

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM  
3 MARCH 2015  
7.00 - 9.25 PM**



**Present:**

**Members:**

Michael Abbott (Chairman)  
Councillor Michael Brossard  
John Deakin  
Councillor John Porter  
Peter Radband  
Jenny Yung

**In attendance:**

Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Officer  
Robert Solomon, Ranger (Countryside and PROW)  
Richard Walton, Head of Parks & Countryside  
Rose Wicks, Parks & Countryside Projects Officer

**Observers:**

Colin Bird, member of public  
Colin Patient, Mid & West Berks LAF

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Hugh Fitzwilliams  
Richard Mosses

**12. Welcome**

**13. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2014 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Minute 4: 'There was a National Conference held in Bristol on 4 February 2014' (rather than 2015).

**14. Membership and Recruitment**

Sharon Holt, who had an equestrian background, had resigned from the Forum. Jenny Yung on the Forum had a similar equestrian background. Officers would write to Sharon to thank her for her work on the Forum.

**(Action: Richard Walton)**

Innes McEwen had stepped down from the Forum since leaving Syngenta. Julia Emburey was in an interim role at Syngenta and was invited to Forum meetings. Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) officers would continue to promote Forum recruitment and membership online, at careers fairs and in the local media. Forum members

were requested to spread the word as well. Suggestions for advertising included SPA wardens and the Forestry Commission.

**(Action: Rose Wicks/ All)**

#### 15. **National and Regional LAF Work**

Mike Abbott attended a Berkshire Local Access Forum (LAF) Chairs' meeting in February, which was also attended by Rose Wicks. Topics discussed included encouraging joint working with other LAFs, producing a map of cross boundary paths and known issues, developing list of paths that change status across boundaries, sharing information about BFC paths with cross boundary issues and investigating options to obtain consistency amongst authorities with regard to signage and waymarking, for example, making waymarkers more uniform with a contact number and logo. Volunteers were being replied upon more now that some LAFs were losing support from Local Authorities.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

It had been queried whether a members' code of conduct was needed for the Forum. It was not a mandatory requirement to have one and there had been no issues with the forum, but what other LAFs had would be considered and the information might be incorporated into a recruitment pack for the Forum.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

Peter Radband had attended the Bracknell Forest Partnership event and there had been a presentation on the day from different partnerships. Not many people at the event were aware of the work of LCAF or had even heard of the Forum. There were workshops at the event where Peter promoted the work of the Forum. Peter was due to attend a meeting of the Bracknell Forest Access Group in April and would promote Forum recruitment at this meeting.

**(Action: Peter Radband)**

It was suggested that the Forum could liaise with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership regarding the work of the Forum.

**(Action: Michael Abbott/ Peter Radband)**

The South East Annual LAF Conference would be held soon; dates and further information would be e-mailed to Forum members.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

LAF Chairs had been sent a letter from Natural England (NE) informing them that the funding for Regional Co-ordinators would cease from 1 April 2015. This was due to NE having to reprioritise its work in the light of ever more stringent funding. NE would continue to encourage their area teams to work with LAFs and they would still facilitate the sharing of information and good practice on Huddle and through their newsletters.

#### 16. **Huddle**

Huddle was an online tool and platform for LAFs. There had been a Westminster Briefing in relation to protecting Public Rights of Way (PROW) and changes to legislation, for further information Forum members could contact Rose Wicks.

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey undertaken on behalf of NE provided baseline and trend data on how people used the natural environment in England. Some of the key headline results from the 2013-14 survey included:

- The most visited areas were parks in towns/cities – 778 million visits, which accounted for 27% of the total number of visits;
- The biggest activity was dog walking – 1.47 billion visits, which accounts to 50% of all the activities recorded;
- The top visit motivations were for people to exercise their dogs;
- 52% of people strongly agreed that having open green spaces close to where they live was important.

These national results fit with those obtained from the Bracknell Forest resident's survey in 2014, which revealed that open spaces and access to nature were the top two things which people liked about living in Bracknell Forest.

## 17. Access Improvement Works

### Public Rights of Way (PROW)

Work continued with the Ramblers Association to identify where accessibility of Public Footpaths could be improved by replacing the older 'step over' or 'squeeze' stiles with new metal or wooden kissing gates. This met targets set out in the Bracknell Forest Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

BFC had worked with South East Berkshire Ramblers to provide two new mobility kissing gate to replace the old squeeze stile and old step over stile on Binfield Footpath 11. The narrow gate at Binfield Footpath 16 (off of Peacocks lane) had been replaced with a more accessible gate. There had been improvements to the small footbridge on Warfield Footpath 7. A new gate had been installed, replacing an old step over stile along Bracknell Footpath 15, at the junction with Easthampstead Park Conference Centre (EPCC) driveway. Edging along Sandhurst Footpath 2 was due to be repaired or replaced and there was pipe installation at Winkfield Footpath 4 which worked well through winter. Litter clearance on Bracknell Footpath 5, ditch improvements on Crowthorne Footpath 18, and wooden bollards replaced with metal posts at Pendry's Lane.

There were regular minor repairs conducted by the Parks & Countryside rangers to the surface of the section of the Devil's Highway (Restricted Byway), which accesses the Forestry Commission car park. This track was heavily used by motorised vehicles, which caused the surface to erode more quickly. BFC were exploring options for a more permanent solution; possibly working with the Forestry Commission in the new financial year

The first section of the Devil's Highway, leading to the Forestry Commission car park was a private road where a resident had issues with people parking opposite the end of their property entrance, thus causing an obstruction. If the land was owned by the resident then parking a car on that part could constitute trespass. They could erect signage indicating such. If the land was owned by someone else, then the issue could be discussed with them. As the road was private, there was little the Council could do to prevent cars parking there.

### Section 106 funded works

Implementation of the Quality Improvements Programme, Phase 1, Year 2, was underway and included:

- Drainage / ditch work and path improvements at Farley Copse in Binfield;
- Path improvement and tree works at Churchill House / Budham Hill in Bracknell;

- Path surfacing, raised flower bed and new wildflower meadow area at The Greenway in Owlsmoor;
- Creation of a path and new orchard and habitat improvement works at Warfield Chase;
- Creation of a new meadow and installation of new site sign at Goddard Way, both in Warfield.

The aim was for a north-south track from Warfield Park to Hayley Green Wood, and to improve drainage in ditches and grass areas. There were issues on the Goddard Way site regarding visual impact but once the work was finished it would look much better. There was a baseline quality assessment of green spaces in the borough, which was part of the Borough's Local Plan Review and funding would be targeted at raising quality standards.

Phase 2 works included:

- Bracknell Town Council would be completing quality improvement works at Jocks Lane Recreation Ground and Sandhurst Town Council at Sandhurst Memorial Park;
- Winkfield Parish Council had been granted £10,434 from Section 106 funding towards improvements; provision of outdoor gym equipment and associated safety surfacing at Allsmoor Field.

### **Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces**

It was not known why the land at Jennett's Park had not been transferred to BFC yet, as the snagging list had been agreed and no one benefitted from the delay. Peacock Meadows was being used and was accessible.

Members were shown photographs of the SANG improvements at Parks & Countryside managed sites.

At Englemere Pond there was a new section of boardwalk and panoramic photo showing habitat improvements, for example, scrub clearance; the improvements at the site were noticeable. At Longhill Park there were new steps through the woodland and a knee rail in the car park.

Planned work at the Cut Countryside Corridor included:

- Path works to link the new Manor Farm bridge with site entrances and Anneforde Place bridge to provide additional walking link of approximately 800 metres of path;
- Replacement or restoration of existing steel bridge at Anneforde Place;
- New Garth Meadow interpretation;
- Piggy wood path and vegetation works.

And at Shepherd Meadows:

- Path works on southern bank, plus extension on northern bank.

Planned work at Ambarrow Court included path works to link Ambarrow Hill with Ambarrow Court of approximately 630 metres involving close liaison with the National Trust; southern entrance project with various drainage and gate works; waymarkers; interpretation board and a cycle-rack project. At Horseshoe Lake there would be bank repair works and path works of approximately 160m.

18. **LCAF Annual Report**

The Annual Review Form for LCAF was due to be submitted to NE by the end of June 2015. The glossy version of the LCAF 2014 Annual Report was in draft form and needed approval from Forum members before being published on BFCs website by June 2015.

The Annual Report was a requirement each year and included the Forum's achievements and priorities along with comments from the Forum's Chairman and officers. Rose Wicks would contact Forum members for their feedback and ideas.

**(Action: All)**

19. **Site Visits**

There had been a site visit to Rooks Wood in Wokingham in conjunction with other local LAFs, where Forum members and Local Authority officers looked at how responsible dog ownership was being promoted by Wokingham Borough Council. This was a good opportunity to share best practice and see how other authorities were tackling the issue of irresponsible dog ownership, for example, addressing dog fouling and poor dog control.

There was a need to get the balance right between promoting the message of responsible dog ownership, without alienating the target audience. Providing dog bins in the right location was important to help encourage people to properly dispose of their dog's waste. There could be better co-ordination between land owners and local authorities regarding this matter. The Crown Estate was keen to help with co-ordinating hot spots for this. Muzzies roundabout dog bin, it was noted, was not being emptied regularly.

Rooks Wood was a well managed site, with a good facility and pathways. Whilst this was a useful visit, it was suggested that Dinton Pastures would perhaps be a better site to visit, as irresponsible dog ownership appeared to be a bigger issue there.

Future site visit ideas included: Swinley Forest pipeline with John Deakin, Jealott's Hill Community Landshare Project, contact David Putt, and meeting at the new Community Centre at The Parks.

**(Action: Rose Wicks/ John Deakin)**

20. **Reports from Officers**

**Graham Pockett** advised that Crowthorne Footpath 5 was temporarily closed to allow a scheme to widen and resurface the path. The closure came into force on 2 March 2015 and would last for approximately one month. There was an obstruction at the start of Binfield Footpath 3 from Ryehurst Lane and a letter had been posted on site, asking the landowner to remove the obstruction or reinstate the stile to not less than the previous condition. If necessary, this would be followed up with a Section 143 notice of the Highways Act 1980.

In relation to Sandhurst Footpath 22 near Horseshoe Lake, part of the Blackwater Valley Path, a request had been received for temporary closure of the footpath to allow works to take place on the adjacent section of the River Blackwater. There was some concern about the length of the diversion required around Horseshoe Lake before being able to return to the Blackwater Valley Path but dates had not yet been confirmed. Graham mentioned on behalf of Richard Mosses, that 'Mosses Path' in Binfield had been named in memory of Robin Mosses who did much work on behalf

of the Parish Council ensuring that footpaths remained an amenity for everyone to enjoy.

**Rose Wicks** advised that the Bracknell Forest Ramblers Route leaflet had been updated with route corrections and revised maps. It was available on the website and printed copies would be brought to the next meeting of the Forum. Rose also mentioned that the Horse riding leaflet had been updated with the help of Jenny Young and Sharon Holt.

## 21. **Reports from Members round the table**

**Peter Radband** mentioned that the Broadmoor development had caused an increased amount of traffic on the roads. It was noted that the access road was private at present but if possible the legal status would be clarified.

**John Deakin** mentioned that the horse riding policy at The Crown Estate would be changing and there would be one single permit for riding on land at Swinley Forest and Windsor Great Park from the start of May 2015. There would be no day permits, just annual permits, and the horse box parking areas would be moved to a location further south in Swinley Forest, which would be an improvement to its existing location at The Look Out. The aim was for more distinct areas for horse riding and access would be monitored as it progressed. Permit holders only could access some car parks via a permit code. Jenny mentioned that new discs were due to come out on 1 April 2015 and John would check this with Gareth.

**(Action: John Deakin)**

**Councillor Brossard** advised that a wild service tree had been purchased and planted by Sandhurst Town Council in memory of Mel Calvert, who sadly passed away last year. Mel was the founder and Life President of Longdown Lodge Estate Residents Association. Sandhurst Footpath 13 between Orchard Gate and Wellington Road would be designated 'Calvert Walk' to recognise his valuable contribution, with the signs funded by a community grant.

**Jenny Yung** mentioned flytipping and Richard said that there had been site visits with Gail Siddall, BFC Environmental Health regarding this and officers were considering options for CCTV. There was the possibility of undertaking minor design modifications to make it more difficult for larger vehicles to flytip but this would make it difficult for horse boxes and restrict access rights for others. There was an online form to report issues such as obstructions on Public Rights of Way, on the Borough Council's website; Rose would send a web link to Jenny.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

**Peter Radband** raised a query about QR codes to be put onto signs so people could scan them for information. Richard advised that using mobile in parks and open spaces had been investigated by officers within the Parks & Countryside service, but due to BFC internal policies and procedures, this was slow to be progressed. QR codes were also old technology and there was some reluctance to spend funding on them in case they should go out of date. Peter also queried whether the locations of defibrillators could be shown on maps. Richard advised that this was being looked into by councillors and officers. Rose could check with the Borough Council's GIS Team to see if this had been mapped or if the NHS knew of the locations.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

**John Deakin** mentioned that the Swinley Forest pipeline activities were progressing as expected and the contractor's behaviour had been acceptable with the agreement. The Crown Estate was working closely with Natural England regarding the disruption

caused by the activities. Dan West who was Forest Ranger at The Crown Estate was working on an overarching plan for public access in the forest area and there would be a joined up approach in the borough with a plan for the car park, footpaths and dog bins. This could be presented to the Forum for feedback when completed.

**(Action: John Deakin)**

**22. Public Question Time**

Colin Bird asked about hidden places in Bracknell Forest and how they could be pieced together for learning more about the area in relation to shorter walks and encouraging access. Rose would send Colin a link to the walking page on the Borough Council's website and walks around the borough. Rob led regular moderate to advanced walks and other rangers led shorter and easier walks. Improvement projects funded by SANGs money and Section 106 developer contributions, did a lot to help improve and connect parks and open spaces throughout the Borough. These were due to be publicised via leaflets and the website.

Any suggestions regarding links in parks and open spaces should be forwarded to Rose Wicks.

**(Action: All)**

**23. Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 6 October 2015, 7pm, Function Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell