

MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting of the Forum
Held at Shaw House, Newbury and Online via Zoom
2 pm Wednesday 25th May 2022

Present: Simon Pike (Chair), Jan Heard, Helena Barker, Janice Bridger, Julian Le Patourel, Sharon Bovingdon, Nicola Greenwood, John Walmsley, Graham Smith,

In Attendance: Sandra Griffin (Secretary), Elaine Cox (WBDC).

Zoom Attendance: Karen Rowland (RBC), Angus Ross, Natalie Lucas (RBC), Lillian Green (RBC), Andrew Fletcher (WBC), Mark Bullen, ,

Members of the Public also on zoom: Greg Wilkinson (potential member), Steve Vale (Ramblers), Tim Lewis (Wilts LAF) Paula Stevens

Apologies for absence: Margaret Pawson, Donald Peck. Tony Vickers, Connor Clark

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.

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.

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 JAN 2022 SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENTS AND MATTERS ARISING.

ITEM 6 JAN 2022. READING ROWIP.

Lillian Green gave a presentation of the current status of the project and how it has been achieved. Julian suggested an audit of the local paths may be useful, he suggested this could be completed by May subject to various factors. Lillian accepted the proposed timescale and Margaret offered to assist regarding accessing the paths from a disabled viewpoint.

Action 6: Julian to respond to RBC's request with support from those interested including Angus and Margaret.

ITEM 19 JAN 2022. DEFRA GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO GLOVER REVIEW

As this covers a significant part of the Forum's area it would be prudent to respond. Janice is happy to draft a response on the relevant questions including Chapter 3 section People & Place. Simon to draft responses relating to motorised traffic and send all proposed responses to LAF members for discussion. Deadline is 9th April, prior to our next meeting.

Action 19: Simon to coordinate a response from Forum members and submit prior to the deadline.

4: WORKING METHODS OF THE FORUM.

Apologies for the delay from the Chair to the Forum and Secretary. Now on V3 subject to comments from Jan Heard regarding layout and clarity. Some ongoing discussion including a further redraft at section 2.3 but otherwise the Forum accepted the document as agreed.

Action 5: Simon to redraft section 2.3 and share with Forum

5. PRIORITIES OF THE FORUM.

It was agreed that until the ROWIPS of both West Berkshire and Reading are complete no further action is required as these inform the Forum's priorities. Some discussion followed as to the relevance placed on LAF's by Government. Elaine Cox (WBDC) has recent experience with DEFRA who feel that LAF consultations and comments are integral to their thinking. Simon Pike mentioned that Windsor and Maidenhead LAF are seeking to create a regional LAF. LAF's around the country operate slightly differently and maybe the Forum needs to consider what types and to what extent it should engage in consultations. They are time consuming to complete.

The Chair asked Andrew Fletcher (WBC) about the Wokingham ROWIP. It was reviewed in 2019/20 and adopted in March 2020 and will run until March 2030. Available to view on their website.

Action 5: Andrew Fletcher to share ROWIP with the Forum

6. UPDATE ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING SOLAR FARMS.

The title of the policy was discussed and amended to include consultation and replace planning applications with developments. Jan Heard suggested 3 changes particularly to the wording in the policy including the addition of 'a sense of place'.

Action 6: Simon to update Policy with agreed changes.

7. WEST BERKSHIRE ROWIP.

Currently 1 out of 2 reports have been produced as shared. Both reports are evidence based. The countryside team have a meeting on 16th June to consider the reports. The consultant is available around that time for the Forum members to meet in person or online. Currently the Forum has made little input to the ROWIP except possibly through the disability members, although it is planned that advice will be sought imminently. Elaine commented that PROW team is increasingly involved with Public Health particularly since COVID. They are currently updating leaflets and looking at routes around and between villages.

Action 7a: Simon Pike to send policies onto the consultants.

Action 7b: Forum members read the comments made under the heading of 'Others' within the 1st report.

8. WBDC PROW CASE PROGRAMME 2022/23.

The programme as shown is almost a full list of plans for the coming year. There is an anomaly this year regarding a diversion order application made by a consultant on behalf of Bucklebury Farm Park. Janice Bridger asked if the Officers alone made the decision to tarmac a footpath, Elaine commented that this is indeed the case, it is possible to have a more formal process, but this is time consuming.

9. PROBLEMS WITH ARTIFICIALLY CONSTRAINED FOOTPATHS.

Tony Vickers commented there is an increasing trend amongst farmers to artificially constrain footpaths along field boundaries next to public footpaths. It is a penitential problem if the footpath is well used and becomes a quagmire in poor weather. Farmers are legally entitled to enclose their field using appropriate materials. Robust fencing is required to keep cattle in and deer and dogs out. Fencing has become more of an issue

since COVID with the number of countryside users increasing. Elaine Cox mentioned that a new Capital Projects Officer is now in post, he will be looking at path maintenance as one of his roles.

10. POLICY PAPER ON WALKING & CYCLING PROJECTS.

Janice Bridger queries whether the paper has ever been officially adopted regarding LCWIPS. It was briefly discussed by the Forum who all agreed to adopt it with the change of title offered as shown above.

Action10: Simon and Sandra to ensure the title is amended as shown.

11. PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE READING BC ROWIP.

Julian thanked the Forum for their comments so far and asked for any further additions to the consultation. It was agreed that the consultation response was complete and ready to send by email to Lilian Green at RBC. Lilian thanked the Forum for their constructive input and mentioned the ROWIP should be ready for review by the autumn.

Action 11: Julian to forward the final document to the Secretary for email.

12. AUTOMATIC VEHICLES CONSULTATION.

Final consultation consisted of a 500 page document. Jan Heard attended an online meeting and managed to ask a question. The Forum has been invited to continue consulting with them, and Jan will continue with her role and will feed back to the Forum as appropriate. Appreciation from the Chair offered to Jan for her continuing efforts.

Action12: Jan to continue to liaise regarding automated vehicles.

13. POTENTIAL EXTENSION TO ELING WAY.

Good news that an extension to Eling Way is being planned under Clive Tombs (Josh Kerry as moved on). Invite him to a future meeting of the Forum once the project has got underway. Route is not yet finalised, may not be easy to do so as the original sector. Janice has sent the Forum's Walking and Cycling Policy and agreed to continue with her role of liaison as agreed by the Forum.

Action 13: Janice to continue to liaise regarding Eling Way

14. FEEDBACK FROM FARMERS/LANDOWNERS TO VARIOUS PUBLICATIONS.

Thanks to Sharon Bovingdon for bringing the publications to the attention of the Forum for information. Interesting to read the views of different users in the countryside.

15. GREENWAYS UPDATE.

Up to date report circulated prior to the meeting. There is currently a review of the routes outstanding as it has been 6 years since it began. Changes on the ground need checking to see if it is still fit for purpose, change of political leadership, and budget implications.

Action 15a: Andrew or Connor to continue to keep the Forum updated.

Action 15b: Andrew, Nicola and Jan to debate options for Greenway E

16. UPDATES ON LONG STANDING RIGHTS OF WAY ISSUES.

1. Shaw 3/1. Phase 2 is still outstanding, i.e creating a corral. **Ongoing Action**
2. Streatley FP21. Level survey has now been completed. 2 water courses will need bridging and strong stock proof fencing. £40,000 funding has been secured. **Ongoing action.**
3. Snelmore Common. A design has been produced for a safe crossing point for both walkers and riders. Currently there is no signage on the road to alert road users to possible walker/rider incursions ahead.

17. DISABLED ACCESS WORKING GROUP.

Regarding Streatley Footpath 21 the Council now accepts that the FP should be created on the ground. By pushing the disability agenda, further funding may be available from Mend the Gap Funding. Paul Hendry WBDC is in email contact discussing the way forward.

18. CROSS BOUNDARY LIAISON

Hants. Report from Helena circulated prior to meeting.

Oxon:

Wilts: Graham attended meeting online in January, nothing to report.

19. WEST BERKSHIRE COMMONS.

Bucklebury: Ongoing bollard replacement, repairs may be made to damage incurred prior to bollards being in place. The seasonal TROs should go hand-in-hand with repairs where feasible. A recent site survey indicated very few issues except in the Holly Lane area.

Wokefield: No meeting since January

Greenham & Cookham: Park run has resumed and is being monitored for 6 months.

Snelmore: CLL money available to use for access.

AOB.

Elaine Cox wishes to thank John Walmsley on behalf of the Forum for his colossal endeavour over the past 2.5 years looking at planning permission that may affect PROW's

Meeting closed at 17.08

Apologies offered to all those who attempted to join the meeting via zoom. This proved beyond the capabilities of the location. It is hoped that the next meeting in September will be all face to face.

MEETING DATES FOR 2022

WEDNESDAY 26TH JANUARY - READING

WEDNESDAY 25TH MAY - WEST BERKSHIRE

WEDNESDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER - WOKINGHAM