

Parish Council Bridleway No.32 Working Group – Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Bridleway No. 32 Working Group is established by the Parish Council to support the Council in matters relating to the proposed Bridleway No. 32. The Group will work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders* to review the evidence relating to the proposal, support the Parish Council's agreed position in responding to the application, and identify appropriate options available to the Council. Where alternative routes are proposed, the Group will work with stakeholders to assess their suitability, safety and potential impact on parish residents and the wider community before making recommendations to the Parish Council.

The Working Group is advisory only and has no delegated authority to make decisions or commit expenditure on behalf of the Parish Council. Its role is to gather and review information, facilitate discussions with relevant stakeholders, and present findings and recommendations to the Parish Council to inform its decision making.

2. Objectives

The Working Group will:

- Review the proposal of bridleway no.32 and any alternative routes.
- Consider opportunities to improve the alternative routes suggested.
- Ensure Central Bedfordshire Council Rights of Way Officers are aware of the need for Temporary Closure Orders (TCOs) to remain in place to protect both the land and potential users, including visitors to Maulden Graveyard, during the interim period. Maintain regular follow-up and clear communication to prevent any lapses in protection arising from a lack of awareness or changes in personnel.
- Liaise with landowners, user groups, neighbouring councils, the Highway Authority and other relevant organisations.
- Make recommendations to the Parish Council where applicable.
- Support community engagement and consultation on bridleway matters.

3. Responsibilities

The Working Group may:

- Undertake site visits.
- Gather information and evidence.
- Develop proposals and options for consideration by the Parish Council.
- Consult with stakeholders to ensure continuity of discussions.
- Prepare reports and recommendations.

The Working Group shall not:

- Make decisions on behalf of the full Parish Council.
- Enter into contracts or agreements.
- Commit Parish Council funds.
- Speak on behalf of the full Parish Council unless specifically authorised.

4. Membership

The Working Group will normally comprise:

- At least three Parish Councillors.
- The Clerk (or a nominated officer) will provide administrative support, together with appropriate knowledge, guidance, and advice to assist the working group where required.
- Co-opted members with relevant knowledge or experience, appointed by the Parish Council.

The Chair of the Working Group will be appointed by the Parish Council.

Co-opted members may participate fully in discussions but do not have voting rights at Parish Council meetings.

5. Meetings

- Meetings will be held as required.
- Agendas and notes will be circulated to members in advance where practicable.
- Meetings of the Working Group are informal and are not meetings of the Parish Council or a committee exercising delegated powers.
- The Working Group will seek to reach recommendations by consensus wherever possible.

6. Reporting

The Working Group will:

- Report regularly to the Parish Council.
- Submit recommendations for consideration at Parish Council meetings.
- Maintain an action list where appropriate.
- Provide updates on progress against agreed actions.

No recommendation of the Working Group shall take effect until approved by the Parish Council.

7. Finance

The Working Group has no authority to incur expenditure.

Any proposal requiring expenditure must be supported by appropriate information and submitted to the Parish Council for approval before any commitment is made.

8. Conduct

Members will:

- Act in accordance with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct where applicable.
- Declare any interests relevant to matters under discussion.
- Treat all participants with respect.
- Work collaboratively in the interests of the parish.

9. Communication

The Working Group recognises the importance of clear, accurate, and consistent communication throughout the Bridleway No.32 process. Given the sensitive nature of the matter, particularly regarding Maulden Graveyard, all public communications issued on behalf of the Council must be agreed by the Parish Council to ensure information is factual, appropriately contextualised, and represents the agreed position.

In circumstances where an urgent update is required, information may be released where the Clerk and relevant Councillors agree that publication is necessary and appropriate, with any such communication reported back to the Council at the earliest opportunity.

Stakeholders remain able to communicate independently in their own capacity; however, such communications should not be presented as representing the views of the Parish Council unless formally agreed. The Working Group will support transparent and timely updates to residents and stakeholders where appropriate.

10. Review

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually by the Parish Council or sooner if required until the group is no longer necessary as deemed by a full council.

11. Adoption

These Terms of Reference were adopted by Maulden Parish Council at its meeting held on:

Date: _____

Minute Reference: _____

Review Date: _____

*Stakeholder definition~ For the purposes of these Terms of Reference, "stakeholders" means individuals, organisations and public bodies with an interest in, or who may be affected by, the proposed Bridleway No. 32. This may include, but is not limited to, neighbouring parish councils, the local highway authority, landowners and occupiers, statutory bodies, user groups (such as equestrian, walking and cycling organisations), local residents, and any other parties with a legitimate interest in the proposal.