

## RIGHTS OF WAY & HIGHWAY LICENSING PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 7 APRIL 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillors Maureen Hunt (Chairman), Gary Muir (Vice-Chairman), Samantha Rayner, David Cannon, Clive Baskerville, Phil Haseler and Mandy Brar

Also in attendance: Councillors Gurpreet Bhangra, John Baldwin and Donna Stimson

Officers: Mark Beeley, Fatima Rehman and Anthony Hurst

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor W Da Costa.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were noted by the Panel and approved as an accurate record.**

### PUBLIC FOOTPATH 53 BRAY - TEMPORARY DIVERSION ORDER

Anthony Hurst, Parks and Countryside Manager, explained that the report was seeking to gain the approval for a Temporary Diversion Order (TDO) for part of Footpath 53 in Bray. The reason for the diversion was to facilitate planning permission which had been gained on the land to be implemented. The planning permission involved extraction of sand and gravel and site restoration for a period of no longer than 10 years. Therefore, it had been proposed that this section of footpath 53 be diverted to an alternative route for the duration of the works, before reopening along its original route once the work had been completed. The two new routes which formed part of the diversion would remain permanently open as rights of way, which was part of the site restoration. Before bringing this report to the Panel, Anthony Hurst had consulted with Bray Parish Council, the Local Access Forum and the East Berks Ramblers, with no objections being received. If the Panel approved the TDO, there would be a second round of consultations. Any objections would then be brought back to the Panel for consideration before any final approval.

Anthony Hurst shared a presentation with the Panel, showing the map where the current footpath was and the proposed route of the diversion, along with some photos from the site.

Councillor Haseler asked if disability interests had been taken into account and assumed that there would be no issues with accessibility on the diverted route, as the proposal had gone through the Local Access Forum. He asked what would happen to the planning permission if the Panel decided not to agree with the recommendation in the report.

Anthony Hurst said that the TDO had been considered by the Local Access Forum and they had not identified any issues. There were no gates or stiles on the proposed diversion. If the TDO was not approved by the Panel, then this could potentially delay implementation of the planning permission on the site.

Councillor Rayner asked if adequate signage would be put in place on the diverted footpath and what the surface of the diverted footpath would be.

Anthony Hurst confirmed that the extraction site would be fenced off for a maximum 10 year period and the diversion would be adequately signed. The new sections of diverted footpath would have a gravel surface around two metres wide and would be suitable for all users.

Councillor Baskerville asked if the diverted footpath would be removed once the extraction work had been completed to avoid confusion to users.

Anthony Hurst explained that once the original footpath was restored the diverted footpath would also remain to become a permanent right of way.

Councillor Brar asked if another order or approval from the Panel would be needed when the original path was opened up again.

Anthony Hurst said that once the works had been completed the original footpath would be opened up while retaining the path from the diverted route. This would create a circular route around the field.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel approved the making of a Temporary Footpath Diversion Order for Footpath 53 Bray, under S257 and S261 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and that the Order be confirmed as an unopposed Order if no objections were received in response to statutory consultations. If objections were received, the matter will be brought back to the Panel for further consideration.**

#### MILESTONES STATEMENT 2021/22

The Chairman introduced the Milestones Statement and said that there was over 300km of footpaths, rights of way and bridleways across the borough. Volunteers had spent a significant amount of time ensuring that rights of way were maintained, which was hugely appreciated.

Anthony Hurst explained that the statement aimed to set out the targets and priorities for the year ahead. Before bringing the statement to the Panel, Anthony Hurst had consulted with the Local Access Forum and all the Parish Councils in the borough. The Local Access Forum suggested that an interim review part way through the year may be required, depending on the progress of the Borough Local Plan. They also suggested adding neighbouring local authorities to the list of interested parties. Three parish councils responded to the consultation, Cookham, Datchet and Hurley. The Public Rights of Way team would work with the parishes to include the suggestions offered, where appropriate.

Anthony Hurst presented some photographs of paths across the borough that had been improved over the past year.

The Chairman commented on the revenue budget that was available to the team being £60,000 and the capital budget being £40,000.

Councillor Rayner said that the footpaths looked good and were much improved. She also said it was pleasing to see so many volunteers give up their time to work on footpaths around the borough. She asked if sustainable materials were used as part of the strategy and if there were any links in the Milestones Statement to the council's climate strategy.

Anthony Hurst said that sustainable materials were used where possible, with materials from old footpaths being recycled too. A good footpath network was important to the climate strategy as it encouraged more residents to use them as alternatives to travelling by car.

Councillor Brar pointed out that at Battlemead Common there would be a link to the River Thames footpath as part of the Milestones Statement. She asked if the team would be

consulting with groups like Wild Cookham, Wild Maidenhead and Friends of Battlemead Common.

Anthony Hurst said that they had always consulted with the parish councils but there was no reason why those groups could not be included on the consultee list for future years. The Panel agreed that this would be useful.

Councillor Baskerville suggested that involving these extra groups could also provide an extra resource when it came to volunteers.

Councillor Rayner said that it would be good to mention the sustainability aspects as part of the statement.

Councillor Brar said that there had been a number of complaints from horse riders that they were having to use the roads in Cookham where there were gaps in the bridleway circuit. She asked if there was anything that could be done.

Anthony Hurst said that there was a recognised need for off road routes for horse riders. The Local Access Forum had set up a multi-user working group to investigate the issue and work would be done with landowners to identify any potential opportunities to open up routes further.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel approved the 'Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review 2021/22'.**

#### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Baskerville noted in the minutes of the last meeting of the Panel, in March 2019, there had been discussion about Heatherwood Hospital and the path connecting it to Ascot Station. Councillor Baskerville asked if that matter had now been dealt with.

Anthony Hurst said that the footpath discussed was an aspiration in that development but unfortunately was not something that could be achieved.

The meeting, which began at 6.25 pm, finished at 7.05 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....