

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
12 FEBRUARY 2019
7.00 - 9.00 PM**



Present:

Members:

Peter Radband (Chairman)
Mike Abbott
Colin Bird
Councillor Michael Brossard
Richard Elsbury
Councillor Alvin Finch
Hugh Fitzwilliams
David Warren
Simon Yates
Jenny Yung

In attendance:

Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Manager
Rose Wicks, Parks & Countryside Project Officer

Apologies for absence were received from:

Richard Mosses
John Deakin
Geoff Paxton

103. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He was pleased to announce that David Warren had joined the forum. David introduced himself as a member of the Trail Riders Fellowship.

104. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 2 October 2018 were approved as a correct record.

The following updates on action points were noted:

- Graham Pockett was still looking into the possibility of a visit to the TRL site and intended to plan this visit during the spring / summer when the evenings would be lighter and the ground less muddy.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

- Peter Radband asked Councillor Brossard to amend the wording of the policy to not print documents “unless absolutely essential” to “unless essential” as the qualification was unnecessary.

It was noted that Bracknell Forest Homes has changed its name to Silva Homes.

105. **ROWIP2 actions**

Rose Wicks briefly explained the purpose of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2 (ROWIP2) and the mechanisms of how the actions being delivered would be monitored and reported on. Parks & Countryside (P&C) officers would update members on actions delivered at LCAF meetings, as well as prepare a report by the end of March to present to Bracknell Forest Council's Departmental Management Team (DMT). Members were invited to share any updates to be included in that report.

(Action: All)

Graham Pockett and Rose Wicks presented examples of ROWIP2 actions delivered since the last meeting. These were centred on some of the main policies put forward in the document

Policy 1 Rights of Way for all

Action 10 concerned providing and maintaining an up-to-date online web-based map which was to include detail of potential impediments to access such as gates and stiles. It was confirmed that once the mapping work was complete, that this information would be made available to the public so that they could use this to better plan their recreation/work/school routes.

Work was progressing well to record and map Public Rights of Way (PRoW) furniture such as stiles and gates, with the valuable assistance of volunteer path wardens

Sandhurst was the latest parish being mapped, with an example given of footpaths which were deemed as having only moderate access owing to the five kissing gates along its length.

Work needed to be continued in Crowthorne and the rest of Winkfield once the mapping of Sandhurst had been completed.

A Borough-wide map of PRoW furniture would be used to prioritise resources to improve the network by removing obstacles to access. Consideration will be given to including this type of project as part of future planning obligations.

Members discussed the accessibility of kissing gates to all users, but particularly to wheelchair users, and the need to only provide furniture where it was necessary. BFC were asked to look into the possibility of depicting on the map where animals reside, so this can be used to inform decisions about if furniture was necessary on PRoW, in consultation with the landowner. Rose Wicks proposed to add this detail as part of attributes within the GIS data i.e. not as a symbol on the map, which was already very busy with other symbology.

The focus would be to finish this mapping work, quality check the information and then prioritise removing/updating what's deemed the least accessible furniture first. Members would be kept informed and involved in this project.

It was proposed to provide volunteer path inspectors with copies of the furniture map for them to check and use in future inspections.

(Action: Rose Wicks, Rob Solomon and Volunteer Path Inspectors)

Policy 2 Fulfil legal duties

Action 17 concerned responding to issues with PRoW. Graham Pockett updated members on the agreed new restriction to come into force to motorised vehicles

along a section of the Devil's Highway, and which was due to coincide with the closure of The Crown Estate car park

The new restriction was necessary to protect the surface of the right of way (Restricted Byway) from further deterioration caused by heavy motorised vehicle use. Preparatory work was already well underway, with new signage being prepared and surface repair works being drawn up so that its intended users (i.e. walkers, cyclists, horse riders and horse drawn carriages) could still access the right of way. There was a concern about people parking on the private road being the first section of the route when the car park was closed. It was decided during a recent consultation with residents that official-looking signage would hopefully discourage parking on the private road. A communication has been drafted to be included in the Crowthorne Eye publication with a link to the council website which would have more detail.

Other matters included the resurfacing of a small section of Sandhurst FP13 – Calvert Walk – following a report that tree roots from a neighbouring property were growing through the surface of the path. This route was noted to be very well-used and a good linking route used by Uplands Primary School. Resources have been allocated for these resurfacing works, which will be carried out by the end of the financial year. BFCs transport team confirmed that there are no plans at present to turn this FP into a cycleway. There was a mixed reaction from members about the suitability of this route for cycling.

Action 19 concerned processing temporary closures of PRow where required. Graham Pockett outlined plans for a new access road and beginning construction of a segregated crossing where Avery Lane (Warfield BW8) meets the new highway. A discussion followed about how pedestrians and riders would have to give way to new traffic.

A permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for Avery Lane was consulted on and approved by the Thames Valley Police prohibiting motorised vehicles and horse drawn carriages.

It was proposed to provide members with a copy of the PRow map so they have this to refer to at the future meetings.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

Policy 3 Routes and links

Action 1 resolved to review and update current online BFC route guides and maps. Rose Wicks had received suggestions about potential new accessible walking routes from a colleague who was a keen walker at a recent One Council event. One of these routes was a circular walk starting and finishing in Jocks Park Binfield, and passed through green spaces including Garth Meadows, Piggy Wood, Quelm Lane and Cabbage Hill. This route would be two miles approximately with hard surface for most of the route. There would be many pedestrian gates but no stiles. It was noted that the map displayed was not entirely accurate and would be redrawn.

(Action: Rose Wicks to update the route map and circulate for feedback.)

Policy 4 Information and marketing

Action 5 concerned supporting existing healthy walking and green exercise schemes and backing the development of new initiatives. P&C joined forces with Public Health

to run the Pope's and Amen Corner volunteer-led walk which celebrated Self Care Week and which ran from 12-18 November 2018.

Reference was made to the action to review the three Accessible Rural Route Guides (Jock's Lane and The Cut, Larks Hill and West End, Frost's Folly and Warfield Church). Members were asked for assistance in suggesting new walking, cycling and horse riding routes, which would then be drawn up by BFC and tested before being made available on BFCs website. A number of volunteers agreed to help out with this work, which would be done as a working group via email. Several members volunteered to assist with this work including Jenny Yung, Hugh Flitzwilliams and Colin Bird. It was proposed to circulate an email to members following the meeting.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

Rose displayed a list of activities promoted by the Public Health Team. Members discussed additional activities which they felt needed to be included on this list; in particular Park Run was deemed to be very popular in Great Hollands.

Policy 8 Working in Partnership

Action 28 concerned working with neighbouring LAFs and highway authorities to identify and address cross boundary Rights of Way anomalies and explore opportunities for promoting PRoW and circular routes. Other aims included exploring ways of improving consistency in signage and way-marking on cross-boundary routes. Members were informed of the meeting dates of neighbouring LAFs and members who were interested in attending were invited to contact Rose Wicks who would assist in getting something set up for them.

It was noted that Andrew Fletcher who used to work at The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM) is now the Rights of Way manager at Wokingham.

Policy 9 Raise strategic profile

The new logo designs (one in colour and the other in black and white) were displayed. Members agreed that the new logo made correspondence look more professional. The colour version would be preferred unless the letter needed to be printed in black and white.

106. New Cabbage Hill path link

It had been proposed to seek a permissive path between Cabbage Hill and Hazelwood Lane to avoid the need to walk along the busy Forest Road.

Thames Water who own the land have indicated their support in principle for the proposed path. They are progressing evaluations of how it might be implemented.

Colin Bird and Rob Solomon met with Ian Crump – the Biodiversity Officer at Thames Water – to discuss the proposal. There was enthusiasm on both sides to move forward.

Thames Water had indicated that they might like to transfer the land to the Council, which prompted Graham Pockett to check if this could be treated as a delegated decision. If the value of the land was under £400,000 then this could be a Director delegated decision i.e. by Andrew Hunter. The Hedgerow Regulations also wouldn't be a problem due to the small size of the opening required to access the land from Forest Road, opposite Cabbage Hill.

Colin Bird informed the Forum that there were lots of overhanging trees along the route. Members also considered the mast at the top of the hill.

It was suggested that creating a path along the boundary would be simple and inexpensive to do, but that there may be further costs associated with this work; for example Thames Water require a new stock-proof fence to be established along the line of the path.

Ian Crump was due to cost up these works and provide a quote. Members discussed options for funding these works outside of what could be provided by Thames Water.

Rose Wicks has been investigating whether this type of project would likely qualify for funding from S106 developer contributions for open space and recreation enhancements, It would increase the number of people able to access the countryside and rights of way routes and therefore help mitigate the impact of the local developments. A discussion followed re CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money which would involve liaising with Parish Councils and if the need arose to look at securing development monies then S106 funding might be a simpler solution.

Colin Bird proposed setting up another meeting with Graham Pockett, Rose Wicks and Ian Crump to go through the particulars.

(Action: Colin Bird, Graham Pockett, Rose Wicks)

107. **SPA and SANGs**

Rose explained that SPAs are Special Protection Areas and SANGs are Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces.

Horseshoe Lake SANG

Rose Wicks provided an update on the Horseshoe Lake proposal which sought to enhance the visitor experience, providing a welcoming place and removing barriers to access.

Councillor Brossard updated that the Executive unanimously agreed in principle to allocate money to this project. It would be necessary to undertake surveys (highway, wildlife, stakeholder consultation).

LCAF members were invited to form a working consultation group. Colin Bird, Jenny Yung, Simon Yates and Councillor Brossard expressed an interest in joining this consultation group.

Amen Corner North – Piglittle Field SANG

Graham Pockett informed members that this site was currently managed by Bellway Homes but due to transfer to Bracknell Forest Council from January 2019. This SANG, which was linked to a neighbouring Wokingham SANG (Stokes Farm), was now open to the public but was difficult to access through the adjacent construction site, although there are public footpath links from Murrellhill Lane and the Coppid Beech roundabout

Broadmoor Farm Meadows

Graham Pockett advised that this site was now open to the public. The site was part of the historic landscape surrounding Broadmoor and included the Butter Stream, wet meadow areas, woodland and a man-made knoll.

Peter Radband expressed regret that the kissing gate was inaccessible to wheelchair users. It was noted that livestock would be grazed there.

Securing links

Action 22 concerned providing links to circular / multi-use routes in existing and future SANGs with the PRoW network. Rose Wicks informed members that BFC's Implementation and Infrastructure Team were keen to engage with LCAF and in particular to receive requests for improved links for recreational routes. A spreadsheet has been created which will be distributed to members in order for them to make suggestions for creating new routes and recreational links and send these back to Rose Wicks to then liaise with Planning.

**(Action: Rose Wicks
All – to consider any suggestions)**

Members discussed the need for better signage for these routes and links and suggested that paths should be formally named. "The Hooks" was suggested as a name for the new Thames Water path as this is the name of the woods on the adjacent Warfield Hall land.

Graham Pockett presented the following examples of securing links, which had been provided by BFC Planning. Each one showed maps and descriptions:

- Linking Ralphs Ride to the open space at the Parks development
- Linking the Parks and Harmanswater open space has been partly completed
- BFC owned land north of Garth Pond which had no access northwards. A proposed development at Warfield presented the opportunity to create a river park alongside The Cut which was in the process of being completed by the developer. Members discussed the benefits of this being a designated PRoW as it was felt it would give longer-term security and eventually appear on OS maps. Rose Wicks would add to the list of suggestions.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

There was an existing route running through BFC open spaces Piggy Wood / Quelm Lane. The northern route linked with the existing southern route creating a leisure route from the Three Legged Cross in Warfield to central Bracknell. Hugh Fitzwilliams noted that this shouldn't show as a cycle track on the Ordnance Survey map as it can't be a PRoW and a cycle track.

The new route would connect nicely to the East to West Greenway and connections would be enhanced across the existing routes across Larks Hill, Priory Fields and Hedge Lane. It was proposed that improved signing as a through-route would be beneficial.

- A route needed to be determined to create the link from Hedge Lane to Westmorland Park over the Bull Brook which would be permissible to cyclists.

108. Site visits

It was requested that members be more proactive in proposing ideas for site visit. It was suggested that members could develop a "SANG tour" programme of evening visits during the summer months. The next visit after TRL would be Frost Folly Park (Wellers Lane) which was being managed by BFC although hadn't yet transferred to BFC. Members suggested visiting Horseshoe Lake to develop a clearer understanding of the proposal to turn this into a country park.

Members discussed the need for greater publicity of new open spaces. Rose Wicks informed that there were mechanisms in place for publicity including a SANGS webpage on the BFC website and a SANGS leaflet pack which was regularly distributed to libraries and council offices. Rose Wicks would bring copies to the next

meeting of LCAF. It was proposed that new SANGS could also be added as news items on the BFC website.

(Actions: Rose Wicks)

Members questioned whether LCAF had contact with Thames Valley Heath Partnership. Rose Wicks advised that P&C and the rangers had contact details and indicated she was looking to invite Sarah or another representative to a future LCAF meeting.

109. Annual report

Rose Wicks expressed apologies that the draft had been delayed. The draft annual report would be distributed to members once it has been completed for members' feedback before being finalised and published online.

Rose Wicks informed the Forum that there had been no request so far from Natural England about the need for LAFs to submit an annual review form for 18/19 financial year. This reflected last year's stance, whereby LCAF will upload their own annual (calendar year) report to Huddle unless Natural England suggest otherwise. Members expressed regret that the annual LAF conferences had stopped and that national and regional support had been cut, as it was important for LAFs to maintain the network of contact at a regional and national level.

110. Horizon Scanning

Hugh Fitzwilliams advised that there had been a vast rush of development applications in Warfield. Colin Bird added that these were not always on designated sites on the Local Plan and expressed regret that there had been three applications north of Forest Road in this year alone.

It was suggested that a member of the planning team e.g. Simon Cridland be invited to the next LCAF meeting to give an overview on development applications and the work being done by BFC to mitigate for the impact of local development.

(Action: Rose Wicks)

111. Any Other Business

David Warren advised the Forum that the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) was set up to promote responsible riding. TRF would be able to offer assistance to councils to clear overgrown vegetation along byways or potentially donate funds for resurfacing works. It was suggested to talk to Rob Solomon regarding the schedule of works.

(Action: Rob Solomon)

David Warren informed that TRF could assist at horse events. Jenny Yung offered to put David in touch with the British Horse Society.

(Action: Jenny Yung)

Jenny Yung advised that the British Horse Society would like to know if there are any unclaimed bridleways.

Councillor Brossard praised the rangers for an excellent job during the snow.

Peter Radband expressed that he was perplexed by the new Crowthorne Forest sign as it was listed as Crowthorne Woods on the OS maps.

It was noted that the Horseshoe Lake bridleway was not showing on the Definitive Map and this should be looked into.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

Councillor Finch expressed a willingness to publicise things for LCAF in his capacity as Borough Mayor.

It was suggested that rangers could run a series of events "introducing you to our new SANGS".

Members agreed that this style of room was preferable to meeting in the Council Chamber.

112. Public Question Time

Jennie Green asked when the new SANG development at Wellers Lane was due to open. Graham Pockett advised that he was not sure. Hugh Fitzwilliams added that Warfield Council were responsible for the car parking provision for this new SANG in addition to the existing one at Frost Folly. Jennie expressed regret that all the bins at Frost Folly were in the car park at Frost Folly, whereas they were distributed right across the Cabbage Hill SANG.

113. Future Chair of the Forum

It was noted that Peter Radband would be stepping down from the Forum following this meeting. In order to enable officers to plan the next meeting in conjunction with the Chair, the Group was invited to appoint his successor.

Expressions of interest had been received from Richard Mosses (current Vice Chair) and Colin Bird. Rose had provided members with an overview of the time commitment required to deliver the role of LCAF Chair. Richard felt that he couldn't always commit this time and was happy for Colin to step forward as he felt that his interest in cycling as well as walking would make him more qualified

A motion to nominate Colin Bird as Chair of the Local Countryside Access Forum was moved by Councillor Brossard and seconded by Hugh Fitzwilliams and a recorded vote was requested. On being put to the Forum the voting on the motion was as follows:

For (10) Councillors Brossard and Finch, Peter Radband, Mike Abbott, Colin Bird, Richard Elsbury, Hugh Fitzwilliams, David Warren, Simon Yates and Jenny Yung

It was therefore

RESOLVED that Colin Bird be elected Chair of the Local Countryside Access Forum.

COLIN BIRD IN THE CHAIR

The forum expressed their thanks to Peter Radband and he was presented with a gift from the forum in recognition and appreciation of his sixteen years' service to the Forum.

114. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 11 June 2019.

CHAIRMAN