

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM**  
**13 OCTOBER 2020**  
**7.00 - 8.20 PM**



**Present:**

**Members:**

Colin Bird (Chairman)  
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chairman)  
Richard Elsbury  
Councillor Alvin Finch  
Hugh Fitzwilliams  
David Warren  
Jenny Yung

**In attendance:**

Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Manager  
Rose Wicks, Parks & Countryside Project Officer

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Mike Abbott  
Councillor Michael Brossard  
Robert Solomon, Ranger (Countryside and PROW)

**161. Welcome & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed the Forum to the meeting.

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

The minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 9 June 2020 were approved as a correct record.

A summary of progress on the action points from the previous minutes were included in the reports which had been provided to members in advance.

Councillor Alvin Finch requested an update on action 21 regarding the lane going between Warfield Road and the former Garth Hill College site. Graham Pockett explained that he had provided an update on the action list, but summarised that this had been hampered by the lack of access to the historic paper records at Time Square offices. Colin Bird added that the Forum wouldn't lose track of it as it was on the list and the actions would move forward when circumstances allow.

**163. Impact of COVID-19**

Rose Wicks highlighted that the current situation with Covid-19 has affected BFC and LCAF's ability to deliver some of the actions identified at LCAF meetings and in the RoWIP.

One action which had been completed was to create anti-littering posters, as one of the ways to tackle the serious issue of littering in local parks.

More people had started to attend the parks during the pandemic and some of those people may not have been aware of the etiquettes of park use. There was evidence to suggest that young people were the cause of some of the littering and there has been a coordinated approach between BFC, the police and outreach work with community and youth groups to tackle this issue.

The anti-littering posters, which were put up in problem spots, were more strongly worded than previously.

Rose asked members their thoughts on the current use of parks and their perceptions of anti-social behaviour:

- Hugh Fitzwilliams advised that he saw a lot of people on Cabbage Hill and overall was pleasantly surprised with how responsible people have been. Hugh raised an issue about it being both a cycle route and a footpath which he thought created the potential for an accident. Colin expressed that he hadn't realised it was going to be deemed as a recreational cycle route and was surprised about that. Hugh explained that it was major cycle route. Councillor Finch added that he found it useful as a cycle route.
- Colin's observation was that intensity of use had declined since people were permitted to go further afield and not limited to just going out once a day, although overall usage of parks had increased. Whilst the number of issues of anti-social behaviour had appeared to have declined, Colin still saw evidence of littering, some of which was caused by animals accessing public litter bins. There had also been a welcome surge in local community spirit to tackle littering, with the number of volunteer litter pickers also having increased.
- Hugh was surprised at how regularly and consistently dog owners pick up dog mess and overall felt we were quite lucky in that respect.

Richard Elsbury highlighted that from his observations, that the Great Hollands pavilion area was being used responsibly. Things were good there as long as the bins were emptied. Colin added that thanks were due to everyone involved in keeping the parks clean.

#### 164. **ROWIP2 Actions - PRow Improvements**

The Forum had received a report, which summarised the actions delivered in 2019/20 against RoWIP2 policies. The report had originally been prepared for the council's department management team (DMT).

A correction was required on page 14 of the report, Item 6 (Preserve Rural Character) as the FP in question was Warfield FP23, not Warfield FP12. Colin asked Graham Pockett to clarify whether the proposal to tarmac the path was going ahead. Graham explained that it had been refused by BFC, with one area of concern relating to losing the rural character of the FP. There is the chance that this decision will be appealed by the developer. Graham added that there was a separate planning application for four houses immediately to the left of the area, which could also impact on the local RoW. Colin asked how much weight would be given to the policy of preserving rural character in planning applications. Graham replied that it would be considered as part of the whole balance. As an individual reason it probably wouldn't carry much weight.

Graham updated the Forum on the Binfield FP10 project. The request to improve the FP came from Cllr John Harrison. Robert Solomon is in the process of running a project to improve the surface, particularly at the southern end which got very wet in winter and had been flooded due to drainage works and being in the flood plain of the

river. BFC has identified some Section 106 developer money that could be used to fund these works.. These improvements would also improve off-road links for cyclists and pedestrians. The route was identified as cycle route but was technically a FP, not a bridleway.

Regarding the Warfield BR27 (Hedge Lane) surface, Graham explained that BFC was doing their utmost to maintain the surface of bridleway. BFC has obtained planings at a reduced cost and was carrying out the works themselves. This was an economical way to manage similar projects going forward. Richard Mosses felt that drainage needed to be provided underneath the FP, not just resurfacing it. Graham explained that that would form part of a longer-term solution, but the current work was more of a temporary fix.

Colin updated on the attempt to get Thames Water to agree to establishment of a permissive path from Cabbage Hill to Hazelwood Lane. Colin has been unable to get any contact with the biodiversity officer which meant that this project was struggling. Hugh added that he has also been unable to contact the biodiversity officer and suggested approaching the regional director or going back to the CEO. Colin and Graham agreed to compose a letter from LCAF and BFC to Thames Water, as this type of joint approach would hold more weight.

**(Action: Chair / Graham Pockett)**

Regarding the Crowthorne FP8 gates at Broadmoor, Graham updated that he had still not heard back from the NHS site owners, so no progress had been made re the problematic steel stiles. Rose suggested that a letter could be co-signed by BFC and the Forum. Colin added that the Forum may have to explore if any powers could be used. The stiles needed to be removed as they were not accessible. Graham and Colin would compose a letter to the NHS Trust.

**(Action: Chair / Graham Pockett)**

Richard Mosses referred to the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) at Broadmoor alongside Crowthorne FP8 and raised the fact that there was no connection between the spaces via the FP. Graham explained it was because the SANG was so close to the Special Protection Area (SPA) at Wildmoor Heath; we couldn't complete a SANG with a car park and then have a direct link to the SPA as that would risk increasing visitor numbers to the SPA. Natural England's policy would be against allowing it.

#### **165. Winkfield FP19 Diversion**

Graham explained that there was a long history of problems with the paths being interrupted by works to relevel the polo club pitches. The contractor was trying to smooth things out and they have applied for a temporary traffic regulation order (TTRO) to divert FP19 around the pitch they were working on and which the footpath crosses., The work on the pitch had been delayed by the weather and Covid-19. The TTRO would be in place until the end of the year. They have agreed to persuade the polo club to do the diversion and make a permanent application to divert the paths. This was hoped to permanently resolve issues of FPs going straight across pitches. The challenge was to get the polo club to agree the plans. The contractor had expressed a willingness to submit the application.

Colin highlighted that there is a diverted section not covered by the TTRO to the west where a cutting through a mound of soil used to be. In addition. the stretch adjacent to the western-most hedge also goes across the polo pitch, which needed including in the diversion as well.

Colin expressed that on principle he wouldn't object as long as it was extremely well signposted, which Colin felt that the Forum should require. Hugh expressed that the reason for the lack of signage was due to the impracticality of having signs in the middle of the pitch. Hugh would support the proposed changes. Colin added that resurfacing the FP would make it clearer.

The detail of any requests to change the route should be presented to the Forum for review.

**(Action: Graham Pockett)**

#### 166. **Multi-user Path Sign**

David Warren updated that the sign was coming along but not quite ready. The design that David would propose to take forward would have the BFC logo at top and would be 420mm high by 210mm wide. The Mid and West Berks Ramblers were consulted and were happy to support it. The British Horse Society (BHS) have also given their approval and that would be included on the signs on a national basis.

There were two new icons on the sign: carriage driving and wheelchair access. To move forward, approval was required from BFC and the rangers to check which user icons could appear on each sign, depending on the allowable users which varied between byways.

Colin asked whether the wheelchair icon implied that it was suitable for wheelchairs or just that wheelchairs are allowed. Darren responded that that was a good question and could be discussed further outside this meeting. There was potential for complaints to BFC if it was not suitable for wheelchairs. Darren would have a conversation with the ranger to see if the routes were suitable for wheelchair-users; if not, it would be better for the wheelchair access icon to be removed from the posters.

**(Action: David Warren)**

The total cost for the 12 signs was £200 with the cost being split three ways between the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF), BHS and the Ramblers. Graham added that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) had given permission to put a sign at the northern end and they have sent a high-resolution image of their logo to be used.

Hugh asked whether thought had been given to the order the images were displayed implied any form of hierarchy. David replied that it was not meant to infer any kind of hierarchy. Hugh suggested that an asterisk could be added to the wheelchair sign with a warning that the surface may not be suitable; this would still acknowledge that wheelchair-use was allowed. Consultation would be required on that point.

Rose thanked David for all his work on the sign. Rose added that she had an action to contact BFC's graphic designer to get a high-resolution version of the BFC logo. Rose explained that there were corporate standards about how the logo is displayed so Rose would need to see the final version, so she could run it past their in-house graphic designer. Rose queried adding an apostrophe to "respect others' rights". It was agreed it would be better to reword to say, "respect the rights of others".

**(Action: David Warren)**

#### 167. **PROW and Local Developments**

Graham updated members on the changes made by developers to Crowthorne FP6. The FP was already a fairly steep path, but it had been possible to still wheel buggies and wheelchairs up and down. Since the alterations by Barratt Homes, who have

created a zigzag step which has changed the line of the path, this has severely impeded the path's accessibility. The works were done without consultation or permission (they should have applied for a diversion order). Members of the public and local councillors have raised objections. BFC were looking into powers of enforcement as an existing situation has been made worse. The Forum noted that it was inappropriate for Barratt Homes to move the line of a path without due process, and supported BFC pursuing a legal solution to rectify this issue. Colin felt that BFC should be telling Barratt Homes to reinstate the line of the path.

Colin asked whether there was any further clarity on developments in Warfield on the east end of the greenway. Graham explained that the applications were not very advanced and were only in the outline stages. Graham would bring any developments back to the Forum.

**(Action: Graham Pockett)**

#### 168. **Any Other Business**

Rose updated that the Parks & Countryside newsletter was sent out fortnightly and felt that it has been a good mechanism to communicate to residents, as such a large number of people were subscribed to it. It could be a good way to promote the work of the Forum and the next edition would include an article promoting membership to LCAF. Rose would send a link to sign up to the newsletter to members alongside the minutes.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

Rose updated that Chris Swatridge has been working in partnership with other landowners to address the deteriorating boardwalks at Wildmoor Heath. The project was progressing but there had been slight delays in getting feedback. The specifications have been agreed and the team was reviewing quotes. The project was due to be completed this financial year. There would be a combination of raised paths and boardwalk. Rose was hoping to have more of an update next time.

**(Action: Rose Wicks / Chris Swatridge)**

Rose updated on Savernake Park where there was a council-funded project to improve biodiversity and the capacity of the pond to hold rainfall and therefore alleviate flooding. Improvements, such as new fenced heathland areas and marginal pond vegetation would be delivered by volunteers, rangers and other BFC staff. Work to clean out the silt traps, which will help improve water quality, are due to be carried out by contractors. BFC will be issuing a press release about this project soon.

**(Action: BFC officers)**

Colin added that the Bracknell Conservation Volunteers (BCVs) had spent the day there cutting down willows to open up the views. Hugh had also been asked to lay a short run of Hazels as a hedge on 28 October 2020.

Regarding Warfield FP5, Graham updated that ward councillors were requesting more clarity about the line of the path for those using it. BFC has produced a sign to show what the true line of the path is. Colin agreed that it was a good idea to put a sign up to give confidence to use the path as opposed to people feeling they need to walk along the adjacent track.

David explained that Wokingham Borough Council had recently released a greenways overview plan. This would have a huge impact on local byways, as it would put permanent TROs on them to restrict vehicular use. David asked whether

there was anything similar in the pipeline for BFC. Graham confirmed that, as far as he was aware, there was nothing similarly planned for BFC.

Richard Mosses asked whether there had been any progress on the works to improve Big Wood adjacent to Peacock Meadows North in Binfield. Graham replied that many of the improvements had now been carried out and the site was now open to the public. There was the need for further enhancements to be done on SANG standards.

Rose reported that the Green Flag Award results were due the next day. It was anticipated that BFC would retain all their awards for their six sites this year and Time Square would therefore be lit up green to celebrate the news. Buildings would be lit up green up and down the country to acknowledge that green spaces are important (as part of a campaign by Keep Britain Tidy). BFC was due to issue some comms around this fantastic news.

Richard Mosses raised that the major works to Piglittle Field had been extended up to the car park at Binfield Road. Graham explained that it was connected to a separate SANG in Wokingham. Bellway had applied to revisit the contouring done before. BFC had debated whether to allow this as it had already been opened to the public. However, on balance there were some wider benefits and Bellway had offered a sum of money as insurance. Graham needed to go back to do a site inspection as it should be nearly completed. Richard Mosses pointed out that one section had a narrow estate road with no FP along it. Graham agreed to check on that. Richard added that it was still blocked off at the northern end – Binfield FP11. Graham would check on that as well.

**(Action: Graham Pockett)**

Regarding Mosses Path in Binfield, Richard Mosses explained that it was a permitted path, but requested to make it a PRow and a bridleway. The path was on land owned by BFC which has been leased to a football club. Colin would add this to the list of proposals to make a PRow (the list included Horseshoe Lake, Trilakes, and Ambarrow Hill).

**(Action: Chair)**

Regarding walking routes on the BFC website, Rose reported that there had been feedback from the public that a map would have been helpful for one of the routes. Rose felt this would be a good opportunity to review all the maps and routes to ensure they were correct and may ask members of the Forum to help.

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

The Chair expressed thanks to Rose for pulling together the paperwork as it made it easier to focus on the important things. Rose thanked members and officers for providing action updates.

#### **169. Public Question Time**

No questions had been received from members of the public.

#### **170. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Forum would be held on Tuesday 2 February 2021 at 7:00pm. The meeting would be held virtually.

**CHAIRMAN**