



**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM**  
**4 MARCH 2014**  
**7.00 - 9.03 PM**

**Present:**

**Members:**

Mr Michael Abbott (Chairman)  
Mr Richard Mosses  
Councillor John Porter  
Hugh Fitzwilliams  
Mrs Jenny Yung

**In attendance:**

Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Officer  
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Officer  
Robert Solomon, Ranger (Countryside & ROW)  
Rose Wicks, Parks & Countryside Projects Officer

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillor Michael Brossard  
John Deakin  
Sharon Holt  
Mr Innes McEwen  
Mr Peter Radband  
Richard Walton, Head of Parks & Countryside

**13. Welcome**

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

**Matters Arising**

Path improvements would be undertaken once the weather had improved and one of the main projects parallel to the Blackwater river was due to be undertaken this summer.

The Code of Conduct leaflets for dog walkers had been well distributed and another print run would be undertaken before the Paws in the Park event this summer. The leaflet was also available on the Borough Council's website. It was queried whether Rangers could be more proactive with dog walkers at The Look Out but it was clarified that this was the responsibility of the Crown Estate. Rose could liaise with the Crown Estate to ascertain as to whether the dog walker leaflet had been circulated at the User Group Forum.

**(Action: Rose Wicks)**

To encourage attendance at LCAF meetings and advance notice of apologies (where possible), reminders would be sent to Forum Members approximately two to four weeks before each meeting.

## 15. **Membership and Recruitment**

Forum Members welcomed Hugh Fitzwilliams as a new member on the Forum.

Recruitment posters had been sent to Town and Parish Councils, libraries, and Parks and Countryside Rangers for inclusion on their notice boards, and the information was also available on the Borough Council's website:

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/localcountrysideaccessforumlcaf>

Further suggestions included promoting membership in local groups interested in countryside matters, for example, conservation volunteers.

## 16. **National and Regional LCAF Work**

The National LAF Conference was due to take place in Durham. It was noted that attendance at national conferences could be affected by the distance needed to travel to the conference and as such there were would be no representative from the Bracknell Forest LAF this year. The costs of national conferences were also thought to be prohibitive and free venues were being sought for the next national LAF conference in 2015.

The South East Regional LAF Conference was due to be held on Tuesday 20 May 2014 and proved useful to attend in previous years. There were bi-annual officers meetings for LAFs and Bracknell Forest had submitted a written summary of the Borough Council's work for the latest meeting, which had coincided with the previous LCAF meeting on 1 October 2013.

Contact information for all Local Access Forums in England can be found on the Natural England website and specifically in the south east via the following web link: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/laf/selaf.aspx>.

If LAF members were interested in attending further LAF meetings in neighbouring authorities and counties, the details of these meetings could be found on the websites of the authorities (examples below):

- Hampshire LAF: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/hcaf>
- Surrey LAF: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/environment-housing-and-planning/countryside/explore-surreys-countryside/visit-the-countryside/footpaths-byways-and-bridleways/surrey-countryside-access-forum>
- Mid & West Berkshire LAF: <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8904>
- Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM) LAF: [http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/prow\\_local\\_access\\_forum.htm](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/prow_local_access_forum.htm)
- Slough LAF: <http://www.slough.gov.uk/parking-travel-and-roads/slough-local-access-forum.aspx>
- Wiltshire LAF: <http://www.wiltshirelaf.org.uk/>

Huddle is an interactive Forum for LAFs. In discussions on Huddle you can learn from and share with other LAF colleagues on topics ranging from 'Unsurfaced Roads' to 'Wind Farms'; from 'Health Agenda' to 'Public Consultations'. LAFs use Huddle to upload local information and to keep in touch on relevant issues; a diary of events

can also be found on Huddle, although this was reliant on LAFs to upload details, such as meetings. Natural England were regular contributors to Huddle.

Hugh, Michael and Rob expressed an interest in learning more about Huddle. Rose would investigate the possibility of licences and in-house training for LAF members.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

#### 17. **Ramblers 'Paths in Crisis' Report**

The Ramblers Association had sent a Freedom of Information request to all Local Authorities in England regarding information on Rights of Way budgets and the work they were doing.

Statistics provided back, with Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) comparison:

- 100,000 unresolved (reported) path problems. At BFC, there was only one at the time of the report.
- 30% of councils had cut their path budgets, following on from three years of severe cuts. At BFC, there had been a small cut to revenue budget between 12/13 and 13/14. There was money available for capital projects from Section 106 developer contributions.
- Local Authorities had been losing experienced staff from the rights of way teams. At BFC, there had been no cuts to rights of way staff.
- There was a backlog of over 4,000 paths waiting to be protected as Rights of Way. At BFC, in relation to Definitive Map Modification Order applications:- 0 awaiting determination; 3 made in 11/12 and 2 in 12/13; 5 determined in 11/12 and 2 in 12/13.

Paths in Crisis Report:

[http://www.ramblers.org.uk/~media/Files/Campaign%20with%20us/PATHS\\_IN\\_CRI SIS.pdf](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/~media/Files/Campaign%20with%20us/PATHS_IN_CRI SIS.pdf)

#### 18. **LCAF Annual Report**

The 2013 Annual Report was being produced and a draft version would be available for Forum Members' feedback. This report was produced internally and was separate from the Annual Review Form submitted to Natural England. It was suggested that these reports should include that the Borough Council was supporting Public Rights of Way (PROW) when nationally PROW were under pressure. Rose would circulate the draft 2013 Annual Report by e-mail to members.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

The Annual Review Form, for period Apr 13 – Mar 14, was due to be submitted to Natural England by end of June 2014.

#### 19. **Site Visits**

Forum Members considered the following site visits:

- The Crown Estate; visit to see new bike trails would be postponed until the autumn.

- Jennett's Park; creation of new footpaths. It was suggested that this site visit be combined with a visit to Tarman's Copse, Garden's Copse and Wykery Copse, the latter being a SSSI woodland with managed access.
- South Hill Park; new waymarked trails. This site visit was of interest to members and it was suggested that it be combined with conservation restoration of sites and / or tied in with Heritage Open Days. Rose would investigate the possibility of this further.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

- Popes Manor / Meadow. Rose to investigate.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

- Jealott's Hill Farm; Forum members invited by Innes McEwan (at previous meetings) to visit the farm. The aim was for this visit to be arranged at the next meeting of the Forum.
- Broadmoor/ Foresters Way; possible affect of new hospital access road to the PROW network. This visit would need to be investigated before being undertaken to decide which route to take.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

## 20. Reports from Officers

**Graham Pockett** reported that there had been two Freedom of Information (FOI) requests for PROW statistics in the past year, one of them was the one from The Ramblers Association. The source of the other FOI request was not known, but it included other highway authority information, not just rights of way. BFC had a monitoring mechanism for enquiries relating to PROW which was useful for responding to FOI requests. Exchange of information and benchmarking was being undertaken with Wokingham Borough Council. Some of the headline comparisons with other local authorities were reported to the meeting. The cost of rights of way per kilometre were comparable across similar unitary authorities, but the cost of PROW per resident annually was lower in Bracknell Forest than other nearby unitary authorities.

Improvements had been undertaken on Longhill Park steps (permitted path), Bracknell Footpath 5 (Section 106 funded), and joint work with Hampshire County Council on Rights of Way at Shepherd Meadows on the Hampshire side.

Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) had been issued for Sandhurst Byway 16 (water mains replacement by South East Water), Devil's Highway (emergency tree works and reinstatement of the restricted byway), and Longshot Lane (trial bore holes and tree works). A TTRO would be needed at Nine Mile Ride for South East Water to conduct further work in relation to the pipeline through Swinley.

The matter regarding bollards on Sandhurst Byway 16, which was also a private road, was discussed. These bollards restricted vehicles from travelling between Wellington Road to Yorktown Road (or in reverse). These would have likely been in place for a long time and were used to stop the private road from being used as a 'through route'; it would therefore prove very difficult to justify asking for them to be removed.

Adverse weather conditions had caused an increased number of faults to be reported on PROW including fallen trees, potholes and flooding. Options were being explored about how to mitigate flooding on the footpath which ran down the side of Edgbarrow school (Crowthorne Footpath 4) and conducting a basic repair of potholes on Hawthorne Lane.

Hugh Fitzwilliams asked that further clarification be made with Environmental Services in relation to BFCs responsibility to clear fly-tipped rubbish on private roads where PROWs were running over the top of them.

**(Action: Graham Pockett)**

Eight ponies had been left illegally to graze in a field in Peacock Lane opposite Jennett's Park at the end of January 2014. A wire fence had been erected across a PROW (Binfield Footpath 16) without permission to stop the ponies from escaping onto the A329M and causing a danger to themselves and motorists. The land was the responsibility of the consortium building the Jennett's Park development. They had instructed bailiffs to secure removal of the ponies. BFC who had responsibility in relation to ensuring the PROW obstruction was removed, had erected advisory notices to warn dog walkers and ramblers of the situation.

Footpath 15 had been made narrower by the developer and a three metre width was needed for this path, which was a combination cycle and footpath. A formal notice under section 143 of the highways Act 1980 had been served. Works to restore the path width had been agreed but were yet to be implemented by the developer.

In relation to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs), works planned included Englemere Pond (propose to install further waymarkers), Longhill Park (interpretation project, signs etc), Horseshoe Lake (ditch repair work, replacing the sluice gate), and Shepherd Meadows (path work on the southern side of the river in the summer). SPA wardening had been agreed with Natural England and all Thames Basin Heaths authorities with a plan to increase resource over time to four full-time and ten seasonal wardens covering the whole Thames Basin Heaths area, and there would be awareness raising amongst visitors.

South East Water had submitted a revised planning application for the pipeline through Swinley; the haulage routes had changed but the pipeline routes remained the same. BFC was objecting to this planning application as the planned haulage routes came very close to Caesar's Camp (Scheduled Monument) with large trucks using the forest track regularly.

**Rose Wicks** mentioned that BFC were one of only 13% of authorities who had completed a review of their Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The majority (48%) of authorities had carried out a 'limited' consultation on ROWIP. 'Funding' and 'Brief Guidance' were the most popular ways in which authorities would like support with their ROWIP reviews. ROWIP for the borough was integrated with Local Transport Plan 3. Most respondents (83%) considered ROWIPs a success, mostly due to the raised profile of rights of way.

Work was being undertaken with the Forestry Commission to produce interpretation panels at key access points to the Crowthorne Woods site, such as, Devil's Highway and Muzzy's roundabout.

The interpretation and information would highlight the sensitive nature of the site and promote key messages consistent with the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project co-ordinated by Natural England.

The information provided would clearly state that the SPA was a protected habitat and was an internationally important breeding ground for birds. Visitors would be asked to take care to minimise potential disturbance (particularly by dogs). In addition, the interpretation would include key information specific to the location, for example, Wet Mires and forestry operations.

Exert from the Habitats Regulation Assessment report:

In relation to the Parks and Open Spaces Quality Improvements Programme, project facilitation was in place and Phase 1 projects were underway. At Westmorland Park, paths had been upgraded to improve circulation and better link the park. Improvements planned included new wildflower meadow areas, ornamental planting and new interpretation and site signs.

At Snapnails Park, wooden footbridges had been installed, paths links would be created and restoration of the stream embankments would be undertaken. At Turnberry, a multi user path had been completed by Bracknell Town Council, and expenditure had been approved for Edmunds Green/ Lane and Blackmore Pond projects.

Phase 2 projects included Bracknell Town Council projects at Mill Park (Wildridings and Central), Calfridus Way Recreation Ground (Harmans Water), and a Binfield Parish Council project at Binfield Cricket Club. Other projects were in the pipeline and proposals were being received via the project assessment pro forma. These would be assessed against core criteria.

## 21. **Reports from Members round the table**

**Richard Mosses** mentioned that there was a used car garage at Maidens Green where Winkfield Footpath 11 crossed the forecourt and there should be access through this area. It was often impossible to squeeze between the cars.

Richard Mosses also reported that at the Jocks Lane Woodland Event the Bracknell Natural History Society had been asked by Landscape Services about the locations of orchids in roadside verges, and he thought this information would be recorded within the Council. Rose Wicks mentioned that the council's Biodiversity Officer would hold this information.

## 22. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 30 September 2014, 7pm, Function Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell.