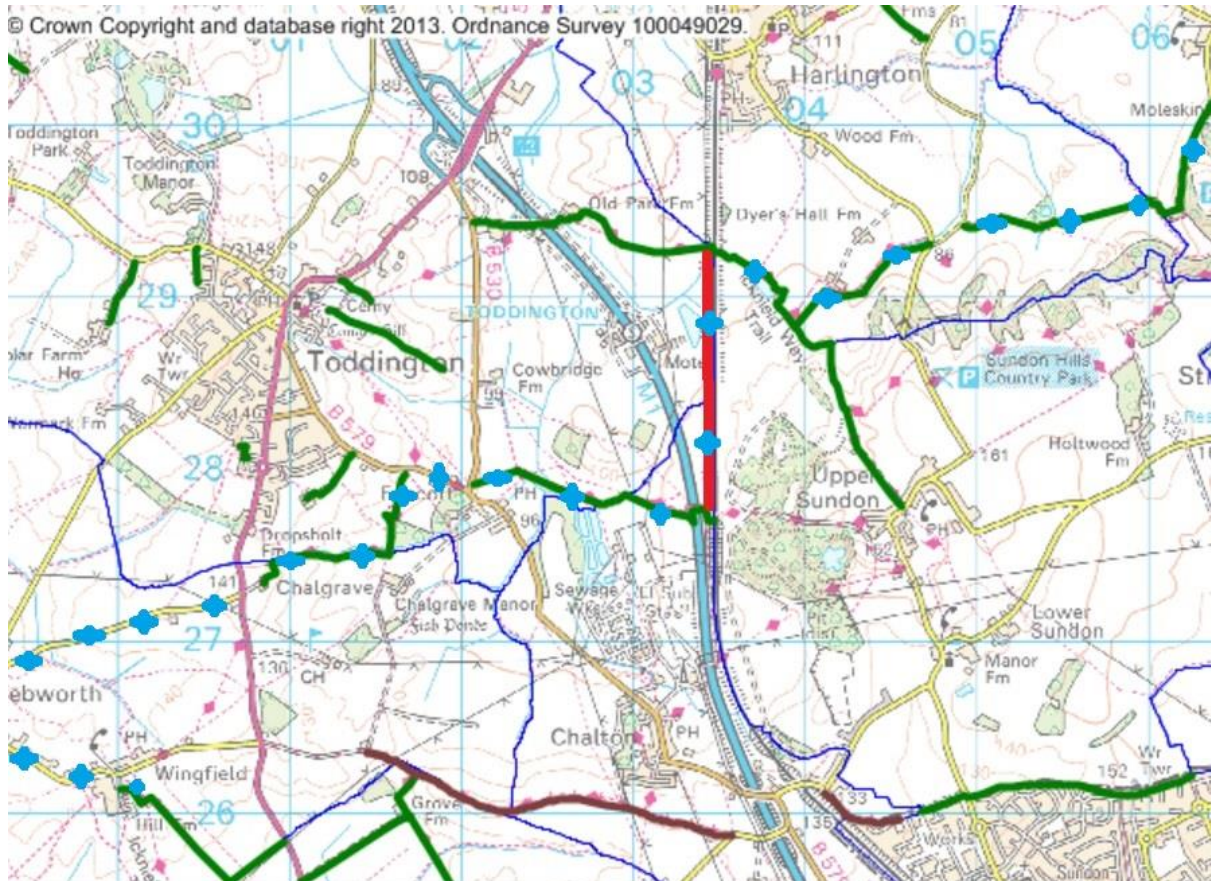


## Icknield Way Trail

### Bedfordshire – route beside the Midland Mainline

This is an update about progress on upgrading the bridleyway between Toddington and Chalton parishes. This is a plan has been around for perhaps 20 years, but I am becoming increasing confident it will actually complete in 2016! The proposal had stalled until I attended a consultation meeting about the freight line a couple of years ago where I was able to make direct contact with some Network Rail staff.



I know some have struggled to understand where the route goes, so the above plan shows a red line for the intended upgrade, together with the Icknield Way Trail (riders route in blue splodges). This link provides a vital missing link in the Bedfordshire section of the trail. The bridleyway crosses at the northern end through a tunnel under the railway, to the east the Icknield Way riders route continues to Sharpenhoe, Sreatley, Galley Hills and on through Hertfordshire all the way to Norfolk!

This section is 1.6km (one mile) of existing public footpath which runs parallel to the west of the railway. For clarity, I have not shown the footpaths, so it should be clear that the new bridleyway will link two existing bridleyways (in green). The bridleyway at the south is currently a 'dead-end' after the level crossing was closed many years ago, although there is a footbridge over the railway, which cyclists (not suitable for horses!) can use to link with the road (closed to general motorised traffic) to Upper Sundon.

The southern half of the upgraded route is an arable field which Network Rail own a wide strip beside the railway boundary fence, the northern part is CBC land. The route runs under the power pylons. At the southern end the bridleyway is at a similar level to the rail lines, but at the northern end the railway is high on an embankment. The upgraded route is intended to be 4m wide.

Network Rail have agreed to the upgrade to bridleway on their land, although they are currently consulting formally with the Office of Rail & Road Regulation, which is expected to conclude with agreement in Jan 2016. Network Rail are also due to replace the fence along the whole length in early 2016. The fence will be a mesh fence rather than the ugly palisade fencing but will ensure a more secure barrier with the railway.

CBC use the northern part as a 'leachate' works to cleanse the water from the former tip on the east of the railway. There has been a temporary (10+ years) haul road enabling large lorries to bring capping material onto the site, but this traffic will cease in December 2015 (hurray!), and the haul road is due to be removed in spring 2016. The plan is to improve/raise the path surface using some hard core, principally near a particularly wet area. The wet area is subject to further investigation by Network Rail, we met on Friday and discussed a plan from a few years ago to provide proper drainage.



I maintain the Icknield Way Trail website [www.IcknieldWayTrail.org.uk](http://www.IcknieldWayTrail.org.uk) which shows the whole 170 mile long riders route.

Tom Chevalier

Icknield Way Trail [www.IcknieldWayTrail.org.uk](http://www.IcknieldWayTrail.org.uk)

6<sup>th</sup> December 2015