

# ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

## LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

14 June 2017

### ATTENDANCE LIST

<b>Name</b>	<b>Interest area</b>
Peter Thorn	Chair of LAF, Land Management
Councillor Maureen Hunt	RBWM Councillor
Councillor Malcolm Beer	RBWM Councillor
Geoff Priest	Walking, Hurley Parish Council
Steve Gillions	Walking, East Berkshire Ramblers
Sara Church	Horse Riding
Alan Keene	Bisham Parish Council, Land Management
Lisa Hughes	Disabled users
Christine Gadd	Cycling and walking
Katie Sarsfield	WSL Parish Council

Tanya Leftwich	Clerk to the Forum
Andrew Fletcher	Local Access Forum Secretary
Victoria Gibson	Team Leader for Development Control
Buffy Harris-Jones	TCV

### **OBSERVERS**

Annie Keene	
Colin Patient	Mid & West Berks LAF

### **APOLOGIES**

<b>Name</b>
James Copas
Margaret Cubley
John Foulger
Gordon Marrs
Ian Wilson
Fiona Hewer

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD**  
**LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**  
**14 June 2017**  
**MINUTES**

**1 Welcome, apologies and introductions**

The Chairman, **Peter Thorn**, welcomed everyone to the **thirty-sixth** meeting of the Local Access Forum.

Apologies for Absence were received from Ian Wilson, Gordon Marrs, James Copas, Margaret Cubley, John Foulger and Fiona Hewer.

**Councillor Hunt** declared an interest in relation to Item 4 of the agenda (Planning and Consultations) as the subject of the Maidenhead Golf Course would be going to Full Council in the future. When it got to item 4 **Councillor Hunt** left the meeting for the duration of the item.

The Forum approved the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2016.

The Chairman informed everyone present that the meeting was being recorded and would be uploaded onto the RBWM website.

Matters arising from last meeting

**Andrew Fletcher** referred members to pages 17-23 of the agenda and explained that item 8.4 (To liaise with the Council's planning teams and ensure that they are aware of what the LAF would wish to be consulted about, particularly in regard to large planning developments) was the only item 'in progress', the others had all been completed.

**Councillor Beer** stated that it was good to see that so many of the items had been completed.

**2 Members' update**

Members had nothing to update.

General Forum membership

**Andrew Fletcher** informed the Forum that **Fiona Hewer** (representing Cookham Parish Council and Footpaths, Public Rights of Way and Open Spaces) had joined since the last meeting but unfortunately could not be present today.

It was noted that the following members had resigned from the Forum:

- Andrew Nye

**3 Volunteering in RBWM**

The Chairman, **Peter Thorn**, welcomed **Buffy Harris-Jones** (Senior Project Officer - TCV) to the meeting and invited her to address the Forum.

**Buffy Harris-Jones** gave the Forum a brief presentation on Volunteering in RBWM which covered the following:

- The Conservation Volunteers
- The Berkshire Biodiversity Action Team
- BAT volunteers from 2011-2017
- BAT projects in RBWM

- Before and after photos
- Volunteers Feedback
- The future of the BATeam in RBWM
- Leaflet

It was noted that a lot of hard work had gone into BAT projects such as the steps and handrail installed in Quarry Wood, the boardwalk installed at Chalk Pit Copse (in 2014), the additional boardwalk added at Chalk Pit Copse (in 2016), the boardwalk added to a Sunninghill Footpath and surface improvements made to Datchet Footpath 9 (opposite the Golf Course).

**Buffy Harris-Jones** informed the Forum that only hand tools were used to complete projects and that the volunteers learnt by experience.

It was hoped that going forward additional volunteers could be found to help either on a regular basis or as and when they had time available. The Forum was given examples of the new flyer about the BAT Team that **Buffy Harris-Jones** had produced.

**Buffy Harris-Jones** informed the Forum that they had been really lucky this year to have received an extra two / three days funding to spend on access improvements. It was noted that the timber used in projects was pressure treated timber which was expected to have a fifteen year lifespan.

It was noted that in the office there was Buffy who worked four days a week and her colleague who worked three days a week on different schemes.

**Councillor Beer** suggested sending three of four of the leaflets to each of the Parish Councils in the Royal Borough.

- ❖ **Action (AF): To send TCV BAT Team leaflets to Parish Councils.**
- ❖ **Action (PT): To write a letter to go out with the TCV BAT Team leaflets to Parish Councils to help encourage more volunteers to sign up.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): To send contact details of Parish Clerks to Buffy Harris-Jones for her to contact each Council directly.**
- ❖ **Action (AF/LH): To investigate options for potential training for volunteers to understand disabled access issues.**

#### 4 **Planning and consultations**

The Chairman, **Peter Thorn**, welcomed the Team Leader for Development Control, **Victoria Gibson** to the meeting and explained that she had been invited to attend due to concerns about how the Forum could best engage with the planning process with regard to large developments, for example the potential use of the Golf Course in Maidenhead.

**Councillor Hunt** declared an interest and left the room whilst this item was discussed. **Councillor Beer** explained that **Councillor Hunt** had left the room because she was a Maidenhead Councillor and that he lived in the other end of the Borough and was a Windsor Councillor so felt happy to stay for the item.

The Chairman invited the Team Leader for Development Control to address the Forum.

The Team Leader for Development Control explained that she made recommendations on planning applications whilst the other side of planning looked at policies. It was noted that when a planning application was received

their statutory list of consultees were consulted which included the Highways Team, the Rights of Way & Highway Licensing Panel and the Principal Transport Policy Officer. The Chairman stated that sometimes the Local Access Forum heard about applications after they had been processed. The Team Leader for Development Control explained that the Forum's comments had been taken on board with regard to the Chapel Arches planning application as comments from interested groups were included in the report.

The Team Leader for Development Control explained that the Development Control team also dealt with pre-applications which was the stage prior to applications being submitted. It was noted that pre-application informal discussions were commercially sensitive and therefore confidential. It was noted that the Highways Team influenced where the additional infrastructure, such as route ways / links, was located. The Forum was informed that CIL money helped pay for infrastructure which Section S106 could secure projects through the planning process.

The Team Leader for Development Control assumed the Forum that with regard to the Maidenhead Golf Course it was in the very early stages of a long pathway.

It was noted that the footpath had disappointingly not been diverted regarding the Beech Lodge School planning application. The Team Leader for Development Control explained that the diversion could have been negotiated at the planning application stage.

The Team Leader for Development Control informed the Forum that the Government was being encouraged to persuade developers to do some public consultation before submitting a planning application.

- ❖ **Action (VG): Victoria Gibson to update Andrew Fletcher with details of what requirements were needed for a particular size of development.**
- ❖ **Action (AF/VG): Planning Policy team to liaise with Andrew Fletcher regarding LAF position statements.**

## 5 Access and Brexit

**Andrew Fletcher** informed the Forum that Mid and West Berkshire was particularly worried about leaving the E.U.

The Forum was given a brief summary on Mid and West Berkshires concerns, it was requested that the detailed paper be emailed to the Forum as soon as possible.

**Andrew Fletcher** explained that the pots of money to improve access and environment were tied in with European Union funds and had stopped with immediate effect. The Forum was informed that Mid and West Berkshire had come up with some proposals to seek to improve access which they were hoping to get on an MP's agenda ASAP. The proposals included:

- That land owners or occupiers should be financially rewarded for creating off-road links and connecting existing ROW.
- A process for payments for improving ROW – giving greater widths, providing higher rights, providing way marking, etc. It was noted that new access should benefit all non-motorised users.
- Improved existing cross compliance.
- Re-organisation for re-use of paths.

The Chairman stated that he felt it was a justified concern that Natural England would not be able to fund improvements across England / UK and that local LAFs would want to lobby local MPs.

**Councillor Hunt** stated that she felt she needed more information to be able to make an informed decision. The Chairman explained that the Forum just wanted to alert local MPs about the local ROW network and how improvements could be made. **Steve Gillions** explained that the quality of stewardship in the Royal Borough was very high and that the tone needed to be that it would be nice if all of the UK could enjoy the standards we in the Royal Borough did as it worked. **Councillor Hunt** agreed that made sense.

- ❖ **Action (AF): To circulate Mid and West Berks LAF Access and Brexit proposals to all LAF members.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): To inform MWBLAF that the RBWM LAF were not prepared to support their proposals at the present time, but have resolved to write separately to the Secretary of State for the Environment to register support of stewardship schemes and financial incentives to gain access improvements.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): To draft a letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment to highlight that Countryside Stewardship schemes and other financial incentives have worked in this area, and asking him to bear this in mind when considering policies in future following the withdrawal from the EU.**

**Letter to be sent to all members for comments before it is sent.**

## 6 **LAF Work programme**

**Andrew Fletcher** gave the Forum an update on the work programme for 2016/2017.

### Multi-User Routes.

**Andrew Fletcher** explained that there were ongoing discussions with the Environment Agency and Bucks County Council regarding opening up part of the jubilee river for horse riding. The Forum was informed that at present there were no other proposals for multi-user routes currently being investigated. **Sara Church** explained that horse riders were already using the route.

### Fostering closer engagement with parish councils.

The Forum noted that a meeting had been held with **Peter Thorn, Geoff Priest** and **Andrew Fletcher** to discuss proposed actions to foster closer engagement with Parish Councils. The following actions were agreed:

1. Share minutes of Forum meetings with Parish Councils and ask them to link to it on their website for parish residents to view.
2. Ask Parish Councils to share minutes of meetings with the Forum.
3. Invite Parish Councils to site visits being organised by the Forum in their area.
4. Ask Parish Councils to assist with enforcement issues where they are able.

**Geoff Priest** stated that he believed that Parish Clerks did not want to get involved which was a concern and that Parish Councillors needed to be approached rather than Parish Clerks. **Councillor Beer** explained that Parish clerks were salaried and as such should undertake what was requested of them.

## Opportunities and issues with identified large development sites

It was noted that this item had already been covered under earlier agenda item discussions.

### Improvement to access as Ashley Hill, Hurley.

**Andrew Fletcher** informed the Forum that a meeting had been held with **Alan Keene** and **Annie Keene** on 21 February 2017 to develop a proposal for improved horse riding access in Ashley Hill. It was noted that a map detailing the proposal was included in Appendix A of the agenda.

**Andrew Fletcher** explained that the Forestry Commission had then been approached as the main land manager to see if they had any objection to the proposals. They replied stating that horse riding is something they looked at previously and at the time the forestry commission decided not to pursue it. They added that they do not have the resource to manage any additional trails at the current time, and although the proposal was to upgrade the existing tracks, the Forestry Commission would need to inspect them as riding trails which would increase the resources required at the site.

It was noted that a proposal had been put to the Forestry Commission for the Council to inspect the paths on the Forestry Commission's behalf. **Andrew Fletcher** explained that the Forestry Commission had responded that this did happen in other cases but at the present time they were not able to look into this until February 2018.

- ❖ **Action (AF/AK): To work together to approach the other stakeholders at Ashley Hill to see if they would be happy in principle for increased horse riding access in the woods.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): A LAF working group to be put together with interested members to develop draft position statements on behalf of the LAF which define strategic access benefits that would be desirable in the identified development areas in the Local Plan.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): To share the LAF position statements with local Parish Councils, Highways and Planning Policy for their consideration when responding to pre planning advice and formal planning applications.**

## 7 **LAF Annual Report**

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to page 29 of the agenda and explained that the item was to inform the Forum about the preparation of the annual report and Natural England Proforma for its activities over the past year, and to seek approval for them to be published.

Forum members were given a two page handout from the Chairman introducing the item that they could read at their leisure.

- ❖ **Action (AF): To publish the Local Access Forum Annual Report 2016-2017.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): PT suggested that the financial value of the volunteer works be communicated as a percentage of the annual revenue budget in future publications.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): The LAF work programme for 2017/2018 was decided as follows:**
  - **Opportunities for access improvements in large**

- development sites.
  - Multi-user routes.
  - Improvement of access at Ashley Hill, Hurley.
- ❖ **Action (AF): To write to Maidenhead Civic Society regarding the Millennium Walk to inform them that the LAF will be continuing to monitor progress towards this aim, but at the present time have decided that no further advice to the Council is necessary.**

The Chairman congratulated **Andrew Fletcher**.

## 8 **LAF Monitoring items**

**Andrew Fletcher** referred the Forum to pages 37 & 38 of the agenda and explained that the purpose of the report was to update the Forum about the status of projects on the LAF regular monitoring list and to seek the forums advice regarding the members' discussion forum. The following items were covered:

- Eton-Dorney Multi-User Route.
  - Forlease Road to Green Lane.
  - Deregulation Bill update – it was noted that the applicant / land owner would be liable for costs rather than the Council.
  - Volunteer works.
  - M4 smart motorway.
- ❖ **Action (AF): Peter Thorn suggested that the financial value of the volunteer works be communicated as a percentage of the annual revenue budget in future publications.**

## 9 **Feedback from meetings and conferences**

**Andrew Fletcher** provided the Forum Members with handouts listing the actions that had arisen from the meetings on the 30 January and 19 May 2017. It was noted that these joint LAF Chair meetings helped to resolve cross boundary issues and helped each Borough understand what each area was doing.

The Chairman thanked those who had been able to attend Hawthorn Lane.

- ❖ **Action (AF): To ask the LAF chairs group who represents disabled access users on other forums.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): To circulate details of potential fund for improving PROW affected by Highways England schemes to all members.**

## 10 **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be on Wednesday 1 November 2017.

A.O.B.

The Chairman informed the Forum that he and **Andrew Fletcher** had attended Margaret Bowdery's funeral and he was happy to announce that the RBWM had agreed to dedicate a bridge in her name.

**Andrew Fletcher** explained that the bridge was currently being designed along with a plaque. It was noted that a response was outstanding from Margaret Bowdery's son which could potentially delay things as the plaque needed to be embedded in the bridge.

- ❖ **Action (SG): To contact Margaret Bowdery's family regarding wording for memorial plaque.**

**Councillor Beer** informed the Forum that he wanted to express his appreciation and regret to Mike Bruton, a champion for the disabled community, who had sadly died a fortnight ago.

- ❖ **Action (AF): To draft letter on behalf of the LAF to the late Cllr Mike Bruton's family expressing condolences for their loss.**

The meeting, which started at 6.30 pm, ended at 8.45 pm.

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