

LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
2 OCTOBER 2018
7.00 - 8.45 PM



Present:

Members:

Peter Radband (Chairman)
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chairman)
Mike Abbott
Councillor Michael Brossard
Richard Elsbury
Jenny Yung

In attendance:

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

Observers:

Colin Patient, Mid & West Berks LAF

Apologies for absence were received from:

Colin Bird
John Deakin
Councillor Alvin Finch
Hugh Fitzwilliams
Geoff Paxton
Simon Yates

93. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He was pleased to announce that Geoff Paxton had now joined the Forum, although he was unable to attend this meeting.

94. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 26 June 2018 were approved as a correct record.

The following updates on action points not referred to elsewhere in the agenda were noted:

- Graham Pockett had contacted the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) about a sign to inform users of the reduced access of the new style kissing gates at Wildmoor Heath; a response was awaited.
- There had been little further movement from the interested parties on the possibility of setting up a new Bracknell Forest Green Spaces Forum.
- Rose Wicks had contacted Natural England (NE) about setting up and training Jenny Yung as a user on the *Huddle* package to assist with monitoring and sharing information of interest to the Forum; a response from NE was awaited.

- An update on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) would be made to the next meeting, with particular reference as to how potential improvement schemes (such as an upgrade to the bridge for the Three Castles footpath) can be identified, programmed and funded.

95. **ROWIP2**

The Forum noted that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2 (ROWIP2) had now been published and made available in hard copy and online. Initial publicity had been by way of a press release and promotion at an outdoor cinema event during the summer. Further publicity would be arranged through an article in the next edition of Town and Country, with copies of the Plan to be circulated to Natural England, neighbouring authorities and LAFs. A great deal of work and activity had been put into producing ROWIP2 and co-ordinating the work to begin delivering the actions set out.

Graham Pockett and Rose Wicks gave a presentation of ROWIP2, centred on the main policies put forward in the document, with some examples of how these would be implemented.

Policy 1 Rights of Way for all

Work was progressing with the help of the voluntary wardens to identify and map stiles and gates across the rights of way network, with a view to identifying those causing a hindrance to access, in need of improvement or removal if no longer required. An example was given of a footpath in Warfield which could be rated as having only moderate access owing to the three kissing gates on its length. Modification of stiles or gates on some paths was more complicated where agreement with multiple landowners was required. Binfield Parish had expressed interest in an audit of its RoW as well as paths across its open spaces being carried out.

Mapping work had been completed for three Parishes in the Borough. This now needed to be continued, for priorities to be set for where improvements were required and for more information on paths and routes to be uploaded to the website.

Policy 2 Fulfil legal duties

This entailed, for instance, responding to issues or faults reported. A case in point was the Sandhurst 13 path (Calvert Walk) where tree roots had caused an uneven surface in the path. A solution had been proposed which would involve raising the level of the tarmac surface. Members also discussed if this urban footpath should be turned into a cycleway, as it provided a valuable link to Uplands Primary School. It was decided that the works to resurface the affected section of the footpath should be implemented, as it would take time to explore and implement the cycleway option.

Other actions concerned the processing of Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs), for instance an Order to close Avery Lane had taken effect on 3 September 2018. This was to enable the continuation of work on the Redrow development at Newell Green. When the RoW re-opened it would be provided with a horse crossing and segregated cycle/pedestrian routes and include effective measures to prevent use by motorised vehicles. Notices were being prepared for the temporary closure of Warfield 17 (Pendry's Lane) and the alternative route to be provided. The contractor would be required to take measures to ensure tree roots weren't significantly damaged during the works, and to restore the route following completion of the works. This included, providing a surface that followed guidance by the British Horse Society and re-instating the gully at the side.

Policy 3 Routes and links

Work on the design of a new logo for LCAF was being finalised and it was hoped to share the design with Forum members shortly. The logo would initially be used for the LCAF letterhead and then for publicity leaflets and other documentation.

Action under the heading of new routes or improvement to existing routes included the proposal put to Thames Water regarding a permissive path between Cabbage Hill and Hazelwood Lane (to avoid the need to walk the busy Forest Road). It was hoped that further approaches would bring about this improvement.

Policy 4 Information and marketing

The Forum noted some of the information and publicity undertaken:

- Pre-roll video before an outdoor cinema event, which advertised LCAF membership, publication of ROWIP2 and the 100km of traffic-free cycle routes in the Borough.
- Public Health publicity about the benefits of walking/exercise, through Self-care Week and other media.
- Website information on rights of way updated to make it more accessible to the public.

Reference was made to the action to review and update the three Accessible Rural Route Guides (Jock's Lane and The Cut, Larks Hill and West End, Frost's Folly and Warfield Church), each of which had been rendered out of date by recent development and other changes. It was proposed to remove the guides from the website with a view to replacement with a series of new leaflets with suggested walks across the Borough. Robert Solomon volunteered to lead an LCAF working group to assist in the development of a number of suitable routes, which could be graded with a difficulty rating. A review of intermediate routes on the website was also necessary, and the information coming through from the mapping of gates, stiles etc could inform the process. It was proposed to circulate an email to members following the meeting outlining ways to volunteer assistance.

**(Action: Rose Wicks, Robert Solomon
All – to consider volunteering)**

Policy 5 Responsible use

This included working with the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership to encourage responsible use of the PRoW in the Special Protection Area, particularly during the nesting season (especially important for the 3 protected species - Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark). It was suggested that the Warden be invited to come to speak at the next LCAF meeting (or if not available provide an update for members).

(Action: Rose Wicks)

Policy 6 Preserve Rural Character

This was about trying to preserve the nature and appearance of ancient paths and byways in the context of surrounding new development and other recent changes. This would include the preservation of surfaces and hedgerows alongside RoW, for example the proposals for Avery Lane at Newell Green.

Policy 7 Sustainable benefits

The importance of this policy was supported by statistics from a recent report from Monitor on Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE). This showed increasing numbers of people are choosing to visit the natural environment, are doing so more regularly, and that the most frequent visitors are from the 16 – 24 year old

age group. Also, the Council's website received a very high number of hits on its cycling pages.

With health and exercise being the main motivation, this emphasised the importance of working with Public Health; a link to the relevant Public Health website pages would be included in the minutes when circulated.

<http://health.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/get-active/>

(Action: Rose Wicks)

Policy 8 Working in partnership

Members were informed of the dates of meetings of neighbouring LAFs which were open to anyone to attend. Interested members were asked to contact Rose Wicks.

Policy 9 Raise strategic profile

This included such matters as the new logo design and the recruitment of new members to LCAF.

96. PROW and Local Developments

Graham Pockett gave an update on the provision of new Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) in Warfield, showing detailed plans of each location:

- Frost Folly SANG was now open and comprised an area of about 12ha, which would extend to a total of 25ha when the adjoining Wellers Lane section was added. New ponds were to be included in this area.
- A site at Moss End Farm was being prepared, which would be the largest of the new SANGs at 25ha, and would have a number of access points including one from the garden centre.
- A site at Windmill Farm would provide a SANG of approximately 12ha.

These were all third party private SANGs, would provide the minimum 2.3km walk within their boundaries and would be connected the RoW network. Future management measures may include grazing on some of the sites.

97. Reports from Meetings and Site Visits

Reference was made to the recent walk led by Richard Mosses, commencing from the Binfield car park, proceeding around the Amen Corner north site and returning via Beehive Lane. This had been much appreciated by those attending. It was suggested that another walk for members be planned for late spring 2019.

Peter Radband reported on the visits to Wellington College (a second date was added to accommodate some members) which had been most interesting and informative. A further visit was suggested during May 2019.

Graham Pockett was looking into the possibility of a visit to the TRL site in order that members could view it during the construction phase and see at first hand the issues faced. It would need to be a day time visit if held during the winter months, which was acceptable to members if adequate notice of the date was given.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

98. **Annual Report**

Rose Wicks informed the Forum that work would soon commence on drafting the 2018 LCAF Annual Report. This would be in the form of an attractively presented, readable document. Natural England no longer requested LAFs to provide them with individual annual reports using the template they had formerly provided, but LCAF would still submit their version to them for inclusion on Huddle.

99. **Horizon Scanning**

Graham Pockett reported that the Deregulation Bill, which among other provisions contained proposals for the simplification of the notice and publicity arrangements for footpath orders, was subject to a continuing delay in its progress through Parliament. An update would be given at the next meeting.

Arising from the experience of the Mid and West Berkshire LAF, Rose Wicks indicated that she was looking further into a greater involvement by LCAF in local planning matters. For instance, some input into the development of new SANGs would be a worthwhile advance.

100. **Any Other Business**

The following matters were raised:

- Richard Mosses expressed regret that the Council no longer printed and sent out the agenda to members. Councillor Brossard explained the policy decision about agenda papers which had been applied across all Council meetings. Peter Radband agreed to print an agenda for future meetings for Richard and the officers would continue to display appropriate reports/presentations on screen at meetings.
- Peter Radband asked about the potential for local residents to take over maintenance of unused or neglected space. Some arrangements had been made through the Bracknell in Bloom initiative for local groups/individuals to plant up small areas of amenity land within the Bracknell Forest Homes estates. The Council would need to look at whether similar arrangements could be applied to any of its land.
- Attention was drawn to the continuation of the Nightingale Triangle Woodland Restoration Project, phase 2 of which was about to commence.
- Jenny Yung expressed her appreciation of the site visits that had been organised. In addition to suggestions for visits referred to earlier in the meeting, a visit to Easthampstead Park was also considered to be desirable. Although this had (or was about to be) transferred out of Council ownership, an enquiry would be made about a visit.

(Action: Peter Radband)

101. **Public Question Time**

There were no questions from members of the public.

102. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12 February 2019. Richard Mosses offered his apologies for absence on that date.

CHAIRMAN