

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
10 OCTOBER 2017
7.00 - 9.00 PM**



Present:

Members:

Peter Radband (Chairman)
Mike Abbott
Colin Bird
Councillor Michael Brossard
Hugh Fitzwilliams
Simon Yates
Jenny Yung

In attendance:

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

Observers:

Richard Elsbury

Apologies for absence were received from:

John Deakin
Councillor Alvin Finch
Richard Mosses

62. Welcome

Peter Radband welcomed Forum members to the meeting.

63. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting on 20 June 2017 were approved as a correct record subject to the following changes:

- Item 53 was specifically an update on the feedback received from the ROWIP user survey and not the consultation on the draft plan, which took place at a later date.
- Correct item spelling to Hogoak Lane.

Arising from the minutes, the following points were noted:

- The final number of responses to the ROWIP user survey was 328.

64. New ROWIP2

Rose Wicks updated the Forum on the feedback received in response to the public consultation on the draft ROWIP2, which had now closed. Rose thanked members of the Forum for their input and advised members that the draft Plan would be going to the Council's Executive for approval at the end of October.

Feedback from 4 members of the public were discussed and the following points were raised:

- A request was made for a new cycle path parallel to Old Wokingham Road / Peacock Lane. Upgrading the surface of the current path (not a PRow) might help to improve access for cyclists, however not all of the land was in the Borough Council's control, which limited options about what could realistically be achieved. This matter was to be run past the Council's Transport Development Team. **(Action Graham Pockett)**
- It was suggested by a respondent that Murellhill Lane be recognised as a PRow, however as it was already classed as an ancient highway, it already had more rights than a PRow.
- The RoWIP focused on the use of pavements by cyclists but could equally apply to pedestrians on cycle lanes, which needed to be better reflected in the plan. It was asked whether there could be clearer distinction between paths and cycle lanes, including installing signage at points where pedestrians were likely to join the cycle lane. At the LAF conference there was little perceived conflict between user groups of shared routes and members' agreed that segregating a footpath might actually give rise to greater conflict, as it increased the perceived division between the two. **(Action Graham Pockett)**
- A request was received for a key to the tick system in resource requirements featured in the Action Plan table. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**
- Members' agreed with the suggestion to make full use of partner organisations to help promote activities such as walking in the borough. There would also be scope to create a map with parks and routes.

Feedback from groups and organisations was received as part of the consultation and Rose Wicks thanked Forum members for their contributions, particularly for the feedback they had provided to the Action Plan prior to the consultation going live.

It was noted that the promotion of cycle routes should be incorporated as a new action in the RoWIP, to sit alongside the action to promote circular walks (Action Ref.1). **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

It was suggested that the council should add an action to produce online copies of routes in GPX format, for Garmin/smart phones, as well as the current pdf versions. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

It was also acknowledged that there were opportunities to create connections between Bracknell Forest PRow and other authorities to create longer routes.

Feedback from the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership was discussed and the following points raised:

- The partnership would support a statement to get the Blackwater Valley Path dedicated as a PRow. **(Action Graham Pockett)**
- To take a wider approach to analysing the network. Expansion of the PRow maps to include cycle routes and green spaces, with consideration given to urban routes that connect between PRow and spaces. Reference was made to the study (Play, Open Spaces and Sports) recently carried out by Bracknell Forest Council to review and map all the publically accessible green spaces in the borough. This identified the importance of green corridors such as Edmund's Lane. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**
- It was proposed that the Forum should be consulted on housing development proposals over 20 houses to identify path opportunities to link up routes in Bracknell, although it was acknowledged that a working group would be

required due to the frequency of Forum meetings. **(Action: Graham Pockett to investigate and speak to planning)**

Feedback from Binfield Parish Council was discussed and the following points raised:

- Following feedback, the Binfield Neighbourhood Plan and other town/parish neighbourhood plans would be referenced in RoWIP2. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**
- It was suggested that the quality of PRoW should be examined alongside looking at the volume, as Binfield had a number of PRoWs which were poor quality or fragmented. **(Action: Rose Wicks & Graham Pockett)**
- In conjunction with the newly formed Binfield Environment Group, Binfield Parish Council would look to restart annual inspections as local activities; which the Forum acknowledged would make a positive contribution to monitoring the condition of PRoWs
- The Parish Council wished to improve signage for PRoWs where old names were showing. Providing there was no record of path name already recorded in the Definitive Map and Statement, LCAF confirmed that Binfield Parish Council were able and encouraged to do this and that an action should be included to encourage other towns and parishes to follow suit. **(Action: Rose Wicks to add to action plan)**

Feedback from Hampshire Countryside Access Forum was discussed and the following points were made:

- Hampshire Countryside Access Forum was pleased with the RoWIP2 especially with regards to maintenance and upgrading of existing routes and cross-border linkages.
- There was a greater emphasis on the many good shorter circular routes in and through Bracknell Forest which combined use of part of the Blackwater Valley Path with other rights of way.
- It was noted that walkers did not realise where boundaries were, which made an argument for consistent route markings. However, the boundaries were important for reporting problems to the correct authority.

The Forum also discussed the mechanisms in place for cross-boundary communication between authorities to ensure consistent standards of maintenance.

Following the consultation on the draft RoWIP2, the document was being finalised ready for presentation to Council on 27 October 2017. Officers thanked members' for all their input into the draft plan. The Forum agreed that they would be happy to endorse the plan, by providing a statement to be included in the main document.

Rose Wicks asked Members for any photo resources they had available, which could be used for the RoWIP2. Pictures were particularly needed of PRoW signs, horse riders, volunteers, walkers and cyclists. Permission would be needed from the people featured in the photos if the pics were to be used in the plan **(Action: All and Rose Wicks)**.

Rob Solomon and Graham Pockett updated the Forum on actions resulting from the new ROWIP2. This included

- Replacing stiles with more accessible gates along 5 footpaths.
- Surface improvements to 4 PRoW, including 650m at Shepherd Meadows(SANG path) which had been well received by local people and should ensure the path was more resilient to flooding in future.
- Hogoak Lane resurfacing and the addition of signage and new bollards to prevent access by unauthorised vehicles.

65. **PROW and Local Developments**

Graham Pockett updated the Forum on PROW and local developments at Amen Corner South. The current housing proposals couldn't be shown as the plans were commercially sensitive. It was acknowledged that the current pathways in the area were not good and it was hoped that the new development would improve access. It was noted that the proposed development would disrupt the current pathways and would mean diversions would be necessary. Major roads and cycle paths were planned around the development which would be used as diversions.

Currently Wokingham Borough Council had no plans to link their pathways to the Bracknell Forest borough via this site

66. **Membership and recruitment**

Rose Wicks updated the Forum on plans to increase membership and recruitment. Leaflets had recently been sent to Bracknell Forest libraries and Shop Mobility. Further copies were to be printed and distributed to local Town and Parish Councils, South Hill Park and The Look Out. Advertisements for LCAF membership would also be posted on BFCs social media. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

The Forum was asked to encourage new membership to the Forum where possible. **(Action: All)**

67. **Reports from meetings and site visits**

Updates were given to the Forum on the latest meetings and site visits.

LAF National Conference

Hugh Fitzwilliam reported on the National Conference and highlighted the key themes. Theme's included avoiding the desire to preserve the environment through limiting access and the issues with discourteous dog walkers. The success of LCAF in Shropshire to recruit from interested groups and encourage tourism was also discussed however it was acknowledged these approaches would not work for Bracknell Forest.

It was noted that the group would like to recruit from diverse backgrounds including those with disabilities.

LAF Chairs meeting

Peter Radband reported on the LAF Chairs meeting and acknowledged that much of the discussion did not affect the Bracknell Forest area. It was noted that the exit of the UK from the European Union could cause PROW to be put at risk due to the potential for agricultural subsidies to be discontinued. Bracknell Forest Council was to host the meeting in January and anyone could add business to the agenda.

Mid and West Berks site visit

Peter Radband updated the group on the site visit to California Country Park. £600,000 had been spent on updating the path so it was 3m wide and had sockets for winter lighting. New gates had also been installed; however these were not suitable for disabled tramper access. It was noted that despite the addition of winter lights, the paths would be too dark for children in the winter. Currently Wokingham Borough Council had no plans to link the path to Bracknell Forest Borough.

Transport Development Team Meeting

The Forum was updated on Peter's meeting with the Council's Transport Development Team. Phillip Burke was very proactive in this area and was happy to attend a future meeting of LCAF. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

The possibility of adding chicanes at Wildmoor Heath to protect cyclists was discussed. The Transport Development Team would investigate using quiet roads to link roads from the meadows through Sandhurst and on to Bracknell.

Forum members confirmed they would be happy to share email addresses with each other in order to be better placed to organise future site visits.

68. **Annual Report**

Rose Wicks confirmed that subject to receiving no feedback from LCAF, that the 2016 annual report would be uploaded to Council's website in the near future **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

Members were asked to submit ideas for the 2017 Annual report to Rose Wicks **(Action: All)**

Rose Wicks reported that Natural England had not asked for feedback from LCAF, which was usually submitted on an annual basis via an annual review form. It was agreed that LCAF should focus on the Bracknell Forest Annual Report and only feedback to Natural England if necessary.

69. **AOB**

WOW Week of Walks

The WOW Week of Walks led by the Bracknell Forest Society was very popular and well received even when there was poor weather. The Forum thanked Hugh Fitzwilliams for his contribution to the walks.

Cabbage Hill Site Visit

It was reported that the site visit to Cabbage Hill was very positive with impressive landscaping, biodiversity and trees from Berkley Homes.

TRL SANG

It was hoped the TRL site would be another high quality development and was planned to include a mix of flats, terraced and 3/4/5 bedroom houses, a care home and a community centre. The forum agreed they would be interested in an early site visit. **(Action: Graham Pockett to arrange)**

Michael Abbott reported that the three stiles close to Broadmoor on Eastern Lane needed replacing as the current high stiles were difficult to get over. discussed discussion took place on what type of gate would be appropriate to allow wheelchair access and it was noted that possible options were currently being examined by the Council.

Councillor Michael Brossard commented on the inclusion in the latest planning committee agenda of the requirement to investigate invasive plant species and eradicate them before building on the site. Members' agreed that this seemed to be a good course of action to take.

Rose Wicks confirmed that the group would be kept informed of the progress of the new ROWIP. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

70. **Public Question Time**

There were no questions from members of the public on this occasion.

71. **Date of Next Meeting**

Further meetings were to be held on the following dates:

6 February 2018

26 June 2018

2 October 2018

CHAIRMAN