

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
1 FEBRUARY 2022
7.00 PM**



Present:

Members:

Colin Bird (Chair)
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Michael Brossard
Richard Elsbury
Councillor Alvin Finch
Hugh Fitzwilliams
Sue McDaid
Jane Rimmer
Jenny Yung

In attendance:

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

Observers:

Heather Brown

Apologies for absence were received from:

Nicholas Ballard

205. Welcome

The chair welcomed the forum to the meeting. The chair also welcomed Jane Rimmer who is a new member of the forum. Jane introduced herself as an equestrian and an avid lover of the countryside in the Bracknell Forest area.

206. Apologies

Apologies were received from Nicholas Ballard who had been intending to join this meeting again as an observer.

207. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 were approved as a correct record.

An update on the actions was available in Appendix 1 of the agenda reports pack.

208. PROW Improvements

Colin Bird updated that the proposals to Bracknell Forest LCAF for new / modified Public Rights of Way (PROWs) and access routes had been discussed by the

subgroup and ranked in terms of delivery potential and what was needed to move them forward. Ones marked as high potential were ones which were primarily within Bracknell Forest Council's (BFC) control and were able to be moved forward quickly. This category included Access to Frost Folly SANG2 from Church Lane, Warfield (proposal no. 5) as, although it could only progress when the SANG was transferred to the council, this was expected soon. The medium potential proposals were ones that the subgroup could see moving forward but required some external involvement or planning approval. Low potential proposals were those where there were multiple landowners who would need to give approval or if there hadn't been a PRow there in the past meaning that a lot of work was needed, and chances of success were difficult to judge. The document would be kept live and continuously moving forward on actions. New ideas and proposals were welcome to be added to the document.

The proposal to add existing Mosses path adjacent to the football club in Binfield as a PRow on the definitive map (proposal no. 8) was listed as having medium potential, partly because Binfield Football Club lease the land and partly because the existing path was open. Jane Rimmer highlighted that, when she last visited, the path was accessible for pedestrians but not for equestrian users due to overgrown shrubbery. Richard Mosses fed back that it had been cleared recently, although he was not sure how accessible it was for horse riders. Jane Rimmer agreed to go back to check accessibility. Rob Solomon added that he has spoken to the Binfield Conservation Volunteers, and they have essentially taken ownership of the issue, so Rob would get back in touch to see how they are getting on and whether there was anything he could do to help.

Jane Rimmer highlighted that a question mark had been put against the proposal for a bridleway route to link Warfield development area to Hazelwood Lane and Warfield BR26 (proposal no. 15). From an equestrian point of view, there were still lots of stables in that area, so Jane expressed that she would like some continued discussion. Colin Bird explained that this proposal had been included in the improvement plan from five years ago but there were challenges in delivering it as parts of the route had restrictions on horse-riding, so it was not straightforward. However, there may be more demand for it than they were aware of.

Cabbage Hill Path

Colin Bird updated that Thames Water had promised feedback for this meeting, but this was not forthcoming. This matter would continue to be pursued with them.

Accessible routes

Rose Wicks presented to the forum a mock-up of a leaflet of an accessible route through Cabbage Hill and The Cut Circuit. There was still work to do to design the leaflet. Rose would like the LCAF logo to be included alongside the BFC logo, with the forum's agreement. The ambition was to publish the route as an interactive map online, which the leaflet would link to and where users could see the map in greater detail. The leaflet would be available online as well. Councillor Finch suggested that the leaflet could include a QR code link to the map, and Rose agreed that was a good idea.

Action: Rose Wicks to send the draft leaflet to the forum for feedback.

Longshot Lane (Bracknell Footpath 6A)

Graham Pockett explained that Bracknell BID (Business Improvement District) funded the newly surfaced footpath and added their own signage to the routes. However, they liaised with the council and agreed to incorporate the green FP signs, which avoided the need to clutter the footpath with extra posts. Bracknell BID have also done some work to promote walking routes that people working in the area can do

during their lunchbreak, and the signs show the distance to various locations which is helpful. The forum agreed that it was a great improvement. Councillor Brossard asked whether it was wheelchair accessible. Rob Solomon confirmed that it was.

Sandhurst FP26

Graham Pockett updated that signage had been installed on existing lampposts at both ends of the route.

Hawthorndale Lane (Warfield Bridleway 25)

Graham Pockett shared that there had been a lot of complaints about the muddy state of the path. Drainage works had been completed to stop the frequent flooding, but the resurfacing was inadequate. Rob Solomon added that he has spoken to the contractors who were responsible for the works, and he has persuaded them to relevel and resurface the lane. This has been scheduled for week commencing 7th March 2022 and it is hoped that the material used and the Spring weather will help to settle it. Hugh Fitzwilliams expressed that he felt the current surface was illegal in terms of being past the point of acceptance. Hugh suggested Rob Solomon asking the contractors if they could put down a membrane. Rob replied that he did not think they would be willing to do more as it had been difficult to get them agree to fix it; they had said it was natural before and natural now, but Rob had made point that it was a different natural material now. Jane Rimmer added that it was safe and passable before, but not anymore.

Hedge Lane (Warfield Bridleway 25)

Rob Solomon advised that he had spoken to a drainage engineer to investigate ways of reducing flooding across the bridleway at the western end. They discovered that the ditching was defunct and did not drain in any direction. The ditching sits within a mature hedge line so it would be difficult to improve due to environmental reasons and costs. However, there are plans to put in more drainage as part of the east-west greenway development which will help. Graham Pockett added that the recent Taylor Wimpey pre-application includes this bridleway so the council has commented on that and would be asking Taylor Wimpey to take account of the drainage. Graham explained that he could not share many details as this was not yet in the public domain. It was expected to be a few years before having a sustainable drainage solution.

Bridges catalogue and improvements

Rose Wicks explained that, following on from Richard Mosses' observation about the bridges at Piggy Wood, the rangers have just completed a catalogue of all footbridges on RoW. It was likely in future that the parks & countryside team would retain inspection of small wooden bridges such as Warfield FP24, but larger structures would continue to be part of the Highway's structures contract with Atkins. Where possible, recycled plastic would be used in place of timber to future-proof as many structures as possible. Sue McDaid asked whether the bridge that went from Priory Fields to Hedge Lane was on the list. Hugh Fitzwilliams added that the steps had been installed by volunteers, but they were made of second-hand timber which rotted away so the steps were removed; however, members of the public decided to make their own steps which was even worse. Rose agreed to check to see if that is on their plan. However, Hugh explained that it was not a public footpath. Graham Pockett added that the new greenway would solve the problem.

Rose advised the forum that the bridge at Piggy Wood which needed repairs was closed due to safety reasons; however, there have been issues of members of the public removing the safety barriers. Temporary repairs were expected to be completed soon and then there would likely be a wider project to update bridges at

Piggy Wood where it was deemed necessary. Rose would update the forum when work has been completed.

Action: Rose Wicks to update the forum when the work to replace the wooden footbridges at Piggy Wood has been completed.

Richard Mosses asked what the difference in cost was between recycled plastic and timber. Rose Wicks replied that she was not sure about price, but recycled plastic was more durable. Rob Solomon added that the recycled plastic was slightly more expensive initially but was cheaper in the long run due to being more durable and easier to maintain.

Future projects

Graham Pockett explained that the Blue Mountain permissive path (which is not a PRow) still floods. This would become BFC's responsibility when the SANG transfers. Graham believed that the flooding was made worse by the car park to the SANG being raised up so much. Rob Solomon added that he has been out to the site with a drainage engineer and the ditch appears to be in a usable section. The engineer thought they had found a blocked drain so it may help if they can unblock that.

209. **ROWIP2 and Mid-Term/Definitive Map Consolidation**

RoWIP2 mid-term review

Rose Wicks explained that the forum was a key stakeholder in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP2) and had provided important advice when developing the plan. LCAF was listed as a key partner or even the lead on some of the actions. There was a statutory duty to review RoWIPs at intervals of not more than ten years. RoWIP2 was created in 2017 so this plan was halfway through its lifespan and needed to be reviewed this year. The review was due to be presented for approval by the Executive in late summer and LCAF would be consulted via email and at the next meeting in June. Rose would send a working copy of the review document to the forum for comment, highlighting the actions for LCAF. Rose updated that good progress has been made so far.

Action: Rose Wicks to send RoWIP2 review to the forum for comment.

Definitive Map consolidation

Graham Pockett explained that the last consolidation of the Bracknell Forest Definitive Map was published in 2013 so the review was due to be published in 2023, meaning work on the map was required this year. All changes made since 2013 were under the council's watch so it was expected to be a simpler process than in 2013 which involved searching through old County Council documents. This process would bring the definitive map fully up to date, which is the legal record of the public's rights to use footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. The GIS interactive map on the website was already up to date as it reflects live changes to rights of way. Colin Bird expressed that the forum had an interest in this being completed as it provides a legal basis for all PRow.

210. **Winkfield FPs 13 and 19**

Graham Pockett updated the forum that the contractor had finally been persuaded to submit an application for a permanent diversion, but the registered owner is unfortunately deceased so written agreement will be sought from the beneficiaries of the will. The footpath diversion has been used as a track to the various works and is very wet and muddy in several places, making it difficult to pass on foot. Colin Bird

thanked Graham for his efforts to resolve this issue which has been ongoing for some time.

211. **Claimed Rights of Way**

Graham Pockett advised that most authorities have a mechanism for members of the public to submit evidence of any route for which a PRoW is claimed to exist but not recorded or recorded incorrectly on the Definitive Map and Statement. New information has now been made available on BFCs rights of way pages, which includes a new accessible form, which people can use to submit their evidence either by email or by post.

Graham provided examples of Perry Bridge Farm to Horseshoe Lake and Ambarrow Farm to Perry Bridge and displayed images of the 1900 OS map which appears to depict those footpaths. However, it would be necessary to research why they did not end up on the definitive map. Colin Bird added that neither path had any visibility on the ground today. However, he felt that they may be useful links. Regarding the path to Horseshoe Lake, if the Bloor Homes planning appeal were to be successful, that would be part of the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Councillor Brossard added that the planning application was contentious with lots of public opposition and an outcome of the appeal was expected in March 2022.

Regarding the lane between Warfield Road and the former Garth Hill College site, Graham Pockett advised that he thought the path had been extinguished when Millennium Way was built. Councillor Finch recalled that the site was regularly used by Garth Hill College students before it closed. Hugh Fitzwilliams highlighted that, if the site had been closed legally, it could not be re-opened under the claimed RoW mechanism, but if it is owned by the council anyway, they can decide to re-open it. Sue McDaid asked whether it was only the top end that was being proposed to be re-opened, as the other end has been built over. Colin Bird confirmed that it was only the end opposite Wick Hill Cottage. Sue asked whether it would join to anything. Colin replied that it would join to the new estate being built and would be a through route, but he was not sure if residents would want it, and suggested holding a consultation if the council wants to progress it. Councillor Finch advised that the proposal would create a new green corridor, which might be appealing to the local community. Colin added that it sounds like the proposal has more potential than when the subgroup first discussed it so he will change it to medium potential on the plan.

Action: Graham Pockett to research the land ownership and set up a site visit with Colin Bird and Councillor Finch.

212. **Annual Report**

Rose Wicks presented to the forum the contents page of the Annual Report 2020-21 to provide an idea of what would be included in the report. Colin Bird had agreed to provide the Chairman's foreword. The Introduction to LCAF would highlight the statutory duty to have a forum. Then there would be sections about annual reports, meetings (providing the dates of future meetings, and the current membership (the member's interest list would be included in Appendix 1). The next section would be the impact of coronavirus pandemic on membership engagement, wellbeing of residents, and deterioration of rights of way. There would be a section on LCAF successes including being a big advocate for the accessibility improvements along Crowthorne FP8 (Broadmoor Farm), the new share the trail signs, new footpath link in Sandhurst, and the new and accessible Cabbage Hill circuit. The final section would be called Horizon scanning and would include developing more accessible

routes, RoWIP2 mid-term review, and Bracknell Forest Definitive Map and Statement of Rights of Way consolidation.

Richard Mosses suggested including The Cuts Countryside Corridor and the Bullbrook Countryside Corridor. Rose Wicks agreed to add the work that has been done to provide SANGS and improve signage to the list. Colin Bird also suggested making it clear in the introduction about how LCAFs remit was broader than just focusing on improving Rights of Way. Rose agreed to add that.

Action: Rose Wicks to send the report in draft form to members by the end of the week for feedback.

Rose highlighted that one thing lacking from the report is pictures of forum members as some of the pictures previously used are of people who are no longer members of the forum. Rose suggested taking pictures during upcoming site visits.

Rose explained that at least one other LAF had provided details of how many volunteer hours members had contributed, and how this equated to monetary value. This incorporated time spent at meetings and site visits. Rose wondered if this was something that members thought would be useful for Bracknell Forest LCAF. Colin Bird expressed that it was always good to have figures, but he was not sure how to calculate this other than attendance at meetings as there has not been much external activity recently. Many members also volunteer their time inspecting the condition of Rights of Way, and it was suggested that it might be worth recording these activities as part of LCAFs work. Rose asked whether the forum would be happy to record hours of attendance at meetings over the past two years for the annual report 2021-22. Colin Bird agreed and suggested looking through agendas and recordings of previous meetings to see how long those were. There would be more site visits and other forum-related activities to incorporate into the next annual report in 2022. Sue McDaid advised caution against putting people off volunteering as members of the forum, as it may look like it takes a lot of time. Colin Bird felt that was a good point and it would be important to stress that we value any contribution that members can make.

213. **Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces**

Rose Wicks advised that a member of the public had spotted that the leaflet for the Ambarrow Court circular walk was out of date due to changes to the footpath. The leaflet has temporarily been removed from the website while it is updated. Rob Solomon and Rose have looked at the suite of SANGs circular walks leaflets and will be updating them and providing new leaflets for new routes including Cabbage Hill, Big Wood / Peacock Meadows North, and Peacock Meadows South. There have been no new SANGs opened since the last meeting of the forum.

214. **PRoWs and Local Developments**

Colin Bird explained that the Bracknell Forest Local Plan would provide the strategy for the growth of the borough up to 2037. Once adopted, it would replace some of the policies in the last local plan from 2002 and the Core Strategy from 2008, so it is an important document in terms of future development. There was lots of information on the BFC website. Colin did not think that there was any particular activity needed by the forum currently and there was nothing to report at this time.

215. **Any Other Business**

Hugh Fitzwilliams highlighted that there was a mistake in Appendix 2 of the agenda reports pack where proposal no. 15 says that "Greenway through Woodhurst Park has no horse restriction". Hugh explained that there were strong restrictions on the greenway. Colin Bird replied that Hugh was correct and that he had included the wrong version of the document.

Action: Colin Bird to correct the document.

Councillor Finch has noticed a link on Facebook to a consultation on how to improve the cycling infrastructure and has seen a lot of responses already. The Transport Strategy team had requested that LCAF be involved in the consultation, and Rose Wicks would send members further information so they could submit their feedback. Rose would be happy to collate any email responses on behalf of the forum.

Action: Rose Wicks to send the consultation request to LCAF members/officers.

Rob Solomon highlighted that the central bollard at Hawthorn has been vandalised several times by people illegally accessing the neighbouring farmland. It is beyond Rob's capability to resolve it, but he will speak to the landowner to try to get it fixed. Hugh Fitzwilliams added that concrete blocks have been put there in the last couple of weeks, probably illegally. Jane Rimmer highlighted that someone has removed the lock and chain on the gate at Pendry's lane and this could be an invitation for exactly the same issues.

Action: Rob Solomon to follow-up the issue at Pendry's Lane.

216. **Public Question Time**

There were no comments or questions.

217. **Date of Next Meeting - 7 June 2022**

The date of the next meeting would be 7 June 2022 at 7pm. Venue to be confirmed but Colin Bird expressed that he would like to be back in Time Square.

CHAIRMAN