

MID AND WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting of the Forum
Wednesday 24th September 2025

Present: Simon Pike (Chair), Helena Barker, Jon Ford, Sharon Bovingdon, Nicola Greenwood, Helen Tranter, Margaret Pawson, Janice Bridger, Chris Read, Jan Heard (Vice Chair).

In Attendance: Sandra Griffin (Secretary), Elaine Cox (WBDC), Matt Walters (WBDC), Natalie Lucas (RBC) Cllr Paul Gittings (RBC) Connor Clark (WBC), Laura Buck (WBC), Cllr Catherine Glover (WBC).

Apologies for absence: Donald Peck. **Resignation** received from George Cummings due to A Level commitments.

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

Simon Pike welcomed everyone to the meeting and requested everyone introduce themselves.

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC.

No questions.

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

None

4: CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM MAY 2025 MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING.

AOB JANUARY 2025, LAWRENCES LANE. WBDC NO FURTHER ACTION.

5. ROUND-UP READING BC.

PROW 6 developers providing funding for improving flood works at Coley Meadows. Nothing further to report.

6. ROUND-UP WOKINGHAM BC.

Report has been circulated prior to the meeting. Regarding verge cutting Jan Heard remarked on a particular area that appears to have been overlooked. Laura Buck encouraged her to follow the link through to raise her concerns with the team.

7. ROUND-UP WEST BERKSHIRE DC.

Report has been circulated prior to the meeting.

8. ANCIENT DROVERS ROAD.

Prompted by an article in the NWN. In relation to the Berkshire Nature Recovery Strategy, what is envisaged by WBDC, are PROW's going to be to become Nature Reserves? Elaine Cox commented there has been minimal input to the Nature Recovery Strategy from WBDC, however WBC has been increasing its work to improve the ecological value of certain PROWs, in the form of verge management, hedge laying, coppicing, and drainage measures. This work is also consistent with Actions in the Draft West Berkshire ROWIP.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is spear-heading the Nature Recovery Strategy for Berkshire. Jan Heard will report back from the next cross boundary meeting.

ACTION Jan Heard to report back to the Forum.

8a NORTH WESSEX DOWNS LANDSCAPE.

Statutory Management Plan happens every 5 years concerning the area that covers 9 different Local Authorities who must have regard to it. A new Plan is due to be published soon.

9. BHS PILOT CAMPAIGN RESPONSE.

Thank you to the Forum for their response. Responses received from a wide variety of groups and individuals. Next meeting 30th September. Loddon Valley Ramblers expected to attend together with representatives for bridleways and cycling. Jan Heard confirmed attendance from a cycling perspective.

ACTION Jan Heard to attend and report back.

10. OPEN ACCESS LAND.

LA's are responsible for managing access to areas of designated open access land. There is an attempt to broaden access land more generally. Mooted to be a green paper due early 2026. Janice Bridger thanked Helen Tranter for her comprehensive paper. She also asked if these areas can be added to WBDC website showing areas available for walking etc.

ACTION Simon and Helen to follow developments. Elaine, Matt and Laura would like to be kept informed.

11. OPEN ACCESS LAND REVIEW WBDC.

Ongoing project that has just begun as a desk-based option. Once OAL areas have been identified then visits on the ground will follow. The main priority will be to ensure there is good access to each parcel of land, with informative signage.

12. SANGS REPORT.

Thank you to Helen for her comprehensive report. The ongoing building in the area provides opportunities for access to the countryside via the designation of SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space), which are alternative areas designed to reduce dog walkers disturbing ground nesting birds on sensitive sites near developments, and the overuse of some areas by the general public near the housing developments. Margaret asked if SANGS need to include accessibility - they should - however not all SANGS are adopted by LA's and some are administered independently, causing concerns with access and charging.

13. APPG OUTDOORS FOR ALL.

Established in May 2025 with a consultation in July 2025, due to report now. If the green paper comes about the Forum is entitled to respond. The question was discussed and agreed that it was probably was timely to bring this to local MP's now.

ACTION Simon to write a brief email to local MP's.

14. STREATLEY YOUTH HOSTEL.

Discussions are still ongoing, onto the 2nd stage of disposal. The location of the youth hostel makes the value of the property significantly higher than other similar hostels.

ACTION Simon Pike will continue to monitor discussions and report back to the Forum.

15. WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL PLAN.

The Local Plan for NE Thatcham development of 2500 houses by 2045 has resulted in planning proposals which are currently being considered by WBDC. Once the planning application is made the Forum will then be able to consult with the Developers. The key elements should be agreed by the end of 2025. First completions are likely to be 2030.

16. DISABLED ACCESS WORKING GROUP.

Nothing to add to the report. Requested more information regarding the opening of Streatley FP21 as it has been such a long-standing agenda item. Elaine Cox commented that invites are currently being sent out and will of course include the Forum. The WBDC Chairman Tony Vickers will officially open the path on Friday 24th October at 2pm.

17. CROSS BOUNDARY LIAISON.

Reports have been circulated prior to the meeting.

Janice Bridger has agreed to report from Oxfordshire although she is unlikely to attend the meetings.

18. WEST BERKSHIRE COMMONS.

Reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Bucklebury Common: Definitive lines are being obscured, contractors are currently reinstating these areas. Rangers will be walking the routes to check adequate reinstatement.

19. APPOINTMENT OF GREENHAM AND CROOKHAM COMMON COMMISSIONER.

Following the email sent out prior to the meeting only one candidate showed any interest. Sharon Bovingdon was therefore Proposed by Simon Pike and approved by Forum members.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

It is understood that John Walmsley set up the Facebook page. Please can members of the Forum have a look at the page and comment on its usefulness.

Dates and timings of meetings for 2026 were discussed. It was agreed to move the January meeting back a week into February at 2pm as usual.

Simon will send out an enquiry survey about timings of both May and September meetings but the dates have been agreed as shown. It is noted that officers prefer meetings held during office hours.

ACTION Simon Pike to send out the enquiry survey about meeting timings.

Finally, a huge thank you to Tony Vickers for his contribution to the Forum over many years.

Meeting closed at 1700.

Wednesday 4th February 2026 RBC

Wednesday 27th May 2026 WBDC

Wednesday 23rd September 2026 - WDC