Access for All and the Equality Act

– thinking about access improvements in the Chilterns?
What does the Equality Act do?

- Harmonises the thresholds for the duty to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities
- The public sector Equality Duty came into force across Great Britain on 5 April 2011. It means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.
- The Equality Duty does not require public bodies to take disproportionate action on equality
What does the Equality Act do?

- The Equality Duty does not require public bodies to treat everyone the same. Rather, it requires public bodies to think about people’s different needs and how these can be met.
- The duty extends to groups working on behalf of an authority.
It promotes this !!!
The Law and Reasonableness

The notion of reasonableness includes:
- effect
- practicality
- finance
- disruption
- capacity to do
- progress
- support (Rickmansworth ramp)
The Law and Reasonableness

- The notion of reasonableness includes:
  - effect
  - practicality
  - finance
  - disruption
  - capacity to do
  - progress
  - support (Rickmansworth ramp)
  - and not forgetting of course the Wednesbury principles.
Some Definitions

- **Impairment**: Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function.

- **Disability**: Any restriction resulting from an impairment of ability to perform and activity within the range considered normal for a human being.

- **Handicap**: A disadvantage for a given individual resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a roll that is normal depending on age, sex, social or cultural factors for that individual.
Who are “People with disabilities”

- I searched for “People” on Google images. It took me till page 4 to find an image including a person with an apparent disability.
Who are “People with disabilities”

- Ambulant people with mobility impairment
- People with visual impairment
- People with hearing impairment
- People with learning difficulties
- People with speech impairments
- Wheelchair users
- There are approx 12 million disabled people in UK 20% of the population
But !!!!

- Up to 42% of the population may benefit from improvements
- And everybody else benefits from a better quality route anyway
Models of Disability

The Medical Model:

- In the medical model, people with disabilities are defined by their illness or medical condition. They are disempowered: medical diagnoses are used to regulate and control access to services and opportunity.
- The medical model promotes the view of a person with a disability as dependent and needing to be cured or cared for, and it justifies the way in which disabled people have been systematically excluded from society. The disabled person is the problem, not society.
- Control resides firmly with professionals; choices for the individual are limited to the options provided and approved by the 'helping' expert.
- **Basically it is the person with the disability who is the problem**
Models of Disability

The Social Model:

- The social model has been developed by people with disabilities in response to the medical model and the impact it has had on their lives.
- Under the social model, disability is caused by the society in which we live and is not the ‘fault’ of an individual disabled person, or an inevitable consequence of their limitations. Disability is the product of the physical, organisational and attitudinal barriers present within society, which lead to discrimination. The removal of discrimination requires a change of approach and thinking in the way in which society is organised.
- The social model has been developed with the aim of removing barriers so that disabled people have the same opportunity as everyone else to determine their own life styles.
- It is the physical environment that is the problem
The Social Model

An example:

Wheelchair users who have a mobility impairment. They are not actually disabled in an environment where they can use public transport and gain full access to buildings and their facilities and paths in the same way that someone without this impairment would do.
Some Thoughts!

- Disability is not homogenous. That is it does not effect all in the same way.
- The ranges of ability and needs is enormous.
- It is impossible to meet all needs all the time but improvements can be made somewhere.
- There is almost always scope to improve.
Some Thoughts!

- At the point at which you chose to build, your responsibility changes.
- Landscape doesn’t change, feelings do in the mind of the individual.
- Users aren’t coming to inspect the path; it’s the experience they want.
- A number of people with disabilities want the opportunity to do something wild.
Some Thoughts!

- The reasons people with disabilities might want to go out into the countryside are exactly the same as the rest of the public.
- We are not just doing this just because it is the law! It's because it is right and fair and a good thing to do.
- Works must be context related. What is the general terrain?
Some more

- Don’t underestimate the number of people with disabilities
- Don’t underestimate the number of people who will benefit, it’s higher than you think.
- Remember it could be as high as 42% (USA Nat. Parks study)
Barriers

- Assumption should not limit accessibility (stiles to keep “grannies” out of a difficult terrain)
Barriers

- Barriers to access are not just structures
- Barriers to access can be:
  - Man made,
  - Natural,
  - Expectations,
  - Poor information
  - Conflict or fear of conflict with other users.
Structures as Barriers

- The *least restrictive option* accepts that it is not always possible to achieve access for everybody across every type of terrain without compromising that terrain to an unacceptable extent.
- The **LRO** also expects that whatever can be done will be done, to enable at least some disabled people to access the terrain.
- **Section 66 & 147 Highways Act 1980**
The thought was there
Information

- Information is key to accessibility so that people can make their own informed decisions
Demand

- Assessing demand:
- **Manifest**.. people are doing it.
- **Latent**.. they would do.
- **Potential** … they might
Accessibility Standards

- Accessibility standards differ depending on the context:
- Urban and formal landscapes are close to urban standard
- Urban fringe and managed landscapes
- Rural and working landscapes
- Open and wild landscapes… No standard
Assessment criteria

- Surface: material, type, grain
- Width: greater than 120cm
- Restrictions: squeezes as short as possible
- Barriers: LRO, Brit standards
- Ramp gradient: 1:20 max
- Rise of ramp: Total height gain. Consider landings
- Cross slope (fall): difficult to negotiate
- Steps: Low rise long goings
- Surface breaks: Gaps treads
- Clear walking tunnel
- Passing places: regular
- Resting places: regular but not necessarily formal. Logs rocks etc
What does this mean for us?

- Think accessibility from the beginning and attach weight to it
- Contact users and don’t assume you know what they want. Work with not for.
- Improve awareness, legal and technical knowledge.
- Allocate funding and time
Encourage Local Action

- Each parish to have its own Easy Access Route
- Based on local facility or feature. Pub Shop, Church, car park.
- Benefit to local health and wellbeing
- Boost to local business
- Could be as simple as removing a stile
Finally

- Perhaps one of the most important facets of provision of access is the quality and quantity of information available to potential users to allow informed decisions to be made before attending a location.

- If there is no information or it is poor there is little likelihood it will be used no matter how good it is.
Look at the whole access chain. Is there a weak link? e.g. a great route but poor access friendly car parking.
phototrails - Your Countryside - Your Trails - Your Choice

Trail Search
- County/Region: All
- Accessibility Rating: All
- Distance: All
- Environment: All
- Search

Trail Index

Featured Routes
- Albrighton and Donnington Nature Reserve
  - Photo of Albrighton and Donnington Nature Reserve
  - Where: Shropshire
  - Accessibility Rating: 4
  - Type: Out and Back
  - This nature reserve straddles the boundary between Albrighton and Donnington. The ponds, originally constructed for a mill, are now a great place to see wildlife.
  - More:

Consall Hall Landscape Gardens

http://www.phototrails.org/default.chi?page-trail=trail&consall_hall_landscape_gardens&trail_id=236
Amwell Quarry Bird Hide Phototrail

Route Filmstrip & Description

- Handmade lake towards the White Hide has a seat and information board near by. Take the path to the left towards the bird hides.

- Once over the bridge the path is wider but with a few uneven or loose patches on the surface.
Countryside Walks in the Chilterns
Walks likely to be suitable for people with impaired mobility and users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs

This pack of self-guided walks...

...will enable you to enjoy the fresh air and fantastic views of the Chilterns countryside. You can explore woodlands, meadows, rivers, canals and lakes. The exercise will help get you fit and keep you healthy!

1. Ashridge National Trust Estate, near Berkhamsted.
2. College Lake Nature Reserve, near Tring.
3. Tring Reservoirs & Grand Union Canal, near Tring.
5. Phoenix Trail, between Princes Risborough and Thame.
11. Thames Path, near Goring-on-Thames.

The Chilterns
an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Acknowledgements

- Details can be found at www.fieldfare.org.uk