

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

30 November 2020

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Interest area
Geoff Priest	Hurley Parish Council
Councillor Maureen Hunt	RBWM
Councillor Phil Haseler	RBWM
Councillor Julian Sharpe	RBWM
Lisa Hughes	User - Walker
Anne Woodward	User – Horse Rider
Alan Keene	Bisham Parish Council
Steve Gillions	User - Walker
Susy Shearer	User - Cyclist
Trisha Mentzel	User – Horse Rider
Jacqui Wheeler (LAF Secretary)	RBWM
Mark Beeley (Clerk)	RBWM
Fatima Rehman (Meeting Host)	RBWM

OBSERVERS

Councillor John Baldwin	RBWM
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	RBWM
Councillor Mandy Brar	RBWM
Councillor David Cannon	RBWM

APOLOGIES

Name
Mark Howard
Lynn Penfold

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MINUTES**

ACTION

1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Howard and Lynn Penfold.

2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

3 Approval of Minutes - 30th June 2020

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2020 were approved.

4 Matters arising from the last meeting

Jacqui Wheeler, Parks and Countryside Access Officer, updated the Forum on matter arising.

Contact had been made with other LAF Support Officers and Chairmen from neighbouring authorities, Bracknell had expressed enthusiasm and suggested a Zoom meeting be held. The Surrey Chairman had also expressed an interest and the aim was to try and get a date in the diary for LAF Chairmen to meet soon.

A revised masterplan of Battlemead Common had been considered at the September meeting of Friends of Battlemead Common. The plan had been reviewed and was attached in the paperwork that was distributed as part of this LAF meeting. The causeway would now be open from April until October, while the east field would be open from October until March. The north field would be left to the wild and dogs would be allowed off lead in the west field.

(Post Meeting Update: At the Friends of Battlemead Common meeting on 9th December 2020, there was a U-turn in which the opening of the Causeway and the north/south path in the East Field were put on hold while an alternative winter route through the Willow Woodlands was costed and feasibility study done.)

Alan Keene expressed his thanks for the successful site visit to Thrift Wood.

The Chairman asked if seating was going to be considered in certain areas of the common.

Jacqui Wheeler said that seating was on the site already. The pedestrian access point from Cookham Road was being looked at and changes could be made. Planning for permission for a car park was now not being sought.

Lisa Hughes asked what would happen to the area that had been earmarked for parking. Jacqui Wheeler said that it would probably be discussed at the next Friends of Battlemead Common meeting, which would be taking place on 9th December 2020.

Anne Woodward said that she lived close by to the common and had noticed a

lot of cycling and dogs off lead. She also believed that some signs had been taken down warning people that cycling was not allowed.

Jacqui Wheeler confirmed that cycling was not allowed on the site and there was not much RBWM could do other than put signs up.

Susy Shearer said that she was not aware of the cycling issues on the towpath, she would take these issues up with the cycling group that she was a member of.

5 **Membership Update - Appoint Vice Chair**

Jacqui Wheeler explained that there had been two resignations from the Forum since the last meeting, Dom Lethbridge and David Clenshaw. Dom Lethbridge had left the National Trust and therefore the Forum, with the National Trust currently unable to offer a replacement due to a lack of resources. Two new members had recently joined, Mark Howard who would be a liaison with Cookham Parish Council, and Susy Shearer who was part of the Cycling Action Group.

Dom Lethbridge had been Vice Chairman of the Forum, therefore with his resignation the Forum needed to elect a new Vice Chairman. Lisa Hughes put herself forward for the position, which was seconded by Councillor Hunt.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That Lisa Hughes be elected as Vice Chairman for the remainder of the term.

6 **Milestones Statement/Targets Consultation**

Jacqui Wheeler said that RBWM was consulting with the LAF to understand their opinions on the priorities set by the Public Rights of Way team in 2021/22. Changes from the Accessibility Working Sub Group had been incorporated into the Milestones Statement 2021/21 last year. Jacqui Wheeler outlined the targets that the team would be working towards over the next year, along with the progress of the team in achieving some of the targets so far.

The Chairman said that some targets had been unachievable due to the pandemic. He suggested waiting to see if there were any changes in the output of the working groups before making any recommendations on the targets.

Councillor Sharpe asked what work had been undertaken with Parish Councils in the area. The Chairman explained that Parish Councils gained sight of the report and they also received specific reports on things like footpaths in their area.

Councillor Sharpe asked if there was a list of footpaths condition and how frequently they were examined.

Jacqui Wheeler said that there was survey of all footpaths in the borough done every 7 years, on a rolling basis. RBWM relied on residents to report any issues so that they could be brought to the attention of the team quickly. (Post meeting note: The surveys were done bi-annually so each path is visited once every 3½ years.)

Councillor Sharpe said that it would be great to get an insight from the sub groups to shape the targets in the Milestones Statement and there could be potential to open up areas of the borough that were underutilised for walking and cycling groups.

Steve Gillions said that all footpaths were covered by the survey over the seven year period. He encouraged residents to report any problems direct to the Public Rights of Way team who were very responsive. He explained that the Ramblers national group had been part of a project looking at lost footpaths across the country, with 130 miles of potential lost path in the borough.

Lisa Hughes mentioned that the bridge in Ray Mill Road West had recently had some work done, with new wood placed at either end. However, this had created a step which was problematic for wheelchair users.

Jacqui Wheeler said that she would have a look at this and see what could be done to ensure that wheelchair users could still access the bridge.

Susy Shearer said that she was happy to liaise with Councillor Sharpe after the meeting regarding his comments on cycling.

7 Horse Riding and Multi-Use Provision - Sub Group Updates

Anne Woodward updated the Forum on the work of the sub group. An initial survey had been undertaken in March, with the key findings being:

- Motor vehicles presented the highest safety related issues on-road, with respondents reporting worsening of behaviour over last 24 months.
- Riding off-road, dog attacks and owners/walkers were the biggest hazard, with dogs often not under full control.
- 67% of safety incidents go unreported to Police or BHS, so official data is grossly understated.
- Increases in urbanisation and the related traffic, means that the Cookham and Knowl Hill routes were no longer the safe haven for equestrians that they were intended to be.
- Only 22% of PROW in the Borough were accessible for equestrians.
- Equestrians did not use roads by choice, they would prefer local safe off-road riding.

Recommendations from the group:

- Education programme for vehicles, cyclists, dog owners and riders
- Continue to work with RBWM PROW to investigate improvements to Cookham and Knowl Hill circuits.
- Invite more volunteers for sub-group to fully investigate safety improvements in all areas of the Borough, particularly for Windsor and Ascot.
- Review speed limits and improve signage in Cookham and Cookham Dean, Lee Lane, Burchetts Green Lane, Warren Row Road, Terry's Lane, Mileys Road, Twyford Road.
- Identify which highway verges, cycleways, open spaces owned by RBWM could be opened to multi-use, in order to separate horses from motor traffic.
- Planning and developments in the Borough to consider impact on horse routes and incorporate multi-use access, rather than cycling only.

After the LAF June meeting, Anne Woodward had put together some additional reports for areas that had not been covered in the initial survey, including places like Cookham and Ascot. She commented on an example found in Cookham where a sign had been placed saying 'No more horses on Cookham roads'. There was another problem where there was a footpath which was currently a cycleway but the landowner was not prepared to make it available to equestrians. In Ascot, there was very little off road riding other than paying for a license to ride in the Windsor Great Park. The reports provided more detailed information of the safety issues faced by equestrians along with some

suggestions on how the risks could be reduced. There had been little success in approaching landowners.

Steve Gillions said that it was a very comprehensive report and that it was important that footpaths were upgraded to bridleways where appropriate. Cyclists were also able to use the route if it was classed as a bridleway, but safety issues always needed to be taken into account.

Anne Woodward explained that horses were unable to go on a cycling route, with certain things needing to be done to ensure that a path can be safely transformed to allow horses too and Anne Woodward said that she would be happy to work with landowners to see this happen.

The Chairman commented on Ashley Hill Forest and the desire to gain access. He had written to the Maidenhead MP, Theresa May, to ask if she would be able to discuss the issue with the Forestry Commission. They claimed that the area was in 'wet forest' and was therefore unsuitable for equestrians and they did not want to upgrade the path at this stage.

Councillor Cannon left the meeting.

Alan Keene said that it was a good report and clarified the various references to Copas Farms. Copas Farms was one organisation, with Copas Partnership being a separate organisation altogether. It was also important to note the difference between byways and restricted byways. Alan Keene suggested an improvement to the reports could be to include the parish in the rights of way reference numbers. The Agriculture Bill had recently become the Agriculture Act and therefore it was hoped this might be used to persuade more landowners to upgrade their public rights of way. Bisham bridleways number 22 had been cut off by the A308, Alan Keene suggested that this could be connected to another nearby bridleway. However, there was no guarantee that the landowner would connect the two routes using a bridleway rather than just a footpath.

The Chairman said that these were points that would also hopefully come out of the work of the sub groups which would allow and improve access for all.

Jacqui Wheeler thanked Anne Woodward for the report, it was useful to help the Public Rights of Way Team to improve access for all groups. Some landowners had not been approached for some time about possible upgrades of public rights of way across their land so this was something that could be explored with the findings from the reports. Jacqui Wheeler suggested a meeting between the sub groups to discuss what the best approach might be. She suggested that a steer from the LAF would be useful but this may come later down the line once priorities had been decided upon.

Anne Woodward said there needed to be something in it for the landowner to get them onside with any proposals.

8 Accessibility Working Group Updates

Lisa Hughes explained that the 'Walks for All' report had been distributed to LAF members in advance of the meeting. A couple of years ago, the Access Working Group was created after a presentation at a LAF meeting and the group had built a methodology called Walks for all, many and some. This allowed walks to be categorised and for the public to gain an insight if the route would suit their abilities. The findings had been presented a year ago which was accepted by the LAF. During lockdown, the sub groups work had been

limited but two new volunteers had offered their help to the group. There were a lot of footpaths across the borough that needed to be audited, with the volunteer noting the big features on the footpath. The document would then be produced and circulated to group members, with another volunteer using the document to walk the route. Of the six pilot localities, five were actively in progress. For Battlemead, the group could use the masterplan that had been produced to finish off their documentation of the site. The other localities were in the early stages, with the only one not to be started being the River Thames at Old Windsor.

As part of the audit, Lisa Hughes contacted some wheelchair users near Boulton and asked them about access getting onto Ray Mill Island. The slopes on the bridge were very steep and users were concerned about being unable to control their wheelchairs coming off the bridge.

Steve Gillions said the intention was to create a series of walks, with it not just being a walk from point A to B but looking at different routes available in a particular locality. The document would include information of the walk, how to get there and what route options were available along with a map. The starting point and access to parking or public transport was something that needed to be considered and it was hoped that ideas could be added to the document over time. Steve Gillions said the current draft was probably the best that could be produced using the skills and resources available to the sub group, but suggested that someone who was able to help with technical map making and ability to design leaflets would be greatly appreciated.

Lisa Hughes reiterated that the project was about walks for everyone of all ages and abilities and that the aim was for walks that could be done in a loop rather than just between two points. She mentioned using social media to advertise some of the walks and allow more photos to be added. Lisa Hughes thanked Steve Gillions for all his work on the project.

Steve Gillions said that all the walks were self-guided and social media was important in gaining feedback about footpaths and routes.

Susy Shearer said that it was excellent report. She explained that the Cycle Forum, before it was disbanded, had a way finder group that measured distances for cyclists in time rather than distance.

Anne Woodward said that putting the maps online was important for easy access and it could also be followed on residents walking the route on their mobile phones.

Jacqui Wheeler offered the support of RBWM in the creation of the maps, online mapping was an important tool and was the way forward. She asked if the maps would be graded.

Lisa Hughes said that the six pilots were intended to be for all with the primary focus of the surveys being to describe what is there so that people were aware.

The Chairman thanked Lisa Hughes for a comprehensive report. To get this project further forward, the argument presented to RBWM needed to be coherent. The Chairman proposed to convene a meeting of members of the three working groups. The purpose was to identify areas where the groups could support each other in opening up more areas to multiple groups. It was hoped this would be in early 2021. The working group meeting would allow the Forum to put something forward.

Councillor Hunt thanked Lisa Hughes and Steve Gillions for the report and said that the sub group had worked superbly.

9 **Cycling Action Plan**

Susy Shearer explained that the Windsor & Maidenhead Cycling Action Group was formed to take forward the legacy of the RBWM Cycle Forum.

There was a need to integrate more detailed cycling policy, around which relevant road safety could be addressed and proficiency training organised, was integrated into the process of drafting a new Borough Local Plan including wider policies covering the design and delivery of transport infrastructure as well as traffic and parking.

In 2015, preliminary steps to draw up a Cycling Action Plan were taken and work begun on the strategy document. This continued until September 2017 when it was deemed to be ready for review and further refining by a small Task and Finish group comprised of elected members, the Principal Transport Planner and Cycle Forum volunteer members. This would ensure that the draft accorded with best practice and appropriately reflected the aspirations and needs across the borough's ten primary communities. As part of this exercise, a small Wayfinding Working Group was also set up to develop a new system of cycle signage helping to establish an important cohesive element in the route network underpinned by the Cycling Action Plan 2018-2028, which was adopted by Cabinet in January 2019.

Following the RBWM Boundary Review and the 2019 local elections in May, the Cycle Forum was disbanded and its function brought under the remit of a newly formed Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Panel. However, concerns had already been expressed prior to the elections regarding the amount of RBWM time and resources which would be available to devote to cycling and this led several former CF members to set up the independent Windsor & Maidenhead Cycling Action Group in March 2020. Its fundamental purposes were to progress the ongoing monitoring, review and delivery of costed and prioritised CAP schemes and work with local communities, RBWM and other local and national groups, individuals and organisations to achieve this.

RBWM's 2019 Climate Emergency Declaration followed by the Covid-19 pandemic had brought unforeseen urgency to the need for "active travel" and its contribution to sustainable transport and opportunities to mitigate environmental impacts from these global crises.

Among its uses, the CAP was one of several criteria, including the Propensity to Cycle Tool (PCT), which had been used to design schemes in the bid submissions for Government Tranches 1 and 2 funding. The CAP would be strengthened and complemented by the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) when this policy was completed and adopted, both documents provided essential policy guiding sustainable transport infrastructure for the future.

Susy Shearer explained what the main objectives of the Cycling Action Plan were. The group was waiting to hear back from RBWM on whether additional funding had been received from the government and which schemes they wanted to prioritise.

Councillor Brar commented on the tranche 1 funding being for Maidenhead Town Centre and asked if there was any funding for the more rural parts of RBWM. She asked if a cycle path from Maidenhead to Cookham was part of the plan.

Susy Shearer said that the majority of the funding went to the three biggest towns in the borough; Maidenhead, Windsor and Ascot. Tranche 2 funding had just been announced and this would affect how many schemes would be able to go forward.

Jacqui Wheeler said that it was great to have Susy Shearer on the LAF and it allowed all user groups to be represented on the Forum. The British Horse Society had expressed an interest in being involved with any cycling or walking plans to ensure that they were not inadvertently detrimental to horse riders. Jacqui Wheeler had also received an email from Cycling UK and this year had really shown how important public rights of way were to the public. Cycling UK wanted people to mark missing links on a map in their area and contact their local authority to open up more routes. Jacqui Wheeler said that if any LAF member saw a consultation advertised to let her know so that it could be considered and discussed by the Forum if appropriate.

Susy Shearer said that it was possible to submit a group response to consultations as well as individual responses. It was also important to note how shared use had changed with the pandemic and that space was more of an issue with the need to allow for social distancing. A shared cycling and walking action plan was important and supported by the Windsor and Maidenhead Cycling Action Group.

Jacqui Wheeler said that there was support from the LAF for a cycling and walking infrastructure plan, which RBWM could look to put together.

10 Draft Annual Report 2019/20

Jacqui Wheeler explained that the report covered the period between March 2019 and April 2020. She had noted that the membership of the Forum in the report needed to be changed, as it reflected the current membership and not what the membership was at the time. Jacqui Wheeler asked that if anyone had any comments or amendments to the report, to let her know.

11 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next meeting, currently TBC June/July 2021, would be confirmed after Full Council in February 2021.

The meeting, which started at 6.15 pm, ended at 8.10 pm.