



NOTICE OF MEETING

**Local Countryside Access Forum
Tuesday 20 June 2017, 7.00 pm
Function Room, Fifth Floor, Easthampstead House, Town Square,
Bracknell**

To: Local Countryside Access Forum

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

ALISON SANDERS
Director of Corporate Services

EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 If you hear the alarm, leave the building immediately.
- 2 Follow the green signs.
- 3 Use the stairs not the lifts.
- 4 Do not re-enter the building until told to do so.

If you require further information, please contact: Lizzie Rich
Telephone: 01344 352253
Email: elizabeth.rich@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Published: 14 June 2017



**Local Countryside Access Forum
Tuesday 20 June 2017, 7.00 pm
Function Room, Fifth Floor, Easthampstead House, Town
Square, Bracknell**

AGENDA

	Page No
1. Welcome	
2. Apologies	
3. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising	3 - 8
4. New ROWIP	9 - 10
5. PROW and Local Developments	
6. Bracknell Footpath 22 (Nine Mile Ride) - cycleway proposal	
7. Membership and Recruitment	
8. Reports from meetings and site visits	
• LAF Chairs Meeting	
• Report on Hawthorne Lane visit	
9. Letter to Theresa May regarding post Brexit agricultural subsidy payments	11 - 18
10. Any Other Business	
11. Public Question Time (Maximum 10 Minutes)	
12. Date of Next Meeting	



**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
7 FEBRUARY 2017
7.00 - 9.00 PM**

Present:

Members:

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

In attendance:

Stephen Chown, Head of Parks and Countryside
Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Manager
Robert Solomon, Ranger (Countryside and PROW)
Rose Wicks, Parks & Countryside Projects Officer

Observers:

Colin Patient, Mid & West Berks LAF

40. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2016 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- An action raised at the last meeting about incorporating cycleways and residential cut throughs into the List of Streets was a longer term project with cross departmental working and cooperation required. It was suggested that this matter be raised with BFC Highways department and that their initial response be reported to members at the next meeting (**Action: Graham Pockett**)
- Rose Wicks clarified what was being referred to as a ROWIP review at the previous meeting would in fact be a new ROWIP, with a review of the existing ROWIP carried out as part of this work.
- Rose Wicks commented that QR codes would be considered as part of interpretation projects at parks and countryside sites. It was agreed that Rose would check the Council's policy on the use of QR codes with the Council ICT department. (**Action: Rose Wicks**)
- Rob Solomon reported that the lock on the gate at Devil's Highway had been changed to prevent raves from taking place.
- Graham Pockett commented that he had spoken to the author of the leaflet promoting the Three Castles Path, who had said that he would prefer people to rely on literature and maps on the path rather than signage

- Hugh Fitzwilliam had provided details of the contact for the Cabbage Hill SANG site, and he agreed to arrange a visit after Easter 2017. It was agreed that a suitable date would be found for this site visit for the person conducting the visit and LCAF members. **(Action: Hugh Fitzwilliams and Rose Wicks)**

41. **Natural Spaces in Bracknell Forest - opportunities and challenges for the future**

Stephen Chown, Head of Parks and Countryside gave a presentation on the Natural Spaces in Bracknell Forest with their opportunities and challenges.

Stephen introduced himself and gave an overview of his aspirations for the Parks and Countryside Service at Bracknell Forest Council, to “Optimise ‘Parks and Countryside’ on a strategic level, within the work completed by the council as a whole.”

Steven oversaw a team of highly skilled and very motivated professionals, in the delivery of natural spaces to the public. The work of Parks and Countryside at Bracknell Forest Council aimed to ‘provide safe, high quality and accessible natural spaces for recreation, health and wildlife; to sustainably manage trees, retaining the forest character of Bracknell Forest ensuring we preserve and enhance biodiversity for present and future generation’. It was commented that natural spaces contribute to all areas of the current Council Plan 2015-19, particularly encouraging healthy lifestyles and attracting businesses.

According to independent GIS data, Bracknell Forest was the area with the third highest green cover in the country at 39.8%, and Stephen recognised that although this was a significant benefit to residents, it had financial implications through woodland management. Stephen commented on an extensive woodland estate which was not in active management, and on good engagement with timber merchants to offset the cost of improvements to the woodland structure. There was a significant challenge in communicating the benefit of woodland management to the public.

Stephen commented that the challenge in the provision of new spaces created in the borough through development was to prevent ‘islands’ of land, and to create linkages between Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).

LCAF members thanked Stephen for his report. Members commented on the successful coppicing carried out in woodlands in the north of the Borough, which had increased the growth types and variety of native trees.

Members asked about the performance management of Parks and Countryside, and it was reported that this was measured against the Council’s strategic themes, listed under the Council’s Plan. For example, the number of Green Flag Awards retained for Parks and Countryside sites, the number of sites under active management and actions delivered as part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. It was recognised that Parks and Countryside continuously performed well in the biannual Resident Survey.

42. **New ROWIP**

Graham Pockett reported on the work started to produce the new Bracknell Forest Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the fact that LCAF would need to play a key role in its production and implementation.

It was commented that the new ROWIP would be based on the previous edition, although a number of changes to structure had been proposed. This included using measurable targets in the action plan and adopting a more comprehensive monitoring and reporting structure, with the plan to be reviewed on an annual basis. The new ROWIP was to be presented to local groups for consultation, and a final draft was due to be completed by July 2017.

It was confirmed that whilst the emphasis of the document would still be on rights of way, that the scope of the document should be broader and would include open access land, Local Authority maintained paths and SANG land.

The LCAF undertook a short workshop to consider the vision and priorities for the new ROWIP. Feedback was given to officers who would use this in the production of the new ROWIP.

Officers invited LCAF members to review the previous version of the rights of way user consultation questions and respond with amendments or suggestions by the end of February 2017. **(Action: all to send to Graham Pockett / Rose Wicks)**

43. **PROW and local developments**

Graham Pockett presented the PROW and Local Developments work.

The Warfield SPD (including the Berkeley Homes development) was discussed, which promoted an East-West Greenway link to encourage cycling and walking. Graham presented the East-West Greenway in closer detail, which was a tarmacked path through Berkeley Homes land to include playgrounds and community gardens.

There had been a reluctance from Natural England to connect new areas of development in Warfield with existing bridleways as this would require horse riding in SANG land. Alternatives for riding on SANG land were being investigated. It was agreed that linkages through developments were often successful, and work was required to continue connections between these routes.

Members commented on the crossing at Avery Lane, and advised that officers be mindful that it would become an access road to the Newell Green development.

Graham presented the SANG development at Amen Corner North, and commented that whilst this currently lay in the Wokingham boundary, the site would be transferred to Bracknell Forest to manage. An alternative route for Binfield Footpath 11 had been proposed as part of this development, which would go around the proposed development. Once the new route became established, the current Footpath 11 would be extinguished.

Members requested further updates on the development at Amen Corner North as available. **(Action: Graham Pockett)**

44. **Consultation on cycling on Bracknell Footpath 22 (Nine Mile Ride)**

Graham Pockett presented the proposal to permit cycling on Bracknell Footpath 22 alongside Nine Mile Ride.

The consultation arose following a proposal from the transport team to encourage cycling to the new TRL site. This would be in accordance with the approved Walking and Cycling policy in the Local Transport Plan, where the council seeks to promote

cycling by improving green infrastructure. At present, it was recognised that cycling along Nine Mile Ride was dangerous, but cyclists were not permitted on the footpath.

As part of the proposal, funding would be made available to carry out path improvements and to install appropriate signage to indicate pedestrian priority. As Bracknell Forest Council was the landowner, other uses could be permitted without reclassification of the path which would remain a footpath.

LCAF welcomed the proposal in principle, but commented that the character of the path should be preserved as much as possible, and a controlled crossing could be established to create a linkage over the Golden Retriever roundabout.

45. **TRO width restriction on Hog Oak Lane**

Graham Pockett gave an overview of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) width restriction being carried out on Hog Oak Lane. The TRO was being carried out as a result of concerns raised by residents and landowners.

Hog Oak Lane (a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)) had been damaged by large motorised vehicles that had created deep, muddy ruts. Fly tipping had also been an issue in the area. These issues had been reported by local residents and landowners. Hog Oak Lane was on the border between Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest, and so the improvement approach was joint between the two Councils.

Graham commented that there had been a comparable width restriction to prevent motorised vehicles using Hawthorn Lane, and that this had been successful for two years until recent damage to a fixed bollard.

Following a consultation with residents, there had been support for the proposal from local landowners. Only four objections to the proposal were received from Drift Road residents and they had agreed to withdraw these once access rights had been given. It was expected that implementation of the width restriction would begin in February/March 2017, and that restoration of the road surface would be carried out by RBWM when possible.

46. **LAF Annual Report**

Rose Wicks commented that she was drafting the 2016 Annual Report (calendar year) and would send round for approval when complete. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

The Natural England LAF review submission was due in June, and this would also be circulated to members for approval. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

47. **Membership and Recruitment**

Rose Wicks informed LCAF that a leaflet had now been printed to promote the Forum. Peter asked all members to identify countryside user groups which they could target with distributing the leaflet. **(Action: All)**

The leaflets would also be distributed to public locations such as South Hill Park, The Look Out, and libraries. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

48. **LAF Chairs Meeting**

Peter Radband commented on the LAF Chairs Meeting held in Maidenhead which had been attended by Peter and Graham.

Peter had been asked to consult the Forum on whether further LAF training would be useful and appropriate, and it was agreed that this would be useful in principle depending on the subject matter. It was suggested that future training could take more of a workshop style to share ideas.

The LAF Chairs meeting had discussed development of the M4 Smart Motorway, concerns regarding Access following the Brexit decision, and a greater co-ordination with the southeast region LAFs.

49. **Public Question Time**

There were no questions from the public.

50. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for 13 June 2017 at 7pm in the Function Room at Easthampstead House.

It was requested that the October date be revisited to check that this would not clash with the Conservative party conference. **(Action: Lizzie Rich)**

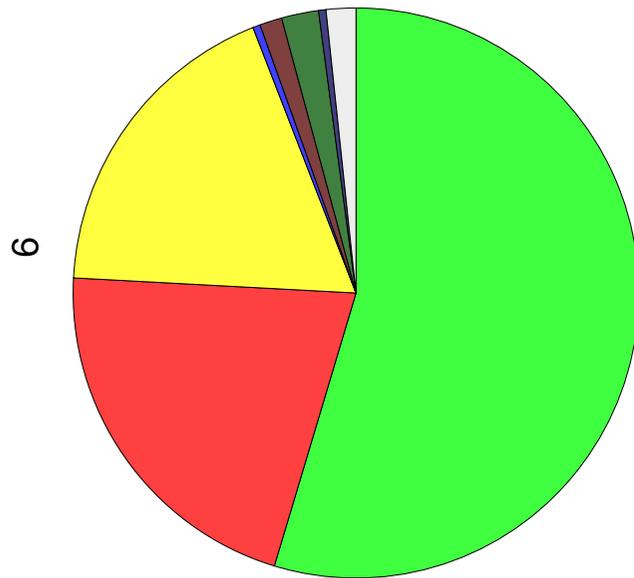
CHAIRMAN

This page is intentionally left blank

6. What is the main way you use public rights of way?

Question responses: 168 (97.67%)

6. What is the main way you use public rights of way? Please select no more than 2.



	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
On foot	54.66%	55.60%	75.00%	129
By bicycle	21.19%	21.55%	29.07%	50
On horseback	18.22%	18.53%	25.00%	43
By motorcycle	0.42%	0.43%	0.58%	1
In a wheelchair	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
By horse/pony-drawn carriage	1.27%	1.29%	1.74%	3
By motorised vehicle	2.12%	2.16%	2.91%	5
Other	0.42%	0.43%	0.58%	1
[No Response]	1.69%	--	2.33%	4
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	236

Table .2

Table .1

This page is intentionally left blank

AGENDA ITEM X: Access & future farm subsidies post Brexit

Prepared by: Janice Bridger

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

1. To review the MWBLAF position
2. To review the efforts of other groups.
3. To decide what further action to take.

PROPOSED ACTION

To review & confirm or modify the content of the MWBLAF statement produced by email consultation amongst Forum members since the January Forum meeting.

To contact MPs in the MWBLAF area and decide who will contact which MPs & when.

BACKGROUND

At the January Forum meeting, it was agreed that Brexit could, in theory, provide new access opportunities to benefit both landowners and the public. It was decided to draw up a MWBLAF statement which could be used to encourage others. This was done by email consultation (appendix 1). At this time, there appeared to be little activity amongst other user groups on including access provision in future farm subsidies although inclusion of environment issues were being discussed.

The MWBLAF statement has been distributed to a number of access groups /organizations (appendix 2). It has been posted on Huddle where there has been a small amount of discussion on the topic. A few LAFs have produced their own statement.

The topic has been proposed for the national LAF conference on 21st June but there is no indication that it will be included.

Assuming national bodies will promote Access & Brexit, the role of the MWBLAF might be to bring it to the attention of MPs in the MWBLAF area.

It is known that the Ramblers, British Horse Society & Open Spaces Society are promoting Access & Brexit.

MID & WEST BERKS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS IN FUTURE FARM SUBSIDIES POST BREXIT.

We believe there is a need to improve and update public access to the countryside through mechanisms which benefit both the public and landowners /occupiers. Subsidies to landowners /occupiers should be used to create and reorganise the public rights of way network where needed. That is, public benefit will be provided for public money.

Our main proposal is:

that landowners /occupiers should be financially rewarded for creating off-road links (ie. new rights of way) to plug gaps in the rights of way network and to connect existing rights of way which can no longer be used safely because either the roads connecting them have become unsafe for non-motorised users or because the rights of way network has become fragmented by the building of new roads. The required links may have been identified in local authority Local Transport Plans or Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

New access needs to be well publicised, targeted, selective, based on public demand and be attractive to landowners / occupiers. Ideally the new access will be permanent.

We also support **additional proposals** listed in appendix 1.

We suggest that **new schemes are developed** based on the better aspects of previous schemes (Countryside Stewardship and Paths for Communities). See appendix 2.

BACKGROUND

The problem

In the area covered by the Mid & West Berks Local Access Forum, there is a good network of public rights of way in many parishes. However, metalled roads have often to be used to connect these public rights of way. These roads, which include minor rural roads, have become unsafe for non-motorised users because of increasing traffic levels. Hence the public rights of way network is, in practice, fragmented in many areas. This needs to be corrected by providing off-road links by encouraging landowners /occupiers with financial rewards. Examples are given in Appendix 3.

A local access forum under Section 94 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, appointed by, and advising

Benefit of a well-connected public rights of way network.

The benefit of outdoor recreation in the countryside to physical and mental well-being is well recognized (Reconomics Plus¹). Our historic public rights of way network offers a facility to provide healthy outdoor exercise, free at the point of use, for a wide variety of recreational and utility purposes: walking; dog walking; jogging / running; horse riding; carriage driving; cycling; disabled rambling; orienteering; appreciating the countryside for its farming value, wildlife, history and archaeology. The network thus provides excellent value for money. It is also accepted that a well-connected public rights of way network supports local economies and tourism.

However, in many parts of the country with strong development pressures, the public rights of way network has, in practice, become fragmented because roads have become unsafe for non-motorised users. **Users of the network are taxpayers and, as such, deserve practical compensation for the loss of the links in the network that have occurred over many decades of growth in vehicular traffic. Where local policies have identified a need, opportunities to secure off-road safe routes need to be taken.** Landowners /occupiers need to be encouraged to help solve the problem by offering them suitable subsidies for new rights of way to re-connect and improve the network.

APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS

1. Payment for improvement of existing public rights of way: greater width / mowing / regrading and rolling of green lanes / improving the accessibility of gates and stiles / additional or improved way marking and signposting /providing higher rights where needed and suitable.
2. New access should benefit all non-motorised users, that is, pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.
3. Payment for helping to maintain existing public rights of way, perhaps relieving local authorities of some expenses.
4. Improved existing cross-compliance and simpler regulation.
5. Consideration of reorganization of the network to suit current land use, perhaps in exchange for new paths, and particularly where existing paths go through sensitive or potentially dangerous areas such as farmyards and where there are dead end, unused or unsuitable paths.

APPENDIX 2: FUTURE SCHEMES

1. Schemes need to be developed which make public access attractive to landowners / occupiers and enhance the public rights of way network.
2. LAFs should be more closely involved to ensure new access is useful and provides best value.

¹ - see <http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/pages/reconomics-plus> published February 2017.

3. Local authorities need to receive a financial award for the maintenance of new access and any other additional duties.
4. Previous schemes should be developed and improved eg. Stewardship access, Paths for Communities. There should be demonstrable public benefit. Schemes need to be better monitored than in the past - perhaps a role for LAFs or local authorities with payment?

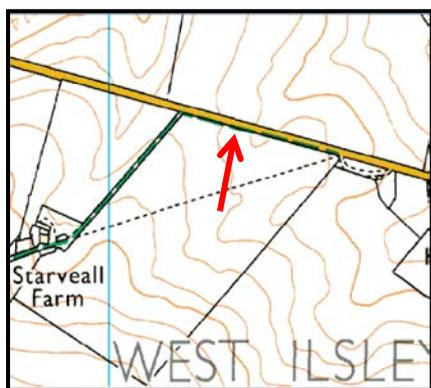
APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLES

Example 1:

The problem of missing links was recognised in '*Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians: a summary of priorities for Highways England's Network*' published January 2017 by Transport Focus². On the A35 near Winterbourne Abbas, Dorset, two bridleways emerge onto the A35 a few hundred metres apart with no provision to get between the two apart from using the carriageway. An off-road link alongside the A35 is required to enable the public to use the two bridleways.

Example 2:

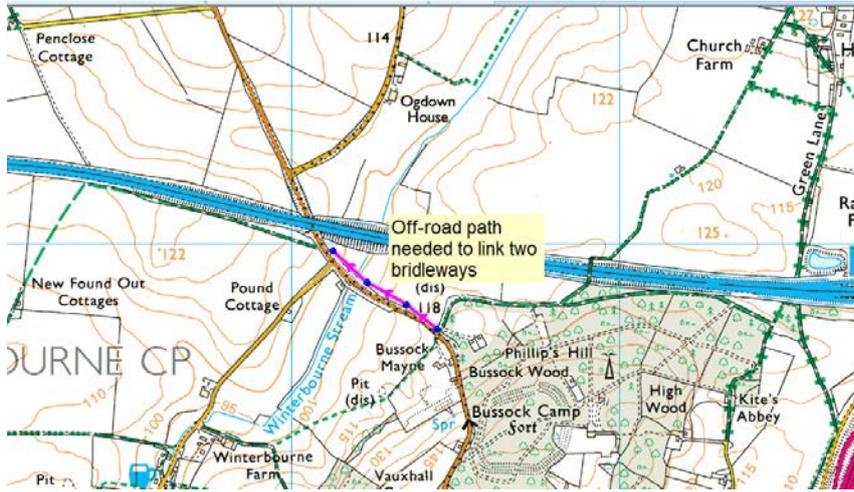
In West Ilsley, West Berkshire, a bridleway diversion for agricultural needs created an off-road link behind the hedge which keeps the public off the adjacent road. This concept needs to be developed by offering landowners / occupiers subsidies to create off-road links.



Example 3:

In Winterbourne parish, West Berkshire, the B4494 has become busy with fast traffic. An off-road path (in pink) is needed to connect the two bridleways (in green) to improve safety. The landowners /occupiers should be rewarded for this.

² <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/cyclists-pedestrians-equestrians-summary-priorities-highways-englands-network/>



Further examples may be found in Rights of Way Improvement Plans. For West Berkshire, see the online map at [on the Council website](#).

APPENDIX 2

Access & Brexit / future farm subsidies: Actions, distribution of proposal, other papers.

28th Mar 2017

Action	Purpose	Action / Response
Establish MWBLAF sub group		JB, CM, MP, PT, TV(email), SP(prov), JH, HB
Draw up MWBLAF proposal	To present case and ideas	Finalized 23 rd Feb.
Contact NE (Pippa Langford, Principal Specialist Commons and Rights of Way)	To find out what NE's plans are.	8/2/2017 PL replied: ' Natural England will not be running a consultation on this issue in the near future, however you may want to send your comments to Defra when it issues a consultation on the 25 year Environment Plan very soon.' 9/2/2017 reply: 'NE has not yet finalised its position on future farm subsidies so I'm unable to comment at the moment. But if you copy me into anything you send in it would be helpful.'
Respond to NWDAONB website: <i>Latest News Dec 19, 2016 Shaping the post-Brexit Landscape. Have your say.</i>	To ensure access issues are included (possibly with the Hampshire & Wiltshire LAFs ?)	Email sent 8/2/2017: no reply
Respond to Green paper(s) based on questions asked and MWBLAF proposal	To present case and ideas for including access in future farm subsidies	Green paper not yet published
Lobby Richard Benyon & other MPs with MWBLAF proposal		RP offered to help contact MPs
Encourage others (LAFs /user groups) to respond to Green Paper(s) & lobby with proposals		MWBLAF ideas received positively by Berkshire LAFs at meeting.
Approach NFU / CLA etc?		

Distribution of proposal

Sent by JB to:	Date proposal sent	Response
Natural England: Pippa Langford National Conference	26 th Feb	NE replied advising to contact Defra & MPs.
Berkshire LAFs: RBWM; Bracknell Forest; Slough	26 th Feb	
Adjacent LAFs: Oxon Surrey Bucks (via J Clark)	26 th Feb Taken to Feb meeting by CM. Via Berkshire LAFs Via Berkshire LAFs	
Other LAFs Leics (Stan Ward) John Law (S Lincs & Rutland)	26 th Feb 26 th Feb	
Other LAFs via Huddle	Posted 26 th Feb	
Ramblers – CEO following letter in Walk & email to area secretary – Laura Burley, Ramblers Campaigns Officer	26 th Feb 3 rd March	Encouraging Reply 27 th ; forwarding internally Reply from Ramblers Alison Hallas policy officer with their statement - I replied
BHS - regional access officers - Geri Coop (BHS / IPROW) - Mark Weston (BHS Director of Access)	26 th Feb	BHS produced / producing a statement in collaboration with OSS.
MPs: Richard Benyon		
IPROW via Facebook page	Private message 27 th Feb: not sure it worked.	
Open Spaces Society	Sent	
BBOWT - Kate Dent	3 rd March	Reply rec'd

Papers produced by others:

Open Spaces Society
Ramblers
Leicester LAF

This page is intentionally left blank