

LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS FORUM
29 SEPTEMBER 2009
7.00 - 9.00 PM



Present:

Statutory Board Members:

Mrs Diana Pidgeon OBE (Chairman)
Mr Michael Abbott
Councillor Michael Brossard
Mr Joe Dodson
Mr Mike Gates
Sharon Holt
Mr Innes McEwen
Mr Richard Mosses
Peter Radband
Councillor Raymond Simonds
Mr Derick Stickler

In attendance:

Sally Coulson, Parks & Countryside Projects Officer
Hugh Fitzwilliams, Rights of Way Ranger, BFC
Graham Pockett, Parks & Countryside Development Officer
David Putt, Be Heard
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Assistant
Richard Walton, Parks & Countryside Manager

Observers:

John Warren, Be Heard

Apologies for absence were received from:

Miss Caroline Tomalin

1. **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed all members to the Forum.

2. **Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2009 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 40, Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The paragraph under Future Projects should read 'Crowthorne Footpath 17' rather than 'Bracknell Footpath 17'.

Matters Arising

Minute 43, Thames Basin Heaths Access Management Partnership

It was noted that the planning applications relating to more housing at the RAF Staff College site and the TRL site in Crowthorne had both been rejected by the Secretary of State.

3. **Be Heard**

David Putt, of Be Heard, was present at the meeting to provide Forum Members with information about the member-led group of learning disabled adults that promoted self-advocacy and peer advocacy to enrich the lives of its members. There were approximately 50 members of Be Heard aged between 16 and 60 years old, 25 of which were pro-active members. David was present at the meeting on behalf of Be Heard members who had been working alongside the Parks and Countryside Service to explore ways of improving access to areas for learning disabled adults.

It was reported that Be Heard members undertook a site visit to Westmorland Park and would help to influence decision making regarding local families. Further to this specific site visit, a re-assessment of pictograms would feed back into site signage and the website. Be Heard would also assist the Parks and Countryside Service in the future auditing of rights of way and open space.

David would act as a representative for members of Be Heard at future meetings of the Forum.

Be Heard held regular weekly open meetings at The Tea House in Bracknell on Monday afternoons from 2.30pm to 4pm starting with refreshments. Anyone wishing to attend one of these meetings should contact David Putt at Be Heard on 01344 485509.

David also reported that he attended meetings of the Access Advisory Panel which consisted of local representatives of disability organisations within the Bracknell Forest and four Councillors. The Panel worked to improve services and facilities in Bracknell Forest for disabled people.

4. **National and Regional LCAF Work**

There were plans to hold more England Access Forum Workshops. Information could be found on the Natural England website under England Access Forum. It was suggested that Forum Members should contact Sally Coulson if they would like to attend any training.

5. **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

The Department for Transport (DfT) had published the new Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2009 guidance and Natural England had worked with the DfT to produce a guidance note on the links between LTPs and Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP). There had been internal consultation and early input from policy officers.

The new LTP guidance recognised the role of active travel solutions such as walking and cycling. There would be close integration of the ROWIP into the LTP which could look at initiatives for school runs, the cycle network, a 'walking bus' for children going to and from school.

Forum Members would be notified of when the public consultation would take place and information from Forum members was welcomed.

(Action: All)

It would be investigated to see if public transport links could feed into the work of the Forum.

(Action: Councillor Simonds)

Data on footpaths created in 2004 would be updated via voluntary footpath inspectors recording information on data sheets and many data sheets had been returned. This information would contribute to the definitive map review.

Forum members queried why metal signs were sometimes used instead of wooden signs. It was reported that metal signs were used when a public right of way met with a highway, so that this distinction was appropriately signposted.

The agent of the landowners near to the Royal Berkshire Polo Club had responded to correspondence sent to them regarding the proposed Winkfield Bridleway Creation. The obligation was to set out in the document dated 23 June 2000 under S.106 Town and Planning Act 1990 and related to planning permission 625392. Work would begin soon; the bridle path would not be a through route to start with but proposed linkages to the wider network of paths had been identified and an initial survey of the land would now be undertaken.

Three hundred metres of boardwalk was now in place at Wildmoor Heath and some recycled timber had been used for this.

The temporary diversion at Bracknell Footpath 16 had worked well and there had been no complaints while the diversion was in place.

Quotes for remedial works were being sought for a sports pitch at Larks Hill and it was hoped that a permissive bridleway link would be open next year. Priory Fields going towards Watersplash Lane was also another area for a future project.

6. Thames Basin Heath SPA

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) were a group of exciting open spaces due to be enhanced to attract more visitors and provide an alternative to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

The Cut Countryside Corridor group of public open spaces was currently undergoing enhancement works as a SANG. Improvements were set out in the Open Space Management Plan for the SANG. The sites included were: Tinkers Copse, Jocks Copse, Garth Meadows, Quelm Lane, Larks Hill, and Piggy Wood. It was reported that a hoggin surface path had been created at the top end of the fields at Garth Meadows. Medium kissing gates, new benches and notice boards had been installed and another kissing gate would be repaired.

The Cut Countryside Corridor route formed a linear walk from Tinkers and Jocks Copse in the east to Larks Hill in the west with linking sites between. Signage had been erected around the route and the Bracknell Forest Council website would be used to promote walking routes.

It was reported that Youth Developer funding may be tied into SANGs to help improve the area at Englemere Pond and at the development at Wykery Copse and Jennetts Park. Planning applications had not commenced for this yet as priority was driven on development.

Bracknell Forest Council and the Crown Estate would work closely together on onsite access management measures and improved habitat areas. Natural England had set up an Access Management Partnership with a project co-ordinator and existing partnership mechanisms would be utilised.

Natural England would invite proposals for competitive bids from organisations wishing to implement access management measures and would draft papers in early October.

7. **Playbuilder**

Graham Pockett had been working with the project manager in Early Years, Childcare and Play to provide technical and design advice on the Playbuilder Scheme, a £1 million government initiative promoting 22 new or existing play areas within the Borough.

The creation or refurbishment of the play areas would need to be completed by March 2011, with 11 sites of these sites completed by March 2010. The sites would be located in the Borough, Parish and Town areas within Bracknell Forest. A consultation had taken place, tenders would be going out soon and would be received back in early November 2009. There would be 11 supply and build companies submitting suggestions for the play areas. It was hoped that there would be more natural play areas.

8. **Interpretation & Marketing**

The Forum's Annual Report would be finalised soon. A forward and summary of the year's activities had been completed by the Chairman for inclusion in the report.

The following ideas were suggested for the report:

- Bluebell Walk
- Caesars' Camp felling pictures
- Forum Group photo

Forum Members were encouraged to forward any ideas for the Annual Report to Sally Coulson by the deadline of 31 October 2009.

(Action: All)

The Parks and Countryside Team had been working with the GIS Team at Bracknell Forest Council on maps on public rights of way. It was reported that there were no specific parking areas marked on these maps for drivers with horse boxes to park and go riding within Bracknell Forest.

There had been an article in Town and Country on 'Access for All'.

9. **Site Visits**

Forum Members suggested the following as possible future site visits:

- Jennetts Park
- Englemere Pond
- Wildmoor Heath boardwalk
- Swinley Forest
- Cross boundary site visits with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

It was agreed that the next site visit would be to the Crown Estate on Saturday 21 November 10am – 12pm and the meeting place would be on Drift Road by Orchard Lea gates. Further information and a map would be circulated before the visit.

Any ideas for future site visits should be forwarded to Sally Coulson.

10. **Recruitment**

It was reported that Caroline Tomalin had resigned from the Local Countryside Access Forum (LCAF). Forum Members queried if anyone knew any carriage drivers who might be interested in becoming a member of the LCAF.

Sally Coulson would circulate guidance on recruitment for the LCAF if Forum Members did not have this and would also circulate an updated LCAF Members list to Forum Members.

(Action: Sally Coulson)

11. **Reports from Members round the Table**

- **Joe Dodson** reported that there had been many sightings of grass snakes across the borough this year.
- **Michael Abbott** reported that a sign had been posted at Englemere Pond advising that the barrier would be closed at night due to vandalism and anti-social behaviour and some attacks had taken place in this area.
- **Hugh Fitzwilliams** reported that there had been similar incidents in Folly, Warfield.
- **Sharon Holt** reported that the gate was never locked in Binfield and rubbish was not removed regularly.
Hugh Fitzwilliams would write a reminder to those responsible for removing the rubbish.

(Action: Hugh Fitzwilliams)

Motor bikes and mopeds had been sighted in the woods owned by Thames Water.

- **Raymond Simonds** reported that Sandhurst Town Councillors would plant annual bulbs in October.
- **Derick Stickler** reported that the reinstatement had begun on the Thames Water pipeline and more work on this was scheduled for the autumn. Work on the tunnels would take a month to complete and water would be due to be in the pipeline in April 2010. The plans for the two star posts had been put on hold due to funding. Just two complaints had been received during the seven weeks that Warner Bros film set was in Bracknell Forest to film some of Harry Potter.
- **Innes McEwen** reported that the farm walk had been redesigned at Jealotts Hill with natural environmental features and an extended walk for schools Brownie groups. Flytipping was reported to be worse recently.
- **Diana Pidgeon** reported that some residents of the gardens backing onto Wildmoor Heath had been using some of the heath to try to extend their gardens. It was hoped that those responsible would be asked to rectify this.

12. **Any Other Business**

Scott's Hill – would be formally opened on Friday 9 October. Flytipping had improved at this site. It was felt that the site may be worth a re-visit.

Berry Bank – was officially open and had a circular walk.

Green Flag – Bracknell Forest had been awarded 3 Green Flags this year for Pope's Meadow, Lily Hill Park and joint entry Sandhurst Memorial Park and Shepherd Meadows.

Britain in Bloom – Bracknell was named winner of the 'small city' class receiving silver gilt in the RHS Thames and Chilterns in bloom group. Bracknell also received the prestigious regional award for best floral input and Ranelagh School received a commendation in the Mark Mattock Schools Challenge Cup for horticultural and environmental achievement.

13. **Public Question Time**

John Warren, an observer at the meeting, asked why there was no public transport to areas of interest in the countryside of Bracknell Forest and why there was no country park in the north of Bracknell, only the Look Out in the south of Bracknell at present.

Richard Walton would feedback this information into the transport policy to see if it would be possible to influence infrastructure plans.

It was reported that the other side of Jennett's Park was due to be developed into a country park which would fall into north Bracknell but the development was linked to the level of occupation at Jennett's Park. It was estimated to be developed in 2011/2012. It would likely be fully accessible to the public but not necessarily a legal right of way as Bracknell Forest Council had a 75 year lease on the land.

14. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 23 March 2010, 7pm, Function Room, 5th Floor, Easthampstead House.

CHAIRMAN