

Significant funding is available each year from the Local Transport Plan (LTP2) budget for CAP projects that contribute to the LTP vision of "...connecting people, communities, employment, goods, services and amenities". This year the Access to Countryside budget from LTP2 has provided £136,000 of funding, enabling 16 projects to go ahead, including the new restricted byway along Mounter's Lane from **Chawton to Alton** (see 'Jane and the forgotten Path' inside). More than £800,000 has been allocated to countryside access improvements over the 5 years of LTP2.

Other 'LTP' projects this year include the final phase of work on Park Lane bridleway 123, **Havant**. This had been identified as a route which if improved could be promoted for cycling to work, school and for leisure. Work was also needed to improve the route for horse-riders, disabled users and families with buggies. The first phase of work was carried out in 2008-09. This year has seen the project completed and feedback has been very positive. An official 'opening' of the improvements is expected in April/May 2010, to tie-in with a signed cycle route from **Catherington** in Horndean to Havant which passes along the bridleway.

On the **Meon Valley Trail** a group of British Trust for Conservation Volunteers has cleared vegetation along a long stretch of the route. In Spring 2010 drainage and resurfacing work is being carried out on a section of the trail north of **Wickham**, trialling new types of re-cycled materials. An evaluation will be carried out next year which will inform the types of materials we use on multi-user routes in the future.

## Another bumper year!

Justin Harvey, Countryside Access Development Officer,  
HCC

Well, it's been another busy year for the Small Grants Scheme and the many Parish/Town Councils and landowners who have got involved. As with all the projects that we have funded over the years, the emphasis is on helping local people make improvements to countryside access that really matters to them, with each project contributing to many of the desired actions from the CAPs. Twenty seven parishes were involved this year, helping to improve path surfacing, install new gates and benches and provide mapboards and leaflets. Some ambitious councils even installed bridges! A flavour of the work completed includes:

- Surfacing work to a popular bridleway linking **Penton Mewsey** and **Penton Grafton**. The remaining 50% match funding was shared by the two parish councils.
- A countryside access project involving a circular walks leaflet, new gates, a boardwalk and a bench has provided **Kingsley** Parish with a brilliant new local resource.
- Surfacing and drainage works to a web of old drove roads in **East Meon** that had become rutted and impassable. County Council maintenance teams completed the vegetation clearance with volunteers assisting the surfacing work.
- We have helped provide leaflets with maps and circular walks in 11 parishes including **Hannington, Lyndhurst, St Mary Bourne** and **Newtown**.
- **Liss** Parish Council has completed 2 projects this year with an ingeniously-designed solution to a heavily poached stile and boardwalk. Both projects made use of local

volunteers and those on Community Service.

- Two new kissing gates and a bridge have helped provide better access to a new permissive route in **Curdrige**.
- New bridges have also been installed in **Kingsclere, Whitechurch, Whitehill, Ecchinswell, Sydmonton** and

Liss footpath 5 before...



..and after!

**Bishops Green.**

- And finally, improving the surface to a permissive route in **Compton and Shawford**, in particular to provide safer and easier access for local people with disabilities.

As for the future, we are looking forward to a busy year through 2010-2011, with an increased budget of £51,000. Keep those projects rolling in!

Information about the scheme can be found at [www.hants.gov.uk/sgs](http://www.hants.gov.uk/sgs)

For further information about the CAPs : 0845 603 5636\*  
(free textphone) : 0845 603 5625  
[www.hants.gov.uk/countryside-access-plans](http://www.hants.gov.uk/countryside-access-plans)

\*Calls will cost up to 4p per minute for BT customers. Calls made using other service providers or mobiles may cost more. Alternatively, call 01329 225398—standard and local rates apply to this number.