

# MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting of the Forum  
Held at Dinton Pastures Activity Centre, Wokingham  
2 pm Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022

**Present:** Simon Pike (Chair), Jan Heard, Helena Barker, Janice Bridger, Julian Le Patourel, Sharon Bovingdon, Nicola Greenwood, Graham Smith, Margaret Pawson, Greg Wilkinson, Janice Bridger, Cllr Tony Vickers (WBDC).

**In Attendance:** Sandra Griffin (Secretary), Elaine Cox (WBDC), Natalie Lucas (RBC), Lillian Green (RBC), Connor Clark (WBC), John Boler - MIGGS - visitor.

**Apologies for absence:** Karen Rowland (RBC), Donald Peck, Tim Lewis (Wilts LAF), Mark Bullen, Angus Ross.

**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 and members of the public and asked everyone to introduce themselves and the group they represent. Simon also offered his apologies for the poor quality of last meeting's hybrid attempt.

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

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

No questions submitted in advance.

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

None Declared.

## **3: CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM MAY 2022 SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENTS AND MATTERS ARISING.**

Action 13: Eling Extension: Ongoing invitation to visit the Forum.

## **4: WORKING METHODS OF THE FORUM.**

Mostly agreed at the last meeting with some minor changes as discussed.

Document approved by all those present.

Action 4. Closed.

## **5. DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDING SOLAR FARMS.**

Again mostly agreed at the last meeting, after further discussion of 3 separate points the document has been approved by all those present.

Action 5. Closed.

## **6. WOKINGHAM LCWIP.**

Consultation was submitted by the deadline, between the Forum's meetings. Primarily reiterating the Forum's previous conclusion. Additionally Jan Heard researched some information relating to equality, equestrians are primarily female and maybe overlooked.

**Action 6.** Closed.

#### **7. REMOTE DRIVING CONSULTATION.**

Consultation was submitted by the deadline between meetings.

Some clarity needed between use of connected vehicles and autonomous vehicles and their use on byways. Satnavs are an increasing problem.

**Action 7:** Keep monitoring, Simon Pike to investigate further.

#### **8. GREENWAYS UPDATE.**

Report was submitted by Andrew Fletcher who is not present, Connor Clark is happy to take back any questions to Andrew. The forum commented that it was a fantastic report with only a couple of queries. Including:

- there is no indication on the report as to which routes are for which type of user,
- Section B not running near the river, can this be moved or is it down to permissions and/or development?
- Section I, regarding the objections to the bridleway creation order, how will this be resolved?
- Loddon Drive, is this a private road as the route has changed to busier roads?

**Action 8:** Andrew Fletcher to respond to these queries.

#### **9. SIGNS.**

Sharon Bovingdon mentioned that signage, either lack of or completely ignored and/or damaged is a regular and far reaching problem. Following some discussion amongst the Forum it was agreed that education is the answer however, there will always be elements who continue to be arrogant.

#### **10. WEST BERKSHIRE ROWIP.**

There is an informal meeting with Sharon Bayne, Consultant and Shaw House on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September. Elaine Cox took the Forum through the report supplied outlining key areas requiring advice from the LAF. Jan Heard raised the issue of very little input from any cycle groups currently and mentioned she had contact with Sharon Bayne at the outset of the consultation. Are there any notes from this contact that can be shared?

**Action 10:** Forum members to join the meeting on Friday if possible and Elaine Cox to seek notes mentioned by Jan however they may not still exist.

#### **11. MEETING OF THE FORUM re WBDC ROWIP.**

Simon Pike mentioned the acronym SMART regarding the objectives for this meeting. He stated that the objectives from 10 years ago were very generic and not necessarily measurable. Scope of the ROWIP is encompassing all countryside access.

**Action 11.** Forum members to consider SMART objectives.

#### **12. PLANNING INSPECTORATE DECISION ON SALTNEY MEAD FOOTPATHS.**

Results of the Inquiry are available after 18<sup>th</sup> months, 2 new footpaths gained locally linking the Thames Path. The Inquiry considered the question of whether an interruption to use due to closure of a path during foot and mouth, constituted an interruption to use for the purposes of claiming a PROW.

#### **13. STREATLEY FOOTPATH 21**

Margaret Pawson commented that it is important to note that the footpath has been walked by many people since its creation in 2004 and has been considered by the Forum on a number of occasions without any progress being made. Janice Bridger commented that WBDC are lucky not to be subject to legal action through not pursuing the

reinstatement of this path. However, progress is now underway, the Ecology assessment has been received and forwarded onto stake holders.

Questions raised by the assessment include

- Footbridge
- Barriers
- Stock proof fencing
- Visibility screening
- Surface
- Timing of works in the context of the ecological recommendations

WBDC are proposing to liaise further with landowners to resolve some the outstanding concerns listed and encourage them to manage adjacent meadows appropriately. As winter approaches it is unlikely that all elements of the project will be completed, it is a complex project that needs to address many issues. A levels survey has been undertaken, indicating the path should be able to be used for most of the year. Discussions amongst Forum members together with John Boler, MIGGS, followed regarding many of the questions raised above.

John Boler is the Chair of MIGGS, whose brief is to rectify and expand opportunities for disabled access. MIGGS have offered funds to support this project to complete on a fully accessible basis.

STR21, Agenda item 13. Notes from Margaret Pawson

The Western field is 62% of its length and is walkable all year. The Eastern field is the Local Wildlife Site has 2 drains and also get boggy.

Elaine's paper's numbers.

1. Ecological recommendations and comments on mitigation suggestions.

(The Report included statistics and statements given to Aluco by the Berkshire Ornithological Club)

- Water Rail are classified as 'fairly common' by the RSPB not 'a scarce breeding species' as quoted in the report.

- John Boler produced an analysis of BOC sightings (from their website) which showed that they covered a large area, 4kx4k, and over a 10 year period. The LWS was in the centre. Therefore these sightings are not appropriate to use in the context of building STR21. He sent WBC this information on 19 September 2022.

- If the LWS is fenced on both sides there is no need to add planted screening. The Thames Path, a busy ROW have not been required to plant screening. The birds that visit the site have not been deterred by walkers. Introduced planting is not necessary.

-this is the first time bridges have been proposed, the definitive width of 1.5 meters is adequate.

4. Barriers

Currently there are no problems with motorcycles or bicycles. The proposed mobility gate at the Recreation Ground end will be funded by MIGGS. The Thames Path end can be least restricted therefore a gap.

5. Stock proof fence is not necessary on both sides of the path in the Western field. The most that is acceptable is a fence on the South side.

6. The old barn is not on the line of the path and belongs to the Swan.

7/9. See previous comments

10 The water levels cause a problem with Cleeve Court and the level of the Thames. The only other neighbour is a residential property.

11 there is a window of opportunity to complete the path now. WBC need to urgently complete their plans and publish a timescale to achieve this.

**Action 13:** A formal letter to be drafted by Simon to WBDC, for consideration by the Forum prior to sending, supporting the project's completion in a timely manner and appropriate to all users.

#### **14. ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN LOCAL ACCESS FORUMS.**

To note that elsewhere there is an appetite for communication between LAFs.

JB has been contacted independently by the chair of Somerset LAF and a member of the Yorkshire LAF both of whom have concerns about the lack of LAF networking regionally and nationally since support from NE was withdrawn.

The former has been in contact with Andy Mackintosh of Natural England who has explained the hopes for a Share Point. She also raised lack of LAF representation on Defra's Access and Engagement with Nature Stakeholder Forum and has been invited to its next meeting on 28th September. She is willing to raise issues if we have any. It is agreed that the database of contacts needs updating as a priority.

The chair of Somerset LAF is looking to set up a regional group for the southwest. The Yorkshire LAF member is thinking of a more national approach.

**Action 14:** Forum members to consider joining border Forums.

#### **15. POLICY ON WALKING & CYCLING.**

To be reviewed at the next meeting in January.

**Action 15:** Simon Pike to make further minor amendments to the policy.

#### **16. MEETING OF LOCAL ACCESS FORUM CHAIRS.**

Local access forums on the borders are working at within differing environments, i.e. some are more rural than others, and some mainly centred on more urban issues. Forum members are asked to consider joining bordering groups. Angus Ross will go to meetings covering Oxfordshire, leaving Windsor & Maidenhead, Bracknell Forest, and Wiltshire & Surrey outstanding.

**Action 16:** same as Action 14.

#### **17. LAWRENCES LANE, THATCHAM TRO.**

Trial TRO for 6 months together with a physical barrier has been implemented by WBDC. The Chair declined the opportunity for the Forum to comment as this time. To note that there are carriage drivers in this area, the barrier would impede their access.

**Action 17:** Simon will continue to monitor.

#### **18. STREATLEY YOUTH HOSTEL.**

Current closure has been paused following funding being made available for a consultation on its future.

**Action 18:** Simon will continue to monitor.

#### **19. DISABLED ACCESS WORKING GROUP**

Item covered at Item 13 - Streatley Footpath.

#### **20. CROSS BOUNDARY LIAISON**

Cross boundary meetings are generally being cancelled or do not have relevant agenda items to warrant attending.

#### **21. WEST BERKSHIRE COMMONS.**

**Bucklebury:** Meeting cancelled.

**Greenham & Cookham:** Meetings moving to the Control Tower. Ongoing issue re dogs off lead and faeces. Education rather than banning

**Snelmore:** A meeting was held on 14<sup>th</sup> July. Minutes yet to be received.

There was discussion on submission to the next Countryside Stewardship Agreement which funds much of the conservation work on the Common.

The Fire tower is in a poor state of repair and is likely to be demolished.

Public access to the fenced meadow area by the car park: in the past this has been bookable. However, in the future it is likely to be reserved for selected groups.

AOB: Expense forms to be emailed out by Sandra  
A request for site visits to resume.

Meeting closed at 17.00

**MEETING DATES FOR 2023**

**WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY - READING**

**WEDNESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> MAY - WEST BERKSHIRE**

**WEDNESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER - WOKINGHAM**