

MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting of the Forum

2 pm Wednesday 25th September 2024

Present: Simon Pike (Chair), Margaret Pawson, Jan Heard, Helena Barker, Sharon Bovingdon, Tony Vickers, Nicola Greenwood, George Cummings,

In Attendance: Sandra Griffin (Secretary), Elaine Cox & Matt Walters (WBDC), Connor Clark & Laura Buck (WBC).

Apologies for absence: Janice Bridger, Donald Peck, Natalie Lucas, Angus Ross, Cllr Adele Barnett-Ward, Helen Tranter.

Local authority notation: WBC - Wokingham Borough Council.
WBDC - West Berkshire District Council.
RBC - Reading Borough Council.

WELCOME TO FORUM MEMBERS

Simon Pike welcomed new member George Cummings, asked everyone to introduce themselves and the group they represent.

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.

None.

4. CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM MAY 2024 MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING.

LAWRENCES LANE. Following the expiry of TRO, WBDC are considering alternatives Simon Pike will chase up in approximately 1 year.

EIC Screening, Bucklebury Common. Not currently a consultation however both Simon Pike and Tony Vickers will continue to monitor planning applications.

MOWN VERGES. Jan Heard has seen updates online but no official response to the Forum from WDC. **ACTION: Laura Buck has agreed to chase up and report back.**

Interviews taking place this week to replace Andrew Fletcher, WBC who moved on some time ago.

5. ROUND UP FROM WOKINGHAM. Brief statement from Andy Glencross regarding Greenways being on hold until summer 2025, with the exception of route B that is still ongoing.

Connor Clark said all DMMO's are now up to date.

Margaret Pawson asked how PROW are added to definitive map if not already on it, she was advised this was usually done via a DMMO modification order.

Nicola Greenwood thanked Connor and WBC for bringing DMMO's up to date and asked if he knew anything about signs appearing in Gorick Woods banning horse riding. Connor asked for photos and will then investigate.

Jan Heard commented about the lack of commitment from the Councillor at WBC in supporting the Forum.

6. ROUND UP FROM READING. Statement from Natalie Lucas stating that the Definitive map is now accessible online.

7. ROUND UP FROM WEST BERKSHIRE. The ROWIP is not yet adopted due to an administrative delay and not content. As it is the overall strategy document for all works it is in use, despite not being adopted. Capital works being undertaken have been circulated by email prior to the meeting. Some discussion followed regarding responsibility of landowners and local authorities regarding green growth clearance. If landowners are non-compliant the LA's can serve a notice to comply.

8. OPEN ACCESS LAND DISCUSSION. Elaine Cox mentioned these areas have been neglected by Local Authorities for some time, however landowners are generally keeping them maintained and open. They are often isolated pockets of land that walkers etc do not wish to use. Natural England have produced a map and there is also an App and a website. Should a landowner decide to lock a gate and prevent access then LA have a duty to reinstate it. There should be a brown disc indicating the point of access.

9. WEST BERKSHIRE ROWIP. As previously stated, the ROWIP has not been adopted, however, work has been implemented across targets such as the Snelsmore Common bridleway link, Streatley FP21, 5 new access routes, the removal of 10 stiles replaced with gaps or easier access structures, replacement of 5 structures to improve accessibility to name a few. Large scale improvements require bid bids each year - Elaine Cox asked the Forum for any ideas or thoughts for future capital projects.

Volunteer scheme is under review, WBDC does not have a paid employee to organise volunteers, it is now managed under the volunteer bureau. George Cummings asked for information regarding 6th form volunteers, that is under 18's. Elaine will check and report back to George.

ACTION: Elaine Cox to check with Volunteer Bureau regarding age of volunteers

10. STREATLEY FOOTPATH 21. It was all going very well until the very wet autumn when works had to stop. The vegetation has been cleared, safety tree works completed and bridge footings installed. Some confusion as to the need for fencing amongst the Forum. Jan Heard suggested a site visit once footpath is fully open, possibly next May.

11. DISABLED ACCESS WORKING GROUP. Nothing to add to paper submitted.

12. CROSS BOUNDARY LIAISON.

RBWM: Jan Heard has made contact with the group who meet twice per year in the evenings. They work mostly in subgroups. A discussion as to why elected members were disengaging with the Forum as is happening in our own Forum.

Hampshire: Nothing to add to paper submitted.

Bracknell Forest: Nicola Greenwood said there is a drive to prevent anti-social behaviour from unauthorised users including both petrol and electric bikes. Thames Valley police are visible and prepared to issue Section 59 notices. Various notices have been put up regarding fire risks and code of practice for dog walkers.

13. WEST BERKSHIRE COMMONS.

Snelsmore: Presentation from Matt Walters WBDC regarding long outstanding bridleway link now being resolved. Expected to be completed by end of 2024.

Padworth: Helena Barker will take over from Simon Pike. Last meeting held actually on the common where a schedule of works was discussed.

Wokefield: AGM was 1st July, new owner has inherited the common by the name of James, he seems interested in the current works and has agreed to put a horse crossing on a busy road, also agreed to setting up an access point.

Greenham & Crookham: Tony Vickers attends regular meetings, not much to do with access, mainly pressure on the area from its many users.

14. HORIZON SCANNING. Access to Nature paper discussed, Tony Vickers thinks it might be a good idea to engage, he will liaise with Jenny Graham.

ACTION: Bring forward to next Agenda.

15. AOB.

Jan Heard suggested we engage an AGE UK Speaker, she went to a presentation recently and found it both interesting and informative, possibly a similar person available within RBC area, Natalie to investigate.

ACTION: Natalie Lucas to look into possibility of a speaker from Age UK

George Cummings submitted a late paper regarding timings of meetings not allowing young people or those of working age to attend. Simon Pike to create a survey covering the points discussed including, pushing the start time back until 4pm, Officers availability to attend in the evenings, should the Forum meet in person at least once per year, possibility of online meetings.

ACTION: Simon Pike Create a survey for Forum.

Janice Bridger raised the question by email as to whether the Forum should respond to Lambourn NDP. Members of the Forum agreed to consider this outside the meeting.

MEETING DATES FOR 2025

WEDNESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY - READING, 2-5PM VENUE TO BE ADVISED.

WEDNESDAY 21 MAY - NEWBURY

WEDNESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER WOKINGHAM

Meeting closed at 17.00