

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum

Secretariat: Jacqui Wheeler, Parks and Countryside Access Officer
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St. Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF

Email: pro@rbwm.gov.uk

Local access forums | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (rbwm.gov.uk)

RBWM Local Access Forum

The RBWM Local Access Forum, a statutory body set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to seek consensus across its membership of different user types, land management and disability access to provide advice to organisations in this area about improvements for “active travel” (walking, cycling and horse riding ie; non-motorised modes).

Active Travel Consultation submission:

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum (LAF) supports the need for RBWM to produce a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Representing all the vulnerable road user groups, ie. pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and horse-carriage drivers, the LAF considers that the LCWIP must clearly state the intention that equestrian needs are included in the network planning process. (Ref: LCWIP Technical Guidance for LAs 2017)

The LAF considers that the LCWIP needs to include the principle of “inclusive access” as a core foundation stone so that any new schemes take into account the needs of people with disabilities/mobility issues.

Furthermore, the LAF feels that continual engagement with local user groups like the Windsor & Maidenhead Cycling Action Group and LAF itself along with Parish Councils and Town Forums in non-parished areas is essential to gain the local knowledge and passion required to achieve successful schemes. Rather than simply being a shopping list of ready-made schemes, the view is that these need to be backed up with underlying accessibility principles and standards suitable for all localities across the Borough.

The LAF would like to see schemes brought forward within the LCWIP for each parish as well as the unparished areas in the borough identifying missing links (to improve connectivity and cohesion in existing and new infrastructure) and creating new safer multi-use routes where possible; also working to educate all road users through campaigns aimed at both vulnerable road users to “**Share the Space**” and equally at drivers that they need to “Share the Space” too and **SLOW DOWN**. The LAF advocates that a general speed limit reduction policy is required on Quiet Lanes and at junctions and crossing points where this would be favourable to vulnerable road users.

The existing off-road network (Public rights of way / NCN / public open space / green routes) has so much potential for traffic-free multi-use routes as The Green Way which also links to the National Cycle Network and the Jubilee River from Maidenhead to Eton via Eton Wick and Dorney attest. This potential needs to be recognised, improvements explored within the LCWIP and connections made with the List of site-specific projects in the Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026.

The RBWM Local Access Forum formally requests to be directly engaged, along with the Windsor & Maidenhead Cycling Action Group and Disability & Inclusion Forum, in helping draft the LCWIP.

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LAF Working Groups –

Current working groups within the LAF membership are looking at the following themes: Multi-user routes, Accessibility, and Cycling through liaison with the Windsor & Maidenhead Cycling Action Group (incl Ascot and the Sunnings). The working groups have come together for two workshops this year in June and Sept to find common ground and identify proposals – as listed below in Appendix 1.

Accessibility Working Group (AWG)

This group was set up to advise on the accessibility (for people with disabilities) of popular walking routes and those with high amenity value within the borough. Recommendations from this working group were officially included within the objectives of the Milestone Statement and Public Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2020-21.

See **Appendix 2** for their submission to this Active Travel Consultation.

Multi-User Routes Working Group (Equestrian)

Over the last year and a half, the Multi-User (Equestrian) working group has been assessing the network across the borough to highlight the lack of safe horse-riding provision and suggest improvements.

Jesse Norman MP, Parliamentary Under –Secretary of State for Transport in House of Commons debate on Road Safety, 5 November 2018: stated: - **“We should be clear that the cycling and walking strategy may have that name but is absolutely targeted at vulnerable road users, including horse-riders.....** Horse riders are vulnerable road users—there is no doubt about that, and there never has been—and they have been included in the work we are doing. “

Unless horse riders/carriage drivers are specifically mentioned, then there is high risk of new routes being created on the fringes of urban areas, that do not include horse riding/carriage driving access. This opportunity should be taken to incorporate all vulnerable road users, not just walkers and cyclists. Existing bridleways can be multi-user routes and with some forethought to the design, there can be space and surfacing suitable or all. Existing highway verges need to be explored as potential horse margins sitting alongside shared use cycleways or creating a whole new multi-user route.

See **Appendix 3** for Reports from the Multi-User Routes Working Group which include improvements for walking, cycling and horse-riding routes across the borough.

Common themes identified between working groups

Purpose.

Optimise the walking and cycling network for all users, including those with different ability levels and to make some initial practical suggestions to upgrade to,

- A multiuser route
- Cyclist to equine use
- Walker to Cyclist use
- Improve walker and cycling access for users with disabilities.

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Principles

- The current network is comprehensive, but we should look to cover active management and development as well as maintenance. Targets for improvement should focus on:
- Safety issues, especially those caused by increased traffic volumes and speeds
- Linking/completing networks
- Joint use where appropriate and practicable, eg width, path surface and camber, signage, safety, seasonal impact on natural surfaces
- New/rerouted paths and connectivity arising from development
- Encourage engagement with Neighbouring boroughs to establish cross boundary routes

Issues

- Different user groups need to understand each other's issues and priorities and agree where we can most productively work together.
- Some improvements could be made outside of the PROW network e.g., better use of the highways margin.
- Tensions between potentially conflicting issues will need to be settled e.g. pedestrian and cycling access vs protecting wildlife and the environment
- Not everything will be possible at once: priorities will need to be agreed
- We need to avoid the risk of focussing on piecemeal individual improvements whilst not addressing longer term/underlying issues e.g., path specification.
- Other organisations e.g., Maidenhead Civic Society, other civic and neighbourhood plan groups, will have views.

APPENDIX 1 - Active Travel Consultation

Suggestions for Infrastructure Improvements for the LCWIP

- The promoted Bridleway circuits at Knowl Hill and Cookham provide useful multi-use provision but have been highlighted as needing review for safety reasons.
- Horse riding access on Ockwell's Park extension - Little Thriftwood (currently under consideration by RBWM Parks & Countryside Team)
- Ruscombe and Waltham St Lawrence cross boundary bridleway proposal – upgrade Walt FP9 to bridleway and work with Wokingham Borough Council to create safer multi-use route
- Windsor Bridleway 4 (The Willows Path) Dedworth Road to Ruddles Way – existing Bridleway a key N/S shared-use path: create E/W multi-use paths/routes linking to new development (AL21); safer crossings at Dedworth Rd, Maidenhead Rd, A308
- Ashley Hill Forest – potential for permissive multi-user route
- Cookham Cycleway Project – proposal to create circular cycleway around Cookham linking to school and local amenities.

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- Long Lane – reduce speed limit as narrow lane to improve safety for walkers, cyclists and horse riders – investigate possible additional width.
- Terry’s Lane – reduce speed limit to improve safety for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- Switchback Road North – suggested horse margin within highway verge adjacent to existing shared use cycleway – providing a safe off-road route between Cookham and Maidenhead.
- Improve safe links between Windsor Great Park (Blacknest Gate) and Chobham Common
- A308 Windsor Road from Monkey Island Lane to Ruddles Way roundabout – reduce speed limit / widen footway (shared use foot and cycle path).
- Green Way Corridor - create off-road riding routes on the land owned by Summerleaze
- Drift Road – reduce speed limit and provide horse margin to link bridleways and provide connections to the multi-user routes south towards the Binfield Bridleway circuit
- Bisham FP23 upgrade to multi-user route to allow safer horse-riding access to Maidenhead Thicket from BCA area.

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APPENDIX 2 - Active Travel Consultation

Submission from the Local Access Forum Accessibility Working Group

1. Background

1.1. The LAF Accessibility Working Group was established to produce recommendations aimed at improving access to and usage of the Royal Borough's Public Rights of Way network by people with disabilities. Our overall objective is to 'level up' accessibility. This *Walks for All* initiative, which is ongoing, involves

- producing generic and specific recommendations for the improvement of footpaths and access to them
- suggesting how footpath design standards and practice could be improved to increase accessibility
- surveying sections of the PROW network to identify those areas particularly suited to people with disabilities

Our intention is to design hard copy and on-line maps and publicity material to publicise accessible paths and encourage their use.

1.2. Our approach was to identify a small number of areas that we considered to have high potential for use by all. Each area had to be based on an accessible hub of parking and public transport and to contain a network of PROW's on which we could develop a range of walks to suit various levels of ability. Each area was to be surveyed to assess its potential. Any simple improvements that would improve access such as better path surfaces; surface levelling; improved seating were reported to the Royal Borough for action. We then prepared walk descriptions and sketch maps giving information of particular relevance to disabled users, such as parking facilities; public transport connections; seating and rest areas; toilet facilities; refreshment facilities.

1.3. The locations we are working on are

- Battlemead Common
- The Green Way
- Boulter's Lock and Ray Mill Island
- Cockmarsh
- Ockwells Park

The first three have been surveyed and draft maps produced.

2. Overall approach

2.1. We feel it fundamental to any programme for cycling and walking infrastructure improvement that it does not inadvertently exclude people on grounds of their ability. We also feel that the maximum benefit needs to be obtained from what is already in place and which has the potential to dramatically improve participation levels at relatively low cost.

2.2. We feel that a policy-led approach to developing a forward plan for improvement

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and enhancement to the PROW network, comprising as it does footpaths, bridleways and byways, will result in better use of resources; improved access for a wide range of users; and improved resilience within the network itself. Piecemeal projects alone will not be sufficient.

2.3. We understand that the Active Travel initiative is intended to contain improvements over the next ten years, covering the short, medium and long term. We believe that any successful and effective programme, if it is to be owned by those who respond to the consultation, needs to be based on a sound and transparent process that has regular and meaningful input from the public and end users.

3. Proposals

3.1. Since our interest is confined to the existing PROW network and any additional PROWs that may be added (although we expect these to be relatively few) do not seek significant capital funding but rather a number of annual ring-fenced budgets. We recommend that

- More locations are added to our existing schedule (Local Access Forum members to action in conjunction with the Disability & Inclusion Forum, special interest groups and ward councillors)
- That all PROWs be surveyed to assess the potential for minor works and improvements that would improve access by those with disabilities (extension of existing twice yearly path surveys)
- An annual programme of PROW improvements aimed specifically at disabled users should be introduced (ring fenced budget)
- That all new statutory and permissive rights of way (footways, footpaths, byways, bridleways and cycle tracks with a right of way on foot) should be required to allow inclusive access (include in scheme costing)
- That funding for appropriate surfacing and ‘user separation’ be identified before any proposals for shared paths are implemented
- That paper and on line maps for *Walks for All* as noted in 1.1 be commissioned and produced (ring fenced/project budget)

3.2. Discussions have already been held with the PROW team about footpath design and surface standards. These should be formally adopted.

3.3. Initiatives such as Active Travel tend to be iterative in nature, with suggestions from one area leading to further suggestions in others. The consultation document appears to be silent on the issue of further consultation. We would want assurance that there will be ongoing consultation and dialogue before any plans are finalised, with stakeholders and others having the opportunity to comment, add further input and contribute to the desired outcomes and their measurement.

Steve Gillions, Lisa Hughes

Local Access Forum Accessibility Working Group

September 2021

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APPENDIX 3 - Active Travel Consultation Multi-Use (Equestrian) Working Group March report presented at LAF June 2020

Key Findings

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.
Most incidents go unreported.
Increases in urbanisation and the related traffic, means that the Cookham and Knowl Hill routes are no longer the safe haven for equestrians that they were intended to be. The same goes for on-road linkages to bridleways across the Borough.
Only 22% of PROW in the Borough are accessible for equestrians.
Equestrians do not use roads by choice, they would prefer local safe off-road riding.
Transporting horses to off-road facilities that offer permits, such as Windsor Great Park and BCA, or further afield to more rural locations, is not possible for 35% who do not have transport and not feasible, in terms of time and effort to do so on a regular basis, for the remaining 65%.

Recommendations

Education programme for vehicles, cyclists, dog owners and riders, so that how we can harmoniously share multi-use access. This could include signage in known hotspots. Licencing or accreditation of commercial dog walkers, to encourage greater responsibility around horses.

Continue to work with RBWM PROW to investigate improvements to Cookham and Knowl Hill circuits to increase both safety and usage by creating additional multi-use paths, linkages, off-road riding access e.g. Ashley Hill Forest, provision of parking and safe road crossings.

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, Burchett's Green Lane, Warren Row Road, Terry's Lane, Mileys Road, Twyford Road. Consideration could also be given to the 'Quiet Lane' initiative by CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England).

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Identify which highway verges, cycleways, open spaces owned by RBWM which 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.

Create a dialogue with local landowners regarding the potential subsidies available through the new Agriculture Bill, as a conduit to opening up access to field headlands and upgrading footpaths/cycleways to multi-use, in order to create safe linkages and additional off-road routes.

Educate local riders to report maintenance issues to RBWM PROW

As a follow up to the June LAF, the group have now created additional reports to cover more areas of the Borough.

The objective is to raise the awareness of the safety issues faced by equestrians and how, in an ideal world, these risks could be reduced. There are some suggestions, within the control of RBWM e.g. highway margins, access to council owned land, speed limits, traffic safety measures. However, the majority require the support of landowners to upgrade existing footpaths to bridleways, or access to field margins, by potentially accessing grants available under the Agriculture Bill, to open land for wider leisure use. Landowners, so far, have not shown a great willingness to do so, but for the betterment of the community as a whole, their co-operation is sought.

Supplementary reports;

1. Cookham
2. Fifield and Holyport
3. Knowl Hill, Walthams & Maidenhead Thicket
4. Ascot

This submission constitutes formal advice from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum. Local Authorities are required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

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To: Tim Golabek – RBWM Service Lead, Transport and Infrastructure
Councillor Gerry Clark – RBWM Lead Member, Transport and Infrastructure

Active Travel Consultation and development of an LCWIP for the RBWM

The RBWM Local Access Forum has joined with the Windsor & Maidenhead Cycling Action Group in writing this letter as we feel very strongly that the engagement process for the development of the LCWIP needs to be extended to involve local representative stakeholders in reviewing, refining and helping finalise the draft document.

Such inclusive participation was a key element in developing the RBWM Cycling Action Plan 2018-28 and on which a number of fundamental aspects of the LCWIP will be based. A small Task & Finish Group made up of local resident and Councillor members of the RBWM Cycle Forum was set up at the request of the Council specifically to review the CAP. This enabled nuanced insights and crucial information to be included and ensure the integrity of this policy document prior to its going through requisite overview & scrutiny and Cabinet Adoption.

As the Chairs of these two organisations, we would like assurance from you that there will be further formal opportunities, such as a task and finish process involving our members, prior to the LCWIP being finalised.

It has become clear during the process of meeting and discussing the Active Travel / LCWIP consultation over the summer and early autumn that the Council will miss a very significant opportunity to access specific local knowledge and expertise available in the Borough without further participation of local user group members and statutory bodies such as the Local Access Forum, Cycling Action Group and Disability & Inclusion Forum in the critical latter stages of drafting the LCWIP.

Engagement opportunities with Councillors and residents so far have been very valuable, but this should not be the end of the story. Enabling direct involvement of a small group of key stakeholders including user group representatives and Councillors through a “task and finish” process had been previously shown to be invaluable in completing a comparable policy document. This kind of contribution will be equally vital to ensure the LCWIP has been developed as robustly as possible, is genuinely reflective of local conditions and needs, and has the support of stakeholders engaging with these matters over a significant period of time.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Priest,
Chair, RBWM Local Access Forum

Derek Wilson,
Chair, Windsor & Maidenhead Cycling Action Group

1st October 2021

UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH THE RBWM LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the forum on progress with the RBWM Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Transport and Infrastructure team received nearly 1000 replies to the Active Travel/LCWIP engagement, and they have given the following update to the Forum.

The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is currently being written. We have reviewed all the comments and suggestions made by stakeholders and along with data from yourselves, the previous Cycling Action Plan and the Propensity to Cycle Tool. We have developed key walking routes and key cycling routes which will inform investment in the future. In addition to this we have gathered further data sources on collisions, deliverability of routes, proximity to development sites, current severance of communities to assess and create a prioritisation table for the Council to deliver.

In terms of the Local Access Forum comments, we have acknowledged these and many of these are included within the Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan. Due to prioritisation process you will see some differences for each route in terms of delivery timescales. It is also worth noting, that to obtain funding from Central Government proposals will need to meet Local Transport Note 1/20 requirements for cycling. These are very ambitious requirements, and it could further mean that once more detailed investigation occurs tweaks could have to be made to alignments or designs.

Kind regards

Tim

Tim Golabek
Service Lead – Transport and Infrastructure