

LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
8 JUNE 2021
7.00 - 9.05 PM



Present:

Members:

Colin Bird (Chairman)
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Michael Brossard
Richard Elsbury
Councillor Alvin Finch
Hugh Fitzwilliams
Sue McDaid
Geoff Paxton
David Warren
Jenny Yung

In attendance:

Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Manager
Robert Solomon, Ranger (Countryside and PROW)
Rose Wicks, Parks & Countryside Project Officer

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mike Abbott

181. Welcome

The chair welcomed the Forum to the meeting.

182. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2021 were approved as a correct record subject to the following changes:

- Item 172 – Correct a typo by removing an additional F.
- Item 173 - 'Hogoak' is one word.

Rose Wicks confirmed that the annual report 2020 would be circulated by the end of the month.

183. Impact of COVID-19

Rose Wicks reported to the forum that there had been an unprecedented use of Public Rights of Way (PROW) and outdoor spaces during the pandemic. It was thought that this would result in more wear and tear and the relevant budgets were being monitored. It was considered positive that residents were utilising the beautiful outdoor spaces available for recreation in the borough.

Rose Wicks gave an update on the forum's membership. Several members had not attended in some time and a recruitment campaign would be completed at the

earliest opportunity. The forum hoped to attract someone with expertise or experience in accessibility issues.

184. **ROWIP2 Actions and PRow Improvements**

Colin Bird reported on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) action points listed and confirmed that the diverted link to Ambarrow had now been completed.

The members and officers discussed access to the new Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) at Frost Folly. Public access to SANG 2 was restricted while the site was still managed by the developers. This had raised some enquiries from residents, who were frustrated about why the site still appeared to be closed off. The site would be opened to the public once it had transferred to Bracknell Forest Council.

Action: Graham Pockett to arrange for signage to be installed explaining why the site wasn't currently available.

There was no current update on the proposal to create a new path between Cabbage Hill and Hazelwood Lane, as the matter currently rested with Thames Water's land agent.

Action: Graham Pockett to follow up with Thames Water.

Graham Pockett reported that the council had created a new footpath link (Sandhurst FP27) which would run through Ambarrow Court and would be a public right of way. This footpath created a logical way out of Ambarrow Court and followed the route of the Three Castles Path towards Horseshoe Lake. New signage would also be established in the area.

In addition, there was also a new urban footpath (Sandhurst FP26) near Waitrose in College Town, Sandhurst. Notices had gone out and there would be 42 days for residents to object or make representations, ending on 7th July.

There was also a new countryside route in Bullbrook which included 4.7 miles of footpath with bespoke waymarkers and three information lecterns. There were plans for the maps and information to be provided on the council's website. It was also confirmed that the 'What three words' information was now included on the Bracknell Forest Council website. In future, the new footpaths would link the area to other local routes.

Developing new accessible routes

Information was being put together for a new accessible circular route around Jocks Park, Cabbage Hill and Garth Meadow. Once developed, this would replace the out of date 'Accessible Rural Routes' that were previously published on the council's website. The aim was to make the route as accessible as possible to all pedestrians, including those in wheelchairs. Members highlighted that there was a stiff gate which could cause difficulty for some users. They also advised that travelling in an anti-clockwise direction would ensure there was a less steep incline. Concerns were raised that the route may not be accessible in winter if the weather was wet especially for wheelchair users.

Once all the relevant information was prepared the route would be advertised through the Parks and Countryside newsletter. A specific request would be made for feedback from residents, especially those with accessibility needs, so that further

adjustments could be made to the route if required. It was noted that the forum was interested in exploring additional accessible routes.

Actions: Colin Bird and other volunteer members to re-walk the route to further review accessibility. Colin to draft instructions for the route and Rose Wicks to start mapping it.

Removing obstacles to Public Rights of Way

Rob Solomon presented to the forum pictures of accessibility improvements along Crowthorne Footpath 8. Tall and poorly accessible metal stiles had been removed and were either left open or replaced with a pedestrian or kissing gate.

Rose Wicks confirmed that the project to map furniture on PRoW to show accessibility, was ongoing and detailed the types of gates and whether they are accessible.

Improving access to Public Rights of Way

Rob Solomon confirmed that 30 tonnes of recycled highways materials had been used to resurface sections of rural lanes at a low cost. One area was Hawthorne Lane (Warfield Bridleway 25) which often experienced seasonal water logging and it was hoped the resurfacing would prevent this.

Promoting active travel opportunities.

Rose Wicks reported that the council would be creating videos to promote active travel including walking and cycling in the area and would be filming at Lily Hill Park. It was hoped that photographs of the filming could also be obtained to advertise Bracknell Forest as a filming location.

185. Binfield Footpath 10

Graham Pockett confirmed that some areas had now been resurfaced and vegetation clearance had been completed. A sustainable drainage system had been installed by the developers at Blue Mountain SANG, which had caused flooding last year, but had now been altered to work correctly.

186. Winkfield FPs 13 and 19

Graham Pockett showed forum members the proposed permanent diversion to these footpaths, which run across polo fields. The footpaths are currently temporarily diverted while development work takes place at the site. The contractor had committed to the permanent diversion provided BFC applies for an extension to the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) from the Secretary of State, as this was due to expire on the 9 June. It was hoped the permanent diversion, which the landowner needs to agree to, would be in place within the next six months.

187. Multi-user Path Sign

The forum was shown pictures of the new multi-user signs in place on byways including Penfurzen Lane, Hogoak Lane, Snipes Lane, Hawthorn Lane and Berry Lane. The Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) had led on this work and had co-funded the signs with The Ramblers Association, and the British Horse Society. Bracknell Forest Council contributed by installing the signs. The publicity photos provided by David Warren would be used in comms by BFC and other organisations to promote multi use pathways. The forum thanked all who were involved in this work, particularly the TRF.

188. Wildmoor Heath Boardwalk

An update was provided of the £40k project to rejuvenation the boardwalk, which follows the line of Sandhurst Footpath 24. Rotten sections would be removed and either replaced with more durable recycled plastic, or with new sections of raised path. Jointly funded with the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) the works would not be started until early September, to avoid ground nesting bird season. A TTRO would need to be applied for to temporarily close the footpath. Wildlife habitat improvements would also be carried out as part of this project.

189. PROW and Local Developments

Jeallott's Hill

The forum was shown a map of the proposed new developments at Jeallott's Hill, which had been identified as a key site in the Bracknell Forest Local Plan. A new bridleway, to be dedicated as a public right of way, has been proposed by the developers around the south and eastern edge of the site. The forum would like this and links to other local SANGs to be established before building began. Consideration should be given to whether new bridleway could be a restricted byway which would allow carriage driving.

It was noted that nothing further would happen until the local plan was accepted, which could take over a year.

Crowthorne FP6 Cricketfield Grove.

The forum discussed the issue of the steps added by the developer to the footpath, which replaced a more accessible ramp. The council was in the process of exploring various options about challenging this decision. Current planning policy could not force a change. The steps aren't technically classed as an obstruction under the Highways Act, but they may contravene the Equalities Act. The forum was disappointed that the accessibility at this location had been reduced and requested that BFC continue to look into this matter.

Action: Rose Wicks confirmed she would make enquiries with the Council's Equalities team to see if action could be taken under the Equalities Act.

190. Any Other Business

Rose Wicks advised the forum that they now had extensive drone footage of some of the borough's SANG sites, which were available on the Council's website.

David Warren asked for an update about accessing information about Traffic Regulation Orders on the council's website. Rose advised that the intention was to catalogue and map TRO's, which would then be made available for public view.

191. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

192. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting would be 12 October 2021 at 7pm. Venue to be confirmed.