

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
7 JUNE 2022
7.00 - 9.05 PM**



Present:

Members:

Colin Bird (Chair)
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Michael Brossard
Councillor Alvin Finch
Hugh Fitzwilliams
Geoff Paxton
Jane Rimmer
Jenny Yung

In attendance:

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

Observers:

Nicholas Ballard
Heather Brown

Apologies for absence were received from:

Sue McDaid

218. Welcome

The chair welcomed the forum to the meeting.

219. Apologies

Apologies were received from Sue McDaid.

220. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

Rose Wicks highlighted a mistake in the wording of the heading for minute 209 and it was agreed to change it to the following: "ROWIP2 Mid-Term Review and Definitive Map Consolidation".

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2022 were approved as a correct record subject to that amendment.

An update on the actions was available in Appendices 1 to 3 of the agenda reports pack. Colin Bird noted that the actions were progressing well.

Rose Wicks thanked Councillor Brossard for his feedback on the rural route leaflet for Cabbage Hill and The Cut Circuit and invited any further comments from the forum to be made by the end of the week so that it could be submitted for final design.

221. **PRoW Improvements/Issues**

Proposal to improve Sandhurst FP15 surface

Rose Wicks updated that the Parks & Countryside team was working on a project to improve the surface condition along Sandhurst FP15 which was a very narrow path not accessible by wheelchair / buggy but used as a popular through route by pedestrians. The path was currently unsurfaced and was prone to becoming muddy underfoot in the autumn and winter and overgrown with vegetation during the spring and summer. Resurfacing work would help to resolve this and improve the footpath's accessibility. Approval was being sought from the Council to fund improvements.

Rob Soloman added that contractors were standing-by to do the work pending approval.

Due to the narrow path, it was anticipated to be a slow process as they would not be able to use normal machinery to get up and down so it would all be done manually. Residents neighbouring the footpath had been consulted and no comments or queries had been received.

Warfield FP7

Rob Solomon advised that funding had been received from the Ramblers to install a boardwalk along the eastern section of Warfield FP7. The section formed part of the Bracknell Forest Ramblers' Route and would increasingly be used to link the new Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) sites of Windmill Farm and the several Frost Folly sites. Approval had been received from the landowner to put in extra drainage and install an extra boardwalk section. It was hoped that work would start summer / autumn 2022, using volunteer groups and the rangers. The new boardwalk would make it more accessible throughout the year.

Winkfield FPs13 and 19

Graham Pockett explained that the diversion order had been drafted and was about to be issued, at which point notices would go out to landowners and parish councils, etc. There would be the usual 42-day consultation process. There was still some work to do with the polo club as they would need to make the surface conditions suitable. Geoff Paxton advised that Winkfield Parish Council were in favour of this. The forum was keen for way-markers to be installed as the route of the diversion would not be clear otherwise.

3 Castles Path over the railway

Geoff Paxton advised that he had suggested to the Highways department to put in some traffic lights at the point the Swinley Road goes over the railway line (road bridge), but they declined. Pedestrians had to walk with the traffic up the hill, and the road was derestricted so vehicles could be travelling up to 60 mph (the speed limit would need to be decreased if traffic lights were installed). Members discussed alternative options: installing signage clearly stating that pedestrians would be using the footbridge and painting a white line in the middle of the road to encourage vehicles to slow down. Geoff agreed to raise it at Winkfield Parish Council meetings, and it was suggested that the LCAF could also make representation.

Access to Whitmoor Bog / Bog Lane from Martins Heron

Colin Bird had been contacted by a member of the public who had also contacted the Ramblers. Pedestrians used to be able to access Whitmoor Bog unofficially through gaps in the fence adjacent to New Forest Ride. The fence had now been repaired by the Council at the request of The Crown Estate (there was a legal agreement to

maintain the fence), resulting in no access at this point. There had been a sign on site saying that walkers were welcome, but it was unclear whether the sign was still there. Chris Swatridge had spoken to The Crown Estate, and they said that they do not want this to be a formal access point, and that there were plenty of other formal access points to their land. The forum understood the need for the fence to be repaired but would be concerned about public access to open spaces being reduced and would like to have clarification on The Crown Estate's intentions for public access to Whitmoor Bog from other access points. It was agreed to invite a representative from The Crown Estate to the next meeting. **(Action: Rose Wicks / Graham Pockett)**

Access to Napier Woods and the Broadmoor Estate

Colin Bird had been contacted by the Ramblers Association following new signs being installed discouraging access to woodland on the Broadmoor Estate. The new signs were positioned on forest tracks in areas of woodland that had been used by local residents over many years / generations. It was unclear why the signs had been put up. It was agreed that Graham would write to the Broadmoor Estate for clarification. **(Action: Graham Pockett)**

222. **RoWIP2 Mid-term Review**

Rose Wicks thanked members who had provided feedback to the action plan. LCAF had been identified as a key partner / lead on many of the actions. The final copy of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP2) mid-term review would be sent out to LCAF for feedback before submitting for approval by the 30 August 2022 deadline.

Colin Bird expressed that he was impressed by how many actions had already been progressed. Rose Wicks agreed and added that there were also some actions which were unlikely to be progressed. This was because they contained unrealistic expectations or timescales; those actions would be kept in the review, but explanations would be added as to why they would not be delivered. Colin Bird suggested that it needed to be clarified that green-coded actions meant that the actions were on target to be completed, not that they were completed.

223. **Definitive Map Consolidation**

Graham Pockett explained that the definitive map was being reviewed as it was ten years since its last publication. The definitive statement would also need to be checked. The definitive map would include any changes to Public Rights of Way (PRoW). The first stage of the process had been double checking that the GIS record was correct as that would form the basis for creating the set of maps. Graham had collected all the modification orders which had happened since the last consolidation. Some older Berkshire County Council modification orders had the widths stated, but newer ones did not, so Graham was going to compare them with older records to see if the widths could be added into the statement. The forum expressed that it would be interesting to see whether any of the defined widths had got narrower, such as if fences had been installed or vegetation had become overgrown. Rose Wicks added that the definitive map needed to factor in all the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) as well. Rose was doing some work to map the TROs and was hoping to be able to provide that information online.

224. **PRoWs and Local Developments**

Jealott's Hill and the proposed new garden village

The forum discussed the proposed new garden village and noted the following:

- There was a need to ensure that the rural bridleways were maintained so that equestrian users could continue to use the bridleways.
- The Council had jurisdiction over the bridleways so developers would not be able to make changes without consulting the Council.
- It was felt that a proposed new bridleway to the east of the proposed development would be a great addition to connect through and make a circuit.
- Once the outcome of the consultation on the local plan was known, the forum should contact the developers to positively engage about the PRowS and how to make the best out of them for current as well as future users.
- It was agreed to establish a planning subgroup to review new developments that could impact PRowS or countryside access. Colin Bird, Jane Rimmer, Hugh Fitzwilliams, Richard Mosses, and Jenny Yung agreed to be part of that subgroup. Graham Pockett felt it would be helpful to have officer input as well as he received direct consultation for most applications so he would be able to pick them up early on and bring them to the forum's attention. Colin and Graham would discuss facilitation of the subgroup. **(Action: Colin Bird and Graham Pockett)**

It was noted that Local Access Forums were advisory bodies. Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act defined their statutory function as being to advise as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed.

225. **Claimed Rights of Way**

Track from Forest Road to Warfield Park

Graham Pockett explained that the track mostly belonged to the Warfield Park Estate but there was a separate owner of the northern section. It was an important route connecting the village of Hayley Green to local facilities, as well as being a link between Westmorland Park and Hayley Green Wood. The landowner of the northern end had seen a huge increase in the number of people using the track and had started challenging people saying it was private land, claiming that they had no right to use it. This had triggered over 40 submissions of new user evidence forms to the council. The RoW team had also had a letter from the Warfield Park Estate solicitors outlining their view that it was private land. The team needed to objectively analyse all the evidence presented and then make a recommendation to the Director of Place, Planning and Regeneration. It was unlikely that the landowners would willingly designate it as a RoW; therefore, any decision made was likely to be appealed, in which case it would go to the Planning Inspectorate.

Perry Bridge Farm to Horseshoe Lake and Ambarrow Farm to Perry Bridge

These were found as part of the Ramblers Association review of lost paths (there was no current path on the ground for either of them). The southern path was on land subject to a planning application which had gone to appeal. The plan was to build houses on the southeast side of the path, including a new Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), which would incorporate the land where the former path was located. If the planning application were approved and the SANG went ahead, the forum could influence getting access at that point. The other path was not part of any current planning application. In order to reinstate a historic path, a substantial amount of evidence would be required to claim it as a historic RoW. It was suggested that the Forum could support but the Ramblers Association would need to provide all the evidence. However, it was noted that the northern path had just been moved and so did still exist and therefore reinstating the former path would be redundant. The forum agreed to support the application to reinstate the southern path, and Colin Bird would add it to the action list. **(Action: Colin Bird)**

Beaufort Park

Nicholas Ballard had requested LCAF support for reinstatement of a former footpath within Beaufort Park or for a diverted path to go through the area. Colin Bird highlighted that part of the old footpath would go through a cemetery which would not be a good place to put a PRow. Development on one part of the Beaufort Park Estate was in progress. There were plans for further potential development of the estate and if the application were approved it may be appropriate for the forum to approach the developers.

The forum discussed access across Nine Mile Ride from South Road to Buckler's Forest SANG. A new crossing had been established near the Golden Retriever which made a safe crossing but did not connect to the SANG due to being too close to the Special Protection Area (SPA). This was frustrating for local people who could not access the open space. The forum had been advised in the past that, when the development was further progressed, they may be opening up an entrance on the north side. The intention was to join up Buckler's Forest and Great Hollands recreation ground SANGs as well as the Beaufort Park development in the future. Graham agreed to look into that. **(Action: Graham Pockett)**

Lane between Warfield Road and the former Garth Hill College site

Rob Solomon had done some land registry research and a strip of land had been sold off to one of the houses to extend their garden meaning that it was no longer a continuous piece of land owned by the Council. Therefore, unless the landowner voluntarily released the land (which they would be unlikely to do), it was unlikely that the lane could be reclaimed. It was agreed to take it off the action plan. **(Action: Colin Bird)**

226. **Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces**

Rob Solomon updated that, following the tender process, management of Buckler's Forest had been transferred to Bracknell Forest Council for the next ten years. A new site ranger had been appointed and they would have specific site responsibilities. Colin Bird highlighted that this was a different arrangement than usual, as most SANGs were transferred freehold to the Council to manage in perpetuity. As managers, the Council would have some level of control over the site and would be able to propose improvements, subject to liaising with various bodies.

227. **Administration**

The forum discussed membership and recruitment and felt that it would benefit from disabled representation and more interaction between LCAF and The Crown Estate. Nicholas Ballard was invited to join the forum and could contact Rose Wicks to go through the appropriate process.

Rose Wicks explained that the online application form was changing due to website redevelopment work. It was expected that the form would still be easy to complete.

Rose had been looking at ways to promote LCAF and would like some photos to publicise in the Parks and Countryside newsletter.

228. **Annual Report**

Rose Wicks agreed to circulate the Annual Report for 2020 and 2021 for comments. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

Rose explained that she was also working on pulling information together for the 2022 Annual Report.

229. **Any Other Business**

Rose Wicks highlighted that she had been working with Bracknell Forest Council colleagues and Accessible (formerly known as Disabled Go) to improve accessibility information on the Bracknell Forest Council Parks to Visit web pages, following feedback from a resident who was struggling to find out information about disabled facilities. AccessAble had agreed to complete site visits to audit accessibility.

Rob Solomon updated on some current and future projects. A new section of boardwalk on Crowthorne FP18 was nearing completion, linking back to the long section of boardwalk on Sandhurst FP24 through Wildmoor. There were some future planned works to stone-surface a section of Sandhurst FP14 which also linked back to those two paths. These works had been planned as part of a wider project to return grazing to the Heathlands site.

There were currently contractors working at Horseshoe Lake doing some SANG improvements to a pathway around the back of the water sports centre at Southern Meadow, providing a “quieter route”. Colin Bird noted that this had been proposed previously and asked that it be added to the agenda next time for an update.

(Action: Rob Solomon)

230. **Public Question Time**

There were no comments or questions.

231. **Date of Next Meeting - 11 October 2022**

The date of the next meeting would be 11 October 2022 at 7pm, venue to be confirmed.

CHAIRMAN