

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM  
11 OCTOBER 2016  
7.10 - 9.00 PM**



**Present:**

**Members:**

Peter Radband (Chairman)  
Richard Mosses (Vice Chairman)  
Michael Abbott  
Colin Bird  
Councillor Michael Brossard  
Hugh Fitzwilliams  
Jenny Yung

**In attendance:**

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

**Observers:**

Colin Patient, Mid & West Berks LAF

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

John Deakin

**27. Welcome**

Forum members welcomed Colin Patient from West Berkshire LCAF as an observer to the meeting.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2016 were approved a correct record subject to the following amendments:

Minute 17: '*an National Union of Farmers*' be amended to '*a National Union of Farmers*'. In the same minute, '*lead by Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead*' be amended to read '*lead by The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead*'.

Minute 21: '*Scrub clearance and head cutting along Binfield footpath 9*' be amended to read '*Scrub clearance and hedge cutting along Binfield footpath 9*'.

Matters Arising

The Bracknell Forest Council website had a list of 47 automated external defibrillators located in the borough. The address for the list was

[www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/defibrillators](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/defibrillators)

The WOW! Week of Walks organised by The Bracknell Forest Society had taken place in the first week in October. The Parks and Countryside Rangers had supported this event by leading six walks which had taken place throughout the

borough. The event had gone very well, and members who had attended the walks gave positive feedback.

## 29. **Membership and Recruitment**

**Rose Wicks** informed members of David Lindop's decision to step down from the Forum due to personal circumstances. This meant that the Forum now had 9 members, and work was needed to get up to the recommended 10 members.

**Peter Radband and Rose Wicks** had put together a recruitment leaflet to publicise the Forum and its work. Members commented that the leaflet would be useful, and made a few amendments to wording which Rose agreed to change, subject to agreement from the Chairman Peter Radband. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

## 30. **Meetings, Conferences and Training**

### LAF Chairs Meetings

The LAF Chairs meetings in Maidenhead on 8 March and 28 July 2016 had discussed matters including:

- The impact of the M4 smart motorway development scheme, although it was noted that this would not affect Bracknell Forest.
- Co-ordination of Berkshire LAFs to develop better collaboration.
- Development of the Thames path and the reduction of government funding to resource the path's maintenance.
- National trails and the reduction of DEFRA maintenance funding for these. Funding was expected to reduce to 20% in the next year, before all funding was withdrawn in the following year.
- Cross boundary discussions

### Disabled Ramblers

Following a talk by John Cuthbertson, Vice Chairman of the Disabled Ramblers at the National Conference, Peter Radband invited the speaker to Swinley Forest to test for accessibility with Dan West, Assistant Forest Manager at The Crown Estate. The visit had been worthwhile, and a disabled ramble would be organised as a result of the successful visit. Members would be informed of the arrangements of this when possible.

### PROW Training

Members who had attended the Public Rights of Way training reported that the day had been useful and that the speaker, Sue Rumpfitt, had been engaging. Topics covered in the training had included 'What are ROWs', 'The Role of LAFs', and 'Proposed Changes in Consequence of the Deregulation Act'. However, members noted that the acoustics in the venue had impaired their experience of the training.

While speaking to other local LAF members, it was understood that other they had increased involvement with their Council's Planning and Highways departments, something which is hoped can be further developed with LCAF. With the exception of Slough, other local LAFs were also generally larger organisations covering a greater geographical area which meant that meetings can last for up to 4 hours. It was suggested that Bracknell Forest LCAF could meet three times a year, rather than the current two meetings. This would give members more time to discuss and progress important matters regarding access to the countryside and PROW.

With regards to the 2026 cut-off date for recording PROW, Colin Bird raised the fact that consideration should perhaps be given to urban paths that aren't on the Definitive Map. Graham pointed out that it would be a big job to get these urban paths

added to the Definitive Map and that it may be more appropriate to add them to our list of Streets. Richard Mosses asked about protection for cycleways. These are classified as Adopted Highway and are maintained by the Borough Highway Authority. LCAF is keen to ensure that urban routes are protected and as such, this should be raised with BFC Highways. **(Action: Graham Pockett)**

### 31. **News from Huddle**

**Rose Wicks** advised the Forum that she would be the main contact for Huddle following David Lindop's resignation, and that she would distribute any information of note via email or at meetings.

Rose shared highlights from the State of UK Public Parks report published earlier in 2016, including the following statistics:

- £50m estimated to be raised by park friends groups each year, up by £20 million from 2014
- 57% of adults use their parks at least once a month or more, up by 3% from 2014
- 5,900 was the estimated number of park friends and user groups across the UK, up by 1100 from 2014
- £70m was the estimated value of volunteering hours given by park friends and user groups each year, up by £30 million from 2014

The report also noted the challenges to the UK Public Parks including the deficit between the increased use of public parks and the resources available. For example, 92% of park managers' revenues had been cut over the last three years.

Members asked whether the increase in volunteering was related to the transfer of ownership of parks from Local Authorities to volunteer groups, and whether this would be the case in Bracknell Forest. Officers advised that although volunteers did work very closely and successfully with the Parks and Countryside Team, as far as they were aware there was no intention to transfer management and ownership to them. The Service had actually just recruited new staff in order to accommodate the growing portfolio of sites they manage as a result of transfer of public open spaces connected to local development.

Rose also advised of a Natural England study titled 'Using our Greenspaces for the Nation's Health' which demonstrated emerging evidence that 'connection to nature' mediates a number of health and wellbeing benefits, education outcomes and pro-environmental behaviours. Members commented that this report was a good evidence base from which to draw from for the plans and strategies that need to be reviewed next year e.g. ROWIP, BAP, Parks and Open Spaces strategy and any Public Health strategy.

Rose Wicks agreed to circulate the link to both reports by email. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

Members requested that Stephen Chown, Head of Parks and Countryside be invited to a future meeting to give an overview of the vision for the Parks and Countryside service, including the opportunities presented and the pressures and risks faced. **(Action: Rose Wicks/Graham Pockett)**

### 32. **Access Improvement Works**

**Rob Solomon** reported on the Access Improvement Works which had taken place since the last meeting. Pictures were provided in a presentation, showing members before and after improvement works had taken place.

#### Public Rights of Way

Funded in conjunction with the South East Berkshire Ramblers, a new bridge crossing and gate had been installed to replace the old 'squeeze' stile on Binfield Footpath 2 off Bottle Lane.

A southern section of Sandhurst Footpath 14 around the Wildmoor Heath area had been re-woodchipped and sleepers had been laid, as part of general maintenance before autumn/winter.

Upon the recommendation of Colin Bird some squeeze stiles along the western end of Winkfield Footpath 19, near Cheval Stud had been replaced with pedestrian gateways. Members asked whether the footpath and PROW which runs through polo fields could be used by pedestrians when a polo match was being played. Most walkers tend to walk around the perimeter of the polo pitch off the line of the footpath. In the event that they should wish to walk across the pitch during a match, the club has agreed that the match would be halted briefly to allow them to do so. Colin raised the point that it's hard to navigate a certain section of Winkfield Footpath 13 and suggested that the signage of the footpath could be made clearer to encourage use.  
**(Action: Rob Solomon)**

#### Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space (SANGs)

The entrance gate from the car park at Englemere Pond had been replaced with a more attractive wooden double gate. The old board walk had been removed and replaced with a raised stone path and a collection pond has been re-excavated at the end of the ditch line that runs from Lavender Golf Course into the adjacent woodland.

The metal gate at the pedestrian entrance off Harvest Ride has been replaced with a more attractive, wooden, self-closing gate at Longhill Park. Other improvements include removal of old unattractive concrete posts left over from the time the site was used as a rubbish tip, along with improved signage and new bins to encourage use.

Path access has been improved from Ambarrow Lane / Lower Sandhurst Road at Horseshoe Lake.

A new leaflet pack had been produced to promote new circular walking routes in the borough. The aim is to promote SANGs sites managed by BFC in order to encourage more people to visit these instead of the more ecologically sensitive heathland areas designated as Special Protection Area. 3000 leaflets had been printed and distributed to libraries, town and parish councils, estate agents and The Look Out. Natural England had been kept informed of this work.

**Colin Bird** asked whether LCAF could see plans for the new SANGs to be transferred across to BCF in the future, for example Cabbage Hill and its links with The Cut Countryside Corridor. Hugh Fitzwilliams highlighted the importance of liaising with the BFC planners to ensure that links between PROW and SANGs were maintained. Some discussion took place about the value of Pegasus crossings to enable potential links between bridleways to be promoted.

On a separate matter, members raised that the point that the eastern end of the boardwalk (Sandhurst Footpath 24) is not accessible. Richard Mosses / Rob Solomon would need to involve BBOWT in any decisions taken to address this matter, as this land is managed by them. Consideration would also need to be given

to the site's ecologically sensitive nature being part of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

#### S106

A new accessible bridge on Winkfield Footpath 6 had been installed on the route from Crouch Lane to Hatchet Lane. Approximately 230m of new path surfacing had also been laid from Crouch Lane, running alongside paddocks to prevent wet and muddy ground. The squeeze stiles on this route had been replaced with new accessible pedestrian gates.

A new bridge, path and steps had been installed to improve access to the Newt Reserve in Warfield from Gough's Lane. It was reported that it had been necessary to install steps due to the gradient of the site. The work also means that there is now a complete path connecting Flemish Place to Gough's Lane.

At Bill Hill, four new entrance monoliths had been installed to give information on the site and give a more welcoming feel. Signage was being introduced to encourage visitors to walk around the important and legally protected Bronze Age barrow at the site rather than over it. Further work at Bill Hill would include the addition of attractive, carved wooden sculptures at the site.

#### Cycleway improvements linked to developments

South Road near Broadmoor (will be) lit and surfaced to improve safety.

A formal crossing was to be installed over Rackstraw Road to improve access to Bracknell from Owlsmoor.

A new section of shared use path on the eastbound section of London Road would form part of the new National Cycle Network route to connect Newbury to Windsor.

In Warfield, new cycleways were to be installed through the Berkeley Homes development, and a new section of shared use path was to be installed on the eastbound side of Harvest Ride.

In the town centre, a section of shared use path was to be installed on the eastbound side of Millennium Way, and a shared use path on The Ring was to connect Bond Way to the bus station and train station.

Members suggested inviting Phillip Burke (Senior Transport Coordinator at BFC) to a future meeting so he could give a further update to members about cycleways linked to developments. **(Action: Rose Wicks/Graham Pockett)**

### 33. **ROWIP Review**

**Graham Pockett** informed the Forum of the planned review of the Bracknell Forest Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

The ROWIP was a ten year strategic document, and had been launched in 2006 requiring a new document to be established for 2017. The review was in a very early stage, but it was hoped that consultation with the LCAF and the Parish, Parks and Public Realm Forum could happen throughout. Ideas for objectives for the new plan were requested from members. It was recognised that some objectives and priorities might be currently unachievable, but a long term view needed to be taken. Examples given were the joining up of riverside paths along the Blackwater Valley, and other schemes that could potentially be funded when planning permission was sought on land.

During a recent audit carried out of the Parks and Countryside Service to improve processes going forward, officers had been informed that auditors would be looking for Local Authorities to monitor their annual performance against set strategies. A mechanism for doing this would be built into the 2017 ROWIP document, which would be published by mid-2017.

**Colin Bird** mentioned the need to effectively publicise access to PROW and parks and open spaces, as not everyone is aware that there's this terrific resource on people's doorsteps. Members were provided with hard copies of the 2006 ROWIP and were invited to comment on contents and order of the 2006 edition to advise the format of the 2017 document. **(Action: All)**

#### 34. **LCAF Annual Report**

Rose Wicks reported on the progress of the LCAF Annual Report.

A draft plan of the 2015 annual report had been endorsed and approved by the Forum at the last meeting, and was now available on LCAFs page on Council website at: [www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/localcountrysideaccessforumlcaf](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/localcountrysideaccessforumlcaf)

The 2016 calendar year annual report was due to be drafted and members would be asked for input and feedback on the final draft before being finalised and published online. Members commented that the 2016 annual report could make reference to the work at Cabbage Hill, and to the work at Frost Folly car park. **(Action: Rose Wicks and All)**

The Annual LAF Review Form had been submitted to Natural England in June 2016, and the next form was not due to be submitted until June 2017

#### 35. **Site Visits**

**Peter Radband** reported on the recent LCAF visit to Swinley Forest. Members commented that the visit had been interesting, and that it had been useful to discuss future plans with The Crown Estate foresters.

**Councillor Michael Brossard** reported on the LCAF visit to Wellington College. Members commented on the much improved working relationship between the College, local residents and the Council. Members had met with Mark Dodd, Head Gardener who had been enthusiastic about his work in the gardens. Members had been particularly pleased with the maintenance of the SSSI element of the estate, as well as ornamental gardens.

The Forum thanked Michael Brossard for organising this visit, and thanked Mark Dodd on behalf of the Forum for a pleasing visit.

Rose Wicks had sent photographs from the visit to Mark Dodd and would send copies to LCAF members. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

#### 36. **Report from Members around the Table**

**The Chairman** announced that this would be last time this item would be on the agenda, and that for future meetings members should ask for agenda items to be added prior to each meeting

**Richard Mosses** commented that he had been impressed by the use of QR codes on the South Downs Way and asked whether this could be made use of in Bracknell Forest. Officers responded that the technology would need to be investigated with the Council's ICT department, but that this might be useful for new interpretation at their sites. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

**Peter Radband** asked whether there had been improved security installed at Devils Highway to prevent raves from taking place. Officers responded that there had been no physical changes to the gate locking mechanism, and that the landowners would need to be approached regarding the security of the site. **(Action: Rob Solomon)**

37. **Any Other Business**

**Richard Mosses** suggested that the section of the Three Castle Paths, the long distance route which ran through the borough could be better signposted and given more publicity. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

**Jenny Yung** commented on the swift and pleasing response of the Council to recent reported fly tipping on bridleways.

**Rose Wicks** informed the Forum that a new events leaflet had been created and distributed. Hard copies were provided to members.

**Colin Bird** requested a LCAF visit to the Cabbage Hill SANG. Hugh agreed to provide BFC Officers with contact details for someone who could lead such a visit, so they could get something in place for members. **(Action: Hugh Fitzwilliams and Rose Wicks)**

**Peter Radband** asked members whether a meeting every 4 months rather than every 6 months would be useful. Members agree to add an extra meeting a year and this would begin in 2017. Officers would be asking members ideas for agenda items, in advance of the publication of the meeting agenda. This would hopefully help create more varied agendas over the three meetings and allow greater focus to be given to current topics / issues.

38. **Public Question Time**

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

39. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was to be confirmed in order to coincide with the new structure of three meetings in a year

**CHAIRMAN**