LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
6 OCTOBER 2015
7.00 - 9.25 PM

Present:
Members:
Peter Radband (Chairman)
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chairman)
Michael Abbott
Colin Bird
Councillor Michael Brossard
John Deakin
Hugh Fitzwilliams
David Lindop
Jenny Yung

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

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillor Alvin Finch

1. **Welcome**

Chairman Michael Abbott welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

2. **Election of Chairman**

Michael Brossard proposed Peter Radband as the new Chairman of the Local Countryside Access Forum, which was seconded by Jenny Yung. Richard Mosses expressed an interest in taking on the role of Vice-Chairman. All members agreed with these appointments.

Peter Radband was elected as Chairman and Richard Mosses was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Local Countryside Access Forum. Michael Abbott would continue as a member of the Forum.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2015 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- *Minute 15*: ‘relied upon’ rather than ‘replied upon’ at the end of the first paragraph.
- *Minute 19*: ‘dog ownership’ rather than ‘down ownership’ at the top of the second paragraph.

Matters Arising

A letter had been sent to Sharon Holt who had stepped down as Forum member in 2015. The letter which was sent on behalf of the Forum by Richard Walton from the Borough Council thanked Sharon for her valuable contribution to the Forum over the years, particularly in relation to promoting the interests of horse rising in the borough. Sharon has also greatly helped the Borough Council by providing information and advice in relation to equestrian matters and she had offered to continue this support where she could.

At the last meeting, members raised a query about the locations of defibrillators in the borough. An enquiry had been made with the Council's GIS Team, with a response pending. Officers also reported that a useful tool might be www.defibtracker.co.uk . The website was a work in progress and it had been launched by West Midlands Ambulance Service, Safeheart UK and the Community Heartbeat charity. It let people use a postcode or place name to find the nearest defibrillator in an emergency. There were aspirations for this facility to be built into a national database.

As part of the Members' Initiative Fund, 14 defibrillators had been purchased and positioned throughout the borough; many of these were located in schools. The query was raised as to whether defibrillators in the borough were accessible 24 hours a day or locked away somewhere, such as in a school location. Rob Solomon had a list of defibrillator locations in the borough and would forward this to Rose Wicks. Further investigation would be undertaken to find out if these had been mapped.

(Action: Rob Solomon/ Rose Wicks)

John Deakin reported that they were to position four dog bins in various locations within The Crown Estate site approximately 100 metres from the boundary. The correct positioning of dog bins is crucial in order to encourage people using this facility. The Crown Estate would pay to ensure that these were emptied and maintained.

4. **Membership and Recruitment**

David Lindop's application to join the Local Countryside Access Forum had been accepted by the Borough Council. David was a keen walker and was very interested in finding ways to help younger, older and disabled people to enjoy our countryside. The Chair asked for any ideas for new members, especially from those with a disability to be forwarded to him.

Membership of the Forum was now up to 10, which was the minimum membership as set out in the LAF (England) Regulations 2007 (3.- (1)) There was an updated members' interest list and contact details to take into account recent changes in membership to the forum; this would be circulated to members for their approval..

(Action: Rose Wicks)

The Parks and Countryside Service would continue to promote recruitment to LCAF, particularly in relation to requiring landowner, disabled and youth representation.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

The Chairman requested that The Bracknell Society be approached to see if any of their members would be interested in joining the Forum.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

There were some tailored training opportunities for Forum members through IPROW for possibly half a day to be held at one of the authorities in the region. The more people who could attend, the lower the cost of the training per head. There would be a good overview of PROW matters but the training would not be too technical. Four or five people on the Forum expressed an interest in attending the training, depending on whether it would be held on a weekday or a weekend. Further details could be circulated to members when available.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

Hugh Fitzwilliams reported that joint training days and a more joined up approach between Local Access Forums was encouraged at the South East Regional LAF Conference which he attended. Study days or experience of areas not currently represented on the Forum would be useful.

The Chairman expressed an interest in attending the Bracknell Forest Partnership event again this year if it was being held in November as last year.

5. **LAF related Meetings/Conferences**

Berkshire LAF Chairs' Meeting

Peter Radband had attended this meeting on behalf of the Forum. Peter raised concern at there being no national LAF Forum and the Regional LAF was not as active at present. The M4 Smart Motorway development was one of the matters discussed at this meeting; the work to improve the motorway wouldn't directly impact upon the borough.

Regional LAF Officers' Update

Graham and Rose had not been able to attend the last Regional LAF Officers' Update, but had provided an update to Jonathan Clark.

Feedback provided included a comment on annual reporting. As it currently stand, 2 annual reports need to be completed for the forum each year; one of these was the 'dry' spreadsheet form that needs submitting to Natural England (runs by financial year); the other is the more 'glossy' version (runs by calendar year), which is uploaded to BFCs website. Feedback from Natural England (NE) had indicated that a spreadsheet format helped with benchmarking data across authorities, but Graham and Rose had asked if annual reports could be combined into one?

For the round table discussion BFC provided examples of current issues, successful projects and best practice examples. Best practice examples: gate replacement project to improve accessibility on rights of way (working with South East Berkshire Ramblers and funding provided by RA); and using volunteers to help monitor the condition of PROW. A good example of cross boundary cooperation included working with RBWM to establish a TRO enforceable width restriction of 1.6 metres in a central section of Hawthorne Lane and the whole of Berry Lane, both byways in Warfield. This would help to protect the surface of this rural Byway and would also hopefully help address the issue of fly-tipping. Issues faced included fly-tipping becoming increasingly problematic due to the time and expense involved to deal with it and it tended to be on rural byways.

South East LAF Annual Conference

Hugh Fitzwilliams, Colin Bird and Graham Pockett attended the South East LAF Annual Conference in London in May. Members thanked Hugh for his feedback from the event, which was attached to the agenda papers. Hugh reported that the event was well organised and well run. Colin commented that the difference between LAFs and how they operated was very noticeable. The Chairman suggested that it might be a useful exercise for Forum members to attend as observers to neighbouring LAF meetings such as the Mid and West Berkshire LAF. Their group was much bigger than LCAFs seeing as their remit covered a much larger geographical area.

LAF National Conference

The Chairman and Rose had submitted responses to Natural England's survey regarding the LAF National Conference and had suggested Bristol as their preferred location. The Parks and Countryside Service would be able to pay certain travel costs and a small amount for food associated with attending the event. Rose had suggested that the Chairman of the National Rural Crime Network would be a good speaker at the event in relation to organisations set up to raise awareness on rural crime and how LAFs were dealing with related issues. The Chairman's suggestions for topics were access to military land and a talk by Natural England.

6. **Huddle**

Huddle was an online resource available to LAF members. It was a platform which replaced the Natural England Forum. A toolkit for Huddle included the suggestion to nominate a champion from each LAF to keep other members up to date with issues raised on Huddle and to let other LAF members know of anything of interest. The role of Huddle Champion should ideally be filled by a volunteer LAF member. Hugh Fitzwilliams would be Huddle Monitor on a trial basis.

7. **Big Path Watch**

Big Path Watch had been launched by the Ramblers' Association who were aiming to walk thousands of miles of paths and to report what they found. The aim was to find examples of good practice and to identify the most common issues for walkers. They would survey 1km grid squares but it was not possible to know which areas had been covered previously.

Nationally, 48,500 grid squares had been surveyed so far and 140,000 miles of paths. 108 square kilometres had been completed in Bracknell Forest leading to 260 positives and 132 negatives. Out of the negatives, most of these involved quick fixes, with the other issues already know to the Rangers who were already addressing these, for example, Winkfield Footpaths 6, 13 and 19.

8. **Access Improvement Works**

Work was being undertaken with local landowners in relation to the installation of stiles and kissing gates, including self-shutting gates where needed because of livestock.

Work had been undertaken with South East Berkshire Ramblers to install two new pedestrian gates along Warfield Footpath 6; one replacing the old 'step-over' stile at Brockhill farm and the other replacing a 'squeeze' stile off Malt Hill Road.

Old ‘squeeze’ stiles along Winkfield Footpath 10 had been replaced with one new kissing gate and two pedestrian gates. Another ‘squeeze’ stile had been removed with no need to provide a replacement. Two pedestrian gates had been used to replace old ‘squeeze’ stiles along Winkfield Footpath 10. These works were funded by the Ramblers Association, with the Borough Council providing support for the project.

There was a project to improve access along Winkfield Footpath 6 which experienced seasonal water logging. A scheme was currently being drawn up which would look to use S106 funding from the quality improvement forward plan, as set out in the Borough’s Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. New interpretation was to be designed for Farley Copse (paths had been improved and ditches cleared). An access and education project was being drawn up for South Hill Park, which would look to provide a new nature-themed sculpture trail and educational balance beam. Works at Bill Hill included new paths, habitat improvements and interpretation. Monoliths (x4) would be installed at the site entrance points and would include a map of the site and some key facts about its history and wildlife. A new lectern would provide some information about the important Bronze Age Barrow. Bracknell Conservation volunteers had previously done some work their to improve the steps.

Access improvement works at Englemere Pond included a new boardwalk along the eastern edge of Englemere Pond and a new surfaced path which linked around the pond edge.

Stephen Chown had been appointment as the new Head of Parks and Countryside next week; Stephen had an arboriculture, park management and Town Council background.

Six new gates had been erected at Shepherd Meadows to replace old ‘step-over’ stiles and provide a more accessible route around the meadows and woodland within. A new cycle rack and noticeboard had been installed at Ambarrow Court. New site signs would soon be installed on all SANGs sites. A new Coxwell gravel surfaced path had been completed at Longhill Park allowing links from the meadow to the older path below. The meadow was also to be seeded with a perennial wildflower mix.

The bridge at Garth Meadows / Anneforde Place had been repainted, with a new surface to follow. There were 2 new noticeboards and interpretation panels at Garth Meadows. Manor Farm was now owned and managed by Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) and provided additional routes from Garth Meadows.

The lease for Peacock Meadows at Jennett’s Park was now under BFC control; there were 34 Hectares at this countryside site.

9. **Beating The Boundary Walk**

Beating The Boundary Walk was an idea of The Bracknell Forest Society (TBFS) http://thebracknellforestsociety.org.uk . They proposed creating a route around the Borough made up of a series of shorter walks on a parish by parish basis which could be walked individually or connected. The suggestion was to include longer cycle-able sections, and this walk would help raise the profile of Public Rights of Way in the Borough. The idea could tie in with the objective to produce a suite of leaflets promoting walking opportunities in Bracknell Forest SANG sites.

It was suggested that other groups and charities such as Ramblers, Rotary Club and Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue (SEBEV) could be involved. The walk could

be trialled and then could open up sponsorship opportunities if it was held annually of every other year. It was suggested that young people could be encouraged to be part of it via stewarding activities.

Forum members expressed an interest in being involved in the walk but in a support rather than lead function. Access was thought to be a consideration, particularly in relation to horses, bicycles and disabled people.

The Chairman offered to meet with TBFS to discuss the walk further. Hugh confirmed that Warfield Parish Council were due to meet with TBFS to discuss supporting the concept of the walk.

10. **LCAF Annual Report**

The 2015 Annual Report was currently being drafted. This would need approval from Forum members in spring 2016, before it could be published on the LCAF page of BFCs website.

The Annual LAF Review Form was not due to be submitted to Natural England until June 2016.

11. **Site Visits**

Forum members went on an inspirational site visit to Jealott's Hill Community Landshare, a six acre [multi-purpose] garden for community use.

Between Bracknell and Maidenhead off the A330, the gardens were enjoyed by the local community supporting each other on horticultural activities and creating a haven for wildlife for all to enjoy. Sharing skills and produce was at the heart of the project, with local groups and individuals growing fruit, vegetables, other plants and enhancing biodiversity.

The project is a partnership between Bracknell Forest Homes, Bracknell Town Council, Warfield Parish Council and Syngenta. The land is owned by Syngenta and leased for community use.

To join, participate, sponsor or donate to the gardens, please contact David Putt, Project Manager, on 07867 695931, jealottshilllandshare@gmail.com or visit www.jealottshilllandshare.org.uk

It was suggested that Jealott's Hill Community Landshare could be visited again in a year's time.

Other suggestions for site visits included: the Redoubts at Swinley Forest, South Hill Park when the new sculpture trail was established, and Wellington College with its Grade II listed buildings including a guided tour. Cllr Brossard offered to make enquiries regarding the Wellington College site visit and let Rose know the outcome.
(Action: Cllr Brossard)

The latest events programme run by the Parks and Countryside Service has been published on BFCs website. There were a number of events that members might be interested in attending, such as the guided tour of Pope's Manor and grounds, which were only open to the public once a year. This was a bookable event.

12. **Annual Return of Rights of Way Management data**

The Forum discussed the IPROW Annual Return of Rights of Way Management data.

13. **Reports from Members round the table**

Colin Bird commented that a lot of good work was being done to 'facilitate' access to parks and open spaces and PROW in the Borough; he asked what could be done to further publicise / promote access. This area could use some attention and a focus on what was trying to be achieved. Rose informed the Forum that promoting access to local routes / PROW / to outdoor recreation was an action included in the Right of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The Parks and Countryside Service carry out this action by producing leaflets, website material, social media and press releases (working with BFCs Corporate Comms and Marketing Team). There was a new 'What's On in Bracknell' page which was more tourism oriented and linked in to the work of BFC Services such as Leisure and Parks and Countryside. This could perhaps be utilised by BFC officers to help advertise the Forum's work.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

Peter Radband suggested that the Forum could use Streetwise. Rose suggested that they could check how people heard about events so that more targeted publicity could be applied. The Parks and Countryside Service currently tried to engage with local businesses by involving them on Corporate Volunteer days. There was scope to perhaps to publicise events more to local schools.

David Lindop said that he had enjoyed his first meeting with the Forum.

Hugh Fitzwilliams mentioned the East-West Greenway. The first out of three phases was being built by Berkely Homes, from Cabbage Hill to Avery Lane, but Hugh was concerned that the concept was being diluted outside of this area and queried whether it should be designated as a Public Right of Way to protect for future use. Graham commented that they were currently in discussion with the Highways Team about tarmac and lighting for cyclists in this area. Another section further east would incorporate an existing bridleway. It was suggested that a representative from Berkeley Homes could attend the next meeting of the Forum.

John Deakin reported that there was a Windsor ABC (Ascot Bracknell Cycle) route proposal brought about by an online petition. The cycle route would link Windsor to Bracknell, for example at The Look Out. The Crown Estate were generally supportive of the idea but wished to segregate activities where possible on the route such as cycling, dog walking, horse riding and there were concerns regarding the steep gradient at certain points in the forest. The Crown Estate preferred the use of existing routes where possible rather than creating new ones.

Dan West, ranger at The Crown Estate, was undertaking work on an inventory and it was hoped that a report on this would be ready for the next Forum meeting in March 2016.

Permit arrangements for horse riding on Crown Estate land had changed. An annual permit was now required to ride on land at Windsor Great Park and Swinley Forest, which is payable to The Crown Estate. The horse box parking area had been closed at The Look Out due to pressure on spaces in this car park but there was new horse box provision in Swinley Park. Improvements had been made to the horse riding tracks and car park. The Crown Estate covered four different boroughs, and any feedback on these changes could be directed to John Deakin. The Lapland UK

Christmas event would be at The Crown Estate this year and was being set up at present. Rose checked that the information in the horse riding leaflet provided by BFC was up to date given the changes mentioned above and John confirmed that it was.

Peter Radband mentioned that the café was due to be closed at The Look Out and that people were not sure what to expect in relation to new facilities at the site.

John Deakin commented that The Crown Estate was in discussions with BFC regarding the catering arrangements at The Look Out. BFC was unable to put in mobile catering without permission from The Crown Estate. A decision on this was pending and both sides were working hard to find a better solution.

Cllr Brossard reported that Bracknell had won the Green Flag Award again for Sandhurst Memorial Park and for the first time, Snaprails Park.

Jenny Yung commented that she had enjoyed the site visits and was pleased with the new arrangements regarding permits for horse riders at The Crown Estate. John said that people would be positioned on the gates to enforce the horse riding permits. Jenny said that she would be in favour of a cycle route from Windsor to Bracknell. Access for horse riders behind the car park had been unusable during the week.

The Chairman thanked Michael Abbott for his hard work as Chairman of the Local Countryside Access Forum in Bracknell.

14. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 1 March 2016, 7pm, Function Room, 5th Floor, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell