

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

20 June 2023

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Interest Area
Geoff Priest	Hurley Parish Council
Alan Keene	Bisham Parish Council
Steve Gillions	User - Walker
Claire Taylor	User – Cyclist and Biodiveristy
Susy Shearer	User - Cyclist
Trisha Mentzel	User – Horse Rider
Mark Howard	Cookham Parish Council
Ian Harvey	Cox Green Parish Council
Jacqui Wheeler	RBWM – LAF Secretary
Kirsty Hunt	RBWM – Democratic Services

Observers

Anne Keene
Councillor Douglas

Apologies

Lisa Hughes
James Copas
Martin Richardson
Ceri Richardson

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LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
20 June 2023
MINUTES**

ACTION

1 Nomination and election of Chair and Vice-Chair

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that Geoff Priest be appointed Chair of the Local Access Forum for the municipal year 2023-25.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that Lisa Hughes be appointed Vice-Chair of the Local Access Forum for the municipal year 2023-25.

2 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

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

Apologies for absence were received from James Copas, Councillor Benta Hickley, Lisa Hughes, Ceri Richardson and Martin Richardson.

A) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

B) APPROVAL OF MINUTES - 6TH DECEMBER 2022

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2022 were approved as a true record, provided the following amendments were made:

- In Item 3 - Deerswood Meadow, "While..." be deleted from the second to last paragraph
- In Item 4 - Cycling Groups updates, it was amended from 'achieve' to 'work towards'
- In Item 4 – Cycling Groups updates, the final paragraph be amended to delete 'in' and change 'she' to 'WCH'
- In Item 6 - LCWIP / ROWIP, the spelling of 'Stovall' be corrected to 'Stovell'

3 Matters arising from last meeting

Jacqui Wheeler, Parks and Countryside Access Officer, listed the updates on matters arising from the last meeting as set out on pages 15 – 22 of the agenda pack.

1.2 Matters arising regarding LAF Training: Claire Taylor had attended the British Horse Society training level 1 for Access and Rights of Way. Claire Taylor reflected that the training had identified some gaps in knowledge, and this had been shared with Windsor Cycle Hub so had been a useful tool. Jacqui Wheeler advised that there were two further dates when the Introduction to equestrian access & rights of way (England & Wales) training was being run: Sunday 16 July @ 9.30am and Sunday 17 September @ 9.30am. Members were asked to contact her if they wanted to attend either option.

13.1 Matters arising regarding LAF Chairs meeting: Jacqui Wheeler would circulate notes from the regional LAF Chairs meeting that was held on 14 June 2023. The regional meeting currently covered LAF from across Berkshire, Surrey, Hampshire and Oxfordshire. It was reported by the Chair that the group was keen to extend representation across Kent, Sussex and into one or two of London Boroughs. This was well represented and was working well. The LAF Chairs meeting had been seeking engagement from Natural England and DEFRA across all LAFs in the area. This had been taken to the ADEPT meeting across the South East region and in March an email was received

from Natural England to engage with the LAF which was shared at page 18 of the agenda pack. A new person was in post who looking at supporting LAFs and was setting up a dedicated SharePoint site to facilitate communications between all LAFs and Natural England. Jacqui Wheeler advised that there had been no further contact since then. Jacqui Wheeler would be following this up on behalf of the LAF Chairs meeting.

5.1 Windsor Great Park Access: Steve Gillions advised the meeting that he had a meeting scheduled with the Deputy Head Ranger of the Park at the end of the month to discuss the possibility of open access and inviting them to consider which areas may be appropriate. He explained that the areas they would be focusing upon would be the areas that were open already. This would be an opportunity for them to promote open access this although it would not be a change on the ground and could be withdrawn in the future. He would update LAF members before the next scheduled meeting via email.

6.1 LCWIP/ROWIP crossovers and update: The request had come from Councillor Sharpe regarding the emerging ascot development engagement. Jacqui Wheeler advised the meeting that the Windsor and Maidenhead Infrastructure delivery team had provided the update as set out on page 16 of the agenda pack. The LAF confirmed that they would like her to follow this up.

4 Membership Update

Jacqui Wheeler advised the meeting that following the recent election Councillors would be appointed to LAF at the Cabinet meeting on 29 June 2023. It was discussed that Mark Howard was now a borough Councillor and if he continued to be a member there would be four borough councillors attending the LAF.

Councillor Howard explained that he was not being nominated to LAF as the borough member and would like to continue attending as the parish council representative as long as that was appropriate and another representative from Cookham would attend if required.

The Chair reflected that people could attend and sit on the LAF as an individual, he had experience of people continuing after their original role had changed as long as attendees were adding value. Advice would be sought from Democratic Services to clarify the situation.

Jacqui Wheeler added that there were two Parish Councillors who were no longer elected representatives e.g. Sue Nichols from Wraysbury Parish Council and Ceri Richardson from Sunninghill and Ascot Parish Council. She explained that they were no longer Parish Councillors and Jacqui Wheeler clarified that the individual was the representative and not the organisation. She would contact each member to confirm how they wanted to proceed.

5 Multi-User Subgroup

Trisha Mentzel followed up that the work being undertaken at Uncle's Lane (part of the Knowl Hill Bridleway) had now been completed and it was already well used. She had walked the route and initially had some concerns as there were some large stones on the edges of the Lane but she believed these would bed down over time and would be a better surface for walkers and cyclists. The ditches had also been cleared out which would resolve previous drainage issues. They had achieved all the funding that was required for the work.

Trisha Mentzel raised there was another track that a number of riders had been using which was not on the definitive map. It was located from Henley Road to

Dungrove Hill Lane which went through Woodlands Trust land. She described it as a wide path and easily accessible but not a marked or defined route but it was a very good circular route. She understood that the Woodlands Trust did not want horses to go through there. She noted that Google maps indicated that RBWM owned the land and Woodlands Trust managed it but she was unsure if that was accurate. She concluded that she had enquired with Land Registry to confirm ownership information to discussions to allow access.

Through discussion it was confirmed that it was a track off Dungrove Hill Lane shown as footpath 19 and Alan Keene explained that it was called Michael's Path and previous attempts had been made to make it accessible as it had been used for farm vehicles. He reflected that it was an interesting initiative to propose multi-user access through the woodland past the war memorial.

Alan and Annie Keene offered to join Trisha Mentzel in undertaking further research as they knew the area well but noted a slight complication that the western end of Michael's Path came to a stop where the A404 had been built. He explained that it was joined to the Henley Road by another path which was owned by another landowner.

Trisha Mentzel confirmed that Sharon Wootten had agreed to look into the site. Jacqui Wheeler would follow this up with Sharon as it would be an interesting project to follow that up with the Woodlands Trust.

Trisha Mentzel reported that a horserider at Dorney, Eton Wick had said one of the bridleway path on the south side of the Jubilee had been flooded for some time. It was queried who was responsible and whether there was anything that could be done.

Claire Taylor advised the meeting that the footpath was managed by Slough Borough Council. The enhanced water course was blocked by weed growth around Eton Wick. As the fishing season opened on 15 June the volunteers, Eton Wick Waterways Group were working on this, and Eton Wick College had commissioned activities that started yesterday. She anticipated that water levels around the whole area would drop within the next week. She was aware that the new RBWM councillors were very active on this issue and discussions were ongoing with relevant councils to raise the level of the footpath. She added that they were in discussions with the Environment Agency to improve this area as well.

Councillor Howard commented that access into the rowing area at Dorney from riverbank appeared to be sealed and that this was significantly increasing traffic during competition time with people driving a long way around to enter, especially from Maidenhead. He proposed that if pedestrian and cycling access from the riverside was opened that would take a reasonable amount of people off the roads.

Councillor Howard commented that Cookham Parish Council was very supportive of creating circular routes for horses and would help by contacting landowners if they could help to link up small parts of the network.

Claire Taylor responded, in relation to access to Dorney Lake, that the site was private property and Eton College had taken the decision for the safety of events to close access between April to September.

Councillor Howard understood the rationale but observed that given the level of security at such event days wondered whether having two people stationed at that entrance would be proportionate to mitigate the additional traffic and travel

required.

Claire Taylor commented that attendees on events days were likely to be bring boats and therefore travelling by road which caused congestion at the junction on Eton Wick road.

Councillor Howard and Claire Taylor agreed that there was potential to the proposal to improve things for local residents, maintaining security, car parking and reducing congestion.

Jacqui Wheeler commented that this location was within Buckinghamshire. The Local Access Forum requested that the Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum be contacted to request this change as it would improve local transport on the Buckinghamshire side as well as encourage people travelling from Marlow and Maidenhead to walk to events. The Chair asked for details to be shared with him and he would write to the Buckinghamshire LAF Chair to request their support.

6 Accessibility Working Group

Steve Gillions updated the meeting that Lisa Hughes had developed her knowledge about the technology and was ready to use that. He was focused on writing up the walk route information.

He advised that they had originally put Runnymede on the list of areas to cover, despite being outside of the borough, he observed it was an ideal landscape for mobility issues. He advised that the National Trust were installing all ability paths and a circular walk was being installed. He was contacting them to use their walks to demonstrate different levels of walks along the same route. Jacqui Wheeler advised she had a number of contacts within the National Trust to help him identify who produced the maps.

7 Cycling Groups Updates

Susy Shearer referred to the report that had been prepared for the agenda pack and reiterated the aim of Windsor Cycle Hub (WCH) was to help raise awareness of cycling for everyone throughout the Windsor community through activities to encourage residents and visitors into, or back into cycling. She explained that WCH worked closely with representatives from Windsor Ascot Maidenhead Active Travel group and the RBWM Disability and Inclusion Forum on the project as part of the Borough's emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan involving improvements to existing cycling and walking infrastructure. All three groups attended a site visit and their comments were incorporated into the final scheme. She noted that this was on the verge of being finished although there was a small amount of signage to be installed. She added that WCH worked closely with the Maidenhead Cycle Hub and both hubs had been successful in promoting active travel. WCH were looking forward to working with colleagues from the British Horse Society at the event on 15 July at the Great Park.

8 Training

Trisha Mentzel confirmed she had nothing to add to what had been raised as part of matters arising.

9 Informal Consultation for diversion of Maidenhead FP19

Jacqui Wheeler referred members of the Forum to pages 27 to 44 of the agenda pack which was the pre-order informal consultation on the proposed footpath diversion application for Maidenhead Footpath 19.

It was explained that Maidenhead Footpath 19 runs from North Town Moor in

Maidenhead through to Widbrook Common and is part of the Green Way East. The application form had been received from Summerleaze, the landowner of the path, the associated map and path surface specification were provided.

The map showed the existing route as a dashed green line heading north crossing across Footpath 17 and northwards running alongside existing football pitches. The existing route was also a permissive cycleway. It was proposed that the path would be diverted to the dashed red line as shown on the map. It was clarified that the intention was to allow the landowner to extend the size of the existing football pitches so that adults could use the facilities. Opinions were being sought from all the informal consultees including the East Berks Ramblers and the Maidenhead Civic Society, some other parish councils as well as the National Trust.

Steve Gillions advised the meeting that this had been discussed by the East Berkshire Ramblers and they had not been happy with the original proposal however felt the revised proposal, as set out here, worked well.

AGREED: The LAF supported the recommendations of the changes.

In response to Ian Harvey's enquiry, it was confirmed that there was a written correspondence confirming that the proposed diverted path would be 3m wide rather than 2.5m as in the application.

10 Draft LAF Annual Report

Jacqui Wheeler presented the draft RBWM Local Access Forum Annual Review 2021-22 for comments by members. She explained it contained detail of what had happened over the period and once approved this would be published on the borough's website and a copy to Natural England.

The Chair commented that the report fully explained what the LAF had done and what they continued to want to do.

AGREED: The LAF approved the report.

11 Suggestions for summer site visit

The Chair asked members for suggestions of where the LAF could go for a site visit and the following were raised:

- a return trip to Battle Common would be interesting once the cattle returned to site
- Ockwells was a potential site as further development had been discussed there
- a visit to Braywick Nature Centre as they had been doing more with schools then LAF could share information about what they had been doing
- Ascot High Street initiative was an interesting proposal and Jacqui Wheeler would enquire on suitable timing
- Copas Family had invited the LAF to attend the area they had created as a nature reserve, this could be discussed further with James Copas in November
- potential of large developments in Cookham, specifically AL37, proposal was for the LAF to attend to ensure that the site was accessible to the public right of way network and connect into schools

The Chair advised that when the first Local Plan was drafted the LAF went through and put all recommendations relevant to each of the packages. These were given to Planning and the intention was that they would be submitted to

any developer as part of the process of applying for the packages. Councillor Howard advised that the road across the front of the site was the obvious route to school but there was a network of footpaths that would offer a better leisure amenity and an off-road option for the route to school. He advised that the developers, Bellway, had indicated that a detailed planning application would be made at the end of the month. Jacqui Wheeler confirmed she would check further details with colleagues in Planning.

12 Horizon Scanning - Update for Local Nature Recovery Strategy; Local Transport Plan Update and Cycle Training

Jacqui Wheeler led the discussion looking to future items for the LAF to discuss:

- Rosie Street, Local Nature Recovery Strategy Officer was working with other Berkshire authorities on the strategy and would be happy to attend November's meeting to provide an update.
- The Local Transport Plan has had its first consultation on the proposed vision and themes and would be an engagement that the LAF could consider.
- There was cycle training being provided on the Borough Website under Transport and Streets, Cycle Skills and training. She explained that it was not just Bikeability for children but confidence sessions for adults were being offered. Various dates were available. Maidenhead bike maintenance workshop classes were also available. Jacqui Wheeler would circulate the link.

13 Any Other Business

Alan Keene asked whether the LAF had any further information on the closure of the footbridge over the Thames at Temple. Bisham Parish Council had a report last night that the Environment Agency advised that the crossing may never be reopened and may be demolished which was causing concern to local residents. Jacqui Wheeler advised that her colleague was having conversations with the Thames Path Partnership which the Environment Agency were part of. She noted that it was the Environment Agency's structure and unfortunately it was one of those wooden span bridges that was coming to end of life. Jacqui Wheeler confirmed she would request an update as it was part of the Thames Path and they did not want it to be closed.

Councillor Howard suggested that if the LAF was reaching out to the Environment Agency asked if the closure of Locke Island could be raised. This was the missing link between two public footpaths and had been closed since 2019. It was understood that this was a health and safety concern and Jacqui Wheeler would endeavour to request an update on the situation.

The meeting, which started at 6.30 pm, ended at 7.35 pm.