

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

29 June 2016

ATTENDANCE LIST

Councillor Maureen Hunt
Sara Church
John Foulger
Christine Gadd
Steve Gillions
Alan Keene
Gordon Marrs

Andrew Nye
Geoff Priest
Peter Thorn

Rebecca Anderson
Andrew Fletcher
Tanya Leftwich

RBWM Councillor
Horse Riding, British Horse Society
Walking, open spaces, public rights of way
Cycling and walking
East Berkshire Ramblers Association
Observer
East Berkshire Ramblers Association
Secretary
Cookham Parish Council
Hurley Parish Council
Chairman, land management

RBWM Ecologist
Local Access Forum Secretary
Clerk to the Forum

APOLOGIES

Name

Councillor Malcolm Beer
Katie Sarsfield
Margaret Cubley

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
29 June 2016
MINUTES

1 Welcome, apologies and introductions

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

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Malcolm Beer, Margaret Cubley and Katie Sarsfield.

A declaration of interest was received from Councillor Maureen Hunt in relation to Item 5 of the agenda (Footpath 19) as she was the Chairman of the Rights of Way & Highway Licensing Panel.

The Forum approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2015.

Matters arising from last meeting

Andrew Fletcher referred members to pages 3-24 of the agenda and explained that the actions, all bar 4.3, had been completed.

- ❖ **Action (GM): Item 4.3 - That this was currently being investigated with East Berks Ramblers.**

2 Members' update

Nothing reported.

3 Membership update

Election of Vice-Chair

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that one nomination had been received for the Vice-Chairman's position, that of **Geoff Priest**. **Alan Keene** proposed **Geoff Priest** as Vice-Chairman, which was seconded by **Councillor Hunt**.

The Forum **agreed** that **Geoff Priest** be elected as Vice-Chairman.

General Forum membership

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that **Roy Fabry** had unfortunately resigned from the Forum as he had moved out of the area.

- ❖ **Action (AF): To approach Sustrans and the Cycle Forum for volunteers to join the LAF to contribute from a cycling perspective.**

LAF Fast Response Team membership

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that the LAF Fast Response Team looked at issues outside the Forum meetings in order to meet deadlines and reported back to subsequent meetings. It was noted that these issues tended to be handled via email as it was less time consuming than meeting face to face. Andrew Fletcher stated that Andrew Nye had agreed to be involved which left one vacancy on the LAF Fast Response Team. It was noted that the vacancy could be filled by a someone with a user interest or a land owner interest.

- ❖ **Action (ALL): That a new member to the Fast Response Team was needed (with a user interest or a land owner interest) - anyone interested to let Andrew Fletcher know ASAP.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): To update PROW webpages with LAF members and LAF Fast Response Team members.**

LAF member training

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that joint LAF training course had been arranged to be run by the Institute of Public Rights of Way. It was noted that this training would take place at 10am on the 13 September 2016 in the Desborough Suite, Town Hall, Maidenhead.

- ❖ **Action (ALL): Anyone interested in attending the training to let Andrew Fletcher know ASAP.**
- ❖ **Action (AF): Training papers to be circulated to those who cannot attend.**

4 **Ecology and public rights of way**

Rebecca Anderson, RBWM Ecologist, gave everyone a short presentation on 'Biodiversity within the Borough'. The presentation covered the following subjects:

- Duty of the Council with regards to Biodiversity (European and UK law).
- Public Rights of Way and Biodiversity (designated sites and natural habitats in the Royal Borough).
- Useful Links.

Rebecca Anderson explained that she had been in post for eighteen months and was previously a senior consultant in the private sector. The Forum noted that **Rebecca Anderson** now commented on planning applications that could affect wildlife, following Best Practice Guidelines. It was noted that **Rebecca Anderson** worked part-time on the Borough Local Plan and Neighbourhood Planning Policies and by helping to develop some standard conditions for planning applications. It was noted that **Rebecca Anderson** was involved in Council projects and also worked closely with local wildlife groups.

Christine Gadd arrived

Rebecca Anderson went on to explain the key used in the presentation (blue was the wildlife sites and nature reserves and green / outlined red were the special protection areas). Members were informed that the Royal Borough had 300km of public rights of way and that whilst maintenance / improvements were carried out the Council had to have a regard for wildlife.

The Forum was advised that **Rebecca Anderson** was available to offer advice if needed and referred to the useful links page of her presentation.

Peter Thorn informed **Rebecca Anderson** that the public rights of way team had volunteer groups and that she might like to attend projects to check that the wildlife was being protected / advise as necessary.

It was noted that with regard to wildlife breaches contact should be made with the Thames Valley Police (TVP) Wildlife Liaison Officer and the RBWM Ecologist as the TVP were able to halt works and take the appropriate action if an offence was taking place. Members were informed that there could be anything up to a £5k fine and six months in prison for causing intentional and reckless damage specific species.

Members were informed that a lot of the Council owned sites were sign posted as being wildlife sites / nature reserves, whilst sign posting private land was the responsibility of the private owners. **Rebecca Anderson** explained that the Council bought data in and that small amounts of this data was available free of charge to small organisations on request.

It was noted that farming operations had to cease if ground nesting birds were discovered but only cease approximately five metres from where the birds, nests and

eggs were located in order to prevent them from being disturbed. **Rebecca Anderson** explained that bird scaring equipment could be used to deter birds from nesting but not if the birds had already been located.

- ❖ **Action (RA): To circulate outline information of local wildlife sites to each parish council.**
- ❖ **Action (RA): To circulate information about Hurley & Walthams wildlife sites to Councillor Maureen Hunt.**

5 Maidenhead Footpath 19 diversion proposal

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to pages 25-30 of the agenda and explained that the report was to consult the Forum on the proposal to divert Maidenhead Footpath 19 at the Maidenhead Cricket Club. It was noted that the Maidenhead Footpath 19 ran from North Town Moor in Maidenhead through to Widbrook Common. **Andrew Fletcher** explained that the route of the path took it past the Maidenhead Cricket Club and along the permitted cycle path at Summerleaze. Members noted that Summerleaze, the landowner of the path, had applied to divert part of the footpath which ran in a field adjacent to the cycle track, to take the path fully along the existing cycle track at this point. The Forum was referred to a map detailing the proposed diversion which was included in Appendix A of the report (page 29 of the agenda).

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that if the diversion was allowed it would protect those parts of the cycle track which would mean that the path could never be closed but that cyclists could be restricted because it would remain a permitted cycle way. It was noted that if allowed it would create a continuous walking route.

It was noted that a dual use path, ideally 3.5 metres wide would be the preferred option for this path. **Andrew Fletcher** informed the Forum that dual use paths tended to be 3 metres wide.

The Forum **recommended** that the diversion be allowed, with the following conditions:

1. Width of the path should be a minimum of 3 metres to cater for cyclist and walking traffic.
2. The new line of the path should be protected on the Definitive Map.
3. Access to the cycle track should be improved at each end of the footpath; in particular the keyhole barriers in place along the cycleway should be replaced with more accessible structures.

- ❖ **Action (AF): To send a draft response from the Forum to all members for approval before it went before the Rights of Way & Highway Licensing Panel and landowner.**

6 LAF Annual Report

The Forum was referred to pages 31-42 of the agenda.

It was noted that the purpose of the report was to inform the Forum about the preparation of the annual report and Natural England Pro-forma for its activities over the past year, and to seek approval for them to be published.

Andrew Fletcher explained that under the Local Access Forum regulations, the Forum must publish annually a report of its activities throughout the year. It was noted that this report had historically served the purpose of reporting its activities to Natural England and served as a promotional tool for the Forum.

Andrew Fletcher advised Members that the text of the report was attached as Appendix A to the report and invited the Forum to review and approve the text as the final publication.

It was noted that in addition to the annual report, Natural England required that a report pro-forma was produced each year. **Andrew Fletcher** explained that a copy of the pro-forma form was attached as Appendix B to the report and invited the Forum to review the form and add any comments that it would like to make. It was noted that the deadline for submission was the 31 July 2016.

The Forum **agreed** the work programme for 2016/2017 as follows:

1. Multi-User Routes.
2. Fostering closer engagement with parish councils.
3. Opportunities and issues with identified large development sites
4. Millennium Walk.
5. Improvement to access as Ashley Hill, Hurley.

The Forum **agreed** the following site visits:

1. Cycle track at Ditton Park, Datchet/Slough.
2. Site visits to upcoming potential diversions and new paths.
3. Ashley Hill, Hurley.

❖ **Action (All): To respond to Andrew Fletcher by 15 July 2016 with any comments for the Annual Report or the Natural England report pro-forma.**

❖ **Action (All): To respond to Andrew Fletcher by 15 July 2016 with any suggestions for additional site visits.**

7 **LAF Monitoring items**

The Forum was referred to pages 43-58 of the agenda.

It was noted 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.

- Eton-Dorney Multi-User Route

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to page 47 of the agenda which was a copy of the proposal letter and the subsequent correspondence. It was noted that **Andrew Fletcher** was awaiting a response to this letter.

- Forlease Road to Green Lane

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that as part of the response to the Stafferton Link road scheme, the Forum supported the proposal for a link between Forlease Road and Green Lane underneath the bridge. It was noted that Andrew Fletcher was currently working with the Councils Leisure Team to design, cost and come up with a footpath that would be created in September / October 2016.

- Deregulation Bill update

Andrew Fletcher explained that the Deregulation Bill had been passed and received Royal Assent on 26 March 2015. It was noted that regulations and guidance enacting the public rights of way sections of the bill had been delayed and were now expected later this year.

- Volunteer Works

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to page 44 of the agenda which listed the volunteer works that had been conducted since November 2015 (as of the 20 June 2016).

- M4 Smart Motorway

Andrew Fletcher explained that discussions were ongoing with Highways England with

regard to requested changes to the fence height for the bridge at Marsh Lane, Dorney to improve horse riding and cycling access across the bridge. It was noted that **Andrew Fletcher** was awaiting a response.

- Ramblers' Big Pathwatch

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that the Rambler's Big Pathwatch project had ended in January 2016, and the full report was included as Appendix C to the report. It was noted that the Council had recently received an update from the Ramblers with regard to the planned next steps following on from the project.

- Activities of the LAF Fast Response Team

Andrew Fletcher referred the Forum to page 46 in the agenda that listed the activities.

- ❖ **Action (AF / CG): To approach schools around Sunningdale and Sunninghill for potential volunteer groups.**
- ❖ **Action (PT): To write to RBWM Councillors on behalf of the Forum to thank them for supporting the Public Rights of Way Team and thereby generating the positive results for the Borough reflected in the Ramblers Big Pathwatch.**
- ❖ **Action (SG / AN): To ask The Ramblers Head Office for a breakdown of the Big Pathwatch issues in Cookham.**

8 **Feedback from meetings and conferences**

Andrew Fletcher provided the Forum Members with a handout listing the feedback from site meetings and conferences.

- ❖ **Action (PT): To provide feedback from National Conference to the Forum.**

9 **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was noted as being on Tuesday 8 November 2016.

The meeting, which started at 6.30pm, ended at 8.30 pm.