

**LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
11 OCTOBER 2022
7.00 - 9.05 PM**



Present:

Members:

Colin Bird (Chair)
Richard Mosses (Vice-Chair)
Nicholas Ballard
Councillor Michael Brossard
Richard Elsbury
Councillor Alvin Finch
Hugh Fitzwilliams
Sue McDaid
Geoff Paxton

In attendance:

Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Manager
Robert Solomon, SANG and Rights of Way Officer
Rose Wicks, Data & Communications Officer

Observers:

Rory Kerr, The Crown Estate

Apologies for absence were received from:

David Warren
Jenny Yung

232. Welcome

The chair welcomed the forum to the meeting. Nicholas Ballard was welcomed as a new member of the forum. Rory Kerr was also welcomed as an observer in his role as forest warden at The Crown Estate.

233. Apologies

Apologies were received from David Warren and Jenny Yung. It was noted that Jane Rimmer had left the forum.

234. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2022 were approved as a correct record.

A summary of progress on the action points from the meeting was included in Appendix 1 of the agenda reports pack. Colin Bird noted that the actions were progressing well.

Arising from minute 224, Colin Bird highlighted the action for Graham Pockett and Colin to discuss facilitation of a planning subgroup. This was discussed but had not

yet been activated. Colin requested an action to progress setting up a meeting of the subgroup. **(Action: Colin Bird and Graham Pockett)**

235. **PRoW Improvements/Issues**

Drainage work along Winkfield FP6

Rob Solomon explained that the drainage issue had been rectified, improving access along the footpath.

Surface improvements along Sandhurst FP14

BFC gained consent from Natural England for works on the site of special scientific interest (SSSI) to make surface improvements to the footpath. It was hoped that this would make it more accessible when conditions were wet.

New boardwalk on Warfield FP7

A new boardwalk had been installed to improve access to a seasonally wet section of Warfield FP7. Funding came through the South East Berks Ramblers, and it was installed by Bracknell Conservation Volunteers (BCVs). The path was becoming increasingly important, being part of the Bracknell Forest Ramblers' Route and linking the new Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) at Frost Folly and Windmill Farm.

Surface improvements along Sandhurst FP15

Surface improvements have been made to Sandhurst FP15. This is a narrow footpath linking Branksome Hill Road to College Road, providing a useful route for school children and residents accessing local shops.

Winkfield FP10

Colin Bird thanked Rob for arranging the footbridge to be fixed on the same day as reporting it. Rob explained that it was prioritised as a health and safety issue.

The Crown Estate

Rory Kerr introduced himself and his role as a forest warden at The Crown Estate. The vast majority of Crown Estate land had public access. Rory was invited by Colin Bird to raise any issues of access and the forum would be happy to discuss. Furthermore, the forum would like to better understand The Crown Estate's intentions for public access to Whitmoor Bog from access points following some representations from the public, other than the section where the fence was repaired by BFC. Rory replied that he was not aware of any issues of access. There had been some issues around antisocial behaviour, but these issues seemed to have been resolved since the fence line had been repaired.

Colin also asked about the part of the site used for Lapland UK and whether it was still acceptable for members of the public to use the walking route around the south side of the houses. Rory confirmed that they would always make sure there was some sort of route around. One difficulty this year had been that South East Water was still repairing a large leak and this had limited some access.

Colin asked whether all the "walkers welcome" signs were still displayed around the entrances. Rory replied that they were all still there except one which was removed by the timber yard on the Swinley Park site due to a safety concern.

Graham Pockett highlighted that Crowthorne Forest had been taken over from the Forestry Commission and it was unusual in having Public Rights of Way (PRoW) whereas elsewhere the forest paths had permissive access. Richard Mosses asked whether the 3 Castles Path could be made a PRoW. Graham replied that it was not

possible to create a new PRoW on The Crown Estate land as there was a historical agreement that meant rights of way would not be created by use, and the Crown Estate land was not subject to the Highways Act. Graham highlighted that there was a section of path near Ice House Hill which had got fallen trees across it. Rory replied that he had looked at that today. The main forest tracks had been cleared after high winds had caused debris to obstruct them. This track had not yet been cleared as it was not a regular route they used for site maintenance; however, there was a plan to clear it.

Colin asked whether any more waymarkers could be installed within The Crown Estate regarding the Bracknell Ramblers' Route. Rory did not think there would be a problem with that. Rob Solomon advised that BFC had a stock of signage which could be used. **(Action: Rob Solomon)**

Richard Mosses asked whether the meetings for users of Swinley Forest which used to be held at The Look Out would start again. Rory replied that he believed that it was still something that The Crown Estate wanted; Richard Everett was keen to get different opinions and maximise the public's enjoyment of the land.

Winkfield FPs13 and 19

Graham Pockett updated that a Public Path Diversion Order had been made which was currently in the 6-week consultation period. Notices had gone up at either end of the paths and sent to the parish council, prescribed organisations and landowners. Graham had done site inspections and found that a couple of sections are impassable currently. This had been brought to the contractor's attention and they had advised that the issues would be dealt with during this 6-week period. Once the consultation period had finished, providing there were no objections and the new paths were made accessible, the order would be confirmed and way markers would be installed.

Broadmoor Estate

The landowners had introduced new signage in woodland areas on the Broadmoor Estate. The site was owned by North West London Mental Health Trust. It seemed to be mainly about liability concerns, but the signs told people that they were trespassing. The signs were also located on the route of the 3 Castles Path and this would be discussed further under Item 8 (Claimed Rights of Way). Graham had written to the Trust asking if they had considered that the path where they were looking to restrict access was part of a promoted route, but Graham had not had a response yet.

Cabbage Hill and The Cut route

Rose Wicks updated that improvements had been made to the route description and map following helpful feedback from the forum. One suggestion was to provide a shortcut route to the map and that had been included. They had also added a few more labels for the roads and added in the waterway. A few tweaks had been made to the text. A PDF copy of the leaflet had been produced but Rose was liaising with the website team about the best way to publicise this information online so it was most accessible for people, as sometimes PDFs could have accessibility issues. Hugh Fitzwilliams highlighted that Long Copse, which was referenced in the map, was the subject of a planning application to become a SANG.

236. **RoWIP2 Mid-Term Review**

Rose Wicks updated the forum on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP2) mid-term review. RoWIP2 was created as a 10-year plan to improve access to RoW and recreation routes. Rose thanked members for their feedback, and comments

had been incorporated into the review. For example, it had been made clearer that PRoWs and access were already good in the borough, and that the work was to improve this even further and make routes more accessible to even more people. Also, information had been added about landowner responsibilities. This was limited in RoWIP2 and was an important consideration alongside users' responsibilities. The mid-term review document was due to be finalised in 2022 following submission to the Executive Member for decision. Good progress had been made on the action plan, with over 50% of actions already fulfilled or on target for completion.

Furniture had been improved in at least 35 instances and there had been at least 29 surface improvements. Rose highlighted that many of the improvements had been made possible by partnership-working, the Rights of way team working with the Bracknell Conservation Volunteers, the South East Berkshire Ramblers, and volunteer path inspectors. Colin Bird expressed how well this had been supported by BFC which had organised path inspections as most local authority areas relied on voluntary organisations to organise path inspections.

237. **Definitive Map Consolidation**

Graham Pockett explained that there was a big strategic project to review the rights of way maps and the Definitive Statement to check they were still accurate. They were last updated in 2013 and the revised documents would be published next year. The Definitive Map would provide a legal basis for all PRoW. Graham encouraged the forum to look at the online maps and note any changes required to the line of the RoW.

Graham had been checking the old Berkshire County modification orders as some of them included widths, whereas the widths were not recorded on the Definitive Statement. Graham was looking to add widths into the new Definitive Statement. The forum expressed that this would be useful, especially when new hedges and fences were added which make the paths narrower.

Rose Wicks offered to send the forum links to the online map and Definitive Statement. **(Action: Rose Wicks)**

238. **PROW and Local Developments**

BR26 Hedge Lane

Graham Pockett advised that Hedge Lane was a bridleway which ran through two linked planning application sites: 22/00578/REM for 175 properties and 22/00314/REM for 46 dwellings. The intention was to retain the bridleway in its current alignment. The plans included two new road crossings across the whole site, but more work was needed on the design of the crossings to segregate horses from pedestrians and cyclists; BFC was pushing for that via the consultation process.

Regarding the part of Hedge Lane covered by the smaller development application, some new hedging had been proposed and the ditch would be enlarged to improve drainage. However, this would result in some loss of vegetation.

The north crossing would potentially link with further developments so there was a need to keep potential future road links open.

Graham shared that there was an intention to create a permissive route between the playing fields and the proposed community hub as a traffic-free route. Colin Bird added that the final route would go from the Jocks Lane junction area of Berkeley Homes to Westmorland Park.

Buckler's Forest Masterplan

Graham Pockett explained about the planned route 300m west of the Golden Retriever pub connecting Buckler's Forest with the new Great Hollands SANG. This would be a promoted pedestrian entrance into the site. There would need to be a new crossing near the junction to assist crossing the road safely. Subject to planning, there may be a new SANG at Beaufort Park which would link to Buckler's Forest and the Great Hollands SANG.

Colin Bird shared that Natural England had concerns about having an entrance there as it would be giving a route from south Bracknell to the SPA; however, Graham thought that was referring to the route behind the Golden Retriever where people had been breaking through the fence to get from the SANG to the footpath.

Jealott's Hill and the proposed new garden village

Colin Bird explained that the proposal was still going through assessment by examiners. The proposal would create quite a lot of new green spaces including a new public bridleway which Colin felt would be an excellent addition. Colin reminded the forum that, if this proposal was included in the local plan, the forum would need to engage with developers about access.

239. **Claimed Rights of Way**

240. **Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces**

New paths and car park improvements at Horseshoe Lake

Rob Solomon highlighted a new path which had been established around the back of Horseshoe Lake Activity Centre, providing a quiet route through the grazed meadow, and improving access from the junction of Lower Church Road. The compacted gravel surface would allow for year-round access. Pedestrian friendly wide kissing gates (with access keys) and stock-proof bridle gates had been installed at each entrance.

Colin Bird added that it was part of the wish list to add a PRow so that the access from Lower Church Road would appear on OS maps. It was felt that this would increase safety so that members of the public did not feel that they had to walk along narrow roads to the car park entrance. Now that the improvement works were completed, it was felt that it was the right time to progress this. Graham Pockett explained that he did not feel it would be difficult to progress; however, he did not know the original reasons why it was set up as a permissive path as opposed to a PRow and would need to check that. Graham added that there was a planning application out for a decision, for car park improvements at the Horseshoe Lake activity centre.

Moss End Farm SANG update

Graham Pockett explained that the 3 years' planning approval was due to expire on 14 November 2022. Agents and planners had been working on discharging key conditions so that work could commence to avoid the need for a new application.

Hugh Fitzwilliams expressed that there ought to be connections to the Frost Folly sites. Graham agreed to follow up on opening up the links. **(Action: Graham Pockett)**

241. **Administration**

Membership and recruitment

The forum felt that it would benefit from disabled representation. The forum expressed its thanks to Rory Kerr from The Crown Estate for attending the meeting.

The forum discussed ways to promote LCAF and expressed an interest in holding more group activities such as site visits. Rose Wicks added that this could be helpful in adding to the promotional material such as including photos of site visits in the Parks and Countryside newsletter. It was suggested that Buckler's Forest may be an interesting site visit. Rob Solomon agreed to share dates when the rangers would be working at weekends. **(Action: Rob Solomon)**

The forum discussed that a disadvantage of weekend visits to popular sites such as Buckler's Forest was difficulty in parking. An earlier start may alleviate this, or a request could be made to park in the contractor's car park.

Annual report

Rose Wicks advised that she had incorporated the suggested changes and the Chairman's foreword. Rose requested members to send feedback for the 2022 copy by the end of the year. **(Action: forum members)**

Hugh Fitzwilliams suggested including a list and map of SANGs, particularly drawing attention to new SANGs and when they were likely to open. **(Action: Rose Wicks to include)**

242. **Any Other Business**

Hugh Fitzwilliams requested a meeting about Hayley Green track with Colin Bird and Graham Pockett. **(Action: Colin Bird, Graham Pockett and Hugh Fitzwilliams)**

Geoff Paxton and Colin Bird offered to join Graham Pockett on a site visit to the polo field. Graham to set this up.
(Action: Graham Pockett)

243. **Public Question Time**

There were no comments or questions.

244. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 31 January 2023 at 7pm.

CHAIRMAN