

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
15 OCTOBER 2019
7.00 - 8.45 PM**



Present:

Members:

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

In attendance:

Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Manager
Robert Solomon, Ranger (Countryside and PROW)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Rose Wicks, Parks & Countryside Project Officer

126. Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded members that they were without the services of Rose Wicks who was on secondment elsewhere within the Council services.

127. Membership Changes

The Forum was informed that John Deakin would no longer attend Forum meetings since he had left the Crown Estate to take up a senior appointment with the National Trust. The Crown Estate had appointed a replacement, but he/she would not be in post until after Christmas, when contact would be made with an invitation to attend meetings of the Forum.

128. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 11 June 2019 were approved as a correct record.

The action points from the minutes were reviewed and updates noted as follows:

- The Chair had been provided with a contact at TRL with a view to arranging a visit to the Bucklers Forest SANG. Members expressed an interest in attending but it was agreed this would be more suitably held on a lighter evening, say late Spring 2020. It was further suggested that a visit be

arranged to the Blue Mountain site, where there was some concern as to the open space that had been created by the developer.

(Action: Chair)

- Work on the mapping of path furniture was in abeyance while Rose remained on secondment but would be resumed when she returned to Parks and Countryside.

(Action: Rose Wicks – in due course)

- Although work on the circulation and maintenance of a spreadsheet to hold all suggestions for the creation of new routes and recreational links had not progressed, it was nevertheless requested that a simple programme of suggested routes be drawn up. This would facilitate suggestions being brought forward for consideration as and when appropriate/practical. Richard Mosses had four suggestions for routes, two of which were referred to: a pedestrian route alongside Lower Church Road and then directly into Horseshoe Lake SANG and a route for the proposed new SANG in Warfield, (currently the subject of a planning application).

(Action: Graham Pockett)

- The work carried out by Rose to give greater publicity around new SANGS opening and the public access to them was appreciated. There was an ongoing need to keep website news items updated and make regular use of social media to reinforce this message.

(Action: Rose Wicks – in due course)

- David Warren repeated his offer on behalf of the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) about possible assistance with clearing overgrown byways and resurfacing works and agreed to liaise with Rob Solomon about this.

(Action: David Warren and Rob Solomon)

- Jenny Yung offered to identify a local representative of the British Horse Society with whom David Warren could liaise about local routes and events.

(Action: Jenny Yung and David Warren)

- Graham Pockett reported that he had been unable to find any reason why the Horseshoe Lake bridleway was not included on the Definitive Map. Since it was on land owned by the Council there was no danger of the route being lost and its status as a permitted route was assured. However, it would be possible to make a Creation Agreement in respect of the bridleway.

(Action: Graham Pockett – for future consideration)

- The suggestion under 'Routes and Links' for compiling a series of short, accessible circular routes with no obstacles and accessible surfaces had not progressed. The Chair agreed to take this forward with other volunteers, building on the suggestion that the routes be graded, such as fully accessible, accessible with assistance etc. so as to be most helpful to potential users.

(Action: Chair with Hugh Fitzwilliams, David Warren, Simon Yates and Jenny Yung)

- Details of the Nordic Walking programme and the Bracknell Forest Society's 'Week of Walks' had been published on the website, social media, etc. as requested.

- With reference to Working in Partnership, some dates of neighbouring LCAF meetings were reported later in the agenda. It was understood that the Slough LCAF was possibly not active at present. Efforts to revive the regional meeting with the Chairs of LAFs would be renewed with an offer from Bracknell Forest to host the meeting.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

- Little had changed since the report to the last meeting about the proposals for upgraded facilities at Horseshoe Lake Country Park. A 'Pre-App' had been submitted for consideration by Planning Officers, in advance of the planning application which would be submitted in due course for determination by the Planning Committee. While there was expected to be some local opposition to the proposals, there was also a lot of support. The Council's website contained details of the latest position.
- Hugh Fitzwilliams had led the site visit to the Frost Folly Park SANG which had been much appreciated by members.
- The Annual Report had now been drafted and would shortly be circulated for comments.
- With regard to access from the south to the additional SANG at Wellers Lane, an illustrative plan showing how this could be provided was presented. It wouldn't be possible to progress this until all the land was within Council ownership. The timescale for this was not fixed but it was likely to be a phased transfer of land over time.

(Action: Graham Pockett – at the appropriate time)

129. **ROWIP2 Actions**

The meeting was presented with a number of slides showing ROWIP2 actions that had been carried out.

Policy 1 Rights of Way for all

Surface improvements had been carried out to Warfield FP23 including installation of some sleepers together with some hard surfacing. Use of the sleepers would be monitored to see if they became slippery in wet weather.

Policy 2 Fulfil legal duties

Verge markers had been installed at the Devil's Highway junction with Bracknell Road in Crowthorne making it impossible to park without causing an obstruction. The car park at the site was due to close shortly; works to surface the byway for the benefit of legitimate users would then commence.

Following closure of the level crossing at Ambarrow Hill, works to refurbish and improve the bridge had been carried out by Network Rail, including surfacing, cycle barriers and fencing, all to a very pleasing standard. A length of FP9A would be extinguished and the formal process for diversion of the path across land owned by the National Trust was in hand. Network Rail would pay a commuted sum to cover maintenance of the new path, including provision of signage to assist walkers. The Forum viewed a map of the s119A Rail Crossing Diversion Order.

Policy 3 Routes and links

To complement the above diversion order, the Forum noted a plan showing a proposed footpath dedication in Ambarrow Hill to link with FP10 to the west. The

Forum was supportive of this idea. If dedicated, it would need a new footpath number.

Action 1 under this policy related to online BFC route guides to be updated and the meeting viewed initial proposals for a route through Garth Meadows, Quelm Lane and Cabbage Hill. The route was illustrative rather than accurate, and passed through a number of gates but no stiles. This would be a useful route for review by the 'Accessible Routes Group'.

(Action: Chair and Group)

Policy 4 Information and Marketing

The Forum viewed a slide showing details of the proposed volunteer led walks for the next six months which was about to be published. It was pointed out that the correct name was Shepherd Meadows (not Shepherds Meadow).

(Action: Graham Pockett)

Policy 5 Responsible Use

Following complaints about inconsiderate behaviour of off-road motorbikes on northern byways, a proposal had been made to erect signage to encourage courteous behaviour on shared paths. A draft sign designed by Rose (adapted from similar signs used on shared paths elsewhere) was very favourably received by the Forum. It was thought that such signs could be advantageously put up at the start and end of a route, possibly with one or two repeater signs along the path.

(Action: Graham Pockett)

Policy 8 Working in Partnership

Dates of neighbouring LCAF meetings were reported.

130. **New Cabbage Hill Path Link**

Graham Pockett and Colin Bird reported progress on proposals for a new Cabbage Hill path link. Discussions with Highways had indicated that the path as initially proposed emerged onto the busy Forest Road at a point where there was very poor visibility. An alternative suggestion, adding a dog leg extension in a westerly direction, would allow the path to emerge onto Forest Road where there was better visibility, and would be a much safer option. This would, however, entail taking more land from Thames Water and their response to this alternative was awaited. If successful, it was proposed to establish the route as a permitted path, with a view to making it a right of way in the longer term. It was agreed Thames Water should be pressed for their co-operation over this major improvement.

(Action: Chair and Graham Pockett)

131. **SANGs**

Rob Solomon gave a brief update on the continuing improvement programme at the SANGs in the Borough. Particular reference was made to:

- An interpretation map board installed at Lily Hill Park
- Path works at Lily Hill Park
- An archway art installation at Popes Meadow. This formed a striking entrance to the SANG.
- Path works at Bullbrook Countryside Corridor
- Path works at Whitegrove

Members were presented with copies of the new Thames Basin Heaths Partnership booklet "Greenspace on your doorstep". The booklet was very well received by the

Forum; it was noted further copies could be made available to any member attending an event where they could be distributed.

Hugh Fitzwilliams reported that Warfield Parish Council had expressed a wish to see a more heavily wooded area incorporated into SANG 3. A planning application relating to the SANG had been submitted. There would also be merit in increasing access, as well as links to Frost Folly Park and the proposed car park off Malt Lane. At the Windmill Farm SANG it was felt that the accesses and walking routes could be co-ordinated more conveniently.

Richard Mosses reported in relation to the Amen Corner North SANG that there was a diversion of the path (Binfield FP11) into Piglittle Field SANG while the developer built over an existing path and queried whether this was to be permanent. Graham Pockett indicated that it was originally intended that the new path would be a public right of way but there was now some uncertainty over the developer's final proposals. It was confirmed, however, that there would be a very good path in the woodland buffer zones just east of the SANG, although it would not be a dedicated route. The existing footpath (Binfield FP11) will be embedded in new adoptable highway for part of its length.

At the Big Wood SANG there had been improvements to the access as well as habitat improvements. A large section of pine was to be removed and restocked with native broadleaf woodland, although this was unlikely to take place until drier weather conditions in the spring. Interpretation boards, waymarkers and fingerposts had been installed at Jennett's Park linking the green spaces throughout.

132. **PROW and Local Developments**

The Forum noted that Crowthorne FP6 was to be improved by Barratt Homes as an important link from the Cricketfield Grove development to Crowthorne village centre via Furze Hill Crescent.

As mentioned above, new signs and interpretation boards had recently been erected at Jennett's Park, linking Peacock Meadows, Tasman's Copse, Jennett's Hill and the Rambler's Route.

133. **Site Visits**

The meeting noted that 4 or 5 members had joined the SANG tour of Frost Folly Park in the summer. It was thought that some ideas for improvements to this and adjacent new SANG off Wellers Lane would come forward once it had been transferred into Council ownership.

134. **Annual Report**

The Annual Report had been drafted and would shortly be circulated for comments from members. Once finalised the report would be sent to Natural England, published on the website and made available for internal use within the Council.

135. **Horizon Scanning**

The Deregulation Bill (which may result in simplification of some procedures on Rights of Way issues) had yet to materialise. There would also need to be an Agriculture Bill, setting out how the Government would support farming after Britain's exit from the EU. It was anticipated this would contain provisions relating to

environmental and ecological benefits as well as measures to support agricultural production.

Reference was made to the number of permitted paths in Bracknell Forest. The view was expressed that it would be helpful if these were detailed, perhaps as an appendix, and included in the Definitive Map and Statement.

136. Any Other Business

Jenny Yung reported that she had received introductory user training on the *Huddle* package. Initial experience had revealed little in the way information that would be of interest to the Forum.

137. Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

138. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 4 February 2020.

Following that, it would appropriate for the Forum to meet again in June 2020. Once a date had been fixed (probably either the first or second Tuesday in June) members would be notified.

CHAIRMAN