

MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting of the Forum
Held at Coley Park Community Centre, Reading
2 pm Wednesday 25th January 2023

Present: Simon Pike (Chair), Jan Heard, Janice Bridger, Donald Peck, Sharon Bovington, Nicola Greenwood, Graham Smith, Margaret Pawson, Mark Bullen, Cllr Tony Vickers (WBC).

In Attendance: Sandra Griffin (Secretary), Elaine Cox (WBDC), Natalie Lucas (RBC), Lillian Green (RBC),

Apologies for absence: Julian Le Patourel, Helena Barker, Tim Lewis (Wilts LAF), Connor Clark (WBC), Angus Ross, Greg Wilkinson, Andrew Fletcher (WBC), Roger Penfold.

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

WELCOME TO FORUM MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.
Simon Pike welcomed Forum members.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC.
No questions submitted in advance.

2: DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS WITH RESPECT TO AGENDA ITEMS.
None Declared. Simon informed the meeting of his recent appointment as a Member of the Council of Partners of North Wessex Downs AONB.

3: MINUTES FROM SEP 2022 WERE AGREED AND APPROVED.
ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

ACTION 4: Working Methods of the Forum, Approved and closed.

ACTION 7: Remote Driving Consultation, Simon Pike and Jan Heard ongoing monitoring.

ACTION 8: Greenways Update, On the Agenda.

ACTION 10: WBC ROWIP meet the consultant. Action closed.

ACTION 11: WBDC ROWIP SMART objectives. Action closed.

ACTION 12: Saltney Marsh. Action closed.

ACTION 13: Streatley FP 21. On the Agenda, SP letter o/s from the Forum supporting the project.

ACTION 14: Engagement between local LAF's. On the agenda. Angus Ross will attend Oxfordshire LAF and Simon Pike intends to attend Forums whose areas include the AONB.

ACTION 15: Policy on Walking & Cycling. Action closed.

NB put all policies in the public domain.

ACTION 17: Lawrences Lane, closed following update today.

ACTION 18: Streatley Youth Hostel, see AOB

4. READING ROWIP. Lillian Green and Natalie Lucas outlined the current situation regarding the ROWIP which is now available for consultation with the public and also the Forum. Simon Pike mentioned that an online form is not always an appropriate way to comment however understands it is easier to receive, Lillian stated that a word document with the questions can be supplied as an alternative way to respond.

ACTION 4: Simon Pike to produce a draft template for the Forum to agree and submit prior to the deadline of 17 Feb 2023.

5. WEST BERKSHIRE REGULATION 19 LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION.

Simon Pike described the development of a Local Plan, which is a complicated process with a number of stages. Following agreement by the Forum he had submitted comments to the Regulation 18 consultation in January 2021, which proposed an additional policy on Public Rights of Way. This had not been accepted by West Berkshire Council, but the reasoning for rejecting it was flawed. He therefore proposed resubmitting this proposal for the Regulation 19 consultation, which was due to start shortly. This was agreed.

ACTION 5: Simon Pike to submit official Forum response restating the points made.

6. WEST BERKSHIRE ROWIP.

The Forum had the opportunity to meet the Consultant in November 2022 and have seen the latest draft evidence documents. Elaine expects the statutory consultation period of 12 weeks to begin after the May 4th elections, and will therefore fall between the Forum's next 2 meetings in May and September. Simon Pike suggested there may need to be an additional meeting online for those who are interested, Donald Peck suggested the meeting in May maybe more timely.

ACTION 6: Elaine Cox to supply normalised data from the Parish.

7. LAWRENCES LANE TRO.

Lawrences Lane is a very narrow lane from Thatcham to Bucklebury that is single track with few passing places. Experimental TRO was put in place for 6 months from 19 July 2022 ending on 19 January 2023. Comments were agreed by email to support the continuation of the TRO and submitted by the deadline of 19th January, with a statement that Formal Advice was expected to follow after the Forum's meeting on 25th January 2023.

The Forum agreed the Formal Advice, which is identical in substance to the comments already submitted.

ACTION 7: Simon Pike to submit Formal Advice.

8. BAGNOR ESTATE.

The Forum has received a request from Bagnor Estate to comment on its Woodland Management Plan. There are 3 separate PROW's crossing the well managed estate. Landowners are recommended to consult the Forum when closing parts of the ROW due to forestry operations. Thanks from the Forum to Simon for preparing the response that was agreed by all.

ACTION 8: The secretary to submit the agreed response as soon as possible.

9. CONSIDERATION OF MOTOR VEHICLE SUB CLASS IN MPV.

Mark Bullen asks the Forum to consider making a sub class for 2 wheel motor vehicles when responding to consultations. For example in the case of Lawrences Lane blanket banning all MPV's includes motorbikes without consideration of their size and weight etc. It's the principle being considered rather than Lawrences Lane in particular. Following much discussion it was accepted that the Forum's responses to future consultations should be carefully considered particularly regarding 2 wheel vehicles and the increase in use of E-bikes and E-scooters.

10. STREATLEY FOOTPATH 21

Elaine gave an update on the implementation of this footpath.

Currently there is a bat roost survey underway regarding the trees that require felling, it is anticipated that work to clear bramble thickets will be completed by the end of February also the removal of logs blocking the path. Capital funding is secured and can be carried over to the next financial year. There was debate amongst Forum members regarding the need for fencing and the related costs. Margaret Pawson has been pushing for this FP to be reinstated for many years, Elaine Cox commented that if all goes to plan it should be open in the Autumn.

Janice Bridger shared her concerns regarding the ROWIP, stating it doesn't auger well as Streatley FP21 has been outstanding for so many years. Snelmore Common does not appear on today's agenda as the Council does not appear to have the capacity to deliver these projects.

ACTION 10: Elaine Cox to continue to liaise with all parties and report back the Forum.

11. MOLE ROAD REVISITED.

This is a very dangerous by-way crossing on a fast moving road having a blind bend on one side and a blind summit on the other. Non-slip surfacing on either side was laid but the area has now been resurfaced covering the non-slip surface. Jan Heard would like to bring this to the attention of the Forum and requests a formal letter be sent to WBC regarding its reinstatement.

It was noted that, since Angus Ross retired as a WBC Councillor, the Forum has not been informed of a replacement WBC Councillor member of the Forum.

Action 11: The Secretary to find out the name of the councillor and add to the mailing list.

12 GREENWAYS UPDATE.

Update circulated just prior to the meeting giving Forum members little time to read it or comment. Nicola Greenwood did comment on Greenway D being pointless if not extending to Ennis Hill. Is the land owned by the Council or the Solar Farm?

Action12: Andrew Fletcher/Connor Clark to respond to the enquiry from Nicola.

13. SIGNAGE FOR GREENWAY

Route B is currently completing but does not have a tarmac surface, there is some confusion as to its use by motor vehicles. Most signs are currently to do with restricting usage rather than indicating who can use it. Trail Riders Fellowship have a sign that is being used in other areas if there is nothing suitable. Janice thinks she has seen a sign and will check in her book.

Action13: Janice to check her book of signs then Mark to offer TRF sign if no other available.

14. REMOTE DRIVING.

Jan Heard has received a thank you for the Forum's input, one amongst 42 responses. She will continue to monitor and report back when there are developments.

15. MEETING OF LOCAL ACCESS FORUM CHAIRS.

Simon Pike will continue to monitor the Forum Chairs' meetings and attend meetings when available.

Elaine Cox asked if they have any working policies and suggested sharing best practice. Janice commented that this Forum spends a lot of time responding to consultations and asked if this is usual amongst other Forums.

Nicola Greenwood will liaise with Bracknell Forest LAF.

ACTION 16: Forum members to consider joining adjacent Forums, Simon Pike will continue to monitor and share relevant minutes.

16. CROSS BOUNDARY LIAISON

Cross boundary meetings are continuing to be monitored.
RBWM does not have a particular representative from M&WB LAF.

17. WEST BERKSHIRE COMMONS.

Bucklebury:

Greenham & Cookham: Park Run has resumed, with dogs allowed only on fixed leads. BBOWT has offered to educate dog owners.

Snelmore: See report

Padworth: See report

Wokefield: meeting next month.

AOB: Streatley Youth Hostel, the YHA has obtained funding for a study on the potential for development of the hostel..

Arborfield Solar Farm has been built without the Forum being invited to comment
Addition to the Definitive Map, 20B at High Craddock. 6 week appeal started today.

Ridgway National Trail 50th Year events NWN website for anyone that is interested.

NWN article by Andrew Davis about PROW. Janice wrote a letter to NWN, copies can be supplied.

Simon and Sharon attended a workshop organised by Atkin (rural property advisers) on 'Public Access on Private Land'. The presentation by a solicitor was informative on the legal arguments used on behalf of some landowners to deny any access.

Meeting closed at 17.05

MEETING DATES FOR 2023

WEDNESDAY 24TH MAY - WEST BERKSHIRE

WEDNESDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER - WOKINGHAM