



## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

**Local Countryside Access Forum**

**Tuesday 1 March 2016, 7.00 pm**

**Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell**

**To: Local Countryside Access Forum**

Peter Radband (Chairman)

Richard Mosses (Vicechair)

Michael Abbott

Colin Bird

Councillor Michael Brossard

John Deakin

Councillor Alvin Finch

Hugh Fitzwilliams

David Lindop

Jenny Yung

**ALISON SANDERS**  
Director of Corporate Services

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- 3 Use the stairs not the lifts.
- 4 Do not re-enter the building until told to do so.

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Published: 23 February 2016



**Local Countryside Access Forum  
Tuesday 1 March 2016, 7.00 pm  
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House,  
Bracknell**

**AGENDA**

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13. <b>Date of Next Meeting</b> Tuesday 4 October 2016, 7pm, Function Room, 5th Floor, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell	



## LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM 6 OCTOBER 2015 7.00 - 9.25 PM

### Present:

#### Members:

Peter Radband (Chairman)  
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chairman)  
Michael Abbott  
Colin Bird  
Councillor Michael Brossard  
John Deakin  
Hugh Fitzwilliams  
David Lindop  
Jenny Yung

#### In attendance:

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

#### Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Alvin Finch

### 1. Welcome

Chairman Michael Abbott welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

### 2. Election of Chairman

Michael Brossard proposed Peter Radband as the new Chairman of the Local Countryside Access Forum, which was seconded by Jenny Yung. Richard Mosses expressed an interest in taking on the role of Vice-Chairman. All members agreed with these appointments.

Peter Radband was elected as Chairman and Richard Mosses was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Local Countryside Access Forum. Michael Abbott would continue as a member of the Forum.

### 3. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2015 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- *Minute 15*: 'relied upon' rather than 'replied upon' at the end of the first paragraph.
- *Minute 19*: 'dog ownership' rather than 'down ownership' at the top of the second paragraph.

## Matters Arising

A letter had been sent to Sharon Holt who had stepped down as Forum member in 2015. The letter which was sent on behalf of the Forum by Richard Walton from the Borough Council thanked Sharon for her valuable contribution to the Forum over the years, particularly in relation to promoting the interests of horse rising in the borough. Sharon has also greatly helped the Borough Council by providing information and advice in relation to equestrian matters and she had offered to continue this support where she could.

At the last meeting, members raised a query about the locations of defibrillators in the borough. An enquiry had been made with the Council's GIS Team, with a response pending. Officers also reported that a useful tool might be [www.defibtracker.co.uk](http://www.defibtracker.co.uk). The website was a work in progress and it had been launched by West Midlands Ambulance Service, Safeheart UK and the Community Heartbeat charity. It let people use a postcode or place name to find the nearest defibrillator in an emergency. There were aspirations for this facility to be built into a national database.

As part of the Members' Initiative Fund, 14 defibrillators had been purchased and positioned throughout the borough; many of these were located in schools. The query was raised as to whether defibrillators in the borough were accessible 24 hours a day or locked away somewhere, such as in a school location. Rob Solomon had a list of defibrillator locations in the borough and would forward this to Rose Wicks. Further investigation would be undertaken to find out if these had been mapped.

**(Action: Rob Solomon/ Rose Wicks)**

John Deakin reported that they were to position four dog bins in various locations within The Crown Estate site approximately 100 metres from the boundary. The correct positioning of dog bins is crucial in order to encourage people using this facility. The Crown Estate would pay to ensure that these were emptied and maintained.

### **4. Membership and Recruitment**

David Lindop's application to join the Local Countryside Access Forum had been accepted by the Borough Council. David was a keen walker and was very interested in finding ways to help younger, older and disabled people to enjoy our countryside. The Chair asked for any ideas for new members, especially from those with a disability to be forwarded to him.

Membership of the Forum was now up to 10, which was the minimum membership as set out in the LAF (England) Regulations 2007 (3.- (1)) There was an updated members' interest list and contact details to take into account recent changes in membership to the forum; this would be circulated to members for their approval..

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

The Parks and Countryside Service would continue to promote recruitment to LCAF, particularly in relation to requiring landowner, disabled and youth representation.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

The Chairman requested that The Bracknell Society be approached to see if any of their members would be interested in joining the Forum.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

There were some tailored training opportunities for Forum members through IPROW for possibly half a day to be held at one of the authorities in the region. The more people who could attend, the lower the cost of the training per head. There would be a good overview of PROW matters but the training would not be too technical. Four or five people on the Forum expressed an interest in attending the training, depending on whether it would be held on a weekday or a weekend. Further details could be circulated to members when available.

**(Action: Graham Pockett)**

Hugh Fitzwilliams reported that joint training days and a more joined up approach between Local Access Forums was encouraged at the South East Regional LAF Conference which he attended. Study days or experience of areas not currently represented on the Forum would be useful.

The Chairman expressed an interest in attending the Bracknell Forest Partnership event again this year if it was being held in November as last year.

## 5. **LAF related Meetings/Conferences**

### Berkshire LAF Chairs' Meeting

Peter Radband had attended this meeting on behalf of the Forum. Peter raised concern at there being no national LAF Forum and the Regional LAF was not as active at present. The M4 Smart Motorway development was one of the matters discussed at this meeting; the work to improve the motorway wouldn't directly impact upon the borough.

### Regional LAF Officers' Update

Graham and Rose had not been able to attend the last Regional LAF Officers' Update, but had provided an update to Jonathan Clark.

Feedback provided included a comment on annual reporting. As it currently stand, 2 annual reports need to be completed for the forum each year; one of these was the 'dry' spreadsheet form that needs submitting to Natural England (runs by financial year); the other is the more 'glossy' version (runs by calendar year), which is uploaded to BFCs website. Feedback from Natural England (NE) had indicated that a spreadsheet format helped with benchmarking data across authorities, but Graham and Rose had asked if annual reports could be combined into one?

For the round table discussion BFC provided examples of current issues, successful projects and best practice examples. Best practice examples: gate replacement project to improve accessibility on rights of way (working with South East Berkshire Ramblers and funding provided by RA); and using volunteers to help monitor the condition of PROW. A good example of cross boundary cooperation included working with RBWM to establish a TRD enforceable width restriction of 1.6 metres in a central section of Hawthorne Lane and the whole of Berry Lane, both byways in Warfield. This would help to protect the surface of this rural Byway and would also hopefully help address the issue of fly-tipping. Issues faced included fly-tipping becoming increasingly problematic due to the time and expense involved to deal with it and it tended to be on rural byways.

## South East LAF Annual Conference

Hugh Fitzwilliams, Colin Bird and Graham Pockett attended the South East LAF Annual Conference in London in May. Members thanked Hugh for his feedback from the event, which was attached to the agenda papers. Hugh reported that the event was well organised and well run. Colin commented that the difference between LAFs and how they operated was very noticeable. The Chairman suggested that it might be a useful exercise for Forum members to attend as observers to neighbouring LAF meetings such as the Mid and West Berkshire LAF. Their group was much bigger than LCAFs seeing as their remit covered a much larger geographical area.

## LAF National Conference

The Chairman and Rose had submitted responses to Natural England's survey regarding the LAF National Conference and had suggested Bristol as their preferred location. The Parks and Countryside Service would be able to pay certain travel costs and a small amount for food associated with attending the event. Rose had suggested that the Chairman of the National Rural Crime Network would be a good speaker at the event in relation to organisations set up to raise awareness on rural crime and how LAFs were dealing with related issues. The Chairman's suggestions for topics were access to military land and a talk by Natural England.

## **6. Huddle**

Huddle was an online resource available to LAF members. It was a platform which replaced the Natural England Forum. A toolkit for Huddle included the suggestion to nominate a champion from each LAF to keep other members up to date with issues raised on Huddle and to let other LAF members know of anything of interest. The role of Huddle Champion should ideally be filled by a volunteer LAF member. Hugh Fitzwilliams would be Huddle Monitor on a trial basis.

## **7. Big Path Watch**

Big Path Watch had been launched by the Ramblers' Association who were aiming to walk thousands of miles of paths and to report what they found. The aim was to find examples of good practice and to identify the most common issues for walkers. They would survey 1km grid squares but it was not possible to know which areas had been covered previously.

Nationally, 48,500 grid squares had been surveyed so far and 140,000 miles of paths. 108 square kilometres had been completed in Bracknell Forest leading to 260 positives and 132 negatives. Out of the negatives, most of these involved quick fixes, with the other issues already known to the Rangers who were already addressing these, for example, Winkfield Footpaths 6, 13 and 19.

## **8. Access Improvement Works**

Work was being undertaken with local landowners in relation to the installation of stiles and kissing gates, including self-shutting gates where needed because of livestock.

Work had been undertaken with South East Berkshire Ramblers to install two new pedestrian gates along Warfield Footpath 6; one replacing the old 'step-over' stile at Brockhill farm and the other replacing a 'squeeze' stile off Malt Hill Road.

Old ‘squeeze’ stiles along Winkfield Footpath 10 had been replaced with one new kissing gate and two pedestrian gates. Another ‘squeeze’ stile had been removed with no need to provide a replacement. Two pedestrian gates had been used to replace old ‘squeeze’ stiles along Winkfield Footpath 10. These works were funded by the Ramblers Association, with the Borough Council providing support for the project.

There was a project to improve access along Winkfield Footpath 6 which experienced seasonal water logging. A scheme was currently being drawn up which would look to use S106 funding from the quality improvement forward plan, as set out in the Borough’s Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. New interpretation was to be designed for Farley Copse (paths had been improved and ditches cleared). An access and education project was being drawn up for South Hill Park, which would look to provide a new nature-themed sculpture trail and educational balance beam. Works at Bill Hill included new paths, habitat improvements and interpretation. Monoliths (x4) would be installed at the site entrance points and would include a map of the site and some key facts about its history and wildlife. A new lectern would provide some information about the important Bronze Age Barrow. Bracknell Conservation volunteers had previously done some work there to improve the steps.

Access improvement works at Englemere Pond included a new boardwalk along the eastern edge of Englemere Pond and a new surfaced path which linked around the pond edge.

Stephen Chown had been appointment as the new Head of Parks and Countryside next week; Stephen had an arboriculture, park management and Town Council background.

Six new gates had been erected at Shepherd Meadows to replace old ‘step-over’ stiles and provide a more accessible route around the meadows and woodland within. A new cycle rack and noticeboard had been installed at Ambarrow Court. New site signs would soon be installed on all SANGs sites. A new Coxwell gravel surfaced path had been completed at Longhill Park allowing links from the meadow to the older path below. The meadow was also to be seeded with a perennial wildflower mix.

The bridge at Garth Meadows / Anneforde Place had been repainted, with a new surface to follow. There were 2 new noticeboards and interpretation panels at Garth Meadows. Manor Farm was now owned and managed by Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) and provided additional routes from Garth Meadows.

The lease for Peacock Meadows at Jennett’s Park was now under BFC control; there were 34 Hectares at this countryside site.

## 9. Beating The Boundary Walk

Beating The Boundary Walk was an idea of The Bracknell Forest Society (TBFS) <http://thebracknellforestociety.org.uk> . They proposed creating a route around the Borough made up of a series of shorter walks on a parish by parish basis which could be walked individually or connected. The suggestion was to include longer cycle-able sections, and this walk would help raise the profile of Public Rights of Way in the Borough. The idea could tie in with the objective to produce a suite of leaflets promoting walking opportunities in Bracknell Forest SANG sites.

It was suggested that other groups and charities such as Ramblers, Rotary Club and Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue (SEBEV) could be involved. The walk could

be trialled and then could open up sponsorship opportunities if it was held annually of every other year. It was suggested that young people could be encouraged to be part of it via stewarding activities.

Forum members expressed an interest in being involved in the walk but in a support rather than lead function. Access was thought to be a consideration, particularly in relation to horses, bicycles and disabled people.

The Chairman offered to meet with TBFS to discuss the walk further. Hugh confirmed that Warfield Parish Council were due to meet with TBFS to discuss supporting the concept of the walk.

#### **10. LCAF Annual Report**

The 2015 Annual Report was currently being drafted. This would need approval from Forum members in spring 2016, before it could be published on the LCAF page of BFCs website.

The Annual LAF Review Form was not due to be submitted to Natural England until June 2016.

#### **11. Site Visits**

Forum members went on an inspirational site visit to Jealott's Hill Community Landshare, a six acre [multi-purpose] garden for community use.

Between Bracknell and Maidenhead off the A330, the gardens were enjoyed by the local community supporting each other on horticultural activities and creating a haven for wildlife for all to enjoy. Sharing skills and produce was at the heart of the project, with local groups and individuals growing fruit, vegetables, other plants and enhancing biodiversity.

The project is a partnership between Bracknell Forest Homes, Bracknell Town Council, Warfield Parish Council and Syngenta. The land is owned by Syngenta and leased for community use.

To join, participate, sponsor or donate to the gardens, please contact David Putt, Project Manager, on 07867 695931, [jealottshilllandshare@gmail.com](mailto:jealottshilllandshare@gmail.com) or visit [www.jealottshilllandshare.org.uk](http://www.jealottshilllandshare.org.uk)

It was suggested that Jealott's Hill Community Landshare could be visited again in a year's time.

Other suggestions for site visits included: the Redoubts at Swinley Forest, South Hill Park when the new sculpture trail was established, and Wellington College with its Grade II listed buildings including a guided tour. Cllr Brossard offered to make enquiries regarding the Wellington College site visit and let Rose know the outcome.

**(Action: Cllr Brossard)**

The latest events programme run by the Parks and Countryside Service has been published on BFCs website. There were a number of events that members might be interested in attending, such as the guided tour of Pope's Manor and grounds, which were only open to the public once a year. This was a bookable event.

12. **Annual Return of Rights of Way Management data**

The Forum discussed the IPROW Annual Return of Rights of Way Management data.

13. **Reports from Members round the table**

**Colin Bird** commented that a lot of good work was being done to ‘facilitate’ access to parks and open spaces and PROW in the Borough; he asked what could be done to further publicise / promote access. This area could use some attention and a focus on what was trying to be achieved. Rose informed the Forum that promoting access to local routes / PROW / to outdoor recreation was an action included in the Right of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The Parks and Countryside Service carry out this action by producing leaflets, website material, social media and press releases (working with BFCs Corporate Comms and Marketing Team). There was a new ‘What’s On in Bracknell’ page which was more tourism oriented and linked in to the work of BFC Services such as Leisure and Parks and Countryside. This could perhaps be utilised by BFC officers to help advertise the Forum’s work.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

**Peter Radband** suggested that the Forum could use Streetwise. Rose suggested that they could check how people heard about events so that more targeted publicity could be applied. The Parks and Countryside Service currently tried to engage with local businesses by involving them on Corporate Volunteer days. There was scope to perhaps to publicise events more to local schools.

**David Lindop** said that he had enjoyed his first meeting with the Forum.

**Hugh Fitzwilliams** mentioned the East-West Greenway. The first out of three phases was being built by Berkely Homes, from Cabbage Hill to Avery Lane, but Hugh was concerned that the concept was being diluted outside of this area and queried whether it should be designated as a Public Right of Way to protect for future use. Graham commented that they were currently in discussion with the Highways Team about tarmac and lighting for cyclists in this area. Another section further east would incorporate an existing bridleway. It was suggested that a representative from Berkeley Homes could attend the next meeting of the Forum.

**John Deakin** reported that there was a Windsor ABC (Ascot Bracknell Cycle) route proposal brought about by an online petition. The cycle route would link Windsor to Bracknell, for example at The Look Out. The Crown Estate were generally supportive of the idea but wished to segregate activities where possible on the route such as cycling, dog walking, horse riding and there were concerns regarding the steep gradient at certain points in the forest. The Crown Estate preferred the use of existing routes where possible rather than creating new ones.

Dan West, ranger at The Crown Estate, was undertaking work on an inventory and it was hoped that a report on this would be ready for the next Forum meeting in March 2016.

Permit arrangements for horse riding on Crown Estate land had changed. An annual permit was now required to ride on land at Windsor Great Park and Swinley Forest, which is payable to The Crown Estate. The horse box parking area had been closed at The Look Out due to pressure on spaces in this car park but there was new horse box provision in Swinley Park. Improvements had been made to the horse riding tracks and car park. The Crown Estate covered four different boroughs, and any feedback on these changes could be directed to John Deakin. The Lapland UK

Christmas event would be at The Crown Estate this year and was being set up at present. Rose checked that the information in the horse riding leaflet provided by BFC was up to date given the changes mentioned above and John confirmed that it was.

**Peter Radband** mentioned that the café was due to be closed at The Look Out and that people were not sure what to expect in relation to new facilities at the site.

**John Deakin** commented that The Crown Estate was in discussions with BFC regarding the catering arrangements at The Look Out. BFC was unable to put in mobile catering without permission from The Crown Estate. A decision on this was pending and both sides were working hard to find a better solution.

**Cllr Brossard** reported that Bracknell had won the Green Flag Award again for Sandhurst Memorial Park and for the first time, Snaprails Park.

**Jenny Yung** commented that she had enjoyed the site visits and was pleased with the new arrangements regarding permits for horse riders at The Crown Estate. John said that people would be positioned on the gates to enforce the horse riding permits. Jenny said that she would be in favour of a cycle route from Windsor to Bracknell. Access for horse riders behind the car park had been unusable during the week.

The Chairman thanked Michael Abbott for his hard work as Chairman of the Local Countryside Access Forum in Bracknell.

14. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 1 March 2016, 7pm, Function Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell

Clerk to the Council

Date 02/02/2016

Dear [REDACTED]

## **Cut-off date for recording historic rights of way on the Definitive Map.**

1 January 2026 is the cut-off date for adding historic paths to The definitive map: the official record of the public's rights of way in an area. When a path or way is on this map, it not only means we have a right to walk, or ride/cycle, or drive on it, but it is much easier to protect and maintain. However, any path which came into existence before 1949 and that has not been requested to be on the map by 2026 cannot be added in the future.

New regulations simplifying some of the work involved in modification orders, and requirements for authorities to do so within defined time periods will come into force in April this year. Although it is not anticipated that there will be many paths in Bracknell Forest that were established by right prior to 1949, but not recorded on the first or subsequent Definitive maps for East Berkshire, it seemed an appropriate time to remind local councils and other organisations of this time limit.

It was in 1998 that moves to close the definitive maps to historic paths were first seriously proposed. The creation of the definitive map was never meant to be open-ended and successive governments over the years since its creation in 1949 have tried to complete and close the process for recording older paths. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) officially introduced the cut-off date for adding historic paths to definitive maps. This measure came about largely in order to ensure that landowners have a clear idea of whether land they owned has a right of way on it. 2016 as was originally proposed, but opposition from organisations such as the Ramblers and The Open Spaces Society and others ensured that the cut-off date was set as 2026.

Changes to Regulations include a new type of order that will combine the Map Modification Order with a diversion order to create a path on a new line. This is intended to make negotiations with landowners easier and reduce the number of objections. While this may make it easier to record a right of way, it may not be on the exact line of the historic path.

Other regulation changes affect how orders are publicised, with more use of digital media and less need to place expensive and formally worded public notices in local papers.

## **Evidence**

A right of way can be claimed on the basis of:

- User evidence: the public has established a right of way by using a defined route over a period of time, or
- Documentary evidence: that the right of way has existed historically based on evidence in documents such as old maps
- Or a combination of the two. It is often best to provide as much evidence as possible when making a claim.

Due to the amount of time elapsed, reliable user evidence of rights that may have existed pre-1949 will be getting harder to assemble, and documentary evidence is likely to be the most important basis of a claim.

If you believe that a right of way has been established by public use you will need to collect evidence from people who have used the route concerned. The council can supply forms to gather information on how and when the route was used. Witnesses should also mark the route they have used on a map, and sign and date it.

### **Documentary evidence**

To prove that a right of way came into existence at some time in the past you'll need to rely on documentary evidence like old maps and Enclosure Awards, tithe awards, title deeds, statutory orders and plans, parish council minutes, photographs, reference books and published material that refers to the route in question.

The working maps drawn up by the Inland Revenue under the Finance Act 1910 can be accessed or located via the National Archive at this link:

<http://labs.nationalarchives.gov.uk/maps/valuation.html> The maps are typically consulted by the public for family and local history research and for evidence to support the existence of public rights of way.

The Open Spaces Society has been using the IR maps for rights of way evidence since 1979. 'The maps contain cogent information to support the existence of public rights of way; mainly for restricted byways and bridleways, but occasionally for footpaths too. They are a vital source of supporting evidence for definitive map modification order applications.'

Enclosure maps for the Bracknell Forest area are archived at the Berkshire Records Office in Reading, along with some Parish Council and District Council minutes and old Ordnance Survey maps. Enclosure maps can also be viewed online at

<http://www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk/>

Before doing lots of research and investigations, it's worth checking with the Borough Council whether the right of way you're claiming has previously been extinguished by a legal order. If a right of way has been extinguished it cannot be claimed again using documentary evidence.

If any claims are submitted, the Borough Council's officers will look at the application and carry out additional research to assess whether the definitive map needs to be amended. A recommendation for a decision will be made to the Director of Environment, Culture & Communities, who will have the final say on whether to proceed with the change to the Definitive map.

If the evidence provided does not support the application to change the definitive map, you will be informed by the council and told of any right to appeal against the decision.

If the Director decides that the evidence does support your application to change the Definitive map, you will be told by the council that a Definitive map modification order will be made. This notice will also be sent to the landowners and occupiers.

Definitive map modification order (DMMO): The making of the order isn't the end of the process. The council will advertise the order by notices at each end of the disputed path, in the local press and on its public website. Anyone may object to the order during the 42 days following the advertisement. If objections are made then the order has to be determined by an inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. Only if the inspector then decides that the existence of the path has been shown is the order confirmed, and the definitive map amended to show the path.

If no objections are received then the order can be confirmed and the path or way will be added to the definitive map.

If you would like any additional detail or clarification concerning this information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Pockett  
Parks & Countryside Development Manager  
Time Square  
Market Street, Bracknell  
Berkshire, RG12 1JD

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Agenda Item 10

# Bracknell Forest Borough, Local Countryside Access Forum, Annual Report 2015



The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) placed a duty on Bracknell Forest Council to establish and maintain a 'Local Access Forum'. The Bracknell Forest Local Countryside Access Forum is an independent advisory body that aims to improve recreational access to the local countryside for all users, whilst enabling landowners and managers to make the best of their land. Bracknell Forest Council provides officer support to the Forum as well as training and liaison with other neighbouring Forums and organisations.

This document provides a background to the work of the Bracknell Forest Local Access Forum (LCAF), whose work is becoming ever more important due to the localism agenda coming from central government.

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## **1. Notable events during the year**

There were 2 meetings (each lasting approximately 2 hours), a regional conference, 2 meetings of the Berkshire LAF Chairs and a site visit to Jealott's Hill Community Landshare Project.

### **1.1 Meetings at Easthampstead House, Bracknell**

*3 March:* Attended by 6 LCAF Members, 4 Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) officers and 2 observers.

*6 October:* Attended by 10 LCAF Members and 3 BFC officers and 1 observer.

Agenda and minutes for LCAF meetings are available on the BFC website under Council meetings, agendas and minutes.

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/councillorsdemocracyandelections>

### **1.2 SE Region LAF conference, on 19 May, at Euston Rd, London**

Attended by 2 LCAF Members (Hugh Fitzwilliams and Colin Bird) and 1 BFC officer (Graham Pockett).

#### **Hugh's summary notes**

20.05.2015

It was an interesting and informative day. There were six presentations. The session on Cattle Attacks on PROWs was cancelled due to the speaker being unable to attend. Of the 40 names on the attendance list approx. 30 were present.

#### Session 1. The Future of Public Path Orders

Mike Walker, Independent Consultant

The session focused on the impending changes to the 2000 CROW Act relating to Diversion Orders.

Currently there is no defined formal process for diversion applications and this has led to some illogical and inappropriate outcomes to landowners applications to divert paths. Key elements of the changes are:

- The new rights will apply only to 'any land of prescribed description' this in essence will be agricultural land, gardens and private yards, schools, businesses etc.
- The principle of diversion via an alternative acceptable route around gardens, yards schools etc. will be allowable and should be accommodated.
- Objections without sound reason will not be allowable
- There will be no requirement to advertise the application or diversion in the local press
- There will be a right of appeal & SOS will have the power to say Yes or NO
- LA will have to respond to or take initial action on an application within 4 months and progress specific points within an application within 4 months otherwise the applicant can go directly to SOS for a decision.

- The LA will have the option to take a neutral stance.
- Costs will be carried by the applicant.

It is hoped that the changes will allow for much wider more imaginative ‘packaging’ of changes which will encourage updating the relevance of routes and overall improvements to the PROW network.

#### Session 2. The Ramblers Big Path Project

Helen Mthiyane, Project manager

This was a briefing of the Ramblers Association project to get a wide cross section of individuals and groups whether regular walkers or not to survey the condition of all PROWs marked on the OS 1:25000 maps of Britain. The project is funded by Rambler Holidays Charitable Trust and runs from July 13 to 31 Dec 2015. It is the Ramblers biggest project ever.

The hope is that it will trigger a much wider involvement of society of all ages and types in understanding and making use of the wonderful network of paths within the UK. Problems of access and signage etc. will be coordinated by the Ramblers and fed through to LAs and their own local groups. The survey will not differentiate between FPs, BRs & BWs.

An App download showing a map of the area selected for survey by an individual along with the survey form will be available.

#### Session 3. Measuring the impact of successful funding bids

Annette Weiss, Chiltern Conservation Board

This was a fascinating report on how the Chilterns Conservation Board had evaluated the payback from a £48,000 Leader grant to create the Chilterns Cycleway.

The Chilterns Cycleway is a 173 mile, on road, signed, long distance route suitable for both serious and leisure cyclists but overall quite challenging. It was opened in 2010. The total cost was £70K

The evaluation included surveys of usage of pubs, accommodation and farm shops. Numbers of guide books sold, reviews on Twitter, Facebook and internet generally. The initial work discovered that users were usually in groups of 2 -4, stayed 2 nights and one new campsite had been created as a direct result of the route. In addition Events organisers were using the route for corporate ‘team build’ days and that local tour operators were offering guided trips along the route.

A Survey in 2012 recorded 55 over night users staying for an average 2.6 nights with an average spend of £71 per person including accommodation and an average group size of between 3 & 4. Day users had numbered 54 with an average group size of 3.9 and spend per person of £8. From these figures they had deduced that the probable annual inflow of revenue generated by the Cycleway route was in the region of £868,000. This added to the health & wellbeing benefits and seemed a very satisfactory return on the original grant of £48K.

#### Session 4. Coastal access update

Jenny Bowen, Senior Advisor to Natural England

This was an interesting update but not really very relevant to Bracknell! The Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 is due to deliver for the whole of the England coast line

by Dec 2020. Although a decent start has been made there is still a lot to do. The key points seemed to be:

- It is perhaps as much a continuous coastal path as an access strip to the shore.
- Where access is granted the land owner/ occupier will benefit from reduced liability
- There is a ‘fair balance test’ on what is or is not to be declared accessible
- The standard path width is 4m
- The principle is to find agreement through discussion & negotiation rather than compulsion
- Privacy of existing landowners/ occupiers must be taken into account
- Where the coast is eroding a principle of ‘roll back’ is written into all agreements and where necessary the future line of the path will be established in the current negotiations
- In estuaries the path and access will extend upstream to the first pedestrian or ferry crossing
- Work on all stretches of the coast line must be started by 2017.

#### Session 5. De-registering incorrectly recorded Common Land

Grant McPhee, DEFRA

The Act of 2006 appears to have been very badly worded and to have been full of errors with maps and text declaring privately owned dwellings to be themselves common land along with many other contested issues. To make a sorry story worse there is no finance available to make the necessary corrections.

I found it difficult to hear this speaker, my notes are very thin but luckily to my knowledge Bracknell has little or no Common Land.

#### Session 6. Natural England Update

Rob Leek and Kevin Haugh, Natural England

#### The final session.

The overall message was that resources are very tight and that Access Forums could expect nothing more than the bare routine support.

Rob Leek showed a series of slides relating to Access Forum statistics. The number of Forums has increased from 78 in 2011 to 100 in 2015. 85% of Forums submitted their annual report. This % is basically unchanged since 2011. There seems to be a generally positive response from Forums towards NE. 92% of Forums are represented on Huddle. New contributors to Huddle are needed.

Kevin Haugh explained the organisational structure for Access Forums nationally. Bracknell is in Area 10 - Thames Valley- and our area officer is Andrew Smith. The message again was that resources are tight but if we had specific issues on which we needed to involve Andrew at our meetings we were to ask. He encouraged us to explore the concept, within our areas, at joint meetings and perhaps common interest study groups. This seemed to me a sensible and practical way forward.

### **1.3 LAF Chairs meeting, 5 February, 2 June and 2 September, in Maidenhead**

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 relied upon more now that some LAFs were losing support from Local Authorities.

The M4 Smart Motorway development was also one of the matters discussed at this meeting, but the work to improve the motorway wouldn't directly impact upon the borough.

### **1.4 Site visit to Jealott's Hill**



Forum members went on an inspirational site visit to Jealott's Hill Community Landshare, a six acre (multi-purpose) garden for community use.

Between Bracknell and Maidenhead off the A330, the gardens are enjoyed by the local community supporting each other on horticultural activities and creating a haven for wildlife for all to enjoy. Sharing skills and produce is at the heart of the project, with local groups and individuals growing fruit, vegetables, other plants and enhancing biodiversity.

The project is a partnership between Bracknell Forest Homes, Bracknell Town Council, Warfield Parish Council and Syngenta. The land is owned by Syngenta and leased for community use.

Members were given a guided tour of the site by David Putt who is the Project Manager. Members got to see and learn about the site features including a 400 tree orchard, half acre vineyard, large polytunnel, three acres of cultivated ground and a half acre sensory garden.

Volunteers, with or without horticultural experience, of all ages and backgrounds are welcomed, as well as groups to enjoy activities such as growing food, maintaining flower beds and supporting local wildlife. The project actively encourages a diverse range of individuals from the community to become involved, including vulnerable people with special needs, mental health problems, physical illness or addiction. School staff and children are always welcome.

Community gardening activities have many therapeutic benefits, increased self esteem, a feeling of belonging, promoting well being, healthy eating and exercise. It also builds environmental awareness and helps support our local wildlife habitats.

Michael Brossard remarked “the project is fortunate in having an inspiring leader in the form of David. It was clear from our various discussions that he is passionate in wanting to help the residents from Bracknell and beyond who are disadvantaged mentally or physically. To this should be added Community Payback where those who have erred can be encouraged to support worthwhile causes.”

The project also does its bit towards promoting environmental sustainability by recycling materials that would have otherwise ended up in landfill:  
The many benches removed from our town centre pre. Regeneration  
The quality engineering bricks donated by Ringway  
The many fruit trees purchased based on the multiple 75p donations from Waitrose staff resulting from their 75 year celebrations

To join, participate, sponsor or donate to the gardens, please contact David Putt, Project Manager, on 07867 695931, [jealottshilllandshare@gmail.com](mailto:jealottshilllandshare@gmail.com) or visit [www.jealottshilllandshare.org.uk](http://www.jealottshilllandshare.org.uk)

## **2. Advice given by LCAF to Section 94 Bodies**

### **2.1 Advice to BFC**

Permit arrangements for horse riding on Crown Estate land had changed. An annual permit was now required to ride on land at Windsor Great Park and Swinley Forest, which is payable to The Crown Estate. The horse box parking area had been closed at The Look Out due to pressure on spaces in this car park but there was new horse box provision in Swinley Park. Improvements had been made to the horse riding tracks and car park.

### **2.2 Feedback to Natural England**

LCAF worked with BFC to provide a response (on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015) to an online survey of all LAF Chairs and Secretaries covering the period, 2014-15.

The survey had been produced to gather information from LAFs to help Natural England plan support for LAFs in the coming year. It will help them to use their

resources to best effect and will also help us to report to Defra and the Minister on the work of LAFs.

They were asking all LAF Chairs and Secretaries to complete this survey, giving us their view on how well LAFs are supported by Natural England, Defra and their appointing authority. Unless stated, all answers were treated with full confidentiality and they will use the results in a combined way to help give us an overview of LAF operation.

### **3. Successes**

#### **3.1 Example of partnership working**

Regular attendance by the Chairman and a BFC officer at LAF Berkshire Chairs meeting enables an exchange of ideas and gives an opportunity to discuss cross-border matters.

#### **3.2 Accessibility improvements to PROW and open spaces**

##### **Gate replacement project**

Work continues with BFC, the Ramblers Association and the South East Berkshire Ramblers to improve accessibility of Public Footpaths, which meets targets set out in the Bracknell Forest Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). This involves replacing the older “step over” or “squeeze” stiles with new metal or wooden kissing gates.

BFC had worked with SEBR to carry out the following:

- 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.
- Two new pedestrian gates were installed along Warfield Footpath 6; one replacing the old ‘step-over’ stile at Brockhill farm and the other replacing a ‘squeeze’ stile off Malt Hill Road.
- Old ‘squeeze’ stiles along Winkfield Footpath 10 had been replaced with one new kissing gate and two pedestrian gates. Another ‘squeeze’ stile had been removed with no need to provide a replacement.

These works were funded by the Ramblers Association, with the Borough Council providing and SEBR working together to deliver the improvements. Making PROW more accessible helps meet targets set out in the Bracknell Forest Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

## **S106 funded works**

A project was being drawn up to improve access along Winkfield Footpath 6 which experienced seasonal water logging. New interpretation was to be designed for Farley Copse (paths had been improved and ditches cleared). An access and education project was being drawn up for South Hill Park, which would look to provide a new nature-themed sculpture trail and educational balance beam. Works at Bill Hill included new paths, habitat improvements and interpretation. Monoliths (x4) would be installed at the site entrance points and would include a map of the site and some key facts about its history and wildlife. A new lectern would provide some information about the important Bronze Age Barrow.

## **Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGs)**

These are open spaces that are being enhanced to attract more visitors by providing an enjoyable natural environment for recreation as an alternative to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).

Examples of access improvement works included:

- A new boardwalk along the eastern edge of Englemere Pond and a new surfaced path which linked around the pond edge.
- Six new gates had been erected at Shepherd Meadows to replace old 'step-over' stiles and provide a more accessible route around the meadows and woodland within.
- A new cycle rack and noticeboard had been installed at Ambarrow Court.
- New site signs would soon be installed on all SANGs sites.
- A new Coxwell gravel surfaced path had been completed at Longhill Park allowing links from the meadow to the older path below. The meadow was also to be seeded with a perennial wildflower mix.
- The bridge at Garth Meadows / Anneforde Place had been repainted, with a new surface to follow. There were 2 new noticeboards and interpretation panels at Garth Meadows. Manor Farm was now owned and managed by Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) and provided additional routes from Garth Meadows.

## **4. Membership changes**

Mrs Sharon Holt stepped down from the forum after having joined LCAF when it was first established in 2008. LCAF members and council officers sent Sharon a letter, recording their thanks for Sharon's valuable input over the years. Sharon has done a huge amount to promote horse riding in the borough through her hard work and commitment and she will be missed by all on the Forum and at the Borough Council, who have also greatly benefitted from her knowledge and expertise.

Mr Colin Bird joined LCAF. Colin is a keen walker of the local area and is enthusiastic about promoting outdoor recreation and greater use of the countryside. Has some knowledge of farming issues having had a career in agricultural research.

Mr David Lindop also joined the forum. David is a Winkfield Parish Councillor, a keen dog walker and has an interest in finding ways to help improve accessibility to the

countryside. He has a background in management consultancy that might prove useful and he's passionate about nature and the environment.

The forum is now back up to 10 members which was the minimum membership as set out in the LAF (England) Regulations 2007 (3.- (1))

The following actions were carried out in order to help boost Forum membership:

- The LCAF web page on the BFC website is kept up-to-date with information about the forum, including terms of reference, a (member) person specification and an application form.
- A recruitment poster had been specially created and included on site notice boards at parks and countryside sites and in town/parish council offices.
- There is the potential for greater use to be made of the new What's on in Bracknell Forest Facebook page to promote the work of the forum.

## **5. Training and development**

There were some tailored training opportunities for Forum members through IPROW for possibly half a day to be held at one of the authorities in the region. The more people who could attend, the lower the cost of the training per head. There would be a good overview of PROW matters but the training would not be too technical. Four or five people on the Forum expressed an interest in attending the training, depending on whether it would be held on a weekday or a weekend. Further details would be circulated to members when available.

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