

MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting of the Forum
Held Online via Zoom
2 pm Wednesday 26th JANUARY 2022

Present: Simon Pike (Chair), Margaret Pawson, Jan Heard, Graham Smith, Helena Barker, Angus Ross, Janice Bridger, Julian Le Patourel, Mark Bullen, Sharon Bovingdon. Tony Vickers, Nicola Greenwood, Jordan Norval, Karen Rowland, Donald Peck

In Attendance: Sandra Griffin (Secretary), Elaine Cox (WBDC), Lillian Green (Transport Planner - RBC). Connor Clark (WBC), Steve Vale (Ramblers).

Members of the Public: Gillian Wallace, Anne & Richard McDonald, Liz Connolly

Apologies for absence: John Walmsley, Tim Lewis

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.

Liz asked a question relating to development at Hall Farm (WBC) and its impact on equestrians, stables closing and unsafe hacking.

Gillian Wallace raised the question of the path from Spinney to Pangbourne.

Mr & Mrs McDonald representing Purley residents re Springs Farm footpath.

They were all asked to submit a question in writing if possible, or there maybe time at AOB to discuss each item.

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

Sharon Bovingdon - Landowner Item 12,

Simon Pike - Lower Way, Thatcham Development, AOB

Jan Heard - Wokingham Local Plan Item 8

3: CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM SEP 2021 MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING.

Circulated and updated prior to meeting.

WORKING METHODS OF THE FORUM.

Action 4: Ongoing

PRIORITIES OF THE FORUM.

Action 5: Ongoing,

POLICY FOR SOLAR FARMS.

Action 7: Ongoing. Jan is still waiting for Simon to liaise with her regarding the policy.

MOWN VERGES. On Agenda

Action 15: Ongoing

LONG STANDING ISSUES Streatley FP21

Issue of obtaining funding from BR to support the project at Streatley FP21. Paul Hendry and Susan Pitman from WBDC have now taken over this project. Margaret would like them to get in touch with her.

4. MEMBERSHIP.

Following the resignation of Carole Ruse, Landowner and horse drawn carriage driver there is now a lack of landowners on the Forum.

ACTGION 4a All If anyone knows of any landowners who may wish to join the Forum, please let Sandra know.

Action 4b: Janice to draft a thank you letter to Carole.

5: WORKING METHODS OF THE FORUM.

The adoption of this document remains under discussion due to concerns raised by various members of the Forum, further drafting to continue.

Action 5a: Janice to continue drafting.

Action 5b: Simon to forward the current document to the 3 representatives of the 3 local authorities for their comments.

6. 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 RBCs request for a LAF response to the RBC consultation on its RoWIP with support from those interested including Angus and Margaret.

7. UPDATE ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING SOLAR FARMS.

Some ongoing rewording needed as discussed but in general the policy has been agreed subject to these minor changes. Refined policy to be circulated to Forum members.

Action 7: Simon to contact Jan and then update as per previous action see matters arising.

8. WOKINGHAM LOCAL PLAN.

Thanks to a very thorough job by Nicola a submission has been made on behalf of the Forum. As the Forum is there to support all user groups who have a right to use PROW's including walking, riding, cycling, disability, motor transport etc it is not possible to create a response covering just one activity. Janice will investigate possibly creating a specific document together with BHS for equestrians.

9. PUBLIC ACCESS AND ELMS.

Janice asked everyone to note her report. Some consideration was given by the Forum to possibly lobbying Lord Benyon as he is from the local area and is involved in rural affairs. Janice had met with him a few years ago re access and farm payments but maybe now is the right time to make further points to him for instance green belt not necessarily AONB and is the quality of the landscape a consideration? Sharon also commented that there can a difference between farmers and landowners when considering the ELMs scheme.

10. WEST BERKSHIRE ROWIP.

Consultation has currently stalled due to an issue with the consultants. Still outstanding is the exceptional meeting with the Forum outside of the LAF's planned schedule. Janice asked the question of cost of the consultants and evidence of implementation from the last ROWIP 10 years ago. Elaine confirmed the cost is in the region of £9000 and can evidence the use of the ROWIP in planning applications that fall within PROWs.

Action 10: Elaine Cox to inform Forum about the exceptional meeting when known.

11. WBDC GENERAL CONDITION SURVEY.

The entire network is being surveyed between April and June 2022. The consultants are currently drawing up a set of standards that each path will either pass or fail. Although the Ramblers do an excellent job, these 10 yearly surveys require professionals who understand the standards, H&S etc. Training would need to be given to Ramblers.

12. UPDATES ON LONG STANDING RIGHTS OF WAY ISSUES.

1. Shaw 3/1. Gate has been moved however the landowner is non-compliant in completing the plan and has been threatened with further action. **Ongoing Action**
2. Broad View Farm. The formal application has been forwarded to the portfolio holder for inclusion into case programme for 2022/23. The case has not been considered prior to this due to the length of time taken for submission. **Ongoing action.**
3. Streatley FP21. It is unclear whether funding has been sought from 'Mend the Gap'. Margaret would like contact from Paul Hendry and/or Susan Pitman regarding their action. **Ongoing action.**

14. DISABLED ACCESS WORKING GROUP.

The meeting has not taken place at the Nature Discovery Centre, however a discussion has taken place about the non-viability of the Tramper hire scheme for various reasons.

15. CROSS BOUNDARY LIAISON.

Hants: Helena unable to attend meeting in December, minutes not yet available.

Oxon: Next meeting 18th May, only meet twice a year, currently no representative Simon is happy to attend in May, Janice may go 16th November.

Wilts: Group has not met for over 6 months. Next due in March.

16. WEST BERKSHIRE COMMONS.

Bucklebury: TRO's in place for the winter. More education still needed in some areas.

Wokefield:

Greenham & Cookham: Park run is back for 6 months being monitored for the effect on the area. Abuse of the common by dog walkers is an increasing problem, more education needed based at the control tower.

17. SNELSMORE COMMON AND LINK PATH

Janice Bridger said that the continued lack of progress was sadly affecting morale. Elaine said she had paid for a purchase order to cover a road safety audit in the area.

18. VERGE CUTTING

WBDC has an ongoing project of wildflower verges, however safety is the first priority. John Winstanley has invited BBOWT to attend our next meeting in May. There is some conflict between continuing with the project and the safety of walkers/riders.

WBC - The Forum understands areas have been identified in Wokingham as suitable for wildflower verges. What is the current situation with regard to their implementation?

Action 18: Andrew or Connor to advise Forum of up to date plan.

19. DEFRA AONB PLANNING CONSULTATION

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

20. GREENWAYS PROJECT.

Angus was happy to take questions and endeavour to respond, Mark asked for a plan of the areas affected by the Greenways Project if available.

Action 19: Angus to pass Mark's enquiry onto Andrew or Connor.

21. AOB.

- i. Active Travel England, Simon will promote the Forum to Chris Boardman
- ii. Angus may no longer be a councillor from 5th May but would like to remain on the Forum as an individual.
- iii. West Berkshire Local Plan - Reg 18 response submitted, Reg 19 response due in July, may need a special meeting.
- iv. Lower Way, Thatcham - submission made
- v. Retrospective planning received for Sulhampstead Koi carp pond; potential problem spotted by John Walmsley.
- vi. Law Commission self-driving cars report issued today.
- vii. Former rubbish tip formerly designated access land
- viii. Springs Farm - question from public relating to FP from Springs Farmhouse to riverside at Pangbourne. ROW granted after it being closed by the farm.
- ix. Sandra asked for the deadline for receiving papers to be no less than 14 days except in exceptional circumstances following receipt of papers right up to the time of the meeting.

Meeting closed at 17.05

MEETING DATES FOR 2022

WEDNESDAY 26TH JANUARY - READING

WEDNESDAY 25TH MAY - WEST BERKSHIRE

WEDNESDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER - WOKINGHAM