

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To seek members approval for the RBWM Local Access Forum Annual Review 2021-22 to be published on the borough's website and a copy sent to Natural England.

**The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Local Access Forum Annual Review
2021 to 2022**

Chairman – Geoff Priest

Vice Chair – Lisa Hughes

Total number of LAF members (at 6 th Dec 2022)	17
Number of members representing users of public rights of way or access land	8
Number of members representing owners and occupiers of access land or land over which PROW subsist	1
Number of members representing other interests	5

Member Interests and Organisations

British Horse Society

Ramblers Association

Disability and Inclusion Forum

Windsor and Maidenhead Active Travel

Windsor Cycle Hub

Parish Councils

Climate Awareness and Local Nature Recovery

National Farmers Union

Meeting Diary

Dates of the meetings: 5th July 2021, 2nd December 2021, 7th July 2022, 6th December 2022.

All meetings are held in the evening either at York House, Windsor or The Town Hall, Maidenhead. Members of the public may attend in person (after contacting the Secretary in advance) or watch via YouTube online.

Guest Speakers

Curtains, Transport Consultants

Barton Willmore, Planning Consultant

RBWM Natural Environment team

Monitoring Success

As part of the annual consultation review of the Milestones Statement and Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026, the LAF provided feedback and comments on the targets and objectives for the coming year through which progress, workloads and priorities are monitored. The new chair and vice chair were duly elected from among the membership in July 2021 to serve for a two-year term.

Recruitment and Training

The RBWM LAF is keen to target recruitment at youth groups and local colleges to increase engagement with young people in the work of the LAF.

RBWM LAF changes in membership over 2021 and 2022 included recruitment of cycling representatives and parish council representatives as a result of a recruitment drive to encourage new members with local knowledge from settlements in more rural outer areas of the borough.

Training options were discussed in 2022 and the BHS Access and ROW Level 1 online training course sampled by two members who recommended it as excellent value for money.

Advice and Activity

- St Clouds Way Development pre-application consultation – The LAF heard and commented on the missing links new cycleway alignment through this new development as well as removal of the footbridge and creation of a crossing on the A4.
- LAF Chairs Meetings - The LAF has been actively encouraging the restart of the LAF Chairs meeting, regional get togethers to share information and best practice amongst LAFs. The first LAF Chairs meeting in four years took place in July 2022. Discussion included need for engagement with central government, Natural England and Defra and greater information sharing/communication between LAF's regionally and nationally. Further meetings to take place in January 2023 and summer 2023.
- The LAF commented on the draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to ensure it recognized the needs of disabled users while also addressed improvements to rural outer lying routes/links between settlements and did not focus solely on urban environments.
- Public Rights of Way Diversion application for Cookham footpaths 17 and 59. The Forum commented on both informal and statutory consultations with the final decision by the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel being not to confirm the order.
- The Natural Environment team consulted the LAF on two occasions, firstly for the Biodiversity Action Plan and secondly concerning an area known as Deerswood and their plans to create a new nature reserve and public open space with walking and cycling access.
- Other consultations noted by the Forum were on the Borough's Corporate Plan, Local Plan, placemaking for the Southwest Maidenhead SMD and a large development site in Cox Green SMD which would incorporate SUDS, public open space along with walking and cycling links to the wider public rights of way network.
- The topic of Quiet Lanes was briefly re-visited and remains of interest to the Forum.
- Millennium Walk – The Forum agreed the Civic Society's request for support in their endeavours to have this locally significant and promoted route effectively signposted.

Site meetings

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Oct 2022 – Members attended Maidenhead Town Centre Streets Walking & Cycling Improvements – Walkaround with the aim of investigating walking and cycling improvements in Maidenhead Town Centre.

Sept 2021, Mar 2022, July 2022 – Members attended meetings to support and discuss the Thriftwood permissive horse-riding proposals and helped find a way forward as a trial. Later in Dec 2022, the Forum members decided to confirm their support for the successful trial and continuance in 2023.

Subgroups activity

Accessibility Working Group – several interim meetings have been held to progress the project for local accessible walks to be audited, mapped and signed to inform choice for people with mobility issues. Members have stepped up to advise on accessibility issues within LCWIP scheme designs.

Multi-User Working Group – members have been active in supporting and providing feedback on the new seasonal permissive horse-riding access on council owned land at Thriftwood to help deliver increased off-road access for local vulnerable road users and to encourage other local landowners to be more open to similar permissive access on their land.

Cycling Groups – LAF members representing WAMACT and WCH have continued their drive towards influencing the RBWM Transport team's vision of what Active Travel should look like across the borough. Feeding into design and outcomes from site specific schemes such as the Stovell Road – Barry Avenue scheme, in Windsor, amongst others. Reporting to the LAF on their activities and vocalizing the requirement for education across the road user hierarchy to encourage considerate behaviour.

Volunteer Works

The LAF noted reports for ongoing volunteering activity across the network happening in 2021 and 2022. The number of volunteer workdays total = 19 as well as 394 hours spent by the East Berkshire Ramblers undertaking the Spring and Autumn condition surveys.

Volunteer Groups include- The Conservation Volunteers, Good Gym, BCA Foundation year volunteers.

Challenges

Same as last year – even greater reductions in resources in terms of officer time/workload/budget/Council support.

Same as last year – No clear guidance or support from Defra or Natural England.

Pushing the access agenda within the need for sustainability.

Looking Ahead

The Forum continues to be interested in improved provision for horse riders in conjunction with multi-user provision

Building communication links with parishes and communications within different teams of the appointing authority.

Comments from LAF Chair

" The PROW team worked hard in the last year to produce excellent results with a reduced headcount; meeting or exceeding the various targets agreed by the LAF. The team always seek to involve members of the LAF in upcoming RBWM projects that they consider have a relevance to the remit of the forum."

Geoff Priest (Chairman)

25th May 2023

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