

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

1 November 2017

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Interest area
Councillor Maureen Hunt	RBWM Councillor
Councillor Malcolm Beer	RBWM Councillor
Alan Keene	Bisham Parish Council
Fiona Hewer	Cookham Parish Council
Lisa Hughes	Disabled users
Christine Gadd	Cycling and walking
Steve Gillions	Walking, East Berkshire Ramblers
Gordon Marrs	Walking, East Berkshire Ramblers
Ian Wilson	The National Trust
Geoff Priest	Vice Chair in the Chair, Hurley Parish Council
Andrew Fletcher	Local Access Forum Secretary
Ambika Chouhan	Incoming LAF Secretary
Andy Carswell	Clerk

OBSERVERS

Annie Keene

APOLOGIES

Name

Katie Sarsfield

Sara Church

Peter Thorn

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LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
1 November 2017
MINUTES

ACTION

1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

The Vice Chairman, **Geoff Priest**, welcomed everyone to the **thirty-seventh** meeting of the Local Access Forum. He explained that **Peter Thorn** was not well enough to attend and that he would be chairing the meeting instead. **Geoff Priest** asked everyone present to introduce themselves. He explained that the meeting was being recorded and would be uploaded to the RBWM website.

Apologies for absence were received from **Sara Church**, **Katie Sarsfield** and **Peter Thorn**.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Forum approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2017.

Matters arising from last meeting

A draft letter to be sent to the Secretary of State for the Environment, asking for the success of Countryside Stewardship schemes and other financial incentives to be taken into consideration when considering policies following the withdrawal from the

EU, was circulated amongst members by **Andrew Fletcher**. The Forum approved the letter, subject to a few typos being corrected.

2 Members' Update

Members had nothing to update.

3 Membership and Staff Update

Andrew Fletcher introduced **Ambika Chouhan**, who would be taking over secretarial responsibilities for the Forum following the meeting, and would become the main point of contact. **Andrew Fletcher** explained that he would be taking on a new role at RBWM that included greater responsibility for highways enforcement, although he would continue to assist **Ambika Chouhan**. The Forum was also informed that the regular Panel clerk, **Tanya Leftwich**, had recently left RBWM to take up a new role at Wycombe District Council.

Andrew Fletcher informed the Forum that **John Foulger** had resigned. **Andrew Fletcher** stated that he would send him a letter of thanks for his years of service, explaining that he had been a member of the Forum since its inception in 2003.

4 National Trust Public Rights of Way Plan

Ian Wilson introduced the item and explained that the an Access and Public Access Rights of Way Management Plan was being developed by the National Trust for the Maidenhead and Cookham Commons. **Ian Wilson** explained that the Management Plan would tie in with the National Trust's values and behaviours and allow the National Trust to be more proactive regarding the maintenance of rights of way if a Management Plan was clearly defined. **Ian Wilson** informed the Forum that creating a Management Plan was usually the job of a Local Authority; however the Management Plan he was referring to had

been created in partnership between the National Trust and the Royal Borough to enable upgrading of pathways and bridleways.

During his presentation to the Forum, **Ian Wilson** explained the issues that were relevant to each section of the Maidenhead and Cookham Commons; for example poor conditions of pathways, lack of waymarkers, and conflict between, for example, dog walkers and horse riders. **Ian Wilson** gave the example of there only being one waymarker at the Big Thicket. He stated that the largest number of complaints received related to conflict between dog walkers and horse riders at Pinkneys Green, and he requested help from Forum members for ideas on improvements that could be made in this area. The best solution that had been put forward was better engagement and improved signage in the area.

Ian Wilson explained that one of the car parks at Winter Hill had had to be closed due to a large amount of antisocial behaviour. He stated that the National Trust had been reluctant to do this, but since the closure the incidents of antisocial behaviour had decreased.

Ian Wilson told the Forum that plans had been put forward to link Widbrook Common to the Thames Path, which had the full support of the National Trust.

Fiona Hewer congratulated the National Trust for their work on making improvements to include a butterfly park at the Maidenhead Thicket, which had seen more than 20 different species of butterfly being sighted. **Andrew Fletcher** said that National Trust had done a lot of excellent work to improve the permissive bridleways. He said he would arrange for Sharon Wootten to contact **Ian Wilson** regarding making bridleways more suitable for horse riders, as she had previously been involved in a project of this nature.

The Forum was told that a target had been set to produce a series of promotional leaflets for the pathways and bridleways around the Maidenhead and Cookham Commons.

Regarding the Winter Hill car park, **Cllr Beer** asked if it would be possible to install a barrier across it with entry for key card holders. **Andrew Fletcher** said an extension to the lower car park was being considered, which would negate the need for a barrier. However the proposal put forward by **Cllr Beer** would also be taken into consideration.

5 **Planning Position Statements**

Andrew Fletcher introduced the item and explained that the idea for the Planning Position Statements was not to review the rationale for specific development sites being chosen, but to make recommendations of what access requirements would be needed. A Working Group had been set up on behalf of the Forum and had met three times.

Andrew Fletcher explained that the PPS would be given to developers at the pre-application stage, in order to make it easier for a developer to incorporate the recommended access requirements into their application. It was explained that it was harder for a developer to make fundamental changes to an application once it had passed the pre-application stage. **Andrew Fletcher** explained that, subject to approval, the PPS would be sent to the Planning and Highways Team as guidance to be formally adopted.

Regarding the HA22 site on page 70 of the agenda, **Cllr Hunt** stated that the Neighbourhood Plan group in The Walthams had requested that the land be

classified as Open Space; however it had been designated as Open Countryside in the draft Borough Local Plan. **Andrew Fletcher** stated that the Forum Working Group raised the point that any development on the site would lead to a loss of accessible countryside and that compensatory land would need to be sought by any developer looking to use the site. Regarding why the site had been included in the draft Borough Local Plan, **Andrew Fletcher** said he was unsure why it was included and that he would seek clarification and more details from Victoria Gibson.

It was noted that the supporting information included within the agenda was a draft, as this was what was available when the agenda was published. Members agreed in principle to approving the PPS document. It was agreed that **Andy Carswell** would circulate the revised document to members via email for them to approve.

❖ **Action (AC): To circulate the revised document for approval.**

6 Progress Towards Existing Public Rights of Way Targets

Andrew Fletcher stated that the targets for 2018 would be set in January or February following a consultation with the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel. He provided the Forum with an update on the key progress towards meeting 2017's targets, and outlined them as follows:

- 29 issues had been closed since April 2017.
- There were nine outstanding issues to be resolved, compared to 18 at this stage last year. One of these issues would be settled within the next 14 days.
- One new pathway, leading from Ascot High Street to the station, had been created and proved popular with users. Extra funding had been obtained to install LED lighting along the path.
- The number of stiles had been reduced; however the process of removing them was not simple and required the permission of the landowner. Often the landowner would not want them removed as they, for example, prevented motorcycle access to a particular site.
- 99 per cent of paths were easy to use, ahead of the target of 95 per cent.
- Three out of the ten targeted surface or clearance jobs had been completed.
- Four out of the five targeted bridge repair or replacement jobs had been completed.
- Three access improvements had been carried out, with the target being 15.
- A target for creating one new pathway had been set. Plans were in place for two to be created by the end of the year.
- There was a target to create one new piece of promotional material and one Parish leaflet; currently none had been created.

Andrew Fletcher stated that in terms of meeting targets the Royal Borough was exceptional, explaining that some councils have a backlog of cases going back some years.

❖ **Action (AF): To send a copy of the presentation with the statistics to Forum members.**

❖ **Action (AF): To update the statistics when the consultation on targets for 2018 takes place**

Cllr Beer asked how many of the Parishes had already had leaflets created.

Andrew Fletcher said he thought most of them had but would clarify.

❖ **Action (AF): To confirm which Parishes have a Footpath Leaflet.**

Ian Wilson asked for confirmation of the locations of the two new footpaths. **Andrew Fletcher** said he would seek confirmation.

❖ **Action (AF): To confirm the locations of the two new footpaths.**

7 **LAF Monitoring Items**

Andrew Fletcher circulated a document to members outlining the status of projects that were being monitored by the Forum.

Eton-Dorney Multi User Route

Andrew Fletcher explained that this project was focusing on improvements to make it possible for horse riders to ride from between Eton and Taplow and had been developed in conjunction with Slough Borough Council and Buckinghamshire County Council. However it could not be taken any further as the Environment Agency, as landowner on a particular section, had raised questions about who would take responsibility for liability in the event of a user being injured. The land in question fell under Buckinghamshire County Council's control but they were not willing to accept the liability, meaning that the project could no longer progress.

Cllr Beer asked if there was sufficient headroom for horse riders along the entirety of the route. **Andrew Fletcher** explained that where there were problems, blocks were put in place instructing riders to dismount and walk with their horses.

Forlease Road to Green Lane

Andrew Fletcher explained that this was intended to run underneath the Stafferton Link as part of new landscaping works being carried out. It was explained that RBWM owns the land in question so there were no legal obstacles to overcome. It was anticipated that the project would be completed next year.

Deregulation Bill

There were no updates to inform the Forum about.

Volunteer works

Andrew Fletcher explained that 21 volunteer task days had been carried out since June as part of the Ways Into Work programme; 11 had been arranged with the Berkshire College of Agriculture and one with the Conservation Volunteers. A further task day with the Conservation Volunteers was scheduled for the day after the meeting.

M4 smart motorway

Andrew Fletcher explained that RBWM had requested changes to the height of the parapet fence at Marsh Lane bridge in order to improve safety for horse riders, even though it was outside of the Borough boundary. The maximum height allowed under the development restrictions in place was 1.5m, shorter than the 1.8m recommended for equestrian usage. However it had been

agreed that the bridge's foundations would be constructed in such a way that the fence height could be raised to 1.8m and not impact on the development restrictions.

8 Feedback from Meetings and Conferences

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting as **Peter Thorn** was not present and therefore not able to provide members with feedback from LAF Chairs' meetings.

9 Date of Next Meeting

Members were informed that the calendar of meetings for the forthcoming year had not yet been agreed, and that the dates of the next Forum meetings would be circulated as soon as possible.

The meeting, which started at 6.30 pm, ended at 8.02 pm.