

# MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting of the Forum

Held at

COLEY PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE, 140 WENSLEY ROAD, READING,

2 pm Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**Present:** Janice Bridger, Margaret Pawson, Jan Heard, Graham Smith, Chris Marriage, Helena Barker, Angus Ross, Jeanette Clifford, Nicola Greenwood, Tony Vickers, Simon Pike, Patrick Todd, Steve Vale, Carole Ruse, Heather Brown, Lucy Prismall, Julian Le Patourel, Ray Clayton

**In Attendance:** Sandra Griffin (Secretary), Elaine Cox (West Berks Council), Natalie Lucas (Reading Borough Council), John Walmsley, Mark Hall, Graeme Collins (representing the Trail Riders' Fellowship (TRF)).

**Apologies for absence:** Sarah Hacker, Jed Ramsay, Roger Penfold, Mark Bullen, Andrew Fletcher.

**Local authority notation:** WBC - Wokingham District Council

WBDC - West Berkshire District Council

RBC - Reading Borough Council

## **1: WELCOME TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.**

Janice Bridger welcomed Steve Vale, Carole Ruse, Mark Hall, John Walmsley, as members of the public.

It was agreed that members of the public are welcome to contribute to the discussion but they are asked to wait until Forum members have had their say.

## **2: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC.**

No questions.

## **3: DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS WITH RESPECT TO AGENDA ITEMS.**

Jan Heard declared an interest in Item 10a, as she is a local resident

Jeanette Clifford declared an interest in Item 10, as her husband is deputy chair of the Geospatial Commission.

Janice Bridger declared an interest in item 20a, as she is a local resident.

## **4: CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM SEP 2018 MEETING.**

## **ACTIONS & MATTERS ARISING FROM SEP & NOT ON TODAY'S AGENDA.**

The following actions were recorded as outstanding from May 2018.

**Item 6 May Agenda: Reading ROWIP / lack of definitive map on the RBC website - Roger Penfold is to draft a letter for Janice Bridger to send.** Roger Penfold reported by email that the Reading definitive map was now on the Reading Borough Council website and there was no need for action by the Forum.

**Item 13 May Agenda: Tony Vickers to amend the draft response to planning applications 18/00764 & 18/00828, and submit the LAF response to WBDC in consultation with the Chair.**

**ACTION 4/1:** LAF is to write to regret the decisions made by WBDC and reiterate its position - Tony Vickers to draft.

**Item 14 May Agenda: Tony Vickers to write to the Commission about upgrading and improving Greenham Footpath 6 and the permitted link.**

**ACTION 4/2:** Tony is to raise this at the next Commission meeting.

**Item 18 May Agenda: 'Access and Brexit - Simon Pike is to find out more about the best way to influence the Government about an idea for a pilot access project / Simon Pike to find the best way to communicate to all MPs.'**

**ACTION 4/3:** Simon said he would do this in relation to the All Party Parliamentary Groups.

**Item 9 September meeting: Janice Bridger said the LAF would draft something for more detailed debate at a future meeting.**

Janice said she was happy that the discussion on this topic in September had been sufficiently comprehensive. She asked if there were any further concerns and Graeme Collins commented that councils do not have the funding available for tarmacking for the sake of it. He said it was not generally desirable to lay tarmac on countryside PROW, but it was sometimes appropriate, e.g. where there was access to houses. He added that the TRF was offering financial contributions, e.g. recently to the South Downs National Park to repair damage to byways.

**Item 16/3 September meeting: Janice Bridger to attend the forthcoming North Wessex Downs AONB Forum.**

Janice unable to attend, as she felt that there was little to be discussed which was relevant to access.

**Item 26/1 September meeting): Jan Heard to submit a paper on verges for next meeting.**

Jan Heard deferred, as Andrew Fletcher was still settling in having taken over from Rebecca Walkley. There was a discussion about which councils cut roadside verges for non-motorised users, and it was agreed that this would be an item on the Agenda for the next meeting. Also Tony Vickers to comment on status in WBDC.

**ACTION 4/4:** Tony Vickers to submit a paper for the May 2019 LAF. This will include a request to members for possible sites for verge cutting.

## **5: UPDATE ON FORUM MEMBERSHIP & REGISTER OF INTERESTS OF FORUM MEMBERS.**

Members are requested to note the following actions, to be done outside the meeting:

**ACTION 5/1:** Those members whose period of appointment finishes in May 2019 to consider if they are willing to stand again and inform the secretary, it should be noted that the Councils are not obliged to accept those who wish to continue.

It was noted that there was space for several new members. The following recruitment steps were agreed.

**ACTION 5/2:** Elaine Cox /Sandra Griffin to confirm the process to recruit new members and put it into action so that new members are in place by May 2019 also send out packs to observers at today's meeting by email. Approximately 7-10 new members are needed.

**ACTION 5/3:** Elaine Cox, Natalie Lucas, Andrew Fletcher and John Walmsley to liaise about advertising, including social media. It was noted that there was a lack of landowner representation, and also representation from Reading and Wokingham areas, and this ought to be a priority for recruitment.

**ACTION 5/4:** It was agreed that Janice Bridger would write to Patrick Todd to ask him if he would stay on the LAF, especially in view of Access and Brexit being so topical.

## **6. MWBLAF EMAIL MANAGEMENT. IS IT REALLY NECESSARY FOR EVERYONE TO RECEIVE ALL EMAILS?**

Following a discussion with those present regarding distribution of emails it was agreed that:

- Appointed Forum Members should receive all emails.
- Councillor members again should receive all emails.
- Council Officers (Elaine Cox, Natalie Lucas & Andrew Fletcher) to receive all emails.
- Secretary, due to time constraints, to receive emails from Elaine Cox/Janice Bridger as deemed necessary unless members have been actioned to email the Secretary direct.

**ACTION 6/1:** Simon Pike to consider ease of creating specialist email groups for certain discussions.

## **7: WBDC CASE PROGRAMME 2019-20**

The 2018/19 Programme is available for viewing on the West Berkshire website. Janice Bridger suggested that members could view this Programme and use it as the basis for making comments on the content of the new 2019/20 Programme. Elaine Cox requested comments by the end of February, as the Case Programme needs signing off by the end of

March. Simon Pike commented that, thinking ahead, maybe the timings of the LAF meetings should run alongside Council meetings in order to allow time for discussions at LAF before the Programme is submitted. It was unclear if WBC has a similar case programme.

**ACTION 7/1:** Any member comments to Elaine Cox by end February.

**ACTION 7/2:** Andrew Fletcher to inform the LAF if WBC has an annual case programme similar to WBDC.

## **8: COMMUNICATION OF FORUM BUSINESS USING SOCIAL MEDIA.**

John Walmsley updated the LAF with respect to progress in setting up and using a Facebook account for LAF outreach. He gave examples of current use i.e. sharing the Agenda for this meeting, and also thanked various members for their 'likes' and 'shares', encouraging other members to do the same. He gave particular thanks to Janice for assistance with the initial set up. Some ongoing tweaks might be necessary as time goes on.

**ACTION 8/1:** LAF members and other regular attendees at LAF meetings are encouraged to "follow" the Mid and West Berks LAF Facebook page if they have the means to do so (e.g. Smartphone), and to do "likes" and "shares".

**ACTION 8/2:** LAF members are also encouraged to suggest appropriate information that might be of interest to community groups and individuals with an interest in countryside management, recreational access, and conservation. LAF Facebook Administrators intend to post such information via Facebook into the public domain as and when necessary.

**ACTION 8/3:** LAF Facebook Administrators are to continue to try to use Facebook to engage with relevant public groups or individuals.

**ACTION 8/4:** LAF as a whole to monitor progress throughout 2019, with a view to deciding whether social media is helping with public outreach or not. A continue/discontinue decision to be made at the January/February 2020 LAF meeting.

## **9: READING ROWIP REVIEW.**

Janice Bridger thanked Natalie Lucas for a thorough report. Natalie said that the ROWIP would be a stand-alone document, but incorporated into LTP 4, the Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, and the Healthy Streets Strategy.

There were some questions about the consultation progress particularly with regard to the LAF and to user groups being able to comment. In terms of consultation, the LAF will be updated at future meetings regarding the timescales for consultation, and publication of the Local Transport Plan and the updated Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

In response to questions about funding, Natalie said that as well as money from development, there were funds available from walking and cycling pots.

As part of the discussion, CIL was mentioned, and the fact that much of CIL lies with Parish Councils. Tony Vickers commented that Parishes could offer CIL funds back to District Councils if they wished.

Margaret Pawson noted the proposals for cycling along the Thames Path, and wished to remind the LAF that other users had to be accommodated as well. She was concerned that barriers might be erected, e.g. anti-motorcycle barriers, which prevented access for some groups. Natalie asked the LAF to send advice about the best anti-motorbike structures which could also accommodate wheelchair access - a design by Centrewire was suggested.

**ACTION 9/1:** Natalie Lucas to send the LTP consultation to members, Janice Bridger to coordinate comments.

**ACTION 9/2:** Disability group members and other members are asked to supply comments regarding suitable barriers etc. directly to Natalie Lucas.

## **10. WBC UPDATE ON VARIOUS ONGOING PROJECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FROM NEW DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

An email had been supplied by Andrew Fletcher:

### **1. Greenways**

Progress has begun towards the delivery of Route B, which aims to link Arborfield Cross to Moose Hill.

There are 4 options for the route which are being examined for suitability before a decision is made as to which route will be the best option to pursue. Once the preferred route has been identified affected landowners will be contacted, prior to any public consultation.

We are currently working on a communications/ stakeholder engagement plan, and are also working on a standard letter and a project brief to be sent out to affected landowners for preliminary information.

### **2. South Wokingham Distributor Road**

The route of the new Southern Distributor Road at the Emm Brook will affect 3 public rights of way, Wokingham Footpath 25, Wokingham Footpath 24/Wokingham Without Footpath 9 and Wokingham Without Footpath 10.

We are currently discussing options for these footpaths in light of this development, in particular how best to deal with Wokingham Footpath 24/Wokingham Without Footpath 9 where there is a narrow bridge fronted by metal stiles. At this point the road bridge will be constructed over the path and there is an opportunity to improve the bridge and the path at the same time.

### **3. Definitive Map and Statement**

Wokingham Borough Council's Definitive Map and Statement was last published in 2000 and work has begun to review and republish this map, and update it with all the Definitive Map Modification Orders that have been made over the past 19 years.

At the same time we are looking to take this opportunity to update all the path data to meet the BS7666 spacial data standards and bring it in line to meet the requirements of the National Street Gazetteer. This will bring a number of benefits, including allowing the path network to be included for routing software, and giving up to date information to statutory undertakers for when they are planning works.

A request for quotations has been sent out to contractors for this work with a deadline of 8<sup>th</sup> February for replies.

#### **4. Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Work has begun to review the Wokingham Borough Council Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan, with a review to publishing an updated plan in 2019. Andrew Fletcher is planning to involve the Forum in this review as early as possible.

#### **5. Byway Resurfacing**

As the Forum may be aware, Wokingham Borough Council has an ongoing programme to resurface Byways, targeting byways that are predominately used by vehicles and need to be brought up to an increased maintenance standard to accommodate this use. This programme is based on a review of all byways which was completed by the Council following legal advice about the standard of maintenance required along these routes where historically little or no provision has been made to accommodate vehicles. The programme is informed by a priority list taking into account various factors including the level and type of traffic using a lane, condition surveys and the level of complaints received.

The next byway on the priority list is Wokingham Without Byway 29 (Oaklands Lane) in Crowthorne. Detailed design is currently underway with the Council's in house design team and it is expected that the works will be conducted in the Spring/Summer 2019.

#### **6. Wokingham Without Byway 30**

This byway links Easthampstead Road and Waterloo Road and has been significantly damaged by vehicle use. It is currently under a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order preventing use along the byway. This order expires in 2019.

Surfacing and repair works along this lane are planned for Spring 2019, and the Council is in contact with the residents along the lane regarding this scheme.

Jan Heard asked for clarity with regard to the gravel extraction in Shinfield, and was advised that it was still going ahead but as yet there is no timescale.

#### **10a. HOMES FOR THE FUTURE WBC CONSULTATION**

The LAF is to respond to consultation using the prepared reply from Jan Heard.

**ACTION 10a/1:** Jan Heard to draft a response and forward to the Secretary for emailing by the deadline of 22 February 2019

#### **11: WEST BERKS ROWIP REVIEW**

Elaine Cox explained that the WBDC ROWIP was due for review in 2020, as the first document was dated 2010. Elaine drew the attention of the LAF to the recent Kent ROWIP review, which had won an award, and she invited comments on the approach.

Following a lengthy discussion regarding the Kent document, the overall feeling of the LAF was that 10 years was not a long enough time to start the consultation process again, as it could offer very similar outcomes. It was noted that the results of the extensive Kent

consultation were similar to the thorough consultation undertaken by WBDC in 2010. It was thought best to update and modify the existing document, to include priorities and achievements, as this would be of greater use.

It was thought that the Kent example showed little prioritisation and generic statistics. Targeted surveys would be more useful for future planning, and Helena Barker commented that specialised groups looking at certain aspects was a good idea, e.g. disabled access. She also liked the idea of a range of types of promoted circular walks.

Angus Ross saw potential in joint working with the public health team.

**ACTION 11/1:** WBDC ROWIP to be an Agenda item for the next meeting.

**ACTION 11/2:** Members to feedback to Elaine Cox with ideas, including encouraging children to walk to school; well-being; comments from regular users, including horse riders, as they are daily users.

## **12. ACCESS & BREXIT - UPDATE**

MPs had been contacted with the LAF's views before Christmas. The responses, such as they were, were that it would be useful to submit examples where and how the ideas could be of practical use on the ground.

**ACTION 12/1:** Keep access and Brexit as a standing agenda item for the time being.

**ACTION 12/2:** Members to send any real examples of where the LAF's post Brexit access ideas could be of benefit.

## **13. NATIONAL GRID LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE FUNDING**

**ACTION 13/1:** Members to consider whether there may be projects within the area covered by the LAF for which the North Wessex Downs AONB could seek funding.

**ACTION 13/2:** Jeanette Clifford to raise this at the next AONB meeting.

## **14. USE OF CROSS-COMPLIANCE GAEC 7B**

There was a discussion about instances known to members of landowners being non-compliant, despite receiving payments that have been going on for some years. Patrick Todd said he thought it more appropriate for authorities to approach landowners directly, to fix problems, rather than reporting such landowners to the Rural Payments Agency. Elaine Cox said that in West Berkshire, a report would only usually be made in the case of repeat offences, when other methods to remedy a problem had failed.

It was noted that WBC had apparently had some success as a result of reports to the RPA.

**ACTION 14/1:** Elaine Cox to clarify the WBDC approach for putting pressure on landowners receiving payments but still remaining non-compliant.

**ACTION 14/2:** Andrew Fletcher to clarify policy for WBC.

## **15. NOTIFICATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS RELEVANT TO PROW.**

Following discussion about the large quantity of paperwork involved in being a statutory consultee for planning applications, it was decided not to pursue this request. The best approach still seemed to be that the LAF officer representatives of the planning authorities would inform the LAF of any particularly relevant applications.

**ACTION 15/1:** Seek a volunteer to monitor planning applications and advise the secretary accordingly.

**ACTION 15/2:** LAF officer representatives to devise systems to ensure that the LAF is consulted on relevant planning applications.

## **16: EAST READING MASS TRANSIT ROUTE.**

Angus Ross reported that funding has been lost, the proposal has been withdrawn, and is unlikely to be reinstated.

## **17: UPDATE ON THE TROs ON BYWAYS AT BUCKLEBURY COMMON AND LAMBOURN, WEST BERKS, AND THE REPAIRS.**

Chris Marriage reported that the seasonal TROs were proving effective in deterring 4x4 use, however trail bikes and motorbikes are not banned and can cause a similar nuisance on certain routes. The police were aware of the project and occasionally patrolled. The barriers and routes were being monitored by a WBDC volunteer. Chris said that he thought the surface condition of the routes had been much improved since the TROs had been imposed.

Graeme Collins reported that there had been some rearrangement of the barriers by 'persons unknown', resulting in difficulties of access for legitimate users.

## **18. STREATLEY FOOTPATH 21 UPDATE**

Margaret Pawson is in receipt of further information that needs to be considered more thoroughly before she is able to report on this item any further.

**ACTION 18/1:** Agenda item for next meeting.

## **19. OTHER ISSUES DEALT WITH BY EMAIL SINCE THE SEP 2018 MEETING:**

These were: the Wokingham Vision; the West Berks Vision; Response to planning application for the Hermitage to Hampstead Norreys Railway Path; North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan Consultation; Review of National Parks & AONBs; Stopping up of Highway at 23 Celandine Grove Thatcham.

Copies had been circulated to LAF members and the secretary for filing.

## **20: REPORTS FROM NON-ROWIP WORKING GROUPS:**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ACCESS & MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING**

Chris Marriage reported that construction of the **Hampstead Norreys to Hermitage old railway line path** was due soon.

#### **Re-instatement of Chieveley byway 49 (marsh lane) after sand quarrying, Old Kiln farm, Curridge**

LAF to advise WBDC to resist taking over the maintenance of the original line of the byway before the surface is satisfactorily re-instated. Elaine Cox said that she had met Grundon on site and they had accepted that the surface was presently unsatisfactory.

**ACTION 20/1:** Janice Bridger to write a letter to Elaine Cox, the relevant West Berks Councillor and Stuart Higgins.

Chris Marriage raised the status of the **Snelmore link path**. This was not properly cleared last spring, and the project needs to be finished.

**ACTION 20/2:** An Agenda item for the next LAF.

### **DISABLED / EASY ACCESS.**

The Forum noted that access information for different user groups was still limited on the BBOWT websites.

Helena Barker reported that contractors for BBOWT are due to begin to constructing the new Padworth Common disabled access route next month, with signage due in the spring. Margaret Pawson welcomed the positive approach of BBOWT to disabled access, but acknowledged that they were a well-funded organisation and had the resources to carry out such projects.

The next project for action is Hosehill.

## **21: CROSS-BOUNDARY LIAISON WITH NEIGHBOURING LAFS: HANTS (HB), OXON (CM), WILTS (GS), BF/RBWM (CP).**

Written reports were received for Hants & Wilts. There is no MWBLAF observer for Bracknell Forest of Windsor & Maidenhead at present.

Headlines from Oxfordshire:

1. OCC is hoping to use Community Engagement Officers for local ROW issues
2. Definitive Map Modification Orders - a priority working group has been established as there is a backlog of over 100 cases
3. Tom Bindoff made a presentation regarding the new rural gates centre at Aston Rowant.
4. Discussion around publicising and monitoring of permissive access

5. Proposed Environmental Land Management System and how it can work for both landowners and the public.
6. Big infrastructure project on the horizon: possible upgrade of A34 to M34 (Oxford to Cambridge Expressway), and the west of Abingdon flood alleviation scheme (reservoir and ROW connectivity).

## **22: WEST BERKS COMMONS:**

**BUCKLEBURY (CM), PADWORTH (GS), SNELSMORE (JB), WOKEFIELD (MP), GREENHAM & CROOKHAM (HB).**

Bucklebury - Chris Marriage See agenda item 17.

Reports have been circulated to members already.

## **23. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME / HORIZON SCANNING**

Chris Beney and Tom Bindoff, to be invited to talk about Gates, Gaps and Stiles in the morning before the next LAF meeting.

**ACTION 23/1:** Jan Heard to make enquiries to see if Chris Beney would be available to speak before the next meeting in May.

**ACTION 23/2:** Elaine Cox/Sandra Griffin to book Shaw House or the Greenham Control Tower for speaker, lunch and Forum in May. Invite other interested parties including users and suppliers.

### **Agenda Items for next meeting:**

1. Highways England designated Funding for Cycling Phase 2.
2. Geoplace: digitizing the Definitive Map on the National Street Gazetteer
3. Robots in the Countryside, automated tractors etc. Effect on wildlife, cross-field PROW, equestrians, etc.

**ACTION 23/3:** Simon Pike and Jan Heard to consider the 'Regulatory Framework Governing Automated Vehicles' consultation (Law Commission) by the deadline of 8th February.

## **24. AOB - ANY OTHER VERY BRIEF BUSINESS**

- Simon Pike mentioned signs he had noticed saying 'Police dogs in training', and has written to the Police for an explanatory statement.

Date of next meeting: to be hosted by West Berkshire District Council, the most likely date being 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019.

The members of the public were thanked for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 5.05pm.