

RBWM LAF : Walks for All Report

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Steve Gillions, Lisa Hughes and Mark Hemmings

Progress has been made on five of the six initial localities, with the Thames at Boulter's being the most advanced. The departure of Dom Lethbridge from the LAF depleted the group but a member of Wild Maidenhead – Mark Hemmings – volunteered to help and there are more potential volunteers.

Contact has been made with Susy Shearer from Wild Windsor / Windsor Neighbourhood Planning Group. She is supportive of identifying and helping to document accessible routes in the east of the borough.

Status of six initial localities

Route	Initial Surveys	Draft Document	Route Check / Survey Update	GIS / Mapping	Access Issues Resolved	Final Document
Battlemead Common	✓	In progress	✓	In progress	✓	
The Green Way	✓	In progress				
Ockwells Park & Thrift Wood	✓	In progress				
Cock Marsh	✓	In progress				
Thames at Boulter's	✓	✓	✓	In progress		
Thames at Old Windsor						

Walks for All process

- Initial Survey : Volunteer walking the route / localities, noting and where relevant photographing
 - amenities
 - key path features
 - accessibility issues / recommendations
 - points of interest
- Volunteer produces a draft document and circulates to AWG members
- Document used by another AWG member to walk the route – noting any suggested amendments / queries.
- Accessibility recommendations emailed to RBWM Parks and Countryside
- Maps, photographs and links added to draft document
- Following response from Parks & Countryside about accessibility recommendations, a final draft is agreed and sent to RBWM for publication on websites

Steve will talk through the Thames Riverside at Boulter's Lock guide

Appendix

Background

Anyone planning a walk needs information to judge whether the route is suitable for them. Key aspects include distance, terrain, ground conditions and transport plus information such as access barriers and resting places are of importance to parents with young children, people with disabilities and older people. A standard approach for footpath mapping and information (on-site, online or hard copy) provides potential users with key information.

In 2018 a working group was set up within the LAF to advise it on the accessibility (for people with disabilities) of popular walking routes and those with high amenity value within the borough. The approach and recommendations made by the working group were unanimously approved by the LAF on 26th November 2019.

Recommendations

1. RBWM to aim to establish a network of urban, semi-urban and highly used footpaths to be reasonably accessible for people with disabilities, older people and parents / carers with young children.
 - a. The initial six localities to be surveyed are Battlemead, The Green Way, Ockwells Park & Thrift Wood, Cock Marsh, Boulters Lock and the Thames at Old Windsor
 - b. Recommendations from the annual footpath surveys to be considered for inclusion in the annual Milestones Statement and Rights of Way Improvement Plan
2. RBWM to investigate best practice path surface materials that enable people with disabilities to use public rights of way and other footpaths.
 - a. RBWM to use the results to develop a list of suitable surfaces and the circumstances in which they might appropriately be used.
3. RBWM to adopt the signage and information approach used by South Downs National Park for all online and hard copy maps of green spaces and accessible walks / routes.
 - a. Access for All / Many / Some
 - b. Mapping symbols include Gradients, Resting Places and Access Controls
 - c. Standard information templates
4. RBWM to consider the needs of people with disabilities in all footpath design and improvement programmes. Key aspects to consider
 - a. Access to the route / site
 - b. Appropriate footpath surfaces and width
 - c. Removal of access barriers
 - d. Resting places
 - e. Connections with other footpath / green spaces and transport (parking, bus stops)
 - f. Signage and Information
5. RBWM to develop a footpath survey template for use in areas where access for all or some routes are considered feasible. It should include the following elements
 - a. Footpath surfaces, gradients and condition
 - b. Obstacles (access barriers, stiles, gates, steps)
 - c. Hazards (Tree roots, overhanging or intrusive vegetation, barbed wire)
 - d. Signage and information
 - e. Resting places

Walks for All

Boulter's Lock and Ray Mill Island



In addition to watching the many types of boats pass through Boulter's Lock, Ray Mill Island offers great views of the Thames plus an abundance of bird life and an aviary. There is parking and bus routes nearby. The Island is small, flat and ideally suited to a wander-as-you-please outing. There are places to eat and drink (seasonal opening hours), public toilets, some children's play equipment and many benches. Surfaced paths give access to all parts of Ray Mill Island and there are further walks across the foot bridge to Taplow Riverside or along the Thames Path to Islet Road

Getting there

By car: Post code SL6 8LW. Car parks at Boulter's Lock (about 100 metres/110 yards away) and Riverside Gardens (about 750 metres/800 yards away)

By bus: Service 8 runs to and from Maidenhead Station approximately every hour Mon-Sat to 1800. Service 4 runs more frequently from Slough to Maidenhead Station

By rail: Maidenhead, then bus

Amenities

Boulter's Lock car park: 2 Blue Badge parking bays just before the car park barrier

Ray Mill Island: Restaurant; seasonal café; toilets

Riverside Gardens: Café; children's play area



1. Getting there from Boulters Lock car park

The walk start at the 'pay and display' car park on the Lower Cookham Road, about 100 metres past the lock heading towards Cookham from Maidenhead. On leaving the car park cross the road on the zebra crossing and turn right to walk alongside the lock cut to the lock.

2. Boulter's Lock

This lock was built in 1912 to replace that built in 1772; prior to that, there had been a flash lock since the 15th century. There are two benches, an ice-cream kiosk and information board next to the lock. The bridge over the lock leads past The Boathouse restaurant and through the gates (open from 7am to dusk) onto Ray Mill Island. The attractive modern footbridge to Taplow Riverside is directly ahead but turn left down the tarmacked slope to get onto Ray Mill Island.

**Insert schematic map showing the three routes: Ray Mill Island,
Taplow Riverside and Maidenhead Bridge; Islet Road Riverside.
Distances and access graphics to be included.**

Ray Mill Island

About 1.5 kilometres/1 mile from Boulter's car park, around Ray Mill Island and back again.



The left-hand path leads past the small statue of two old gentlemen, Ice Cream kiosk, tearoom and public toilets. Noise levels rise as the path approaches the weir at the north end of the island. There are fine views up the river from here and occasional white-water kayakers in the waters rushing down the Thames.

The path then turns back on itself, and on either side are many park benches. Continuing through the trees and over lawns you pass the statue of the Maiden and Swans at the top of the small lake before arriving back at the entrance.

Birds and other animals to look out for

As you enter the park area on the island there are usually a variety of wildfowl such as mallards, geese, swans and mandarin ducks. Following the path through mature trees alongside a quiet backwater you are likely to see inquisitive grey squirrels (they should not be fed) and may be lucky to see the orange and blue flash of a kingfisher. In the middle of the island is a caged area of guinea pigs and an aviary with budgerigars, parakeets and zebra finches.

Insert map showing paths, points of interest and access graphics

Taplow Riverside

About 3 kilometres/1¾ miles to Maidenhead Bridge and back. The walk is on surfaced paths and pavements throughout.



*the view back from
Taplow riverside*

The foot bridge to the other side of the stream is well-surfaced and has a low gradient. It leads onto a surfaced boardwalk passing through a pleasant grassed park area with benches, mature trees and on to a laid garden bordering the new houses near the A4 Bath Road. The riverside views back towards Boulters are worth a look.

For the longer walk, follow the path through the gardens and alongside the Jubilee River. When you reach the estate road turn right and then left along the road, signposted Maidenhead and Taplow Riverside. You will soon reach a large park area on your left, where there are two benches. Keep straight on and then keep right to reach the main road at Maidenhead Bridge. Turn right over the bridge and after crossing it turn right again into Bridge Gardens. There are more benches here. To return to Boulters, go straight up the Lower Cookham Road with the Thames on your right.

Insert map showing paths, points of interest and access graphics

Riverside walk along the Thames Path

About 1.5 kilometres/1 mile return. This section of the Thames Path is flat, around 1.5 metres or 5 feet wide and surfaced with compacted stone. Mud and leaves could clog up small wheels in wet weather but wheelchair and stroller or pushchair users should have no other issues.

From the car park: cross at the zebra crossing and turn left – then follow the directions below

From Boulter's Lock: Head towards the car park but continue past the zebra crossing



... a park bench alongside the river ...

Walk alongside the lock cut, keeping it on your right. Ray Mill Island is on the far bank and the rear of gardens of fine architectural houses on your left. Look out for the lifelike model of a man in a deckchair beside a house on the far side. The path leads to the weir where the lock cut leaves the main river and continues on towards Cookham. Cormorants and grebes can often be seen feeding in the river around here. There is a park bench beside the river facing back towards Boulters.

To return to Boulters, either retrace your steps beside the river or take the tarmacked path leading away from the river with a wooden fence on your left. This path is uneven in places and has overhanging vegetation. It brings you out to Islet Road which you should follow for about for about 200 metres/220 yards then turn left into Court Road Follow this to the Lower Cookham Road and turn left to return to Boulters.

Insert map showing paths, points of interest and access graphics