

BRACKNELL FOREST LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
3 OCTOBER 2006
(7.00pm to 8.10pm)

Present: Statutory Board Members

Celia Blay
Mike Gates
Iain McCracken
Innes McEwan
Richard Mosses
Diana Pidgeon (Chairman)
Derick Stickler
Caroline Tomalin

In attendance

Sally Coulson, Parks & Countryside Projects Officer, BFBC
James Dymond, Parks & Countryside Development Officer, BFBC
Steve Richards, Democratic Services Officer, BFBC
Richard Walton, Parks & Countryside Manager, BFBC

Observer

Joe Dobson
Hugh Fitzwilliams, Rights of Way Ranger, BFBC

Apologies for absence were received from:

David Bertie
Chris Gardner
Anne Haydon
Stuart Tarrant

83. Welcome and Introduction (Item 1)

Diana Pidgeon welcomed all members of the Forum to the meeting.

84. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising (Item 3)

The minutes of the meeting of the meeting held on 4 April 2006 were approved as a correct record.

Minute 81 – The new Valley Gardens centre had been opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in June and was doing extremely well. The timber for the roof of the new building had come from trees from the Windsor Estate.

85. Forum Membership (Item 4)

Joe Dobson, who was interested in becoming a member of the Forum, was welcomed. It was agreed that James Dymond would distribute contact details for members of the Forum by e-mail.

(ACTION: James Dymond)

86. South East Local Access Forums Newsletter (Item 5)

This newsletter was tabled, and it would also be circulated by e-mail. This was the first newsletter for the South East, and any feedback would be welcome.

87. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (Item 6)

a) The Cut Riverside Path

A route plan of The Cut was circulated. The Forum was asked if they had any thoughts on the plan, and whether they would like to pursue improvements and take it on as a project. The objective would be to join up the various segments of The Cut as a continuous path, although it crossed the Borough boundary quite quickly. Landowners would be unlikely to want a footpath on their land if it was of no benefit, and who the various landowners were would also need to be established. An alternative option would be for sections of The Cut to become part of a circular path.

It was agreed that this item should be kept on the agenda, and that some investigative work should be carried out before the next meeting. It was felt that if David Bertie supported the idea, it could be a viable proposition. The scheme would probably also be more useful as a bridleway.

(ACTION: Steve Richards)

b) Priory Fields Bridleway

A Countryside Agency grant had been applied for. However, all Countryside Agency funding had been withdrawn due to the claw-back of funds by DEFRA after they were fined by the EU for the late payment of subsidies to farmers. It was planned to have the pitches operating in 2007 and, hopefully, the bridleway work could be carried out at the same time, although this would be dependent on whether funding was available.

It was noted that there was a problem with Ragwort at Larks Hill. Some work had been carried out, and more would be done in future years.

Caroline Tomalin added there was some confusion as to exactly where people were allowed to go, and that a map would be helpful. It was agreed that Caroline and James Dymond would meet early next year with a view to publishing a map of the area.

(ACTION: James Dymond/Caroline Tomalin)

c) Wildmoor Heath Boardwalk – Sandhurst FP24

The Boardwalk was now ten years old and needed to be replaced. The work would have been funded by the Access Management Grant Scheme, but this had been delayed. As a way forward, the possibility of using S106 payments would be looked at, and whether there was any potential to progress the work. Richard Walton would cost the work, and bear in mind the possibility of using Army volunteers.

(ACTION: Richard Walton)

88. SE/Central LAF Meeting (Item 10)

It was agreed that Iain McCracken would represent the Forum at the regional meeting in Winchester from 10.00am–3.00pm on 1 November.

A circular walk which encompassed The Cut could be a potential cross-border issue, but it was not known whether or not the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead would be represented at the meeting.

Another cross-border issue was the paths from Surrey that stopped at the

Bracknell Forest border. This would be looked into.

(ACTION: James Dymond)

The Forum agreed that Iain should use his own discretion as to whether or not future attendance at regional meetings would be beneficial to this Forum.

This item would appear on the next agenda.

(ACTION: Steve Richards)

89. Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) (Item 7)

James Dymond gave the Forum an overview of the background to the SPA issues. The element this Forum was concerned with related to Access Management plans. Bracknell Forest would issue a strategy in November 2006 which would show how it planned to mitigate the risks to the SPA. James would be attending English Nature meetings on the access element, and this Forum would be consulted in due course.

90. NERC Bill (Item 8)

A paper was circulated which showed the latest situation of the six restricted byways in Bracknell Forest.

Celia Blay expressed concerns over access to restricted byways for carriage-drivers and suggested the use of Kent carriage gaps. She would e-mail details of the ones she was concerned about to James Dymond who would investigate the situation.

(ACTION: Celia Blay/James Dymond)

91. Rights of Access to Open Countryside – NAO Report (Item 9)

The Forum noted the summary of the National Audit Office Report. The full report was available from the NAO website: <http://www.nao.org.uk/pn/05-06/05061046.htm>.

92. Information and Updates (Item 11)

a) Forthcoming LAF Regulations, Guidance and Members Handbook

Some information on this had been included in the newsletter. The Members Handbook would be distributed shortly, and new Local Access Forum regulations would come into effect early in 2007.

b) Watersplash Lane ford

The improvements to the ford had now been completed and had been greatly appreciated by the general public.

c) New waymarks and signs

New waymarks and signs had been put up around the Borough, now including the Borough Council's contact number, and more would appear in the future.

d) Green Flag Awards

Pope's Meadow, Westmorland Park and Sandhurst Memorial Park & Shepherd Meadows had all received Green Flag Awards again. Environment Agency funding had helped at Shepherd Meadows where new disabled access fishing platforms and paths had been installed.

93. Other Business (Item 12)

93.1 The opening of the new bridleway (Warfield bridleway 25) around Syngenta's land went well. It will be known as Hawthorndale

93.2 Only three people had turned up for the requested Forum Walk. Some people who had said that they were free did not appear.

93.3 There had been an agreement in 1999 for a bridleway to be built in Winkfield. Due to access problems the bridleway had not materialised, but it was felt that it would be a great benefit to the Borough. Mike Gates and Hugh Fitzwilliams would liaise with James Dymond to look at a way to progress this item.

(ACTION: Mike Gates/Hugh Fitzwilliams/James Dymond)

93.4 It was agreed that any issues that arose from the points contained in Table 6.3 of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan would be brought back to the next meeting.

(ACTION: All)

93.5 Looking at future initiatives, there were potentially mitigation projects that could be undertaken. Any such projects should be discussed by this Forum.

93.6 Celia Blay offered to give a guided history tour of the area. This was a possibility for a Forum Walk.

93.7 If there were any items to be included on the next agenda, James Dymond should be made aware of them.

(ACTION: All)

94. Date of Next Meeting (Item 14)

The next meeting of the Forum would be Tuesday 27 March 2007

(ACTION: James Dymond)