

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
20 JUNE 2017
7.00 - 9.00 PM**



Present:

Members:

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

In attendance:

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

Observers:

Colin Patient, Mid & West Berks LAF
Richard Elsbury

51. Welcome

Peter Radband welcomed members to the meeting, and introduced Simon Yates as a new Forum member.

Simon was a keen mountain biker and had heard about the Forum through his wife who worked at Syngenta. Simon had studied Geography at university and had an interest in GIS mapping.

The Forum also welcomed Richard Elsbury as an observer to the meeting.

52. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting on 7 February 2017 were approved as a correct record. Arising from the minutes, the following points were noted:

- The Council's GIS team were in the process of including Public Rights of Way on the list of streets, but they had advised that to include every linkage and cut through was unachievable. It was noted that if unrecorded rights of way were included in the list of streets, the cut off in the deregulation bill would not apply to it.
- The Council's Digital Services Team were approached for advice about the use of QR codes in countryside recreation, in follow up to queries raised by members at the last meeting. QR codes are probably not the best way to

promote something, as in terms of practical usage the take up of them isn't very high, even when they were new. There are also some security concerns with them.

- LCAF members' feedback had been incorporated into the rights of way user consultation, which had received 220 responses so far with further responses expected.

53. **New ROWIP**

Rose Wicks updated the Forum on the new ROWIP consultation, which had been open to responses for two weeks.

The consultation suggested that rights of way were mostly being used in Bracknell, Warfield and Binfield, which reflected the density of rights of way in the borough. Users considered the condition of Bracknell Forest rights of way to be good.

Consultees had fed back a concern regarding fly-tipped waste on right of ways. Rose commented that carrying out Traffic Regulation Orders to protect the surface of public rights of way had the additional benefit of helping to prevent fly-tipping. The Council had explored this option in recent years, with TROs carried out on 2 Byways.

Cyclists had raised concerns over a lack of cyclist signage, or confusing signage on public rights of way and cycleways. Walkers had suggested that better linkages between routes would encourage further use of rights of ways.

A potential for conflict between user groups, was a reoccurring theme in the feedback received. Clearer signage was needed on routes to clearly identify who could/should be using them.

Horse riders had responded with concerns over the lack of safe and accessible routes and the loss of existing bridleway routes to housing developments.

Graham Pockett and Rose Wicks would establish a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan, with LCAF feedback about the Vision included.

The Forum considered the draft policies for the new ROWIP.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- The ROWIP would primarily focus on rights of way, but would also look at other countryside and access routes such as SANGs paths. The possibility for confusion between different kind of routes, was something that was addressed in the questions included in the ROWIP survey
- There had not been any response from disabled rights of way users, which the Forum was disappointed by.
- The Forum discussed the impact of having rights of way 'fit for the 21st Century', as it was understood that the enjoyment of the paths often came from their rural appeal. It was agreed that a balance needed to be sought between using the latest technology to promote outdoor recreation whilst maintaining the rural historic character of rights of way.
- It was suggested that a more realistic policy than 'rights of way for all', would be increase the accessibility of rights of way, which could then be a measurable target.
- Natural England were a key stakeholder for the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan and would be involved in consultation of the draft plan.

It was explained that the new ROWIP would go through the Council's formal decision making process to be ratified by full Council. It was hoped that the new plan would come into effect before the end of the year.

54. **PROW and Local Developments**

Graham Pockett updated on the local developments to public rights of way, regarding TRL and Blue Mountain.

The Transport Research Laboratory development (approx. 1000 units) had impacted on Crowthorne Footpath 11 which ran behind the Golden Retriever pub. In order to maintain the 400m buffer zone from the SPA in Swinley Forest, the required SANG land had been used to fill the buffer zone and would be next to the dual carriageway. Non-residential buildings would also be included in the SPA buffer zone. A new network of footpath and cycle routes had been developed into and out of the site, but it was commented that the new footpaths in SANG land would not be public rights of way.

The Forum asked whether the road crossing would be improved to encourage footpath connectivity between Bracknell and Crowthorne, and it was noted that this was being explored by the Council's Highways team.

The Blue Mountain development would include a SANG with 2.3km of footpaths. The land would remain in Borough Council ownership, and the footpaths would improve access to Binfield FP10, so it would no longer be a completely fenced-in route.

The Forum asked officers whether there would be a permissive bridleway to Forest Road, and to look at the linkage between Cabbage Hill and Forest Road. **(Action: Rose Wicks/Graham Pockett)**

55. **Bracknell Footpath 22 (Nine Mile Ride) - cycleway proposal**

Graham Pockett updated the Forum on the position of creating Bracknell Footpath 22 as a shared footpath and cycleway,

The Council's Highways team had raised concerns over the legal difficulty of allowing cycling along the route, and legal advice was being sought despite the fact that the land was owned by Bracknell Forest Council. The Forum was concerned that this legal issue may bring other shared paths in the Borough into difficulty, and asked officers to keep them updated on the situation.

56. **Membership and Recruitment**

Rose Wicks informed the Forum of membership and recruitment developments.

Arising from the Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultation, it had become apparent that many members of the public were not aware of LCAF. It was hoped that with the launch of Bracknell Forest Council's new website, and promotional activities, the Forum could be grown. There were a number of individuals who were interested in observing a meeting with a view to becoming members.

The Forum recognised the particular importance of trying to recruit a representative of a disabled access group.

57. **Reports from meetings and site visits**

LAF Chairs

Peter Radband and Graham Pockett had attended the most recent LAF Chairs meeting at Maidenhead Town Hall.

The focus had been on the effect of Brexit and Farm Subsidies arising from the Queen's speech. Feedback had been given on the recent training session, and the joint site visits between LAFs were discussed, for example along the Bracknell Forest and Wokingham boundary.

The changes associated with the Smart M4 motorway were discussed, however this did not affect Bracknell Forest due to the lack of M4 bridges in the borough.

Hawthorne Lane/Hog Oak Lane

Colin Bird commented on the recent joint LAF visit between Bracknell Forest and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Hawthorne Lane had had a Traffic Regulation Order established some time ago to combat vehicle damage and fly tipping, and Hog Oak Lane had recently had the same Order put in place for the same reason. Members commented that Hog Oak Lane had been markedly more damaged than Hawthorne Lane, as the landscape had not yet recovered from the damage before the bollards were put in place, however there was less fly tipping and the difference was beginning to be evident.

Members commented that it was important not to demonise legitimate users, and to find out the reasons behind the vehicle damage.

Cabbage Hill

LCAF were reminded that the Cabbage Hill site visit had been postponed from the 6th June 2017 due to inclement weather. A new date of 10th July was proposed for this visit with Berkeley Homes.

LAF National Conference

Councillor Brossard and Hugh Fitzwilliams were due to attend the LAF National Conference on 21 June 2017. LCAF requested feedback on any workshops they attended at the next meeting.

58. **Letter to Theresa May regarding post Brexit agricultural subsidy payments**

Graham Pockett presented the letter which had been drafted by Mid and West Berkshire LCAF to Theresa May, to address post Brexit agricultural subsidies. Across Berkshire, it was hoped that LCAFs would write to their MP to raise the issue.

LCAF discussed the issue, and agreed that although some permissive paths may disappear as a result of the proposed changes, Bracknell Forest would be affected less than other Local Authorities and the letter should be amended to suit local requirements.

LCAF proposed that the timing of the letter was wrong, and that the letter should be reconsidered when the agricultural subsidy payments were being considered by Parliament. John Deakin asked to be involved in the re-draft, as the changes would affect the Crown Estate as Swinley Forest was not eligible for funding from Natural England or the Forestry Commission. This was due to different interpretations of eligibility of Crown Land under agriculture and forestry schemes. **(Action: Graham Pockett/John Deakin)**

59. **Any Other Business**

Councillor Michael Brossard commented that Phil Burke, Senior Transport Co-ordinator and Aidan Richardson, Assistant Engineer had attended Sandhurst Town Council to discuss improvements and enhancements to the existing cyclepaths around Sandhurst. It had been suggested that Wellington Road be used to act as a conduit between cyclepaths. It was hoped that Sandhurst Town Council could use their CIL funding to improve the cycling provision for Sandhurst.

Graham Pockett informed the Forum that the existing passage behind Bentalls and McDonalds on the High Street had been legally 'stopped up' as Bracknell Regeneration Partnership had been concerned that it may hold Public Right of Way legal status.

Rose Wicks commented that although she had not yet heard from Natural England and nothing was yet apparent on Huddle, that she anticipated that the LAF Annual Report would be required to be submitted in June/July.

Rose also informed the Forum that during the Rights of Way survey, an anomaly had been found where a FP was signposted but was not listed on the definitive map. Rose resolved to discuss this matter with Hugh Fitzwilliams following the meeting. It was thought that the Parish Council may have put the signs in place.

John Deakin advised the Forum that a new all-weather access route was due to be created from The Look Out, and building would begin in July 2017.

Peter Radband advised the Forum that a Huddle champion was still sought, and Jenny Yung agreed to represent LCAF on Huddle with the right support. **(Action: Rose Wicks to meet Jenny Yung to provide basic training on using Huddle)**

60. **Public Question Time**

Richard Elsbury commented that he had found the meeting very informative, and asked who was in charge of mapping at the Council. Rose commented that the GIS team were principally in charge of mapping, but that lots of teams, including P&C fed their data into this system. It was noted that linkages and residential cut through paths were often difficult to capture on GIS, but that LCAF recognised their asset to the network.

61. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for 10 October 2017

CHAIRMAN