

# **ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD**

## **LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES**

**30 June 2020**

### **ATTENDANCE LIST**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Interest area</b>
Anne Woodward	User – Horse Rider
Councillor Maureen Hunt	RBWM
Councillor Phil Haseler	RBWM
Councillor Julian Sharpe	RBWM
Geoff Priest (Chairman)	Hurley Parish Council, User – Young People
Lynne Peperell	User
Dom Lethbridge (Vice Chairman)	Landowner – The National Trust
Jacqui Wheeler (LAF Secretary)	RBWM
Alan Keene	User - Walker
Trisha Mentzel	User – Horse Rider
Mark Beeley (Clerk)	RBWM
Shilpa Manek (Meeting Host)	RBWM

### **OBSERVERS**

Councillor John Baldwin	RBWM
Councillor John Bowden	RBWM
Councillor Mandy Brar	RBWM
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	RBWM

### **APOLOGIES**

<b>Name</b>
Steve Gillions
Lynne Penfold

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MINUTES**

**ACTION**

**1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions**  
Apologies were received from Lynn Penfold and Steve Gillions.

**2 Declarations of Interest**  
None.

**3 Approval of Minutes - 26th November 2019**  
**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019 were approved.**

**4 Matters arising from the last meeting**  
Jacqui Wheeler, Parks and Countryside Access Officer, updated members on matters arising.

Regarding the join Local Access Chairs meeting Jacqui Wheeler said that she had made contact with Bracknell and they had offered to host the next meeting using Microsoft Teams. There had not yet been any contact from West Berkshire Council.

The Council website had an archived page for the LAF, but the Chairman had come up with an initial draft for a new page which would be uploaded soon. There was a link on the archived page to a discussion facility, and asked the Forum if it was still needed.

Lisa Hughes said that the discussion facility was not needed as members could contact each other by other means.

Nothing had been heard from the Crown Estate regarding a new member joining the LAF.

The Chairman had been in contact with the Berkshire College of Agriculture and they were interested in having some of their students attend LAF meetings. However, until it could be discussed and arranged in person it would be unlikely to be progressed.

There had been no news on the Local Plan and it was suggested a further update could be part of the next agenda.

The Milestones Statement was approved by Councillor Hunt in her role as Chairman of the Rights of Way and Highways Licencing Panel. RBWM was looking into accessing external funding to achieve some of the targets.

**5 Membership Update**  
Jacqui Wheeler said that Christine Gadd had resigned from the Forum and that she had been thanked for her hard work and contributions to the work of the Forum over many years. The total membership now stood at 13.

Councillor Sharpe said that there should be someone from the cycling community represented on the Forum.

The Chairman said that nobody had come forward with a request to join. Jacqui Wheeler commented that a new Cycling Forum had recently been formed and they could be contacted. Councillor Brar said that a new cycling group had also been set up in Cookham and that she could pass on contact details if needed.

## **6 LAF Information on RBWM website**

Jacqui Wheeler explained that she had already given an update on the website in the Matters Arising item.

The Chairman asked if the membership page on the website would remain hidden. He was told that it would be the first page once it had been put up and would therefore not be hidden. The Chairman said that if any members had any issues with this to let him know. Only names would be visible on the website, no contact details.

## **7 Horse Riding and Multi-Use Provision - Sub Group First Report**

Anne Woodward explained that a survey had been put together about horse riding provision in the borough. The mission statement of the group was improve and minimise any safety risks to horse riders and ensure that there was adequate off road multi use paths. There had been a constant increase in road use and population across the borough, which would have a further impact on the safety of road users. Across the borough, only 67km out of 311km were accessible to horses, with Cookham being the least accessible area of the borough with just 8% of Public Rights of Way being accessible. The Agriculture Bill was currently in the process of becoming law and would give grants to farmers who gave public access through their land.

The survey was undertaken in March and looked to gain an insight into riding habits in the borough and make recommendations on how they could be improved. 129 responses to the survey were received which was calculated to represent over 1,400 horses in the community. Looking at riding habits:

- 68% of riding time was spent hacking
- Only 47% of this was off-road
- 48% only hacked directly from their yard
- 35% did not have any transport
- 100% wore hi-viz

For on-road experiences:

- 83% had experienced safety issues with vehicles
- 62% had experienced safety issues with cyclists
- 65% had experienced unpleasant/threatening behaviour from motorists
- 29% had experienced unpleasant/threatening behaviour from cyclists

For off-road experiences:

Cyclists were less of an issue off-road with 32% safety incidence rate. The bigger problem lay with dogs worrying or attacking horses (58%) and threatening behaviour from their owners or walkers (37%).

Cookham Bridle Circuit was a pleasant route for riders but much of it was now on the road. For some riders the only access to the bridle route was through busy roads which proved to be dangerous. Only 40% of respondents had ridden the route, with no parking/transport close to the start of the route being a significant factor. A number of suggestions had been received to improve this route, including having the route going through Bisham Woods and improving access to parking.

Another route was the Knowl Hill Bridle Circuit, which was split into a north and south section. 54% of those asked in the survey had ridden the circuit, while 10% did not know about it. Reasons for not riding the route included:

- 20% too many road sections
- 30% no transport
- 20% no parking

Respondents suggested improvements by having a safe crossing of A4 (Knowl Hill and Littlewick Green) and by reducing the speed of traffic and improving safety at junctions.

The general sentiments from the survey were:

- 71% of respondents felt that riding had become less safe over the last 24 months and they would prefer to avoid riding on roads but have little option.
- 61% find it extremely frustrating that over the evolution of time, many bridleways now end at a main road.
- 65% would ride more if there was a better network of off-road linkages.
- 64% were in favour of upgrading all rights of way to multi-use access.

The key findings and recommendations included:

- Increase in road traffic had made some of the bridle circuits in the borough unsafe
- Dog attacks were also significant, but many were not reported to the police
- Horse riders did not use the roads by choice, but many were forced to
- Education was seen as a key recommendation so that multi-use access could be shared
- Increase safety and signage in key areas
- Invite volunteers from sub groups for contributions

Councillor Hunt said that it was a very comprehensive presentation. She said that the crossing with the A4 at Bottle Lane and at the common was always very busy. There was a crossing that had been made for cyclists and this could also be used by horse riders.

Anne Woodward said that it was a 'zig zag' for horse riders and was much easier to cross for cyclists. She suggested a crossing like the one at Windsor Park.

Councillor Sharpe said that he was puzzled by the report as it did not cover the other users, just horse riders. He also commented that the report only looked at a small portion of the borough, and that it would be more useful if it took on board other areas like walking and cycling.

The Chairman said that they had tried to engage with these groups and that the report was comprehensive and well put together.

Anne Woodward said that the scope would be massive so they decided to focus on routes that had been promoted by the borough. They had received some comments from the Ascot/Sunninghill area and would like to gain more comments from other areas.

Councillor Brar said that she would speak with Anne Woodward about how to improve the bridleways that had been discussed as parts of them fell in her ward.

Lisa Hughes said that she supported increasing the number of multi-purpose routes across the borough. As a disabled user, it was important that users considered people who were more vulnerable than themselves.

Councillor Bowden said that he supported Councillor Sharpe's comments. He suggested that certain areas of the borough could have increased signage on the road to warn drivers of the potential for horse riders to be using the same routes. Anne Woodward said that they were aware of issues in the area that Councillor Bowden had raised and said that more representatives from that area were needed so that they could deal with the problem.

Dom Lethbridge agreed with Councillor Brar and he wanted to help improve access on the routes. He suggested that they would use the volunteer resource from the National Trust to help.

Jacqui Wheeler commented that it was a good report and it showed that there were things that RBWM could look in to. They wanted to improve the situation for all road users and that 'Share the Space' road signage could be particularly effective, as it was educational for other road users.

The Chairman said that it would need to be borough wide, but this was the first report of detail that had been looked at and it was a good starting point.

## **8 Accessibility Audits Working Group**

Lisa Hughes explained that the Accessibility Audits Working Group had been set up around 18 months ago and they looked at a number of sites to assess their accessibility. Examples of sites that have been looked at included Battlemead, Boulters Lock and the Greenway. At the Greenway, Steve Gillions had undertaken a survey of the area and Lisa Hughes had tried to access the site and was able to access the whole area. Battlemead was in the process of having new benches installed which would help users, while it was also important that the circular route of the Common was kept. There was a proposal to only have the connecting paths open on certain days of the year, Lisa Hughes said that she would contact the Park and Countryside Team at RBWM for clarification.

Dom Lethbridge said that they had been looking at the methodology that the group could use to review accessibility and come up with a template that could be applied to all sites. He said that a further update could be provided at a future meeting.

The Chairman thanked both Lisa Hughes and Dom Lethbridge and said that the work they had done was underlined in the Milestones Statement. Councillor Hunt also thanked Lisa Hughes for her contributions.

Jacqui Wheeler asked when a report would be available for the Greenway survey. She was informed that Steve Gillions and Lisa Hughes would meet soon to discuss the progress made as they wanted the survey to be at a certain level of completion.

## **9 Battlemead Common Update**

The Chairman said that he had received a note from Steve Gillions in his absence, which largely reiterated what Friends of Battlemead Common were saying. However, at the current stage not much could be done until RBWM had completed their report.

Anne Woodward said that the common was a great walking route and there had recently been a big increase in the number of people using it. This had led

to issues, however, as signs were being ignored with dogs not on leads and cyclists using the footpaths.

Lisa Hughes said that she had seen a significant number of dogs not on their leads in recent weeks and she also suspected that there was an increase in the amount of fouling that was not being picked up. She expressed her disappointment, but underlined that it was a minority.

Lynne Peperell, who was speaking on behalf of Mike Copland, said that wildlife on the common was severely declining which was a concern.

Councillor Brar said that she was particularly concerned as the common was part of her ward. She said that the route from the car park to the river footpath was to be improved, especially for those with disabilities. It was suggested that more could be done to stop dog walkers from getting near the wildlife that needed to be protected.

The Chairman said that RBWM had a difficult job to balance between different groups and needs. They had a moral obligation to protect the ecologically and sorting the issue of access to riverside. The dog issue was likely to never go away.

Anne Woodward suggested that it could be classed as a wildlife reserve and then people would start to understand what it was about. Councillor Baldwin agreed and said that there were educational opportunities at Battlemead.

Jacqui Wheeler said that lots of representations had been made and RBWM was trying to take on board everyone's views. The Accessibility Sub Group of Battlemead had recently gained a new member who was a dog walker, therefore there was an opportunity to engage with them. Cyclists on the towpath was a big problem and signs that had been put up, but these had not been effective.

Councillor Sharpe said that he was not familiar with the wildlife in the area. Lynne Peperell said that there were at least 8 different species of bird that were on the conservation list amongst other wildlife that needed to be protected. Councillor Brar said that there were over 50 different species present at the common.

## **10 Site Visit - When and Where**

Jacqui Wheeler informed Members that the next site visit was to Thriftwood, the extension of Ockwell's Park in Cox Green, Maidenhead. The visit was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 2pm. Jason Mills would explain the management of the site.

Councillor Hunt passed on her apologies for not being able to attend this site visit.

## **11 Date of Next Meeting**

Members noted the date of the next meeting.

The meeting, which started at 6.15 pm, ended at 7.50 pm.