

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

6 December 2022

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Interest area
Geoff Priest	
Lisa Hughes	MS Society
Councillor Maureen Hunt	
Ian Harvey	
Steve Gillions	
Susy Shearer	
Trisha Mentzel	

OBSERVERS

None

APOLOGIES

Name

James Copas
Mark Howard
Ceri Richardson

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MINUTES**

ACTION

1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and asked those present in the Council Chamber to introduce themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from James Copas, Ceri Richardson and Mark Howard.

A) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest received.

B) APPROVAL OF MINUTES - 7TH JULY 2022

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022 were approved as a true record, provided the following amendments were made:

- In Item 9 – Cycling Groups Update, it was corrected to say: “organised by WCH and funded by Cycling UK”
- In Item 9 – Cycling Groups Update, the spelling of ‘Derrick’ was corrected to ‘Derek’.
- In Item 10 – Biodiversity Action Plan Progress, it was corrected to say: “working with wild groups on implementing the BAP.”

2 Matters arising from the Last Meeting

Jacqui Wheeler, Parks and Countryside Access Officer, listed the updates on matters arising from the last meeting.

In answer to the question raised at the last meeting by Mark Howard on how much was spent on the formal consultation for the Diversion Order Cook/17 and part 59, Jacqui Wheeler replied that the costs in making a diversion order application were covered by the applicant, including legal and advertising.

On the training for the LAF, after consulting with and receiving feedback from LAF members, it was arranged for Lisa Hughes, Vice-Chairman, to undertake the Access & Right of Way Level 1 training course ran by the British Horse Society on 6th November 2022. Jacqui Wheeler explained that the next stage was to find out when the next Level 1 course was to take place and book LAF members onto the course.

The Chairman suggested that the short notes on the training course could be circulated to LAF members so they could get an idea of what was covered and then decide whether they wanted to attend. Jacqui Wheeler informed that training course attendance would cost a minimum of £10 for a full-on half-day course.

Jacqui Wheeler then moved on to potential recruitment of younger LAF members from Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA). It was reported that this had been placed on hold due to BCA integrating with East Berkshire and Langley College. The Chairman mentioned that he would pursue this further after Christmas.

On contacting the Youth Engagement Officer at Achieving for Children to recruit younger LAF members, Lisa Hughes reported that she was supposed to attend the Youth Council meeting in September 2022, but this coincided with

the Queen's funeral and therefore needed to reschedule.

Jacqui Wheeler then informed that there were a couple of projects on creating LAF webpages and 'Walks For All' leaflets on the RBWM Together website.

Jacqui Wheeler also reported that she still needed to send an email out to Parish Councils to explain to them about Quiet Lanes and asking them for views/suggestions (as suggested in the last LAF meeting). There was also potential to gather more information on Quiet Lanes.

Jacqui Wheeler also stated that she had circulated the minutes of the last LAF chairs meeting on 20th July 2022 to LAF members.

3 **Membership Update**

The Chairman informed the Forum that it had a new member: Ian Harvey from Cox Green Parish Council.

4 **Deerswood Meadow**

(The order of agenda items was changed whereby Deerswood Meadow was considered third.)

Rosie Street, Natural Environment Officer, presented an update on the plans for Deerswood Meadow in Maidenhead. The Meadow was a small area of grassland (about 3.2 hectares) which was originally going to be used for housing, but not anymore.

After conducting a public consultation, Rosie Street presented a rough plan for the area which would include extra public paths through Deerswood, a limited car park (mainly for disabled access) in the north, a few habitats, public seating, and sustainable urban drainage features (SUDs) to reduce flood risks and further provide habitats.

Rosie Street then presented some graphs illustrating the results of the public consultation. Most people who were likely to access Deerswood would be local residents who would walk there. A few residents more would cycle and drive there. The results also illustrated that the prominent reasons for visiting Deerswood were to walk and visit a natural environment within an urban area.

Susy Shearer asked what the soil was under the SUDs. Rosie Street stated that she would have to come back to her on that question.

Lisa Hughes asked if there was an area in which toads could be left undisturbed. Rosie Street replied that most of the toads lived in resident's gardens as well as in Deerswood based on some reptile and amphibian surveys. There were plans to plant a native hedge around the edge of Deerswood as well as some amphibian features across the land.

Lisa Hughes then asked if the paths through Deerswood were suitable for wheelchair users as well as whether there was consideration on accessibility to the natural playground area for children with disabilities. Rosie Street replied that a couple of the paths would be paved and disability access for the play area would be considered during the designing process.

Ian Harvey asked if any planning had been put in place regarding the protection of toads and other wildlife in the SUD area from, for example, free roaming dogs. Rosie Street responded that the SUD area would be fenced off as it was a drainage feature rather than a pond for residents to visit.

Susy Shearer asked how cycling access towards and through Deerswood was managed. Rosie Street stated that the management of cycling was discussed, such as adding cycle racks for cyclists to park their bicycle. While the public right-of-way was used to get across Deerswood, survey results conveyed negative results regarding cycling through Deerswood with concerns about tree roots being crushed. Therefore, recreational cycling would potentially be discouraged. Agreeing with Rosie Street, Susy Shearer replied that she would like to encourage more cycling to Deerswood.

Councillor Hunt asked if there was a proposed timeline for this development. Rose Street replied that the development plan for Deerswood Meadow would be taken to Cabinet in February 2023; in which the budget would then need to be approved. Rosie Street hoped that the work would start in early 2023.

The LAF noted the report.

5 Sub-Group Reports

The LAF considered an update from each sub group.

A) MULTI-USER SUBGROUP - THRIFTWOOD BR ACCESS. DOES LAF SUPPORT CONTINUING?

(Rosie Street left the meeting at 19:02)

Trisha Mentzel explained that it was agreed, along with Jacqui Wheeler, that the route in the Thriftwood extension of Ockwells Park needed amendments to make it clearer to go around. She mentioned that there were some concerns at the beginning on there being conflict between horse riders and walkers (especially dog walkers); however, there were no reports of conflict between these groups based on feedback.

Trisha Mentzel explained that the trial for horse rider access in Ockwells Park, which ran from the summer months of 2022 to November 2022, had recently ended. She asked whether LAF would support the path being accessible for horse riders in summer 2023.

Jacqui Wheeler agreed that work needed to be done on the signage at Ockwells Park for horse riders based on the feedback received. She also mentioned that some work had already been done, such as increasing the height of waymark posts and more signage added. More work would potentially be undertaken through further engagement with horse riders.

Jacqui Wheeler then asked if LAF supported this permissive access being permanent seasonal access for next year (2023) while the path was still available before the wetland works in Ockwells Park went ahead. She added that if approved by LAF, she would speak to parish councils and other users to then make a final decision on this equestrian access.

Ian Harvey informed that parish councils had not received complaints regarding the trial of horse rider accessibility; though some comments had been made on the way it was implemented:

- The route map on the notice boards were inconsistent with the waymarks placed around the path.
- The information on the start and end of the trial period was unclear.
- Dog owners felt they were burdened on preventing any issues caused by their dogs with the horse riders.
- Potential issues of horse manure poisoning dogs.

Ian Harvey explained that it was felt by residents that the trial should have been explained better to them.

Councillor Haseler agreed that the waymarking in Thriftwood needed to be clearer. He also confirmed that he had not received emails from residents raising issues regarding the trial after its initial implementation. He argued that as many users as possible should be allowed access to the land; therefore, the objective should be to reduce conflict between pathway users as much as possible. He also added that he would support continued accessibility for horse riders in Thriftwood into next year.

The Chairman then asked if the LAF supported extending the trial for horse-riding access into summer 2023 until the wetland plans for Ockwells Park were known. The LAF agreed, though Ian Harvey abstained because he had not raised this at Cox Green Parish Council.

AGREED: The LAF supported permissive horse-riding access at Thriftwood (Ockwells Park) continuing in 2023.

The Chairman declared that the LAF agreed to the continuation of the trial, subject to the issues regarding the mapping and signage needing improvement.

Jacqui Wheeler explained that she would contact parish councils for their views and then take this forward.

Trisha Mentzel raised that there was another byway that horses used called Uncle's Lane (part of the Knowl Hill Bridleway) which went from Shurlock Row to Spring Lane. After visiting the byway with Sharon Wootten, Public Rights of Way Officer, Trisha Mentzel explained the Borough agreed that the land required some work, though it also requested some financial support.

Trisha Mentzel then explained that she asked the British Horising Society (BHS) if they could provide some funding towards some maintenance works at Bridleway through one of their Ride Out Funds. She then stated that BHS agreed to forward £4,000 to the cost out of a total cost of £10,000. The Borough would also contribute to some of the costs.

Trisha Mentzel then explained the BHS asked if there was any possibility £1,000 being raised for other pathway users, such as cyclists and walkers. She stated that she would ask for £500 from the committee and then asked if there were any multi-user groups who might be able to contribute to the remaining £500.

The Chairman was uncertain and cautious about requesting funding from other group due to uncertainty on whether the groups had sources of funding as well as groups making their own requests for funding. He suggested that requests for funding should be made to the Borough.

Councillor Hunt asked about the proposition on how to make Uncles Lane suitable. Trisha Mentzel replied that it would likely involve filling deeper areas with road scalplings or crushed concrete, while laying membrane in deeper areas. Councillor Hunt replied that she had some issues with this as parts of Waltham St. Lawrence (near Uncles Lane) were in the flood zone. She then asked if this would require planning permission, adding this would need further review outside of the meeting.

The Chairman was uncertain if planning was required for placing crushed concrete, though speculated that this would be reviewed before being implemented.

Councillor Sharpe informed that Windsor Great Park had a model for multi-user groups whereby horse-riders, walkers and cyclists were designated separate areas to prevent conflict between the groups. He said that allowing multi-user access on public land would reduce the space for other users, and therefore argued that this would require caution.

The LAF noted the update.

6 **Accessibility Working Group - Walks For All Project**

Lisa Hughes explained that she and Steve Gillions had some brief training as administrators on the RBWM Together website, though believed the training was not great. She hoped that she, Jacqui Wheeler, Steve Gillions and Rosie Street would meet up to figure out the system architecture in order to work out how to upload the content.

The LAF noted the update.

A) CYCLING GROUPS UPDATES

Susy Shearer reported that Windsor Cycle Hub (WCH) continued to run its weekly activities on Saturdays (such as free repair sessions) and a series of Led (“Guided”) Rides to help build rider confidence, skill and familiarity with different environments around the Borough as well as good social and community networks.

Susy Shearer also reported that training had been provided by Maidenhead Cycle Hub (MCH) mechanics enabling WCH mechanics to work towards national standard levels. Between August and November 2022, WCH ran 3 “Dr Bike” free repair sessions, funded by CyclingUK as part of their “Big Bike Revival” programme to increase awareness and use of cycling throughout the country. These took place in Clewer, Eton Wick and Old Windsor respectively and the Hub was planning to run another series of sessions in 2023.

WCH would continue to provide mechanic training for sixth form students at The Green Room School which shares a base with the cycle hub.

A recent grant from The Prince Philip Trust Fund would make it possible for WCH to develop a new “mobile workshop” to provide a flexible resource for local areas and groups who did not currently have access to such a facility, such as Sawyers Close in Dedworth.

With representatives from the Disability and Inclusion Forum and WAMACT (Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead Active Travel), WCH were invited to participate in a site meeting and contribute comment in respect of Stovell Road/Barry Avenue cycling and walking infrastructure in Windsor, an initial project for the LCWIP.

Lisa Hughes asked if the ‘Led Rides’ were inclusive for people with ‘non-standard cycles’. Susy Shearer replied that this was an important aspect which WCH hoped to develop. She also accepted Lisa Hughes suggestion of visiting the ‘Led Rides’.

Martin Richardson commented that there was a barrier which was recently reinstalled on the bridleway from Eton Wick to the Jubilee River which prevented cyclists from travelling through. Jacqui Wheeler replied that this was a horse stile which had been vandalised and required reinstating. She added that the K-barrier alongside this horse stile was designed to be adjustable to allow as many models of bicycle through as possible while still preventing motorbikes. It was acknowledged however that K-barriers were not ideal for bicycles and pushchairs. She stated that she could look into this.

Martin Richardson then raised that there was some consultation which would change a zebra crossing to a pelican crossing. He believed this downgraded the priority of pedestrians. The Chairman responded that this may be the responsibility of the Highways Department rather than the Rights of Way Team.

The LAF noted the update.

(Councillor Haseler left the meeting at 19:32)

7 **Windsor Great Park Access**

Steve Gillions explained that Windsor Great Park Access was part of the

national initiative to increase public access. He asked if the LAF for any comments based on the item in the report, adding that he was happy to have comments outside of the meeting.

The Chairman explained that the LAF had sought to encourage the Crown Estates to forward a representative to attend LAF meetings over the last few years so that there was a clearer understanding of their constraints, to which LAF had so far been unsuccessful. Despite this, he stated that LAF would continue trying to acquire a representative from the Crown Estates. Steve Gillions replied that there was no urgency over this, but LAF's support would be appreciated.

Susy Shearer asked for examples of the ownership of SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces), namely how many and who they were. Steve Gillions replied that it was complicated, adding that he speculated that some were owned by local authorities as well as trade-offs in SANGs taking place whereby individuals would buy the sites and then sell them to developers to offset the development costs. He also stated that Susy Shearer's underlying point was correct where the landowners' agreement was required to allow public access.

Martin Richardson asked if the areas which were being reviewed for the Open Access included parts of the park which closed after dark. Steve Gillions replied that he was uncertain, but he informed that it did not cover the Great Park area around Saville Garden.

The LAF noted the update.

8 LCWIP/ROWIP crossovers and update

Jacqui Wheeler informed that the item was about the consultations and site visits which took place over the summer 2022 after the adoption of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) by the Borough. She explained that Stovell Road and Barry Avenue Walking and Cycling Improvement Scheme had gathered views and comments from cyclists and pedestrians (including disabled pedestrians).

Jacqui Wheeler then explained that the Transport Team were considering the proposal of creating a pocket park style space in a section near Stovall Road; and were in the process of drawing up preliminary designs with the Project Centre, the RBWM Landscape Team and Berkshire College of Agriculture.

She asked the LAF to email any comments to either her or the Transport Team regarding this.

Jacqui Wheeler then moved on by explaining a site visit and discussion about improvements on the Maidenhead Town Centre, which was held on 3rd October 2022 and was attended by some LAF members.

Jacqui Wheeler then explained that a funding stream had been established for Sustrans called Paths for Everyone. Sustrans had also considered conducting a trial of removing barriers across the Jubilee River in Buckinghamshire.

Jacqui Wheeler then moved onto the crossover from the LCWIP consultations which included suggestions which did not go under the LCWIP but were more Rights-of-Way Improvement. Parish Councils also gave some suggestions which would be looked into on whether they could be implemented.

Councillor Sharpe raised that there was an emerging redevelopment of Ascot High Street and said that it would be useful if the LAF looked at the plans for this development to ensure they were suitable for all types of people (e.g., accessible for disabled people). He requested for this to be looked into by Jacqui Wheeler. The Chairman agreed.

The LAF noted the update.

9 Milestones Statement Update

Jacqui Wheeler explained that the report was to update the LAF on progress with the 'Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan' for 2022/23 as well as a request for the ongoing suggestions mentioned in the report. In addition, the report was to also provide an update on volunteering activity in 2022.

Jacqui Wheeler first explained the work which had been done by Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) students and Conservation Volunteers, such as handrail repairs in Braywick and surface improvement works in Cox Green. However, she added that further works with the Conservation Volunteers could not be planned until the approval of a RBWM Grant, submitted in September 2022. In addition, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Conservation Volunteers to attract volunteers and paid supervisors.

Jacqui Wheeler also stated that the targets for the various categories in the Milestone Statement were nearly achieved in spite of limited resources.

Councillor Hunt asked if young offenders were used for volunteering work. Jacqui Wheeler replied that Reparations schemes from the Youth Offending Team had been utilised a few times to do projects, such as removing graffiti and repainting picnic benches at Oaken Grove Park. She added that she was working to build relations with the Youth Offending Team so that their Reparations schemes could be used again.

Councillor Sharpe asked what the state of footpaths had to be before they were repaired or upgraded, adding that a footpath in Ascot was in a worse condition compared to the ones which were being repaired. Jacqui Wheeler replied that responses were reactive based on reports or complaints on footpaths needing repairs due to limited resources. She also stated that if a footpath required some work, she was happy to investigate the path.

Ian Harvey asked if the Parish Paths Initiative still existed. Jacqui Wheeler replied that she believed it did, though she added that she would have to investigate if there had been any projects which had been forwarded. She also explained that all Parish Councils were regularly consulted on the Milestones Statement at the beginning of each year. Through this, Parish Councils were able to provide suggestions for improvements in their areas.

Ian Harvey then asked if he could contact Jacqui Wheeler regarding outstanding issues with some local footpaths in Cox Green. Jacqui Wheeler replied that she would be fine with this.

The LAF noted the update.

10 Millennium Walk

The Chairman read a letter from Theresa May, MP for Maidenhead, who expressed her support for the Millennium Walk waymarking initiative by Maidenhead Civic Society and requested for the LAF to review the proposal

that the Millennium Walk be waymarked like other paths. The Chairman then stated that it seemed to make sense that there should be signage around the walk like any other pathways.

Susy Shearer commented that she was supportive of the initiative, stating that it would also serve as an excellent paradigm to use and as a reference for other future projects.

Steve Gillions explained the next steps if the recommendation in the report was approved by the LAF. Firstly, a full survey of the Millennium Walk would be conducted, then the costs would be worked out as well as what needed to be done. He stated that he was confident that The Ramblers and the Civic Society would make contributions to those costs. He added that he had talked with Berkshire College of Agriculture because the section of the Millennium Walk which crossed into their land was a permitted pathway rather than public right-of-way.

The Chairman explained that the next step was for the LAF to decide whether they support the recommendation of waymarking the Millennium Walk. He then explained that the request could then be forwarded to the rights of way team for discussion.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED: The LAF to support the principle of adding waymarker signs across the Millennium Walk.

The Chairman informed that he would reply to Theresa May to notify her that LAF had debated and supported the waymarking of the Millennium Walk.

The LAF noted the update.

11 Planning Consultations

Jacqui Wheeler informed the LAF that the planning site allocated as AL24, land adjacent to Woodlands Park Road, was being worked on. She added that the stakeholder master plan document was available to view on the Berkeley Homes website, and that consultations had taken place with a community liaison group and the wider community in Cox Green. She also offered to circulate the information to LAF members so they could make comments. Jacqui Wheeler also informed that the stakeholder master plan would be going to cabinet for approval. She asked if the LAF had any comments.

The Chairman asked if she had already circulated the stakeholder master plan; to which Jacqui Wheeler responded that she had but the latest version would be an updated version with some minor changes.

The LAF noted the update.

12 Horizon Scanning - Colne Valley Regional Park connections with RBWM?, LAF Annual Report, WCHAR Assessment consultation re: improvements to Bisham Roundabout on A404

Jacqui Wheeler stated that she added Colne Valley Regional Park connections with RBWM, which recently held a meeting discussing the work they had done under the funding they received, in case LAF members wanted to look into this.

Jacqui Wheeler then mentioned that the LAF annual report for 2021-22 needed to be drafted, as this had not been done yet.

Jacqui Wheeler then explained that she was approached by the Road Safety

Team from Mott MacDonald who were doing work for National Highways to redesign and make improvements to the Bisham roundabout at the A404, adding that the A404 severed walking, horse riding and cyclist routes. She stated she would forward details of the consultation with Mott MacDonald Road Safety Team when available.

Jacqui Wheeler then informed that the rights of way improvement plan consultation from Reading Borough Council was received. She stated that she would forward this to LAF members for them to make comments on the rights of way improvement plan, with the deadline being 19th February 2023.

The LAF noted the update.

13 **Date of the Next Meeting: TBC June/July 2023**

The LAF noted that future LAF meetings in 2023 would be made available in new year.

The meeting, which started at 6:32pm, ended at 8:21pm.