

BRACKNELL FOREST LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
27 September 2005
(7.00 pm – 8.55 pm)

Present: Diana Pidgeon (Chairman)
Chris Gardner
Mike Gates
Cllr Anne Haydon
Cllr Ian McCracken
Mark Osman
Peter Radbland
Caroline Tomalin
Simon Weeks
Derrick Stickler

In attendance: James Dymond, Projects Officer
Helen Tranter, Head of Cultural & Visual Environment
Heather White, Planning and Projects Manager
Cathie Hart,

Apologies for absence were received from:
David Bertie
Celia Blay
Robert Bonney

56. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all members of the Forum to the meeting.

57. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 22 February 2005 were approved as a correct record.

58. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) (Item 4)

James Dymond, the Councils Projects Officer, presented the final draft of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan to the Forum. Members were asked to provide feedback on the consultation document and to offer suggestions for additional information and possible improvements to the plan before it was circulated to interested groups.

The Forum raised a number of comments on the consultation draft which are detailed below:

- There should be reference to heritage guides published by Parish Councils in the Action Plan.
- There needed to be more substance to cross boundary issues.
- A section on the rights and responsibilities of both land owners and members of the public should be included in the document.
- There needed to be some reference to rural crime in the document, such as

details of who people should contact if they witness suspicious behaviour.

- The Action in relation to disabled access to all areas of the countryside should be amended to 'where practicable/suitable' as it was not always possible to ensure disabled access.

The Forum raised concerns about rural crime in the Borough and asked that it receive a presentation from the police at its next meeting to address these concerns.

The Forum thanked James and Heather for their work on the ROWIP. Members noted that once the consultation period had ended, and subject to no significant comments being made, it would be presented to the Executive Member to be signed off.

59. National Countryside Access Forum (NCAF)

For information, the Forum received the minutes from the meeting of the National Countryside Access Forum. Members noted that if they required more information about membership of this forum, they should contact the Local Countryside Access Office.

60. DEFRA Natural Environment and Communities Bill (NERC)

The Forum was presented with the key elements of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill for discussion. The Bill was designed to help achieve a rich and diverse natural environment and thriving rural communities, through modernised and simplified arrangements for delivering government policy. It would implement key elements of the Government's Rural Strategy and establish new structures with a strong customer focus.

The Forum noted that the Bill awaited its Third reading in the House of Commons and would then pass to House of Lords. Further information would be presented to members at a later date.

61. Consultation on amendment of the Local Access Forum regulations

The Forum was presented with the consultation paper on amendments to the Local Access Forum regulations. The document set out a number of amendments that could be made to help the effectiveness of forums. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs asked for comments to be submitted by 29 November 2005.

The Forum discussed the document and considered the proposals. Members agreed that most proposals were sensible. However, they agreed that membership should not be widened. Furthermore, it was felt that the current remit of the Forum was more than enough but in order to keep updated, minutes from other Forums should be sent out with the agenda for noting.

62. Hogoak Lane

Mike Gates presented the Forum with several pictures of Hogoak Lane in Warfield. He informed Members that because of persistent use by motorised vehicles the lane had been spoiled. He requested that the Council considered putting down

some kind of protective surface to improve the condition of the road.

The Forum discussed the road and felt that because of the heavy rain during the early part of the year, this would have played a part in loosening the soil. Members agreed that the road should be monitored and, if it did worsen to a point where access was not possible, it should be looked at again.

63. Bracknell Forest rights of way and access update

The Forum received several updates on the following issues, the Green Flag awards, Snaprails Park, Shepherd Meadows, Lily Hill Park, South Hill Park and a number of biodiversity and nature projects. Members were particularly pleased to note that funding, totalling £964,000, for the second phase of the Lily Hill Park restoration project had been approved.

64. CROW Access Land – Forestry Commission

For information, the Forum was presented with a map outlining the Forest Enterprise land dedicated for open access under the CROW Act 2000.

65. Watersplash Lane Ford Update (Item 8)

The Forum was advised that reinstatement of the ford was still being held up by the Environment Agency (necessary because the work required would involve altering the bed of the river). Members were welcome to contact Ken Wherrell in the Council Streetcare department if they wished to visit the site.

66. Syngenta Bridleway, Warfield – Update (Item 9)

The Forum was advised that planning permission had been granted and work on the Syngenta Bridleway in Warfield would begin next week. It was hoped to be open on the ground by November 2005, although the formal legal issues were likely to take longer. Members agreed that it would be good if they could meet and walk around the bridleway in the new year.

67. Review and membership of Forum

The Forum was advised that as the Forum had been in existence for three years, it was necessary to review its membership. Members would need to reapply if they wished to remain on the Forum. An advertisement would be placed in the local press in due course and a letter would be sent to existing Members asking them if they wished to reapply.

68. Items for Next Meeting Agenda

- Rights of Way Improvement Plan Consultation draft
- Presentation from the Police on rural crime
- Update on Watersplash Lane Ford

69. **Any Other Business (Item 11)**

Members were reminded about the regional training event taking place in London for all Local Access Forum Members. It was unfortunate that no one could make the session. However, it was suggested that Members considered visiting other Local Access Forums in the region.

During the meeting, the Forum asked about the use of signs telling members of the public where they should take care or not walk. Heather agreed to ask the NFU about this issue and find out whether this was done elsewhere in the country.

(ACTION: Heather White)

70. **Public Question Time**

Mr Richard Mosses asked the Forum about the access to Crowthorne footpath 1. He raised concerns about the decreasing width of the footpath and the gate at the entrance to the footpath, which had become difficult to use. Heather advised Mr Mosses that she was in discussions about both issues with the developers. She would advise on progress at the next meeting.

71. **Date of next meeting**

To be arranged in February/March 2006

(Following the meeting, a date was agreed with the Chairman to hold the next meeting on Tuesday 4th April 2006, 7pm).

CHAIRMAN