



**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
7 FEBRUARY 2017
7.00 - 9.00 PM**

Present:

Members:

Peter Radband (Chairman)
Michael Abbott
Colin Bird
Councillor Michael Brossard
Councillor Alvin Finch
Hugh Fitzwilliams
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chairman)
Jenny Yung

In attendance:

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

Observers:

Colin Patient, Mid & West Berks LAF

40. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2016 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- An action raised at the last meeting about incorporating cycleways and residential cut throughs into the List of Streets was a longer term project with cross departmental working and cooperation required. It was suggested that this matter be raised with BFC Highways department and that their initial response be reported to members at the next meeting **(Action: Graham Pockett)**
- Rose Wicks clarified what was being referred to as a ROWIP review at the previous meeting would in fact be a new ROWIP, with a review of the existing ROWIP carried out as part of this work.
- Rose Wicks commented that QR codes would be considered as part of interpretation projects at parks and countryside sites. It was agreed that Rose would check the Council's policy on the use of QR codes with the Council ICT department. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**
- Rob Solomon reported that the lock on the gate at Devil's Highway had been changed to prevent raves from taking place.
- Graham Pockett commented that he had spoken to the author of the leaflet promoting the Three Castles Path, who had said that he would prefer people to rely on literature and maps on the path rather than signage

- Hugh Fitzwilliam had provided details of the contact for the Cabbage Hill SANG site, and he agreed to arrange a visit after Easter 2017. It was agreed that a suitable date would be found for this site visit for the person conducting the visit and LCAF members. **(Action: Hugh Fitzwilliams and Rose Wicks)**

41. **Natural Spaces in Bracknell Forest - opportunities and challenges for the future**

Stephen Chown, Head of Parks and Countryside gave a presentation on the Natural Spaces in Bracknell Forest with their opportunities and challenges.

Stephen introduced himself and gave an overview of his aspirations for the Parks and Countryside Service at Bracknell Forest Council, to “Optimise ‘Parks and Countryside’ on a strategic level, within the work completed by the council as a whole.”

Steven oversaw a team of highly skilled and very motivated professionals, in the delivery of natural spaces to the public. The work of Parks and Countryside at Bracknell Forest Council aimed to ‘provide safe, high quality and accessible natural spaces for recreation, health and wildlife; to sustainably manage trees, retaining the forest character of Bracknell Forest ensuring we preserve and enhance biodiversity for present and future generation’. It was commented that natural spaces contribute to all areas of the current Council Plan 2015-19, particularly encouraging healthy lifestyles and attracting businesses.

According to independent GIS data, Bracknell Forest was the area with the third highest green cover in the country at 39.8%, and Stephen recognised that although this was a significant benefit to residents, it had financial implications through woodland management. Stephen commented on an extensive woodland estate which was not in active management, and on good engagement with timber merchants to offset the cost of improvements to the woodland structure. There was a significant challenge in communicating the benefit of woodland management to the public.

Stephen commented that the challenge in the provision of new spaces created in the borough through development was to prevent ‘islands’ of land, and to create linkages between Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).

LCAF members thanked Stephen for his report. Members commented on the successful coppicing carried out in woodlands in the north of the Borough, which had increased the growth types and variety of native trees.

Members asked about the performance management of Parks and Countryside, and it was reported that this was measured against the Council’s strategic themes, listed under the Council’s Plan. For example, the number of Green Flag Awards retained for Parks and Countryside sites, the number of sites under active management and actions delivered as part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. It was recognised that Parks and Countryside continuously performed well in the biannual Resident Survey.

42. **New ROWIP**

Graham Pockett reported on the work started to produce the new Bracknell Forest Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the fact that LCAF would need to play a key role in its production and implementation.

It was commented that the new ROWIP would be based on the previous edition, although a number of changes to structure had been proposed. This included using measurable targets in the action plan and adopting a more comprehensive monitoring and reporting structure, with the plan to be reviewed on an annual basis. The new ROWIP was to be presented to local groups for consultation, and a final draft was due to be completed by July 2017.

It was confirmed that whilst the emphasis of the document would still be on rights of way, that the scope of the document should be broader and would include open access land, Local Authority maintained paths and SANG land.

The LCAF undertook a short workshop to consider the vision and priorities for the new ROWIP. Feedback was given to officers who would use this in the production of the new ROWIP.

Officers invited LCAF members to review the previous version of the rights of way user consultation questions and respond with amendments or suggestions by the end of February 2017. **(Action: all to send to Graham Pockett / Rose Wicks)**

43. **PROW and local developments**

Graham Pockett presented the PROW and Local Developments work.

The Warfield SPD (including the Berkeley Homes development) was discussed, which promoted an East-West Greenway link to encourage cycling and walking. Graham presented the East-West Greenway in closer detail, which was a tarmacked path through Berkeley Homes land to include playgrounds and community gardens.

There had been a reluctance from Natural England to connect new areas of development in Warfield with existing bridleways as this would require horse riding in SANG land. Alternatives for riding on SANG land were being investigated. It was agreed that linkages through developments were often successful, and work was required to continue connections between these routes.

Members commented on the crossing at Avery Lane, and advised that officers be mindful that it would become an access road to the Newell Green development.

Graham presented the SANG development at Amen Corner North, and commented that whilst this currently lay in the Wokingham boundary, the site would be transferred to Bracknell Forest to manage. An alternative route for Binfield Footpath 11 had been proposed as part of this development, which would go around the proposed development. Once the new route became established, the current Footpath 11 would be extinguished.

Members requested further updates on the development at Amen Corner North as available. **(Action: Graham Pockett)**

44. **Consultation on cycling on Bracknell Footpath 22 (Nine Mile Ride)**

Graham Pockett presented the proposal to permit cycling on Bracknell Footpath 22 alongside Nine Mile Ride.

The consultation arose following a proposal from the transport team to encourage cycling to the new TRL site. This would be in accordance with the approved Walking and Cycling policy in the Local Transport Plan, where the council seeks to promote

cycling by improving green infrastructure. At present, it was recognised that cycling along Nine Mile Ride was dangerous, but cyclists were not permitted on the footpath.

As part of the proposal, funding would be made available to carry out path improvements and to install appropriate signage to indicate pedestrian priority. As Bracknell Forest Council was the landowner, other uses could be permitted without reclassification of the path which would remain a footpath.

LCAF welcomed the proposal in principle, but commented that the character of the path should be preserved as much as possible, and a controlled crossing could be established to create a linkage over the Golden Retriever roundabout.

45. **TRO width restriction on Hog Oak Lane**

Graham Pockett gave an overview of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) width restriction being carried out on Hog Oak Lane. The TRO was being carried out as a result of concerns raised by residents and landowners.

Hog Oak Lane (a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)) had been damaged by large motorised vehicles that had created deep, muddy ruts. Fly tipping had also been an issue in the area. These issues had been reported by local residents and landowners. Hog Oak Lane was on the border between Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest, and so the improvement approach was joint between the two Councils.

Graham commented that there had been a comparable width restriction to prevent motorised vehicles using Hawthorn Lane, and that this had been successful for two years until recent damage to a fixed bollard.

Following a consultation with residents, there had been support for the proposal from local landowners. Only four objections to the proposal were received from Drift Road residents and they had agreed to withdraw these once access rights had been given. It was expected that implementation of the width restriction would begin in February/March 2017, and that restoration of the road surface would be carried out by RBWM when possible.

46. **LAF Annual Report**

Rose Wicks commented that she was drafting the 2016 Annual Report (calendar year) and would send round for approval when complete. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

The Natural England LAF review submission was due in June, and this would also be circulated to members for approval. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

47. **Membership and Recruitment**

Rose Wicks informed LCAF that a leaflet had now been printed to promote the Forum. Peter asked all members to identify countryside user groups which they could target with distributing the leaflet. **(Action: All)**

The leaflets would also be distributed to public locations such as South Hill Park, The Look Out, and libraries. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

48. **LAF Chairs Meeting**

Peter Radband commented on the LAF Chairs Meeting held in Maidenhead which had been attended by Peter and Graham.

Peter had been asked to consult the Forum on whether further LAF training would be useful and appropriate, and it was agreed that this would be useful in principle depending on the subject matter. It was suggested that future training could take more of a workshop style to share ideas.

The LAF Chairs meeting had discussed development of the M4 Smart Motorway, concerns regarding Access following the Brexit decision, and a greater co-ordination with the southeast region LAFs.

49. **Public Question Time**

There were no questions from the public.

50. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for 13 June 2017 at 7pm in the Function Room at Easthampstead House.

It was requested that the October date be revisited to check that this would not clash with the Conservative party conference. **(Action: Lizzie Rich)**

CHAIRMAN