

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
4 FEBRUARY 2020
7.00 - 9.00 PM**



Present:

Members:

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

In attendance:

Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Manager

Observers:

Apologies for absence were received from:

Geoff Paxton
Simon Yates

139. Membership Changes (including New Member Application)

The Chairman reported that a new member application had been received and accepted from Mrs Sylvia Thomas. Although not present, Mrs Thomas had been invited to attend the meeting, having expressed a keen interest in the countryside, environmental and conservation issues in her application.

No response had been received from the Crown Estate regarding a new representative to attend meetings of the Forum, although it was understood that a new Chief Forester had been in post since 1 January 2020. A further approach to the Crown Estate was agreed.

(Action: Derek Morgan BFC Democratic Services)

140. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 15 October 2019 were approved as a correct record.

The action points from the minutes not included elsewhere on the agenda were reviewed and progress/ updates noted as follows:

- Arrangements would be made to visit both the Bucklers Forest SANG and the Blue Mountain SANG in the spring once the lighter evenings had returned.

(Action: Chair)

- Work on the mapping of path furniture had been in abeyance while Rose had been on secondment but could now receive further attention.
(Action: Rose Wicks)
- A spreadsheet showing suggestions for the creation of new paths, recreational routes and links had been prepared by the Chair, based initially on the five routes suggested by Richard Mosses and the Cabbage Hill link proposal. This could be updated with further suggestions that may come forward from time to time and, if circulated as an annex to the meetings of each meeting, could be kept under review.
(Action: Chair/Graham Pockett)
- Action on publicity around new SANGs opening, keeping website news items up to date and more use of social media had been limited while Rose had been on secondment but could now receive attention.
(Action: Rose Wicks)
- David Warren had liaised with Rob Solomon about TRF assistance with clearing overgrown byways. A survey of all byways had shown that they were all in a reasonable state and Rob Solomon was arranging for some road planings to be applied to fill potholes where required.
- Action regarding liaison between the British Horse Society and David Warren about local routes and events was carried forward.
(Action: Jenny Yung and David Warren)
- It should be possible to make a creation agreement to formalise the designation of the bridleway at Horseshoe Lake.
(Action: Graham Pockett to add to future work programme)
- The Chair had deferred calling a get together to discuss, review and grade accessible routes in the Borough. He now proposed meeting at a weekend, say a Saturday morning, at Quelm Lane car park to walk the proposed route through Garth Meadows to progress this. He would email the members who had volunteered (adding Councillor Brossard) about a suitable date.
(Action: Chair)
- Progress had not been made with organising a regional meeting with neighbouring LAF Chairs, but this may be possible in the next financial year.
(Action: Graham Pockett)
- The proposal to seek an access to SANG 2 at Wellers Lane once all the land required was in the ownership of the Council should be added to the spreadsheet of suggested new routes.
(Action: Chair/Graham Pockett)

141. ROWIP2 Actions

The meeting was presented with a number of slides showing ROWIP2 actions either proposed or carried out.

Policy 1 Rights of Way for all

A project was proposed to replace or remove metal stiles on Crowthorne FP8 across the Broadmoor Estate. It may be possible to remove some stiles completely while others may be suitable for replacement with a kissing gate. Contact would be made with the NHS Estates Manager responsible for the Broadmoor estate to discuss and agree options.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

Policy 1 Rights of Way for all

Arising from concerns, it was proposed to look at Binfield FP25 and FP10 with a view to making this route from Forest Road to Jocks Lane less susceptible to flooding. While an overflow from The Cut could be a problem, it was considered that run off

from the adjacent Blue Mountain SANG, where there were ongoing works, was the main cause of flooding. This would be investigated with the Drainage Engineer and developer, including whether any conditions of planning permission had yet to be met regarding provision of the SANG, before any proposals for improvements were brought forward.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

Policy 2 Full legal duties

The Rail Crossing Diversion Order had been completed and brought into force bringing into use the new bridge and path at Ambarrow Hill. Images of the signage to be erected were shown; there was a delay in delivery which meant they had yet to be installed. The next step of the project was to create a link from the southern end of the diverted route through to the public car park. As this was over Council land it could be done by Dedication Order. This link could also be added to the spreadsheet.

(Action: Chair/Graham Pockett)

Devil's Highway – Crowthorne

The car park at Crowthorne Woods was closed by Crown Estate wardens on 15 November 2019. The Council had completed works on installation of a new vehicle barrier and using hoggins from the old car park to resurface parts of the restricted byway.

Action 1 under this policy related to online BFC route guides to be updated. The Forum viewed the initial proposals for a route through Garth Meadows due to be reviewed by the 'Accessible Routes Group'. Arising from the key on the map, it was noted that there was confusion about the status of byways, as shown on an OS map for instance, which may appear to be open to all traffic when there was a TRO in place restricting its use.

(Action: Chair and Group)

Policy 4 Information and Marketing

The Forum noted the dates and details of the volunteer led walks publicised for February, March and April. Owing to the Council's need for economies, further leaflet promotions had been cancelled and there were doubts about the future events programme generally. Volunteers leading the walks, for instance, would not be willing to continue unless these events were 'sponsored' by the Council. Some clarification was necessary.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

Policy 5 Responsible Use

This was the proposal to erect signs to encourage courteous behaviour in relation to shared use paths. David Warren and Rob Solomon had been working on this and the meeting viewed some signage suggestions, noting that these were still subject to change as regards colour, possible inclusion of other Groups' logos etc. The Forum was very supportive of this initiative and recorded its thanks to the TRF/David Warren for paying for the signs (around 8 in total) to be put up. Members expressed a preference for the symbols showing the permitted class of user to be in white. It was hoped that local branches of the Ramblers Association and the British Horse Society would confirm agreement to use of logos.

(Action: David Warren and Rob Solomon)

Policy 8 Working in Partnership

The Forum noted dates of meetings of neighbouring LAFs. No meetings were programmed for Slough BC since it was thought they were currently without a Rights of Way Officer.

142. New Cabbage Hill Path Link

The Forum was reminded of the draft proposals for a new Cabbage Hill path link, re-designed to allow the path to emerge on to the busy Forest Road at a point where there was better visibility and crossing it would be safer. This entailed use of Thames Water land and their approval would be required. It was agreed to press Ian Crump of Thames Water Estates Department for formal approval to proceed with the proposals.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

143. SANGs

The Forum was presented with a slide showing an illustrative design for a SANG north of Church Lane, Warfield (Wellers Lane SANG 3), which was currently at the planning stage. Comments were made to the effect that it would be preferable to provide a more direct path through the SANG and reduce the number of circuitous routes over the whole of the open space. At this stage there were not clear proposals for links between this and the other SANGs being provided at Wellers Lane or with other footpaths. For example, there was no link from the eastern end of the proposed SANG to Warfield FP6 without using a length of road. It was considered that it would be advantageous if the Borough could take a more strategic view about the provision of SANGs in order to achieve improvements in design and layout, in the provision of suitable car parks and particularly in the relationship between SANGs and the Rights of Way network.

The Forum considered a draft sketch design for the Horseshoe Lake SANG where it was hoped to provide a new path link to the bridleway /Church Road. It was proposed to prepare costs and draw up a business case, which could be assisted by carrying out the work in conjunction with the installation of a new foul sewer which was due to be put in. The Forum took the view that even if the wider SANG development did not take place, there was still great merit in providing the new path link.

The Forum considered the latest drawing of the Bulbrook Countryside Corridor, showing the planned green space connectivity. Rob Solomon had carried out a lot of work on this, including looking carefully at the accessibility aspects of the scheme, which had now received approval from Natural England.

The Forum also considered the latest Shepherd Meadows SANG extension map. The SANG extension management plan had been submitted to Natural England for approval. It was proposed that BFC would manage the initial works, for which money was available, after which Sandhurst Town Council will maintain the enhanced areas on their land. Works would cover improvement to the access and appropriate surfacing of some areas/paths. It was noted this would assist the very successful Park Run now taking place regularly at Shepherd Meadows.

144. PROW and Local Developments

The Forum was advised of the draft Bracknell Forest Local Plan policy LP7 which allocated a 240 hectare site for a comprehensive mixed use development based on 'Garden Settlement' principles at Jealott's Hill, Warfield. This had been the subject of an initial public consultation from 25 October to 6 December 2019. Consideration was given to the zoning map issued for the consultation together with a map showing the rights of way around Jealott's Hill.

The Forum took the view that any development allowed should respect the rural nature of the existing rights of way, which formed an important part of the rights of way network in the area (estimated to measure about eight miles in length). It would, therefore, be important for LCAF to comment formally at the second stage consultation and, if necessary, an extraordinary meeting should be called to finalise a response, depending on the timing of the consultation.

(Action: Chair/Graham Pockett)

145. Site Visits

As referred to earlier in the meeting, visits to the Bucklers Forest and Blue Mountain SANGs would be arranged in the spring. Other SANG site visits could be arranged depending on the progress of their development.

146. Annual Report

The LCAF Annual Report for 2018 in draft had been circulated to members for their comments and approval. Changes had been incorporated as a result of the feedback received and the report would be finalised, uploaded to the website and sent to Natural England for their information.

147. Horizon Scanning

The Agriculture Bill, including provisions to authorise expenditure for certain agricultural and other purposes and make provision about payments following the UK's departure from the European Union, was currently in Parliament and about to enter its Committee stage. This was likely to have an effect as regards public access to farmland. An Environment Bill had also been introduced and it was expected that there would be legislation about the deregulation of some rights of way procedures leading to a streamlining of the process. Also, legislation was expected in relation use of electric scooters, which may have implications for mixed use paths etc.

The impact of these proposals could not be assessed until further details were known.

148. Any Other Business

The Chairman reported his recent experience of walking in the Cranbourne area where there were earthworks and construction company fences obstructing rights of way, notably on FP19. No application for a temporary diversion had been made although there were some informal alternative routes that were passable. On the assumption there was a construction management plan approved as part of the planning permission, it seemed this was not being followed. The appropriate action was for further investigation to be undertaken and the matter to be raised formally with the Polo Club and/or the construction company undertaking the work.

(Action: Graham Pockett/Rob Solomon)

Richard Mosses requested that copies of the proposed 'shared use' notice be sent to the East Berkshire Ramblers Association for information/comment.

(Action: Graham Pockett/David Warren)

149. Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

150. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Forum was due to be held on 9 June 2020 commencing at 7pm.

CHAIRMAN