



**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
30 SEPTEMBER 2008
7.00 - 9.00 PM**

Present:

Statutory Board Members:

Mrs Diana Pidgeon OBE (Chairman)
Mr David Bertie
Councillor Michael Brossard
Mr Joe Dodson
Mr Mike Gates
Ms Sharon Holt
Mr Innes McEwen
Mr Richard Mosses
Mr Peter Radband
Councillor Raymond Simonds
Mr Derick Stickler

In attendance:

Sally Coulson, Parks & Countryside Projects Officer
Richard Walton, Parks & Countryside Manager
Priya Patel, Democratic Services Officer

Observers:

Mr Mike Abbott

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr Stuart Tarrant
Miss Caroline Tomalin

23. Election of Chairman

On the proposition of Councillor Raymond Simonds, seconded by Councillor Michael Brossard it was agreed that Mrs Diana Pidgeon be elected as Chairman of the Forum for a period of three years.

Members thanked Mrs Pidgeon for all the work she had done for the Forum and were pleased that she would be chairing the Forum over the next three years.

24. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

On the proposition of Mrs Diana Pidgeon, seconded by Derick Stickler it was agreed that Mr Mike Gates be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Forum for a period of three years.

25. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all members to the Forum and in particular welcomed Mr Mike Abbott who was attending as an observer and was a member of the Ramblers' Association.

The Chairman also notified the Forum that Mrs Celia Blay and Mrs Anne Haydon had both resigned from the Forum as they were moving away from the area. She expressed her thanks to both of them for their work and commitment during their membership of the Forum.

It was also reported that James Dymond had taken up a new post and no longer worked for Bracknell Forest, the Chairman expressed her thanks for all the hard work he had carried out for the Forum.

26. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2008 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Minute 18, Rights of Way Improvement Plan

It was reported that the land relating to the proposed Winkfield bridleway creation was currently being acquired by a new person. Contact had been established by officers with the proposed purchaser.

Minute 21, Rights of Way Closures to Pylon Works

It was reported that these pathways were due to reopen at the beginning of October 2008. Work seemed to operate smoothly, no complaints had been received. Paths were only closed if absolutely necessary.

It was reported that both the Blackwater Valley and Love Parks week had both been hugely successful events.

27. National and Regional Local Countryside Access Forum Work

It was reported that Richard Mosses had agreed to attend the meeting of LCAF representatives from the South East on behalf of the Forum in London on 6 October 2008. Discussions regarding nominations of representatives on the England Access Forum (EAF) were due to take place at this meeting.

28. Thames Basin Heath Access Management Partnership

It was reported that the Forum had received updates on this item over the last few meetings and consideration was being given as to how recreational activity in this area could be balanced with the need to protect biodiversity. It was noted that Bracknell Forest Council had a legal duty to ensure that they were not implementing plans or actions that could have a negative impact on wildlife.

One of the main demands on the Thames Basin Heath area was increased housing which in turn would lead to increased recreational activity. This needed to be balanced with the wildlife in the area, in particular the ground nesting birds Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark.

It was reported that the Access Management Partnership was becoming more established. It had a diverse membership and was led by Natural England. Its main focus was on strategic co-ordination and on-site wardening.

A report was being drafted to look at the role of Natural England in strategic co-ordination and Natural England had indicated that they would take on a positive central role in the future. In terms of on-site wardening, it was felt that this should be led by existing organisations. The focus would be on supporting existing mechanisms. A first draft of the report would be available by the end of October 2008.

29. **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

It was reported that lots of work had been done on this Plan and that Bracknell Forest were one of the first areas to produce an approved strategy. The Forum had been central to this work. The Plan could be viewed on line on the Council's website and hard copies were also available on request.

It was agreed that if members had any future suggestions of areas in the Borough where improvements could be made to roads, grass verges or bridleways that members should contact Sally Coulson.

Future Projects

- Larks Hill link to bridle path network – work was in progress to create a permissive path at Priory Field.
- Breathing Spaces, Scott's Hill - a group of active residents had successfully secured lottery funding for improvement works in a green area that had housing backed onto it and was blighted by fly tipping.
- Northern access to Caesars Camp– 80% funding had been secured.
- Wildmoor Heath projects- The majority of work regarding path refurbishments, habitat improvements and interpretation had been completed and remaining work, particularly to the boardwalk, needed to be carried out in dry weather. Will be covered further in item 10.

30. **Greenspace Strategy**

It was reported that the strategy was currently in draft form and would now be the subject of a consultation exercise. The Strategy would work towards protecting and making the best use of the greenspaces in the Borough. Key themes were quantity, quality and use.

Consultation would include internal and external partners and all bodies who were involved in the management or protection of green spaces.

It was noted that the strategy related to many wider agendas, for example, health.

It was noted that the Borough had one of the best locations for mountain biking in the Country and that this should be acknowledged in strategies and plans.

Members noted that on the former Met Office site, a rare blue grass had been found. Officers stated that they would look into this.

(ACTION: Richard Walton)

31. **Interpretation and Marketing**

The final proof for the information boards at Wildmoor Heath was presented to the Forum and it was reported that the information was also available in a leaflet produced by the [Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust](#) and on

the Council's website. Information boards and signage were due to be installed by the end of October (weather dependent).

It was reported that whilst specific provision for visually impaired people was not included on site at Wildmoor, it was proposed at other sites such as Clinton's Hill in the form of engraved and raised carved wood illustrations/ maps and other formats. The Council's Parks & Countryside Service leaflet range was also available in other languages, large print, Braille or on audio tape on request.

Members were shown the final proof for the new over arching parks and countryside leaflet, one of the first leaflets to be produced as part of the Parks & Countryside Service's new look 'Discover' leaflet range. Members queried whether this leaflet could be sent out with the next edition of Town & Country, officers agreed to consider this. Copies of the new parks and countryside events programme were also circulated.

(ACTION: Sally Coulson)

Members congratulated officers on this excellent work.

32. Site Visits

- Circular walk to discuss work at Lily Hill Park/Clinton's Hill/Scotts Hill – to take place on Monday 27 October 2008 at 3pm. Members to meet at the main Lily Hill car park.
(ACTION: Sally Coulson)
- Ideas for potential visits led by members – Jocks Lane.

33. Reports from Members Round the Table

- **David Bertie** reported that fly tipping had been a particular problem in his area. Officers asked that he contact Sally Coulson about hotspots, in addition to reporting issues to the police. The information would be used by the Council to help prioritise preventative measures such as the use of mobile cameras. Councillor Mrs Hayes also did lots of work in this area and should be contacted for assistance.
- **Derick Stickler** reported that work to the pipeline at Swinley Forest should be complete by Easter 2009. Replanting would commence on the swathe of affected land after this.
- **Sharon Holt** reported that Cabbage Hill Lane had recently been resurfaced and was now dangerous for horses as it was slippery. It was also blighted by fly tipping and was misused by motorists as a 'rat run'.

Sharon also reported that following her recommendation, the Access Department at Bracknell Forest Council – in particular James Dymond and Hugh Fitzwilliams – had received certificates for the Good Guy award. This is one of the Riders Charter Awards, presented by BHS volunteers, staff and Affiliated Bridleways Groups to recognise good practice among individuals, groups and organisations who have made a contribution to equestrian access. She noted that during the time that she had been volunteering for the BHS, James and Hugh have been very helpful with advice and asking for input from a horse rider's point of view eg surfaces. It was suggested that this would be a good opportunity for publicity regarding the local Rights of Way network.

- **Innes McEwen** reported that his farm had received 40 school visits to date and that it was pleasing to see children learning about the Countryside, including young people from urban areas such as Slough and London.

34. Any Other Business

It was reported that three awards had been won this year for the Council's green spaces for Shepherd Meadows (with Sandhurst Town Council), Pope's Meadow and Lily Hill Park. Winkfield Parish Council had also received this prestigious award for Carnation Hall.

Members felt this was most impressive and expressed their congratulations to all involved in this work.

Mr Mike Abbott stated that he found the work of the Forum interesting and stated that he would like to become a member. The Chairman stated that his input would be most welcomed.

35. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 24 March 2009 at 7pm in the Function Room, 5th Floor, Easthampstead House.

CHAIRMAN