

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
24 MARCH 2009
7.00 - 9.00 PM**



Present:

Statutory Board Members:

Mrs Diana Pidgeon OBE (Chairman)
Mr Michael Abbott
Councillor Michael Brossard
Mr Joe Dodson
Sharon Holt
Mr Richard Mosses
Mr Peter Radband
Councillor Raymond Simonds
Mr Derick Stickler
Miss Caroline Tomalin

In attendance:

Sally Coulson, Parks & Countryside Projects Officer
Hugh Fitzwilliams, Rights of Way Ranger, BFC
Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Officer
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Assistant
Richard Walton, Parks & Countryside Manager

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr Mike Gates
Mr Innes McEwen

36. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all members to the Forum.

It was reported that Graham Pockett was present as the new Parks & Countryside Development Officer.

37. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Minute 32, Site Visits

It was noted that there had been two excellent site visits: the Bluebell Walk and the Lily Hill Park/ Clinton's Hill/ Scotts Hill circular walk which produced some great photos.

38. **National and Regional Access Forums**

It was reported that Richard Mosses had attended a meeting of LAF representatives (known collectively as the 'South East LAF') on 6 October 2008 and 3 March 2009 at the Natural England offices, Ashdown House, London.

Richard Mosses and Michael Abbott had then attended a conference for Local Access Forum members in the South East on behalf of Bracknell Forest LCAF. This event took place in the afternoon of Tuesday 3 March 2009 at CSSC, London with an aim to exchange good practice and network.

The conference was chaired by Duncan Graham, chair of the Cumbria Local Access Forum. Duncan had previously been nominated to represent the South East Local Countryside Access Forums on the England Access Forum (EAF) and would chair all future regional conferences.

Copies of the workshop presentations that took place at the afternoon conference were available at the meeting for Bracknell LCAF members.

Forum Members noted the report from Richard Mosses on both events.

Michael Abbott gave a verbal report of his experience of the conference.

Subjects discussed included gating orders and communication with the public regarding the work of LCAFs. It was noted that information needed to be engaging and there were several ideas for communication such as the internet, TV, local press, mail shots/handouts but that radio would possibly target more local people. The Town and Country local paper could be used but the timing of any articles would be a key consideration.

Members discussed the web presence of LCAF and noted that information about Bracknell Forest LCAF, meeting agendas and minutes could be found on the website: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/LCAF but under countryside access rather than rights of way. It was suggested that links should also be made from the rights of way section and that campaign targets should be bullet pointed on the webpage. Forum Members were invited to give feedback to Sally Coulson.

(Action: All)

39. **Definitive Map - review, diversions and creations**

Bracknell Footpath 15

It was reported that part of Footpath 15 southeast of Queens Wood had been legally diverted and the definitive map had been updated accordingly. Possible future diversion of another length of FP15 was also discussed. It was suggested that the footpath could be linked with open spaces such as Jennetts Hill and with other footpaths in the area. Discussions had started with developers to look at other parts of the footpath to avoid it becoming absorbed within other parts of the infrastructure of the site. Opportunities existed to provide access, linking green spaces and wildlife corridors.

40. **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Access Management Grant funding was available to be bid for but needed to be project specific and relate to designated Access Lands. Within Bracknell Forest this was Wildmoor Heath. Members were asked to direct any ideas to Sally Coulson.

Future Projects

- Crowthorne Footpath 17 – £18,000 funding had been secured from Natural England. Queen Anne Gully was a historic area and repair work was needed to stabilise the banks. Timber from the Crown Estate would be used. The projected life of timber varied depending on treatment of the wood.
- It was asked whether the road crossing linking Nine Mile Ride to Caesar's Camp could be made safer. This was considered unfeasible at present due to highway regulations but would be regularly reviewed to see if future opportunities arose.
- Priory Field – a permissive bridal link. Completion was taking longer due to the priorities of work and staff resources. The site would be fully operational for the next football season in approximately 12-18 months time, but the site needed to be completed before the footpath to avoid the corridor effect for equestrian access.
- Winkfield Circuit – there was a slight delay due to changing ownership. Hogarth Developers had been contacted. The entire route would be surveyed and potential links identified
- Winkfield Footpath 5 – funding for drainage works was available. A specification was being drawn up using engineer advice. The path needed to be raised above water level but it had been too wet for engineers to carry out the work.
- Scott's Hill – a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund had been secured by the Bracknell Forest Natural History Society in 2008 for this small woodland site and works to improve access and increase biodiversity had been taking place. Works had included footpath improvement, tree work and replanting, and interpretation was due to be installed in July. The Society had applied for an additional grant for an adjacent site, Allsmoor Lane. If successful, this would complete a green corridor which linked Clinton's Hill, Lily Hill, Scott's Hill and Allsmoor Lane. The Society was keen to create a circular walking route between these sites of approximately two and a half miles and had asked for suggestions from the LAF.

41. **Greenspace Strategy**

Forum Members noted the draft version of the Green Space Strategy.

It was reported that some key elements of the Strategy were already being delivered and Section 106 contributions from developers had been secured for an Urban Woods Project for green spaces located at the rear of housing developments. Money would be used to clear up the effects of anti-social behaviour such as fly tipping, for path improvements and to improve the visibility of areas to make them more welcoming.

Works were underway in the following areas:

- Berry Bank in Sandhurst. A positive response had been received from Waitrose as the neighbouring landlord.
- Wentworth Way, Winkfield, nr Ascot.
- School Hill, Sandhurst.
- Frog Copse, opposite the Depot in Bracknell.
- Osmonds Close, Winkfield – there was currently one way in and one way out. Another route would be identified.
- Napier Close, Crowthorne – adjacent to part of the Broadmoor Farm Estate.

With regard to issues of 'backland' sites; Jennetts Park – lessons had been learnt from past development practice with housing now fronting onto the woodland and copses with buffer zones. Standards were being raised.

With regard to feedback from LCAF members, the focus would be on aims, objectives and key actions. It was suggested that key projects could be advertised on the website, in the Town & Country local paper and on the radio. In order to be more user friendly, consideration should be given to make the Strategy shorter possibly by placing certain items in the Appendix. The Strategy was not geographically specific but some actions would have site references.

It was suggested that there could be a Top 10 list of areas being improved at any time and a small glossy leaflet for different areas of the Borough with simple summaries.

It was noted that the Strategy had also been circulated to the Parish and Town Councils and would also be sent to other relevant organisations such as The Crown Estate. As it was in draft format the Strategy was not available on the website yet. Wider public consultation could be undertaken once initial feedback had been incorporated.

The Forum thanked Richard Walton for his work on the Green Space Strategy and noted the appropriate poem at the beginning.

It was agreed that any comments or suggestions would be directed to Sally Coulson by the end of April 2009.

(Action: All)

42. Interpretation and Marketing (including LCAF Annual Report)

It was reported that the new interpretation boards at Wildmoor Heath had been installed. Members were encouraged to visit the site.

The newly updated Parks & Countryside leaflets were available and a small run of 3,000 leaflets had proved to be very popular.

Forum Members' initial comments included:

- Pictures of cyclists without helmets or horse riders without high visibility jackets should not be used as this could have a detrimental influence on members of the public. A range of illustrative ideas would be useful and there was a request for volunteers to take part in photos for the leaflet.

Further comments from Forum Members for the leaflet were welcomed and should be directed to Sally Coulson.

(Action: All)

A photo competition would be launched in June 2009 for the second year running. Winning images would be displayed in the Community Gallery at South Hill Park from February 2010. Members noted that the LCAF had a flicker site which displayed many of last year's entries, many of which were now displayed on the Council's website and updated leaflets.

LCAF Annual Report

An example of Hampshire's Annual Report was passed around. Members were encouraged to look at other LAF annual reports which were available online.

It was agreed that Forum Members would direct any comments or articles for the Bracknell LCAF Annual Report to Sally Coulson by 1 August 2009.

(Action: All)

43. **Thames Basin Heaths Access Management Partnership**

It was noted that Thames Basin Heath Access would be kept as an agenda item for LCAF meetings as progress was slow and it was a complex process involving representatives from 11 different planning authorities and associated partners.

The delivery framework included access management concepts relating to the impact on outdoor recreation with regard to Bracknell Forest. The role of the LCAF was to steer, influence and advise. At a local level outside of the SPA, the impact was likely to be positive as it would help to raise the profile of the alternative opportunities and other sites for residents to use. There were mini plans for key sites to improve the landscape and biodiversity values.

The main principles were:

- 1) Access Management Measures – involved existing landowners and managers.
- 2) Strategic Co-ordination – consistency of messages. Natural England had accepted the role.
- 3) Consistency – lead funding from developers for access management and specific contributions per dwelling.
- 4) Soft Measures – involved access management such as a subtle onsite presence and well managed onsite routes.

Bracknell Forest Council had rejected the planning application for more housing at the RAF Staff College site and were in the midst of an appeal. There would be a decision on the appeal for the TRL site in Crowthorne by the summer as this would be made by the Secretary of State.

The number of planning applications for large developments and related building work had slowed recently which had reduced the pressures on the Thames Basin Heath access.

A letter had been received from Surrey LAF inviting 2-3 members of Bracknell LCAF to attend a joint meeting regarding the Special Protection Area and the Chairman had agreed.

44. **Reports from Members around the Table**

- **Derick Stickler** reported that the pipeline through the Special Protection Area had been laid. There was no water in the pipe and the twin tunnels under the line were causing a problem. South East Water did not have anymore money for this financial year. A 35 metre strip of land would be replanted with heather out of the 7 hectares of land affected by the pipeline but some of the area would be reforested.
- **Michael Abbott** reported that cyclists were unable to use the bridleway down by the Lower Sandhurst Road from Finchampstead to the river due to its

condition but they were also unable to use the foot path. It was noted that this area came under Wokingham's jurisdiction and that the Blackwater Valley Countryside Project (BVCP) would be a good place to raise this issue. Diana Pidgeon was on the Board of the BVCP and would refer this.

(Action: Diana Pidgeon)

- **Sharon Holt** reported that several boxes of Dominoes leaflets had been dumped on the Hazelwood bridle path near the Bracknell sewage works. Sharon had reported it to the company and legal proceedings were being undertaken. It was highlighted that as the barrier was no longer closed, fly tipping would be Thames Water's responsibility and any problems would need to be reported to them.
- **Diana Pidgeon** reported that 7 horses were found loose on the road by the Toyota garage and reported to the Police. It was highlighted that the Borough Solicitor had previously identified appropriate legislation to serve notice where horses had previously been left to graze on public open space. Sharon reported that she had a welfare contact if this happened again.

45. **Site Visits**

- There was a suggestion to undertake a site visit to Jennetts Park.

A site visit to Jennetts Park was suggested for May. Sally would identify some weekday evening dates after 5pm and e-mail potential dates to Forum Members. Possible meeting places for the visit were the Peacock Farm pub on the Jennetts Park site near to the community centre or the Easthampstead Park Conference Centre.

46. **Any Other Business**

It was reported that there were now 3 relevant e-mail addresses and these would be sent to the Forum Members:

rangers@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

biodiversity@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

rightsofway@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

(Action: Sally Coulson)

It was reported that Bracknell LCAF was currently recruiting for new members. Sally Coulson would attend an Access Advisory Panel meeting on 7 April 2009 to see if any of the panel members would be interested in becoming a member of the LCAF. It was suggested that the Berkshire Disability Information Centre could be contacted also with the aim to recruit a member to represent disabled interests.

(Action: Sally Coulson)

Bracknell had received £1million for 22 new play areas in the Borough as part of the Play Builder Programme to encourage activity amongst children. Early Years would work in partnership with Parks & Countryside and Parishes in the Borough to improve existing play areas as part of the new initiative 'Play-Builder/Path Finder'.

Restoration work had begun on the South Hill Park site which was a £4.5million project involving improvements to the landscape. Stage 1 was almost completed and the bid for Stage 2 would go in next week.

It was reported that Wildmoor Heath in Bracknell had been granted funding for access previously as part of the Natural England Access Management Scheme and

that all applications for the Scheme in 2009/10 needed to be in by September 2009. High profile projects were needed to attract the attention of Natural England. Money for the boardwalk improvements would be carried forward into the next financial year due to the wet conditions preventing work from being carried out.

47. Post Meeting Notice

It was reported after the meeting that Stuart Tarrant had tendered his resignation to the Chairman of the Forum due to his many other commitments and also because he had sold the larger part of his land.

48. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 29 September 2009 at 7pm in the Function Room, 5th Floor, Easthampstead House.

CHAIRMAN