

Local Access Forum : 27th June 2013 Meeting

6:30pm Desborough Suite 4, Town Hall, Maidenhead

Agenda

- | Item | | |
|--|-----------|------------------------|
| 1. Welcome, apologies and introductions | (10 mins) | Peter Thorn |
| (a) Declarations of interest | | All |
| (b) Approval of Minutes – 6 th Dec 2012 | | Andrew Fletcher |
| (c) Matters arising from last meeting | | Andrew Fletcher |
| 2. Members' update | (10 mins) | All |
| 3. Disabled access in the countryside | (15 mins) | Lynne Penn |
| 4. The Berkshire Local Nature Partnership | (15 mins) | Annie English |
| 5. Membership update | (10 mins) | Andrew Fletcher |
| (a) General Forum membership | | |
| (b) LAF Fast Response Team membership | | |
| 6. LAF annual report | (10 mins) | All |
| (a) Approval of draft annual report | | |
| (b) Completion of NE report pro-forma | | |
| 7. Multi-use paths | (15 mins) | All |
| 8. Information about public rights of way | (15 mins) | Julie Mason |
| 9. Conference feedback | (10 mins) | |
| (a) National LAF Conference | | Peter Thorn |
| (b) SE LAF Conference | | Andrew Fletcher |
| 10. LAF Monitoring items | (10 mins) | Andrew Fletcher |
| (a) Easy going routes | | |
| (b) Volunteer works | | |
| (c) LAF members' discussion forum | | |
| 11. Date of next meeting | (2 min) | Tanya Leftwich |

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

6 December 2012

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Interest area
Peter Thorn	Chairman, Land management
Harry Hancock	Vice Chairman, Walking, open spaces
Councillor Beer	Walking, cycling, Old Windsor Parish Council
Councillor Majeed	RBWM
Lynn Cassells	National Trust
James Copas	Farming & land management
Hilary Essen	Walking, health issues, cycling
Gordon Harris	Footpaths, open spaces, Cookham Parish Council
Julie Mason	Walking, web
Christopher Westacott	Land management
Paul Rinder	Farming
Andrew Fletcher	Local Access Forum Secretary
Tanya Leftwich	Clerk to the Forum

OBSERVERS

Annie Keene	
Ray Sharp	Mid & West Berkshire LAF
Phil Smith	East Berkshire Ramblers

APOLOGIES

Name

Councillor John Stretton
Sara Church
Margaret Cubley
William Emmett
Helen Howard
Andrew Randall

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
6 December 2012
MINUTES**

ACTION

1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions, Declarations of Interest

The Chairman **Peter Thorn** welcomed everyone to the twenty-seventh meeting of the Local Access Forum.

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor John Stretton, Sara Church, Margaret Cubley, William Emmett, Helen Howard and Andrew Randall.

The Forum approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 June 2012.

Matters arising from last meeting

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to pages 1-3 of the agenda. It was noted that with regard to item 1.2 **Andrew Fletcher** was in contact with the Special Projects Team who deal with developer contributions about whether these items can be removed. With regard to item 3.1 it was noted that **Andrew Fletcher** was in contact with the RSPCA with regard to signage options.

2 Membership Update

The Chairman, **Peter Thorn**, informed the Forum that **Margaret Bowdery** has chosen to reduce her voluntary activities and has stepped down from the forum. It was noted that **Peter Thorn** had written to **Margaret Bowdery** to thank her for all her hard work, which the Forum endorsed.

3 Members' Update

None reported.

4 Public Rights of way and land management

The Forum welcomed **Paul Rinder**, who had agreed to attend in William Emmett's place. **Paul Rinder** explained that land managers got to see a lot of what was happening in the countryside, especially in urban areas which covered:

- Gates being left open which meant stock were set loose, resulting in damage to both drivers and landowner's property.
- Sheep worrying and maiming.
- Litter and Chinese lanterns that had to be cleared. It was noted that cows often ate plastic bags, which could kill them.
- Bridleways being used to access fields, and vehicles being driven on the fields.
- Hare coursing.
- Deer coursing (usually at night with dogs).
- Drug taking (needles and syringes often found and needed to be dealt with).
- Abandoned cars / burnt out cars / motorbikes driven on land.
- Fly tipping.
- Raves / loud music played at night.
- Travellers.
- Suicides and attempted suicides.

- Football and other games being played on land.

Paul Rinder informed the Forum that whilst landowners ended up policing their land (usually outside the 9am-5pm hours) and keep everything clear he believed the following things could be done in the future to help:

- Footpath signs – to include landowner’s numbers, the footpath number and a 24-hour trouble-shooting telephone number.
- Information signs on paths to show where the public where footpaths ran and including information about rules and responsibilities.
- More police enforcement and increased powers to the Council to be able to deal more effectively with issues.
- Increased education for the public about expected behaviour when using public rights of way.
- Making it easier to change / improve footpaths.
- Landowners to have more information re: ploughing and land crops.
- A little give and take with regard to crops as crops often grow and fall across cross-field paths.

Peter Thorn thanked **Paul Rinder** for his useful ideas and stated that he particularly liked the idea about marking footpaths with their numbers. **Hilary Essen** raised the point that the ideas suggested all had costs associated to them. **Andrew Fletcher** informed the Forum that the idea for putting numbers on public footpath signs had been looked at before but it was considered too costly to get signs with specific numbers printed upon them, but suggested that stickers could be used to number current signs and that the work to implement this could potentially be passed to volunteers and parishes.

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that, with regard to dog littering, he had written to all professional dog walking organisations and veterinary practices and would be writing shortly to all parish councils. He had to date received two responses, which had been very positive towards the Forums stance on the subject **Andrew Fletcher** informed the Forum that he would welcome any advice on how to deal with dog littering, or where any particular problem area existed. **Peter Thorn** suggested that members contact **Andrew Fletcher** if they are aware where there is a particular problem. The forum asked whether byelaws could be put in place to enable the Council to deal with dog issues more effectively and **Andrew Fletcher** agreed to investigate this.

**Andrew
Fletcher**

Hilary Essen informed the Forum that she had taken a photo of a motorcyclist, who was driving on a footpath, which she believed, had been a successful deterrent. **Councillor Beer** stated that he believed taking photos could expose people to violence. **Andrew Fletcher** suggested that registration numbers be taken in future and be reported to the Thames Valley Police so that appropriate action could be taken.

Christopher Westacott raised the issue that the law relating to public rights of way encourages landowners to put up ‘private’ signs on their land wherever people may possibly walk, in order to protect themselves from a claim for public rights. **Harry Hancock** agreed that the overuse of the sign tends to litter the countryside and have a negative impact.

After discussion of the issues it was agreed that **Andrew Fletcher** would write to Brian Martin and ask that Community Wardens make contact with landowners in their areas to establish better liaison and communication. It was felt that this would enable both the landowner and the Council to respond more effectively to problems on their land. It was also agreed that **Peter Thorn** write to Theresa May MP to communicate the forum's concern that the state of the law regarding public rights of way effectively encourages landowners to litter the countryside with "Private" signs.

Andrew Fletcher

Peter Thorn

5 **Milestones Statement and targets 2013/14 consultation and analysis of the existing public rights of way network**

Andrew Fletcher gave the Forum a short presentation entitled 'An analysis of the Public Rights of Way network'. A copy was available on request from the Clerk.

The presentation covered the following:

- State of the Network
- A few figures
- Outstanding Issues
- Issues resolved 2012
- Outstanding Issues
- Work in progress

Andrew Fletcher explained that the purpose of this report was to consult the forum on the priorities, targets and service standards to be included in the Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review 2013/14. It was noted that the Milestones Statement was scheduled to be submitted to the Council's Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel on the 12 March 2013.

RESOLVED: After discussion, the forum made the following recommendations:

Andrew Fletcher / All

- **All targets save for AC1 remain the same as last year. All members of the forum to send any other suggested changes to Andrew Fletcher which would be collated and sent to all members for comment.**
- **Target AC1 to be changed to "Create 1 new strategic path, either permitted or public right of way, to fill identified gaps in the network.**
- **Maintenance and Enforcement of public rights of way should be moved to the top of the priorities list**

The deadline for comments in writing to **Andrew Fletcher** is the 8 January 2013.

All

The forum also requested a report for the LAF concerning the condition of bridleways and the state of the network, particularly identifying gaps and missing links in the network

Andrew Fletcher

6 **Public rights of way booklet review**

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that the purpose of his report was to consult them on the review of the Public Rights of Way Information booklet.

It was requested that a more punchy title be sourced, an example ‘Out in the Country – where can you go and what can you do?’ was given.

It was noted that the target readership was currently everyone but that it could be split into two markets; landowners and walkers if the Forum so wished.

RESOLVED: The forum recommended the following changes:

- **The leaflet needs a better title which will appeal to both users and landowners**
- **The leaflet should be split into 2 sections, one dealing with user rights/information and the other with landowner and farmer related information. These sections should have a colour band at the top to enable ease of use.**
- **Information about responsible dog ownership should be included**
- **There should be a clearer definition about who produced the leaflet.**
- **Information for farmers should include information about the reasons why something should be done rather than simply because it is the law.**

**Andrew
Fletcher**

**Hilary
Essen,
Julie
Mason,
Peter
Thorn &
Andrew
Fletcher**

It was agreed that **Hilary Essen** and **Julie Mason** assist **Andrew Fletcher** with the work and that the Chairman would proof read the revised document.

7 Farming and ploughing leaflet

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to his report on page 34 of the agenda.

It was noted that the Council was proposing to produce a similar leaflet to Kent County Council and Hampshire County Council to send to farmers and to accompany letters when initial contact was made about ploughing or cropping problems.

James Copas informed the Forum that all the information included in the leaflet was already provided in the annual DEFRA handbooks, which were provided to farmers. **Andrew Fletcher** responded by explaining that the Council were not planning to print the leaflet but to make publish it electronically, something that could also be emailed or printed out only when needed. It was suggested that the information could be incorporated into a standard letter rather than a leaflet. **Andrew Fletcher** stated that he believed it was easier to send a reminder rather than having to arrange enforcement.

RESOLVED: It was agreed unanimously to proceed with the electronic version of the leaflet only so that it could be sent out with a reminder letter.

**Andrew
Fletcher**

8 Devolution of public rights of way services to parishes

Andrew Fletcher explained that the report updated the Forum about the role of Parish Council’s in public rights of way work, and progress in the devolution of public rights of way works to Parish Councils.

It was noted that the Council was offering Parish Councils the opportunity to administer the service within their areas thus enabling them to locally determine how the service was provided.

Andrew Fletcher explained that the service was currently carried out by a single contractor covering all Parishes in the Royal Borough with the exception of

Cookham and Old Windsor, who already arranged routine vegetation clearance on public rights of way in their areas.

It was noted that the value of the contract for 2012/13 was £18,000 and that invitations for tender for the 2013/14 contract was due to be issued in January 2013. **Andrew Fletcher** informed the Forum that the contract included a schedule of programmed works for example strimming and mowing vegetation growing on the paths, and a unit price for reactive tree clearance works. It was noted that the Royal Borough usually had between 40-50 requests for tree clearance per annum.

RESOLVED: The forum recommended that option 3 is the best approach for managing the PROW service, for the following reasons:

Andrew Fletcher

- **RBWM is able to synchronise and arrange jobs in the same area, leading to economies of scale**
- **The work can be completed to the same standard if RBWM are managing the contract**
- **RBWM is able to maintain their database of issues and delegate some work over to volunteer groups where possible.**
- **It is easier for RBWM officers to manage cross-boundary maintenance rather than if it was managed at a parish council level.**
- **Parish Councils may have differing priorities to the public.**

9 LAF Monitoring Items

(a) Millennium Walk

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that the missing Link between Footpath 18 Hurley and Footpath 20 Bisham (Speen Hill) had been opened on the 12th May 2012 and a leaflet promoting the Walk had been published by Maidenhead Civic Society and the East Berkshire Ramblers. It was noted that a signage of the route was also being explored.

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that discussions were continuing with the landowners on the proposal to create a new public footpath from Lower Cookham Road and Thames Path National Trail. It was noted that a funding contribution of £50,000 towards the cost of creating the proposed new footpath had been secured through a S106 Planning Agreement although it was highlighted that these funds would not become available until commencement of the development and there was no indication that the development was imminent. **Andrew Fletcher** explained that an alternative source of funding was therefore being explored by Maidenhead Civic Society and the Council.

(b) Volunteer works

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to report which could be found on pages 43 and 44 of the agenda and explained that the Council continued to engage and work with The Conservation Volunteers (formerly BTCV) and the Windsor and Maidenhead Conservation Volunteers (WMVC).

(c) Multi-use paths

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to report which could be found on page 44 of the agenda and explained that work had started to create a multi-use route

along the cycle tracks and the Jubilee River paths at Eton on a one-year trial basis. It was noted that discussions were currently ongoing with Eton College regarding the trial route and that a meeting had been arranged for the 18th December, the project was currently on hold pending the outcome of the meeting.

Councillor Beer offered his help by explaining that a fellow Councillor was a tutor at Eton College and was a keen cyclist and walker and might be interested in being involved. **Councillor Beer** agreed to let him know about the scheme.

(d) LAF website & online form

Andrew Fletcher explained that the LAF website had been reviewed and updated following the last Forum meeting where the Forum had asked for a report about the number of website hits and the amount of feedback received. It was noted that, whilst complete information was not available, the information that was available could be found on page 44 of the agenda. **Andrew Fletcher** thanked **Julie Mason** for her help and support.

(e) Easy going routes

Andrew Fletcher explained that the Cookham Easy Going Route web pages had been developed following the advice of the Forum in June.

It was noted that the Windsor Great Park leaflet was still in development and had been revised following advice from the Access Advisory Forum. **Andrew Fletcher** explained that he hoped the leaflet would be ready for publication in January.

Andrew Fletcher explained that the web pages would be developed following the template established during the creation of the Cookham Easy Going Route web pages. **Julie Mason** requested that a mini-map be included to show where the photos shown were located. **Andrew Fletcher** agreed to implement this.

**Andrew
Fletcher**

12 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Local Access Forum, once confirmed, was to be confirmed by the Clerk.

**Tanya
Leftwich**

The meeting which started at 6.30pm, ended at 8.40pm.

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM: 27th JUNE 2013

MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Local Access Forum about the progress made on actions and issues arising from the Forum meeting held on 6th December 2012.

Agenda Item 4: Public rights of way and land management

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
4.1	Investigate options for including landowner's contact numbers, the footpath number and a 24-hour trouble-shooting telephone number on the public rights of way directional 'finger signs'	AF	<p>Suitable stickers displaying the Council's contact telephone number will be ordered and placed onto existing fingersigns when the team is passing. When a new supply of fingersigns are ordered the telephone number will be included as part of the design.</p> <p>Local landowners will be asked if they wish for laminated information signs to be supplied that can be attached to sign poles and waymark posts, which will include the landowner's contact details and an extract of the definitive map. This will be supplied by the Council to those landowners who would like them.</p> <p>The Public Rights of Way Team discussed the possibility of placing footpath numbers onto finger signs but as the official numbers change at path junctions and at parish boundaries it is felt this would cause confusion to path users.</p>
4.2	Investigate options regarding creating bylaws that may enable the Council or Police to take more stringent action regarding dog waste and anti-social behaviour.	AF	A report regarding the Council's existing powers to deal with dog waste and anti-social behaviour is included in Appendix A to this report.

			The existing powers allow the Council to deal with most situations; The forum may wish to consider whether it considers these powers to be sufficient and whether additional bylaws are necessary.
4.3	Write to Brian Martin to ask if Community Wardens could make contact with local farmers and landowners in their area to establish better liaison and communication.	AF	An email was sent to land management interests requesting contact information. 2 responses were received and the contacts were been passed to Brian Martin.
4.4	Write to Theresa May MP to communicate the forum's concern that the state of the law regarding public rights of way effectively encourages landowners to litter the countryside with "Private" signs.	PT / AF	A letter was sent to Theresa May MP on 9 th January 2013 and a reply received on 21 st January 2013 stating that Mrs May has passed the letter on to Owen Paterson, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Agenda Item 5: Milestones Statement

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
5.1	The Forum recommend that all targets save for AC1 remain the same as last year (subject to any additional comments to be set by members after the meeting).	AH	The forums recommendations were considered and accepted by the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing panel on 12 th March 2013, and have been included in the Milestones Statement 2013/2014.
5.2	Target AC1 to be changed to "Create 1 new strategic path, either permitted or public right of way, to fill identified gaps in the network."	AH	The proposed target has been included in the Milestones Statement 2013/2014 as a target to "Create 1 new strategic path, either public right of way or permitted, to fill identified gaps in the public rights of way network"
5.3	Move "Maintenance and Enforcement" to the top of the priorities list	AH	This change has been included.

5.4	Produce a report for the LAF concerning the condition of bridleways and the state of the network, particularly identifying gaps and missing links in the network	AF	<p>An email and map was sent on 14th December 2012 to Sara Church and Helen Howard for input into where the missing links are for horse riders.</p> <p>A response has been received from Sara Church which will be examined by the Public Rights of Way team as part of a larger review of the bridleway network.</p>

Agenda Item 6: Public Rights of Way Booklet review

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
6.1	<p>The forum recommended the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The leaflet needs a better title which will appeal to both users and landowners ○ The leaflet should be split into 2 sections, one dealing with user rights/information and the other with landowner and farmer related information. These sections should have a colour band at the top to enable ease of use. ○ Information about responsible dog ownership should be included ○ There should be a clearer definition about who produced the leaflet. ○ Information for farmers should include information about the reasons why something should be done rather than simply because it is the law. 	PROW	The leaflet is currently in the process of being reviewed and rewritten and the LAF comments will be taken into account for the new version.
6.2	Peter Thorn, Hilary Essen and Julie Mason to proof read draft when complete	PT / HE / JM	A first draft has been circulated, however a wider review of the leaflet is being undertaken and a new draft will be developed taking into account any comments received.

6.3	Final draft leaflet to be circulated to the LAF when ready for any comments	AF	This will be circulated once it has been produced and reviewed by PT, HE & JM.
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Agenda Item 7: Farming and Ploughing Leaflet

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
7.1	The forum recommended that any leaflet produced should be held electronically and sent out when needed, but there were some concerns about whether such a leaflet was needed because there was only a small group of farmers in the area.	PROW	The farming and ploughing leaflet was published in March 2013 and has been well received. Paper copies have also been supplied to the East Berks Ramblers' association for path wardens and for use in promotional stalls

Agenda Item 8: Devolution of public services to parishes

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
8.1	<p>The forum endorsed the comments made by Hilary Essen and recommended that option 3 is the best approach for managing the PROW service, for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RBWM is able to synchronise and arrange jobs in the same area, leading to economies of scale ○ The work can be completed to the same standard if RBWM are managing the contract ○ RBWM is able to maintain their database of issues and delegate some work over to volunteer groups where possible. ○ It is easier for RBWM officers to manage cross-boundary maintenance rather than if it was managed at a parish council level. ○ Parish Councils may have differing priorities to the public 		The forums comments were sent to Anthony Hurst, Principal Rights of Way officer and response to the forum was sent on 12 th December 2012. A copy of the response is included in Appendix B to this report.

Agenda Item 9: LAF monitoring items

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
9.1	Include mini maps on the Cookham Easy Going Route virtual tour so that it is easier to determine where each picture was taken along the route	AF	This was completed in May 2013.

Public Rights of Way and Land Management

Current powers regarding dog fouling and dogs off leads

At the last Local Access Forum meeting on 6th December 2012 the forum asked whether there are any options for creating by-laws that may enable the Council or the Police to take more stringent action regarding dog waste and irresponsible dog ownership.

The current powers that exist for dealing with dogs is detailed below. It is clear that there are already laws and powers in place to deal with most problems that are currently being experienced.

All of these actions below require the event to be witnessed and the Community Wardens are very much reliant on good intelligence in order deal effectively with dog problems. If they are given details of a particular place and time when problems are experienced, and description of the person responsible (if possible), the team will be able to act upon this and send wardens to specific areas.

In the light of this there does not seem to be any particular 'gaps' in the law that a by-law would be suited to fill. However the forum may wish to consider if there are any better ways that the problems might be addressed.

Dog Fouling

If a person is caught allowing their dog to foul on either public or private property, without the owner removing the waste, an 'on-the-spot' fine of £52 can be issued by the RBWM Community Wardens under the Dog Fouling of Land Act 1996.

Dog waste bags being dumped

If a person is caught abandoning a dog waste bag or throwing it away in bushes/etc the RBWM Community Wardens can issue an 'on-the-spot' littering fine of £50.

Dangerous / Loose dogs

Depending on the situation this is either a police matter or a matter for SDK to manage. The Community Wardens will make a initial investigation into the matter before passing the matter on.

Dog Exclusion Zones

The Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 made the failure by a person in charge of a dog to remove dog faeces (forthwith) from designated land at any time an offence.

Enforcement included on-the-spot Fixed Penalty Notices (£52) or prosecution (up to £1,000 fine). This is detailed above.

The Dog Fouling of Land Act had been repealed but amendments to the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 introduce Dog Control Orders. The provisions of the former Act remain valid until such time as they were replaced by Dog Control Orders.

The regulations provide for five offences:

- Failing to remove dog faeces;
- Not keeping a dog on a lead;
- Not putting, and keeping, a dog on a lead when directed to so by an authorised officer;
- Permitting a dog to enter land to land from which dogs are excluded;
- Taking more than a specified number of dogs onto land.

Penalties include on-the-spot fixed penalty notices and prosecution with a maximum fine of £1000. Defences include:

- Having a reasonable excuse for failing to comply with an order;
- Acting with the consent of the land, or any other person or authority which has control of the land
- Individuals with assistance dogs

Control orders can be issued on any land which is open to the air and to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access, with or without payment. This includes bus shelters and covered forecourt areas etc. Exemptions include Forestry Commission land and roads (including highways). Primary and secondary authorities can make an order providing for an offence or offences relating to the control of dogs in respect of any land in its area. This includes Parish Councils for land within its jurisdiction.

To eliminate an overlap of powers, both authorities are required to consult with each other before coming forward with proposals for orders.

Primary authority orders always take precedence. Authorities have to be able to show it was a necessary and proportionate response to problems caused by activities of dogs and those in charge of them to issue an order.

A Public Notice describing the proposed order needs to be placed in a local newspaper, with a 28 day consultation period. Once an order was made a Public Notice would have to be placed in the local newspaper seven days before coming into force.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum

Secretariat: Andrew Fletcher, Public Rights of Way Officer
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St. Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF
Telephone: 01628 796122 Email: prow@rbwm.gov.uk
http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/prow_local_access_forum.htm

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum: 6th December 2012

Devolution of rights of way services to Parish Councils

In response to a report submitted to the 6th December 2012 meeting of the Local Access Forum concerning the devolution of routine vegetation clearance along public rights of way to Parish Councils, the Forum discussed the issue and makes the following comments:

General Questions (responses in red)

- How many parishes have taken up offer apart from Cookham and Old Windsor? In response to the current Big Society initiative, two Parish Councils (Wraysbury and Waltham St Lawrence) have requested further information on the service currently provided by the Borough, and are understood to be considering the offer. Additionally Old Windsor Parish Council has confirmed that it will be extending its existing service from April 2013 to include vegetation clearance works on all public rights of way in the Parish, including the Thames Path which was previously covered by the Borough's maintenance contract.
- What impact would the various options have on the Councils Statutory duties and responsibilities to the general public? The Borough as Highway Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that all public rights of way are in a fit and safe condition for public use. This duty applies regardless of whether practical works are carried out by contractors appointed by the Borough Council or by Parish Councils, or works are carried out by volunteers organised by the Borough or by Parish Councils.
- Are all three options cost neutral? The funding arrangements for Parish delivery of routine vegetation clearance works will vary depending on the circumstances of each Parish, but the intention is to provide the current level of service at a reduced cost or an enhanced level of service at the current cost.

The Big Society "offer" sent to Parish Council's in 2012 sets out the following options for the Parishes' consideration:

Option A

The parish fully administers the vegetation clearance service including the setting of specifications, timing and frequency of clearance work and responding to enquiries from members of the public.

Option B

The parish partially administers the vegetation clearance service, for example dealing with scheduled work only whilst the borough deals with reactive clearance, or vice versa.

Local Access Forum Comments (responses in red)

- These options may incur additional costs such as extra insurance, purchase of equipment and their maintenance, performing risk assessments. **These aspects will vary depending upon the circumstances of each Parish; however the Boroughs public rights of way team is happy to provide advice and assistance as required.**
- Parish councils would require training in legal matters affecting Rights of Way. **The Big Society offer relates to routine vegetation clearance rather than legal issues such as enforcement works, changes to the path network, diversion orders etc. The Boroughs public rights of way team is happy to provide advice to parishes on any legal issues that may arise in relation to works undertaken by the Parish.**
- There is a risk that parish councils might only maintain the more popular Rights of Way. **Parishes may well choose to prioritise resources on the more popular routes (as does the Borough's public rights of way team in those parts of the network currently maintained by the Borough).**
- There is a risk that parish councils would change the definitive route without RBWM knowledge. **Changes to the definitive rights of way network can only be made through legal orders (e.g. diversion orders), which are made by the Borough.**
- It isn't clear how members of the public report would be able to report problems under these two options. Currently there is a single contact point throughout borough for all problems and walks leaflets and waymark disks currently have RBWM contact details. **Some Parishioners initially contact their Parish office on rights of way issues, while others contact the Borough. In those areas where routine clearance work is organised by the Borough the Parish Clerks will refer queries to the Borough, and in those parishes where the Parish Council organises routine clearance work queries received by the Borough are passed on to the Parish office.**
- Separate parish contracts would raise overall costs. **The funding arrangements for Parish delivery of routine vegetation clearance works will vary depending on the circumstances of each Parish, but the intention is to provide the current level of service at a reduced cost or an enhanced level of service at the current cost.**

- Parishes may not have a full time contact line for urgent problem reporting. Contact arrangements and office hours vary from Parish to Parish; however, urgent matters can be reported to the Borough any time and either dealt with by the Borough or, if appropriate, referred on to the Parish.

Option C

The parish identifies work they wish to see included in the contract managed by the borough and communicates this to Borough through the existing parish paths partnership.

Local Access Forum Comments (responses in red)

The Forum considers that this would be the preferred option for the following reasons:

- RBWM can synchronise several jobs together in adjacent parishes resulting in economies of scale. Although there can be economies of scale in works arranged by the Borough, if adjacent Parishes were to take up the Big Society offer there may be opportunities for joint working between Parishes.
- RBWM can prioritize work. Parish councils may have different priorities compared to other members of the public. The Borough's public rights of way team welcomes input from all Parish Councils as this helps with the prioritising of works across the borough.
- Work can be done to a consistent standard across parishes. The overall standard of maintenance and the condition of the path network is regularly monitored by volunteer wardens from the East Berks Ramblers and by feedback from Parish Councils and the general public.
- RBWM can still keep a central database of issues which allows delegation of some issues to volunteer groups. All issues reported to the Borough by Parish Councils, the East Berks Ramblers and the general public are recorded on the Borough's rights of way database. In those areas where Parishes arrange routine vegetation clearance works this does not preclude the use of volunteers, organised either by the Borough Council or by the Parish Councils.

This note constitutes formal advice from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM: 27 JUNE 2012

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ANNUAL REPORTS

DECISION ITEM

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Local Access Forum about the preparation of the annual report for its activities over the past year, and to seek approval for it to be published.

To inform the forum about the requirements to report activities to Natural England using the prescribed proforma and to invite the forum to complete and approve the proforma

2. OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That the forum consider and approve the publication of the Local Access Forum Annual Report 2012-13.

That the forum consider and complete the Natural England proforma, and approve the submission of the same to Natural England

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 Under the Local Access Forum regulations, the forum must publish annually a report of its activities throughout the year. This report has historically served the purpose of reporting it's activities to Natural England and serves as a promotional tool for the forum.

3.2 This text of this report is attached as appendix A to this report. The forum is invited to review and approve this text as the final publication.

3.3 As part of a review of the Annual reporting process Natural England has requested that all Local Access Forums complete and submit an annual report proforma.

3.4 A copy of the proforma is attached as appendix B to this report. The forum is invited to complete this form in preparation for submission to Natural England, or as an alternative, to delegate the Chair and Vice-Chair, in conjunction with the LAF Secretary, to complete and submit the document on behalf of the forum.

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ANNUAL REPORT 2012 – 2013



Introduction from the Chair

[tbc]

Peter Thorn

Chairman of the Local Access Forum.

Activities of the forum

Local Access Forum work programme 2012-2013

In June 2012 the forum set out it's work programme for the coming year:

1. **Multi-use routes**
In March 2012 the forum set up a working group to develop a proposal for a trial 'Multi-use route' at Eton Wick and the Jubilee River. Throughout the year the forum continued its close involvement with the scheme and monitored the negotiations with landowners and subsequent opening of this route in May 2013 for a 1 year trial period.
2. **The use of volunteers in the Borough**
The forum monitored the use of volunteers for vegetation clearance and path repair work on the public rights of way network, receiving regular reports about use of volunteers at each meeting.
3. **Devolution of public rights of way services to parish councils**
The forum received a report about the Council's offer to parish and town councils within the Borough to devolve routine maintenance responsibilities where the parish or town council wished to administer the service. Following discussion of the report the forum made a number of recommendations supporting the retention of the routine maintenance responsibilities by the Borough Council.

Milestones Statement, and targets for the coming year

The forum was consulted on the Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Report 2013-2014 and recommended, in the current economic climate, that the council retain its current targets for the coming year. In addition to this the forum recommended an change from the existing target to create 2 new routes from the Rights of Way Improvement Plan projects to "Create 1 new strategic path, either permitted or public right of way, to fill identified gaps in the network". These recommendations were subsequently accepted by the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel in March 2013.

Dog Walking Issues

The forum was consulted with regard to the Council's current approaches to dealing with dog walking problems in the Borough. The forum approved of the Council's draft text for encouraging responsible dog ownership, suggesting that in addition to the website the information is sent to all parish councils, vet surgeries and dog grooming parlours. The forum recommendations included specific signage for dog walkers in farming areas to highlight the need to keep dogs on leads in these situations, and recommending that further promotion of responsible dog ownership be included in the "Around the Royal Borough" magazine sent to all residents.

National consultations

The forum received a consultation from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) about proposed changes to the policy and legal framework for public rights of way. The forum set up a working group, consisting of both land management and user interests, to examine the proposals in detail which resulted in a set of recommendations that was sent to DEFRA on behalf of the forum.

The forum received a presentation from Natural England regarding the Paths for Communities (P4C) scheme. The forum noted that an application for funding had been made by the Maidenhead Civic Society for the Millennium Walk and recommended that the Council write directly to local parish councils and volunteer groups to highlight the scheme.

In addition to this the forum received a consultation regarding the future management of National Trails, however no formal advice was supplied by the forum on this issue.

Consultations on Diversion Order applications

The forum was consulted on a diversion application for Bray Footpath 24. After some discussion about the issues relating to this path the forum responded with a number of comments but did not raise a formal objection to the proposal.

Easy Going Routes

The forum has continued to monitor and steer the development of the Windsor Great Park Easy Going Route and the existing Cookham Easy Going Route. The forum recommended that more simple web pages are developed for the Easy Going Routes and the forum will be monitoring the visitor response to these pages through web 'hits' and feedback. The forum also recommended that a press release and possible "Around the Royal Borough" article be published once the Windsor Great Park Easy Going Route was finalised.

Public Rights of Way and Land Management issues

The forum received a presentation from a local farmer regarding issues that farmers and land managers experience with public rights of way. As part of the discussions subsequent to this presentation the forum wrote to Theresa May MP to communicate the forum's concern that the law at present encourages landowners to litter the countryside with "Private" signs. The forum also recommended that the Council share contact details of land owners (where they wished) with the Community wardens to establish better liaison and communication and recommended that the Councils telephone number be included on public rights of way fingersigns, with addition signs with farmer or landowner contact details placed on public rights of way where landowners desired. The forum requested further information about the existing powers that the Council have to deal with dog issues on land with a view to examining whether additional byelaws might allow issues to be dealt with more effectively.

Consultations on new public rights of way publications

The forum was consulted on two new proposed publications relating to public rights of way, a "Farming and Ploughing" leaflet aimed at local farmers to explain and remind them of their responsibilities in keeping paths open during ploughing and cropping works, and a new version of the "Public Rights of Way Information Booklet" last published in 2006.

The forum advised the Council regarding the preferred format and approach for the new ploughing leaflet, recommending that it be produced electronically and printed when needed. The forum recommended a number of changes and updates to the public rights of way information booklet, including splitting the leaflet into two sections, one part being aimed at users of public rights of way and another being aimed at farmers and land managers. In addition to this 3 members of the forum agreed to proof read the draft text of the leaflet once it has been finalised.

Local Access Forum Fast Response Team

The Fast Response Team, set up by the forum to respond to consultations that fall outside of the forum's formal meeting dates, responded to the following requests for advice on behalf of the forum:

- Hurley Footpath 25 diversion application - March 2013
- Holyport Primary Safer Routes to School Scheme – July 2012

Full copies of the advice submitted by the Local Access Forum Fast Response Team can be found at http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/laf_FRT.htm

Other issues that the forum has discussed during 2012-2013:

- Signage and development of the Maidenhead Boundary Walk
- Monitoring progress towards the completion of the Millennium Walk
- Use of developer contributions towards public rights of way projects
- Monitoring neighbouring local access forum activities
- Continuing development of the Local Access Forum website and members' online discussion forum.

Looking forward

[The work programme for the to be confirmed at the 26th June 2013 meeting]

Meetings of the Forum

The Local Access Forum meetings for 2012-2013 were as follows:

Formal meetings

- 7th June 2012 – Desborough Suite 2/3, Town Hall, Maidenhead
- 6th December 2012 – Desborough Suite 4, Town Hall, Maidenhead

Other meetings

- 30th July 2012 –Meeting of a working party to discuss LAF response to the DEFRA consultation on the policy and legal framework for public rights of way.

Membership of the Forum

The forum is expected to achieve a reasonable balance of members' interests. The current membership of the Local Access Forum is listed below.

Name	Representing	Other interests
Dorothy Allard	Land and estate management	
Cllr. Malcolm Beer	RBWM Councillor	Walking; Cycling; Caravanning; Member of Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve Management Committee; Rights of Way; Old Windsor Parish Councillor
Lynn Cassell	Land and estate management	National Trust
Sara Church	Horse riding	
James Copas	Land and estate management	
Margaret Cubley	Walking and open spaces	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Bisham Parish Councillor
Hilary Essen	Walking and health issues	
John Foulger	Walking	Open Spaces; Rights of Way; Bray Parish Councillor
Christine Gadd	Rights of Way; Walking; Cycling	Sunningdale Parish Councillor
Harry Hancock	Walking and open spaces	Mid Thames Ramblers
Gordon Harris	Footpaths and open spaces	Cookham Parish Councillor
Helen Howard	Horse riding	Bray Parish Councillor; The British Horse Society and British Dressage
Tom Jarvis	Land and estate management	Crown Estate
Cllr. Asghar Majeed	RBWM Councillor	
Julie Mason	Walking	Strategy, Planning & Marketing
Andrew Randall	Land and estate management	Chairman of Royal Berks. Agricultural Association
Cllr. John Stretton	RBWM Councillor	Cookham Parish Councillor
Peter Thorn	Land and estate management	Estate Management; Management of the Countryside; Management of Education and Training
Chris Westacott	Land and estate management	Public Rights of Way, Hurley Parish Council

Finances

Room Booking:
7th June 2012

**Total
Cost (£)**

24.00

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM - 27th JUNE 2013 - AGENDA ITEM 6(a) - APPX. A

30 th July 2012	0.00	
6 th December 2012	24.00	
		<hr/>
		48.00
Other Expenses:		
Subscription to "Waymark" 2013-14		54.00
Members' Expenses:		
Dependent Care	-	-
Travel / Mileage		75.00
Other Expenses	-	-
		<hr/>
		75.00
Grand Total		<hr/>
		£177.00

Note: The costs above do not include overheads such as Officer time or printing costs

How to get involved

For more information about the Local Access Forum and how you can get involved, visit the Local Access Forum web pages at http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/local_access_forum.htm, or contact Andrew Fletcher, Public Rights of Way Officer on (01628) 796122 or email andrew.fletcher@rbwm.gov.uk or prow@rbwm.gov.uk

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

Name of LAF:

Name of LAF Chair:

Name of LAF Secretary:

Number of LAF members:

1 - Involvement and Representation

What interests does your current membership cover?

What skills, sectors, interest groups, experience are missing?

Describe any difficulties you had recruiting members from particular sectors:

2 - Operation of LAF

What procedures (e.g. expense claims, new applications etc) do you follow that help you work effectively? Are these effective?

How do you ensure that your members are able to work as a team?

In what ways do you reach consensus?

How do you ensure proper conduct and/or resolve any conflicts?

Give up to 3 examples of where you have encountered operational difficulties (e.g. lack of resources); explain what mechanisms could be put in place to alleviate such issues:

1 -

2 -

3 -

3 - Partnership and Progress

Do you work well with the access authority? If not, why not?

Do you work well with your planning authorities? If not, why not?

Have you established a clear role for the LAF in the local area?

Were you successful in meeting the achievements set out in your work programme (please provide supporting information)?

Have you achieved something else?

Main or notable achievements?

4 - Profile and Direction

Has anything changed over the last year?

What changes / barriers can you see ahead?

What are your priorities for the year ahead (list up to 3)?

1 -

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

2 -

3 -

What support or training do you need to deliver your priorities?

5 - Section 94 Bodies

Give up to 3 examples of advice given by your LAF to section 94 bodies:

1 -

2 -

3 -

6 - Open Access Work

How many Restriction Cases have you been consulted on?

How many cases have you responded to?

Detail any informal involvement with Open Access Restriction cases:

7 - Number of consultations, meetings and initiatives your LAF has been involved with over the year (please add numbers into the boxes below)?

Public meetings		Working groups	
Training days		Definitive map modification orders	
Highway orders		Green Infrastructure strategies	
Gating orders		Local transport plans and traffic management schemes	
Cycle projects		Disabled access	
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders		Housing development schemes	
Planning applications		PROW network and projects	
ROWIP planning and objectives		Local development frameworks and planning strategies	
Local Nature Partnerships		Recording of paths and promoting use	

Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Review Form: April 2012 to March 2013

Expiring permissive agreements under Higher Level Stewardship schemes - assessing the value and future of and liaison with landowners to improve access		Flood defence works - Environment Agency consultations and planning applications regarding	
Slipways and landing stages - public access to		Improvement of access through the Paths for Communities (P4C) scheme	
Disposal and development of land owned by the Council		Parish Council or local improvement grant schemes	
Shoreline management plans		Rail freight interchange strategic development	
Network rail and rail crossing closures		Access and nature conservation	
Horse routes and equestrian provision		Multi user routes	
National Parks		Coastal access	
Motorised vehicle access		Access to MOD land	
New town & village green registration government consultation		Natural England consultations	
Defra consultations		Commons grazing proposals	
Highways Agency consultations		Department for Transport consultations	
Other (please specify):			

8 - Final comments from Appointing Authority:

9 - Final comments from LAF Chair:

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM: 27 JUNE 2013

INFORMATION ABOUT PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the forum about the what information on public rights of way is currently available to the public

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 The Council currently produces a wide range of information about public rights of way in the Borough. The predominant way to access this information is via the Council's website however there are also paper leaflets and booklets that the Council produces. In addition to this the Council publishes various strategic documents relating to the operation of the Public Rights of Way service.

2.2 A breakdown of the information available on the Council's Public Rights of Way web pages and its listing structure can be found in Appendix A to this report.

2.3 In addition to the public rights of way pages public rights of way are mapped on the Council's MapsOnline service. This service currently simply lists the Route Number and Parish for public rights of way. Following suggestions from members of the forum the information available on this service is currently under review and the forum is invited to comment on what sort of information would be useful to the public.

Suggested additions include (subject to technical capabilities):

- Information from the Definitive Statement:
 - Name of the path
 - 'From' & 'To' information
 - Definitive Map sheet number
 - Comments included in the Definitive Statement
 - Recorded widths
 - Recorded limitations
- Links to report a problem on the path
- Associated Definitive Map Orders
- Associated Structure/Limitation authorisations
- Routine maintenance schedule (however this is flexible and any information would be indicative only)

2.4 The following publications are available in paper form:

- The Definitive Map and Statement
 - The full map is for inspection in at Council offices in Windsor and Maidenhead.
 - Copies of the Definitive Map sheets and statement relating to each parish area are available at Parish Offices by appointment, as well as a parish map showing the rights of way in the entire parish on one sheet.

Strategic documents

- The Milestones Statement 2013-2014
- The Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2005-2015

Booklets and leaflets

- Public Rights of Way Information Booklet - 2006 Edition
- Public Rights of Way and Gardens, Hedges and Trees Leaflet
- The Green Way Walks Leaflet
- The Millennium Walk Leaflet
- The Cookham Easy Going Route
- Maidenhead Boundary Walk
- Holyport Health Walk Leaflet
- Knowl Hill Bridleway Circuit Leaflet
- The Cookham Bridleway Circuit
- Ascot and Sunninghill Circular Walks Leaflet
- Walk, Discover, Enjoy Your Sunningdale leaflet
- Foot and Cycle Paths in and around Datchet Leaflet
- Waltham St Lawrence Parish Paths and Circular Walk Leaflet
- White Waltham Parish and Paths Leaflet

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM: 27 JUNE 2013

INFORMATION ABOUT PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY WEBSITE STRUCTURE

- **Main index page**
 - Brief summary of network
 - Links to all public rights of way pages
 - Links to:
 - ⇒ National Trails website

- **Contact us / report a problem**
 - Contact details for the rights of way team
 - Online report form
 - PDF report form

- **Path maps**
 - Overview map and links to PDF Definitive Map sheets
 - PDF Definitive Statement
 - Illustrative public rights of way maps
 - Links to:
 - ⇒ MapsOnline

- **Dogs in the countryside**
 - Information about responsible dog ownership
 - PDF RSPCA / NFU poster
 - PDF Keep Britain Tidy “Poo Fairy” Poster
 - Links to:
 - ⇒ British Horse Society;
 - ⇒ The Kennel Club;
 - ⇒ Countryside Agency

- **Publications**
 - Links to the following publications:
 - Public Rights of Way Information Booklet - 2006 Edition
 - Public Rights of Way and Gardens, Hedges and Trees Leaflet
 - Ploughing, crops and paths: A practical guide
 - The Green Way Walks Leaflet
 - The Millennium Walk Leaflet
 - The Cookham Easy Going Route
 - Maidenhead Boundary Walk
 - Holyport Health Walk Leaflet
 - Knowl Hill Bridleway Circuit Leaflet
 - The Cookham Bridleway Circuit
 - Ascot and Sunninghill Circular Walks Leaflet
 - Walk, Discover, Enjoy Your Sunningdale leaflet
 - Foot and Cycle Paths in and around Datchet Leaflet
 - Waltham St Lawrence Parish Paths and Circular Walk Leaflet
 - White Waltham Parish and Paths Leaflet
 - Links to:

- ⇒ Paths Maps;
- ⇒ Cookham Easy Going Route web pages
- ⇒ Nature in parks leaflets

- **What are public rights of way?**

- Information about different terms (footpaths, bridleways, etc.)
- Maintenance, Widths and Obstructions
 - Links to:
 - ⇒ Information about the Parish Paths Initiative
 - ⇒ Full text of the Rights of Way Act 1990
- Rights of Way responsibilities
 - Owners' rights, including property rights, trespass, worrying livestock, ploughing and cropping, bulls, misleading signs, intimidation, drainage and vegetation encroachment
 - Users' rights, including consideration for others, taking a dog, other 'accompaniments', unauthorised driving or riding
 - Council responsibilities, including service standards
 - The Countryside Code
 - Links to:
 - ⇒ Natural England
 - ⇒ Public Rights of Way Contacts
- Permitted paths
 - Links to:
 - ⇒ Permitted Path pack
- Links to:
 - ⇒ Illustrative maps of public rights of way
 - ⇒ Sustrans
 - ⇒ National Trails

- **What is the definitive map?**

- Information about the definitive map, including changing the map, publication of the map and where it is available for inspection
- Links to:
 - ⇒ Public rights of way forms
 - ⇒ Legal changes to public rights of way information, including Definitive Map Modification Order application register and Highways Act declaration register

- **Public Rights of Way forms**

- Highways Act and Town and Country Planning Act Diversion and Extinguishment guidance note and application form
- Design of structures guidance note
- Application for to install a structure on a footpath or bridleway
- Links to:
 - ⇒ Definitive Map Modification Order 'claim' form pack
 - ⇒ Permitted paths

- **Parish Paths Initiative**

- Information about the PPI scheme

- **Polices, plans and progress reports**

- Links to:
 - ⇒ Milestones Statement
 - ⇒ Path progress reports
 - ⇒ Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- **Local Access Forum pages** (not listed in this report)

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM: 27th JUNE 2013

NATIONAL LOCAL ACCESS FORUM CONFERENCE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report back to the forum about the National LAF conference held on 27th February 2013.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1. The National LAF Conference was organised by Natural England and held at the Holiday Inn in Sheffield. Peter Thorn attended the conference as a delegate on behalf of the forum.

2.2. Out of the 13 workshops offered a delegate was only able to attend 3. The workshops attended were:

- How can LAF's better engage with health departments?
- Working with your appointing authority on planning issues
- Multi-user routes – How to manage and help solve conflicts

2.3. The programme and list of workshops is listed in Appendix A to this report, and notes and observations from the conference are included in Appendix B to this report.



Local Access Forum National Conference

Holiday Inn Sheffield, 27th February 2013

Programme

Time	Activity	Presenter
10.00 - 10.15	Arrival – tea/coffee	
10.15 - 10.20	Welcome by conference host	Martin Shaw Natural England
10.25 - 10.30	Introduction to the day	Steve Scoffin (Chair)
10.30 - 10.55	Talk 1 – How LAFs can make use of Natural England's household survey on people engaging with the natural environment (Monitoring of Engagement with the Natural Environment)	Natural England
10.55 - 11.00	Introduction to workshop sessions	Steve Scoffin (Chair)
11.00 - 12.00	Workshop session 1 (coffee/teas available)	
12.00 - 12.25	Talk 2 - Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage	Sue Coles (Hampshire LAF)
12.25 - 13.25	Lunch	
13.25 - 14.25	Workshop session 2 (coffee/teas available)	
14.25 - 14.50	Talk 3 – A forward look at Rights of Way and the role of Rights of Way Improvement Plans	Defra
14.50 - 15.50	Workshop session 3 (coffee/teas available)	
15.50 - 16.20	Plenary session With an opportunity to ask questions	Panel
16.20 - 16.30	Summary	Steve Scoffin (Chair)
16.20 - 16.30	Conference close	Martin Shaw Natural England



Workshops

1 – Working with volunteers

Facilitated by: Peak, Derby and Derbyshire LAF

2 – Urban LAFs

Facilitated by: Tyne & Wear LAF

3 – Multi-user routes - How to manage and help solve conflicts

Facilitated by: North York Moors LAF

4 – LAF involvement with Local Nature Partnerships

Facilitated by: Wiltshire and Swindon LAF

5 - How can LAF's better engage with health departments?

Facilitated by: Shropshire LAF

6 – Working with your appointing authority on planning issues

Facilitated by: Cambridgeshire LAF

7 - Facilitating disabled access

Facilitated by: Shropshire LAF

8 – Huddle interactive workshop – New and existing Huddle users will be shown different ways to help them get the best out of the system.

Facilitated by: Peak District LAF and Natural England

9 – Setting up 'friends of' groups

Facilitated by: Tees Valley LAF

10 – Open access - The workshop will introduce current issues relating to open access land and will provide an opportunity to ask questions

Facilitated by: Natural England

11 – Impacts of cuts on footpath management

Facilitated by: TBC

12 – Green Infrastructure

Facilitated by: Lancashire LAF

13 – Paths for Communities - The workshop will update participants on the P4C scheme and will provide an opportunity to ask questions

Facilitated by: Natural England

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM: 27 JUNE 2013

CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL LAF CONFERENCE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27TH FEBRUARY 2013

General notes

The Conference was well attended, with 71 Local Access Forums representing all areas of England.

Forum geographic sizes vary considerably from large counties to unitary authorities, the latter being largely an urban/rural mix as in RBWM, although there are a number of essentially urban forums such as Thurrock.

Where there are specific, well defined geographic areas they tend to have their own forum e.g. The New Forest & Yorkshire Parks. There are also a number of amalgamated forums, e.g. Tyneside.

Purely as an observation it seems that the larger geographic forums tend to be concerned with strategy and policy whereas a greater focus upon 'on the ground' issues and problems seems to be possible within smaller areas. All forums are concerned that they are recognised by their respective authorities and consulted in respect of planning and strategic matters and in the application of policy.

Below is a brief summary and thoughts on the presentations.

Talk 1: Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) **Stephen Herbert, Natural England.**

MENE is an ongoing survey on household interaction with the natural environment; 'How people use the outdoors'. Three years of data are currently available which is collected through in-home personal survey. To date 145,000 interviews have been conducted and datasets are available for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead area.

The results illustrate useful pointers for developing strategies toward encouraging outdoor activity across age, gender and social groups. Data also indicates where finance may be directed to more fully support popular activity or encourage initiatives aimed at encouraging non-participants.

The definition of 'outdoors' includes activity in the countryside and in urban settings such as parks & playing fields. The survey also attempts to understand the motivating factors behind different groupings, for example 'health' as a motivator for older people, 'social activity' for young people, 'too busy' as a negative factor in participation within gender and age.

MENE is potentially an important baseline input for developing strategies involving biodiversity within the countryside, public health, and of growing importance children's engagement in outdoor activity.

For more information contact: stephenherbert@naturalengland.co.uk

Workshop 1: How can LAF's better engage with health departments?
Facilitated by Shropshire LAF.

- 'Healthy Lives – Healthy People'
- The workshop outlined known statistics linking activity as contributor to positive health, ageing and mental health, and links to deprivation factors and proportion of heart disease.
- Needs assessment for area as a starting point, which links to 'Public Health Outcomes Framework' for RBWM data. 'Lets Get Moving' guidance for cycling and walking.
- Shropshire LAF has strong active links with senior Public Health managers, public health programme leads and is developing same within the new health structures managed through doctors partnerships.
- It was suggested that we get a representative on the health stakeholders alliance, the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Shropshire have developed one day projects aimed at introducing people to outdoor activity, 'Walking for Health' for example.
- Walking for health promoted through Doctors' surgeries, pharmacies and charities such as MIND and Age Concern.

Talk 2: Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage

This talk outlined the progress of a county-wide initiative to develop and promote access to heritage sites, and the countryside as a heritage asset. Not as relevant in RBWM given nature of our heritage assets.

Workshop 2: Working with your appointing authority on planning issues
Facilitated by Cambridgeshire LAF

- Initial presentation by planning consultant also chair of Cambridgeshire LAF.
- It is apparent that a number of forums have no active relationship with their area planners. This is a particular problem where forums cover embrace more than one local authority area.

- It was stressed that the forum is there to provide advice and make observation to local authority planners and other statutory authorities. Objections per se made by individuals in their own right.
- Local Access Forum objective in planning process is to protect and enhance public rights of way & access, and provide better access and seek improvement through planning initiatives. There was a debate on how forums might ensure that planning departments and other bodies involved in planning issues recognise the role of the LAF as stated above and consult accordingly.
- The workshop discussed the 'National Planning Policy Framework' paragraph 75, which clearly states the role of the forum as not just discretionary. It was agreed that Natural England would write to local authorities to remind them of paragraph and their resulting obligation to involve their respective forums in due process: A good result from the session.

Talk 3: A forward look at Rights of Way and the role of Rights of Way Improvement Plans

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Message DEFRA wanted to get across was that the department remains committed to public rights of way improvement plans; they are 'visionary documents'.

The national ROWIP framework will prioritise access to green space, utilise and help to develop the country's green infrastructure for the range of users. Emphasis is sought toward improving access for disabled users and in accessing woodland for foot, cycle & horse use. There will be funding to improve and add to improving accessibility in woodland.

National Trails were also mentioned in the context of their wishing to develop circular routes around stretches of trails, particularly using multi-user routes. This is an interesting concept given our interests in linking our network and developing multi-user routes.

Workshop 3: Multi-user routes – How to manage and help solve conflicts

Facilitated by north York Moors LAF and Karl Gerhardsen – Natural England.

- Discussed conflict in concept of multi-use; all usual culprits.
- Natural England seeking pragmatic resolution through tested solutions of their area local access forums..
- Not many tried and tested solutions from group I attended. Path surfaces did not really come into the agenda, greater concerns over conflict between actual users at point of use.
- Quality way marking seen as essential to managing routes for single or multiple use, signage backed by education of users through contacts with user groups and organisers.
- It was an accepted problem where individuals ignore direction. The workshop liked our idea of telephone contact numbers on signs, with local authority and landowner contact, to improve timeliness of response.

- Given the emphasis on multiple use in ROWIP policy Natural England may need to lobby to raise the level of control and penalty that a local authority is able to apply in the management of public rights of way.
- Route management key to ensuring viable multi-user network.

IN SUMMARY

A very useful conference particularly as it gives an insight into the workings and issues within the LAF framework, a yardstick to assist in assessing ones own performance. My impression is that our forum has achieved a considerable amount and becomes involved in more of the detail concerning rights of way than the larger area forums.

The conference has generated useful ideas to progress and potentially useful points of contact that may be used to facilitate projects. Networking enabled me to meet the Chair of Slough Local Access Forum and we agreed that it would be useful to meet, with our respective officers, to see how we might collaborate.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent the LAF.

Peter Thorn. Chairman RBWM LAF.

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM: 27 JUNE 2013

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MONITORING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

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.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

(a) Easy Going Routes

The Windsor Great park leaflet has been sent to the Council's Digital Media Services for printing and should be available at the beginning of July 2013. The web pages are in development and will follow the template used by the Cookham Easy Going Route. It is expected that this will be completed by the end of August 2013.

Following the recommendation by the forum on 6th December 2012 the Cookham Easy Going Route walkthrough has been updated to include mini "thumbnail" maps showing the location where the photograph was taken.

(b) Volunteer works

The Council continues to engage and work with The Conservation Volunteers (formerly BTCV) and the Windsor and Maidenhead Conservation Volunteers (WMCV).

Most recently the TCV have spent an extra day building steps along Bisham Footpath 3. This was carried over from last year when works had to be cancelled due to the weather. A second day on the 20th June has been arranged by the TCV in the same area as part of a corporate away day project and approximately 30 people are expected to be involved. This work will include building additional steps, installing a handrail, continuing the revetment repair along Bisham Footpath 4 and general vegetation clearance. The materials needed for the works will be funded by the Council.

Unfortunately WMCV were not able to offer any work days in their summer schedule this year but it is hoped that some days will be available from the autumn schedule.

In addition to the volunteer groups the Public Rights of Way team have been working with the Council's Community Safety team to organise path works via the Community Payback Scheme (CPS). Ditch clearance work was conducted along Sunningdale Footpath 13 and an additional 2 days of revetment work were conducted by the CPS in April and May this year. Further works are being investigated with the Community Safety team for September and October 2013.

(c) LAF members' discussion forum

The LAF online forum is found at <http://groupspaces.com/rbwm-laf/>. This forum is designed to facilitate communication and discussion between the forum members in between the formal meetings and forum members are encouraged to contribute and be engaged with the site.

Currently the forum is heavily dependent on officer support to operate but it is hoped that the LAF online forum will help the forum to become more active and independent.

Experience since the last forum meeting on 6th December 2012 has showed activity on the site from a minority of LAF members. The opinion of the forum is requested as to how this site could become more useful to members and what barriers might exist that prevent members from using it.

In addition to this there is a greater use of the "Huddle" system provided by Natural England, with national questions and debates between LAF members nationally. Members are requested for their opinion the most effective way for the forum to be involved in these debates.
