

MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting of the Forum

Held at

Shaw House, Church Road, Newbury, RG14 2DR

2 pm Wednesday 22 May 2019

The meeting was preceded by a presentation from Chris Beney & Tom Bindoff on Gaps, Gates & Stiles and the new British Standard BS 5079:2018. It was attended by several members of the public and rights of way officers. Please see contact details offered by the presenters at the foot of the minutes.

Present: Janice Bridger (chair), Margaret Pawson, Jan Heard, Graham Smith, Chris Marriage, Helena Barker, Angus Ross, Nicola Greenwood, Tony Vickers, Simon Pike, Carole Ruse, Julian Le Patourel, Mark Bullen, Roger Penfold, Jed Ramsay.

In Attendance: Sandra Griffin (Secretary), Elaine Cox (West Berks Council), Natalie Lucas (Reading Borough Council), Andrew Fletcher (Wokingham Borough Council), Preeti Kauffman (WBC - Greenways Project Manager).

Apologies for absence: Sarah Hacker, Patrick Todd

Local authority notation: WBC - Wokingham Borough Council

WBDC - West Berkshire District Council

RBC - Reading Borough Council

1: WELCOME TO NEW FORUM MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Janice Bridger welcomed the new forum members, Carole Ruse, Julian Le Patourel & Mark Bullen, and Steve Vale, John Walmsley and Tom Bindoff 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.

Election of chair & vice chair: As there were no other offers, Janice Bridger and Jan Heard agreed to continue in these roles for 2019/20. Janice Bridger gave notice that she will be standing down as chair in May 2020.

2: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC.

No questions.

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

Angus Ross, Tony Vickers and Simon Pike all declared an interest as they all are actively involved in the planning process of their own local authorities.

4: CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM JAN 2019 MEETING.

The minutes, which had been distributed to members previously for corrections, were accepted as a true record.

ACTIONS & MATTERS ARISING FROM JANUARY & NOT ON TODAY'S AGENDA.

ITEM 6 (May 18) Graham Smith commented that he was unable to locate the Reading definitive map on the RBC website, Natalie Lucas confirmed that it was there but the possible link words used to locate it need updating.

ACTION 4/1: Natalie Lucas to investigate and update accordingly.

Item 6/1 (Jan19) Not pursuing

Items 8/1-4 completed

Item 9/1 ongoing no date available at this time

Item 10/a1 completed

Item 13/ 1 not relevant at this time

Item 13/2 National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative was raised at the AONB meeting last week. The Initial focus area will be around Cholsey & Moulsoford - in a joint project with Chiltern AONB. It's not about burial - they are looking at hedges, trees, wildflowers and wetland margins as 'distractions'. There will be other opportunities to apply for funding.

Item 14/2 New policy has been created and will be made available to the Forum.

ACTION 4/2 Andrew Fletcher to make the new WBC cross-compliance policy available to the Forum.

Item 15 Chris Marriage has begun monitoring new planning applications, he is receiving approx. 100 weekly from Elaine Cox who finds his input useful. WBC and/or RBC may like to create a similar role.

Item 20/1: Following a site visit by Elaine Cox and Grundon, Grundon have stated they do not wish to restore the original line of the path, because the geography has changed. The situation is being discussed by all parties. Tony Vickers said that he personally preferred the original route to the diverted one.

ACTION 4/3: Update email from Elaine Cox. Agenda item for next time.

Item 24 Simon Pike has written by email but as yet received no response. The signs are still in place.

ACTION 4/4: Simon Pike will make a formal complaint.

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

Mark Bullen, Carole Ruse and Julian Le Patourel, 3 new members, introduced themselves. The Register of members and interests has been circulated and updated accordingly.

It was noted that Jeanette Clifford had lost her seat as a councillor in the recent elections and hence her position on the Forum. The loss of Jeanette to the Forum was noted with regret. The chair to write to Jeanette expressing disappointment. News was awaited about who would be the West Berks Councillor representative on the Forum.

ACTION 5/1: Sandra Griffin and Elaine Cox to analyse membership and consider scope for recruiting.

ACTION 5/2: Janice Bridger to write to Jeanette Clifford.

6: CASE PROGRAMMES FOR WBDC & WBC 2019-20

Andrew Fletcher stated that at present WBC do not have a case programme set up, but it is something that can be considered in the future. WBC do have planned projects and improvements that can be listed. The programme is being developed based on budget.

Elaine Cox stated that the programme (maintenance, enforcement, Rights of Way Improvement Plan, and legal cases) for WBDC for 2019-20 is available to view on the website. The programme is devised by officers & approved by the relevant Portfolio councillor. At the January Forum meeting, Forum members had been asked to review the content of the case programme.

Chair asked for any comments regarding any visible or known areas to have changed as a result of the case programmes. It was said that Bucklebury has benefitted from some improvements. However, regarding Streatley footpath 21, some discussion followed regarding enforcement against landowners.

7: WBC GREENWAYS PHASE 2 CONSULTATION

Preeti Kauffman (WBC - Greenways Project Manager) joined the meeting today to update the Forum. She thanked everyone for the feedback received so far. She commented that the in-house design team for the project will have more detailed plans later this year for consultation. The consultation period is from July - September. There is some concern regarding timing of our September meeting. There are actually two consultations planned:

1. PROW and 2. Walking & Cycling

Greenways Route B mainly crosses WBC land. However, in one area the landowners have agreed to facilitate the PROW. However, the discussions are ongoing with all stakeholders at present, regarding the benefits and also creating a balance.

ACTION 7: Andrew Fletcher to monitor the consultation process and create a subgroup meeting if required.

8: ROADSIDE VERGES.

Verge mowing is currently underway, 4 separate areas have been identified by WBC. WBDC have a paths list available and now need to outline their approach including inspection and consultation with a contractor. Areas need to be identified and prioritised. Safety of users is paramount.

9: ARBORFIELD RELIEF ROAD

Due to the meeting taking place the day after the Forum, a swift response is required. Jan Heard has made it clear that there are two routes that could benefit. The Forum is happy for Andrew Fletcher to respond in time for the meeting tomorrow.

ACTION 9: Andrew Fletcher to pass on comments regarding the two routes mentioned.

10. HIGHWAYS ENGLAND DESIGNATED FUNDING FOR CYCLING PHASE 2

Elaine Cox introduced this Fund. It has been used effectively for the Hampstead Norreys to Hermitage pathway. There is a significant amount of money available to provide provision for non-motorised users to enable access between roads, thereby gaining improvements to cycling generally and overall safety. There is also a sub-fund available for vulnerable users. Josh Kerry of WBDC's highways team made the application for the funding for the previously mentioned pathway, and it was thought useful to obtain a copy of his successful application. The Forum may not have the authority to lead an application for funding, but can support an application made by an established group e.g. The British Horse Society or The Ramblers Association.

ACTION 10: Elaine Cox to ask for a copy of application from Josh Kerry.

11. GEOPLACE: DIGITISING THE DEFINITIVE MAP ON THE NATIONAL STREET GAZETTEER

Elaine Cox explained that Geoplace is the body that oversees the organisation and maintenance of the Local Street Gazetteer. It went live on 9 May 2019. Only two thirds of the WBDC Definitive Rights of Way are shown on the Gazetteer. If all highway records can be shown on the Gazetteer by 2026, this will help to protect them from extinguishment.

12. RAILWAY LEVEL CROSSINGS AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Simon Pike outlined his concerns regarding railway crossings and PROW. He stated that Network Rail work in 5 year periods, and the new period is about to begin. Simon will continue to extract the data and monitor what it actually means for the PROW in the Forum area.

ACTION 12: Simon Pike to continue to extract the data and gauge its impact on the Forum area.

13. SUSTRANS PROJECTS IN READING AND WEST BERKSHIRE

Sustrans have a new project called Paths for Everyone, which has the aim of making Sustrans routes open to all non-motorised users. We are in the South Area Activation programme. Simon Pratt, Development Manager, is to be invited to our next meeting. RBC are currently working with Sustrans regarding a solution that suits all users, particularly barriers that prohibit use by motorcyclists.

ACTION 13: Janice Bridger to invite Sustrans to our meeting in September, Andrew Fletcher to book a room and lunch at Dinton Pastures, Sandra Griffin to provide secretarial support.

14. RIDGWAY NATIONAL TRAIL - UPDATE

Members to note report and consider the impact. Organised events seem to be on the increase. Some concern about the loss of quiet solitude and peace.

15. ACCESS & BREXIT - UPDATE

Important issues regarding public access whether Brexit happens or not. Keep on Agenda for the time being. Agriculture Bill mentions Public Access.

ACTION 15: Ongoing Agenda Item.

16. WEST BERKS ROWIP - ANNUAL ROWIP REVIEW & ROWIP REVISION

Chair asked for any comments or concerns regarding the current ROWIP & work for this year. None declared.

The current ROWIP runs until 2020; a new ROWIP is required. Bucks CC employed a consultant that they highly recommend. Government initially gave money to achieve the ROWIP, but there have been cuts to these funds.

WBC ROWIP currently under revision and RBC has similar resourcing issues.

ACTION 16/1: Elaine Cox to undertake a Literature Review exploring documents such as the Local Plan, the Transport Plan, general good practice and advisory documents.

ACTION 16/2: Margaret Pawson and Helena Barker already supplied thoughts regarding disability users to Elaine Cox

ACTION 16/3: Carole Ruse, Margaret Pawson and Janice Bridger to look at the ROWIP from an equestrian point of view

ACTION 16/4: Tony Vickers, new councillor, to consult with colleagues, as it's a WBDC owned document.

17. RESOLUTION OF LONG STANDING PROW ISSUES IN WEST BERKS

A detailed paper was presented alerting the Forum to the lack of resolution over many years of two long-standing problems which are still interfering with public access: Bridleway COLD25A/1 + BUCK54A/1 at Broad View Farm, Cold Ash, and Bridleway Shaw 3/1. WBDC does not appear to have a written policy to deal with difficult issues and / or is reluctant to use the policy & powers it has. The Forum agreed to write to the Chief Executive & Head of Highways advising that a policy is developed and used to resolve both these problems.

ACTION 17/1: Janice Bridger to draft a letter based on the submitted paper; the Forum to approve; the Forum secretary to submit to WBDC.

18. STREATLEY FP 21 - Update

Following a site visit by several LAF members and Elaine Cox, there was no evidence that the footpath had ever been set out on the ground, although it is shown on the Definitive Map and OS Explorer map. The Forum advises WBDC to move on with investigating what needs to be done to physically create this path.

18a. ITEMS DEALT WITH BY EMAIL SINCE JANUARY MEETING - NO FURTHER ACTION.

1. Autonomous vehicles consultation.
2. WBDC Case Programme 2019-20.
3. Response to Defra's Environmental Land Management call for proposals.
4. 'Homes for the future' WBC consultation.

19. REPORTS FROM NON ROWIP WORKING GROUPS

Development of New Access & Maintenance of Existing:

Snelsmore Link: Elaine Cox reported that the next steps are to re-define the pathway after another site visit; seek permission for the fencing required for the road crossing from the Secretary of State (as it is common land); implement way marking; identify signage required; seek funding if necessary. The question was raised of making this path a definitive bridleway, and the Forum advised WBDC to follow the same marking as used for permitted bridleways elsewhere on the common.

Disabled Access: Margaret Pawson reported that the Padworth Route - almost all works are complete, and way marks will be in-place within 2 months.

Hose Hill Lake work being undertaken by volunteers. It was started on 14 May 2019 and should finish within a couple of weeks. BBOWT are very helpful and onside (within its own timescales).

20. CROSS BOUNDARY LIAISON

There were no written reports except one supplied by Chris Marriage on the day of the meeting, pertaining to Oxfordshire CAF that states the body met on 27th February and had the "Use of TRO's" on the Agenda for discussion. Another meeting was also held on 15th

May. Chris was unable to attend either meeting and has not as yet had a copies of the minutes.

The Forum considered the question 'Is it still useful?' It was agreed that it was, because even if members did not attend the meetings accessing the minutes could prove valuable.

21. WEST BERKS COMMONS

Reports were received for each common highlighting access issues.

Bucklebury Common: written report from Chris Marriage supplied on the day of the meeting states the committee met again on 11th April and confirmed seasonal TRO's will again be applied from October to April next winter. Motorbikes (not banned) have been a bit of a problem especially to Osgoods Corner; but the desperate situation of the 4x4 misuse of a few years back has been largely addressed by TRO's.

Again it was agreed that the representatives from the Forum do not need to attend each meeting, although Helena Barker is happy to do so at this time. Management of the common is working well under BBOWT.

22. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME AND HORIZON SCANNING

- Sustrans as previously mentioned.
- Podcast - look into setting up through Facebook maybe.
- Highways England possible presentation.
- New bridge over Junction 13 of M4.
- SMART motorway update.

ACTION 22/1: Elaine Cox to contact Highways England.

ACTION 22/2: Jan Heard to monitor new bridge update and SMART motorway in case of infringement on ROWs.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Dates for 2020 meetings

Wed 29th Jan 2020: Reading; Natalie Lucas **to book room**

Wed 20th May 2020: West Berks; Elaine Cox **to book room**

Wed 23rd Sep 2020: Wokingham; Andrew Fletcher **to book room**

All with a start time of 2pm with a possibility of a site visit or talk beforehand.

- Spare blue book available if anyone needs one, free of charge.
- Tony Vickers mentioned an enquiry from a resident that is now a formal complaint, regarding a footpath on a new development becoming a route for motor vehicles.
- Patrick Todd brought up by email the problem of landowners having to take quick action to prevent incursion of travellers and hare-coursers onto land via rights of way.

He feels that landowners should be able to physically prevent vehicular access while maintaining access for other appropriate users. Clarity is needed on this.

Meeting closed at 5pm

Tom Bindoff: 07835 942663. gtbindoff@btinternet.com

Chris Beney: 01923 211113. chrisbeney@aol.com

A couple of copies of the yellow booklet discussed on the day are available from the secretary or from The Pittecroft Trust www.pittecroft.org.uk.