



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2016, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL,
AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.15 AM.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr R Pushman, in the Chair

Mr D Briggs, Mr J Elfes, Mr N Harris, Mr C Hurworth, Mr G Caspersz, Mr G Thomas,
Ms N Glover, Ms A Heath, Mr A Clark, Mr W Whyte and Mr S Thorns

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr J Clark, Mrs C Hudson, Ms J Taylor and Mr J Batt

OTHERS PRESENT

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Alan Lambourne and Ross Osborn.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MATTERS ARISING

It was noted on page 3 of the agenda pack that reference was made to highways in the Weedon and Padbury areas and that Mr Clark had provided Mr Thomas with a response to his enquiry from 20th July 2016 meeting about the regularity and extent of summer verge mowing provided by Transport for Bucks (TfB). For information, the response was as follows for rural grass cutting:

- Cut 1 – Junctions and vision splays across all road categories carried out between April – May
- Cut 2 – 1.2m swathe cut across all road categories.
- Cut 3 - Junctions and vision splays across all road categories carried out between July – August
- Cut 4 – Full Width cut on strategic routes = A & B with some C roads as per asset categorisation between August - December.

In addition to previous years TfB are also clearing vegetation from all central reservations and/or safety barriers on strategic routes as detailed above.

Rural Grass Work Type	Junctions	1.2M Swathe	Junctions	Full Width Cut A, B & C roads	Barriers
Timescale	April-May	May-July	July-August	August-September	

It was noted grass is cut in 'swathes of 1.2 metres', but vegetation outside 1.2 metres grows very high and falls towards the carriageway. It was commented that cutting the 1.2 metres at an angle could prevent grass falling as it would be supported by grass of similar, but slightly shorter length. The Chairman recommended that Mr Clark report this information back to TfB for consideration.

Mr A Clark pointed out on page 4 that attendance at the site meeting on 3rd June 2016 in Frieth was Mr J Clark and Mr A Clark, not Mr A Lambourne. This will be corrected.

The minutes of the previous meeting were then agreed as a correct record.

4. NEW ONLINE REPORT SYSTEM

Mr Jack Douglass, Business Improvement Officer from the county council's Transport Economy and Environment department was welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman. He provided the following information:

- It was noted that the current reporting system for Rights of Way was quite complicated, unattractive and not especially useful on mobile phones.
- The county council's Head of Digital chose to redesign the reporting system for potholes and street lighting, which is the busiest area for online reporting.
- The new system will go live in December 2016 and will allow issues to be reported directly onto a map showing specific streets, located by postcode. This will be called Maintain My Street. Updates will be loaded onto the system for the public to view and updated as matters progress. The location of problems on the map will enable the public to view defects on their street already reported and this will prevent double reporting.
- You can choose specific issues and view the status, such as progress on repairs. It will also be possible to upload photos and provide more information to a specific problem if the original report lacked detail.
- This service is currently being tested to receive customer feedback.

It was noted that there was no target date for Rights of Way to be added to the new system, but would be considered if the new system was to be expanded. The Report It system will still be available for uploading issues on the Rights of Way network.

One problem with the existing Report It system was transferring web data to the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS). This is the system rights of way

teams use to raise orders. Mr A Clark said the Report It system was registering the problem as resolved (or 'Job Done') when it has only been transferred from the web data to the CAMS GIS system. Mr Douglass said resolving this issue was not something he could resolve. Ms Taylor said this was to be addressed by TfB. Members were asked to check the system over the coming months to see if these problems were being eliminated and report back to us.

Ms Taylor explained that Exegesis had visited BCC last week to provide some updates on the latest CAMS system; and during that visit they provided a brief explanation of CAMS web. Volunteers can interact, log problems and track their reports. Parish councils can report issues and then take things back if appropriate, to resolve locally. It does seem to be an all singing, all dancing version of the Report It system specifically for rights of way.

Paul Harris, Oxfordshire County Council, was asked if they had adopted the Maintain My Street approach. He said yes, but rights of way were separate and had moved fully to CAMs Web. This system provides better public interaction and the web interface is much better than the old system. Mr Harris offered an open invitation to BCC or the LAF to come to Oxfordshire to see CAMs Web in action.

Mr Thorns asked how many members of the public access the system in a week. Mr Douglass said it can be hundreds, depending on the time of year.

Mr Worrell, member of the public, from the British Driving Society asked if the system would be postcode orientated. Mr Douglass confirmed, yes, and by street name, but not currently by parish, but they can look to develop. It was asked, what happens if you add 'Footpath 12'? Mr Douglass wasn't sure, but if/when rights of way are included in the new system, these are the conversations that needed to take place.

Mr Worrell also said the council should look at what Hampshire had done, combining the Lists of Streets and rights of way on one map. People who are looking up rights of way can see whether it's a highway or not. This is also a great help for people doing research into lost rights of way. The lady's name in Hampshire is Gale Johnson.

The chairman asked if footways on the vehicular highway network were being included in the Maintain My Street system? Mr Douglass was not sure at present.

Cllr Whyte noted that most residents were not aware of the technical difference between a footway and a right of way; they just want the count council to deal with it.

A LAF member asked if there were any plans to do a press release so the public know there is a new system in place which would assist them. Mr Douglass said, yes, absolutely and went on to explain that conversations had been had with parishes regarding soft marketing and the cabinet member for transportation, Cllr Shaw, would take the lead on communication after the development stage had concluded. Parishes will form an important consultee as many services are now devolved.

The Chairman concluded that the Forum would like Rights of Way to be included in the next 'Maintain My Street' upgrade so that all the benefits of the new system could be enjoyed by the many people who report problems on the rights of way network.

Mr Douglass confirmed this was 'work in progress'. They are looking to release what they are currently developing on the 5th December 2016 for public testing over a four week period for reporting street light and pot-hole defects. A decision will be made on what happens next in mid-January 2017.

The chairman confirmed the Forum would mark that up in the diary for future lobbying.

5. RIGHT OF WAY GROUP REPORT

Definitive Map

Mr Elfes said there seemed to be a fixed timescale of 2-3 years for doing Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) yet when a development affects a route, suddenly they can be done in six months. This suggests they could have been done in six months to start with and the process could be speeded up.

It was advised that the 2-3 year timescale for the completion of investigations into DMMOs is due to investigative work being so time consuming and there was only 1 member of staff working on DMMOs at present, 4-days per week.

Mr Hurworth said that he believed Buckinghamshire were very good in getting their applications through in a relatively short time scale compared to many counties, some of whom have backlogs going back ten years or more. Mr Elfes concluded they were winners in a very slow race indeed!

It was raised that there was no timescale for determining Village Green applications. Mrs Hudson said these are very expensive due to inquiry costs, so only one is done annually.

Strategic Access

Mr Clark explained that £15 million of the £40 million available for local projects from HS2 would be made available within the 'central area' when the HS2 Bill receives Royal Assent, probably in January 2017. This will be called the 'Community & Environment Fund and Business & Local Economy Fund'. The council are currently compiling a spreadsheet of suitable ideas and LAF Members could make Mr Clark aware prior to January 2017 of any ideas for projects that could utilise this money.

Mr Clark also advised that a £500,000 grant had been secured for cycling improvements around the Wendover area from HS2 Ltd. The Ridgeway Partnership were aware of these funding streams.

Groundwork and the county council have worked together and secured £3 million from HS2 for the Colne Valley. This includes the area of Buckinghamshire around the M25, including Iwer, Denham and Grand Union Canal. Again, ideas for projects are welcome.

A member asked how these sums came about before projects has been identified. Mr Clark explained that counties had lobbied government through the Parliamentary Committee process to ask for mitigation to off-set having HS2 on the doorstep with none of the benefits that such a railway brings. The Wendover improvements are linked to the proposed National Cycleway and Grand Union Triangle. There may be money for path improvements, but not path maintenance.

Mr Thomas highlighted the money spent on up-grading of cycle ways/footpaths along the A413. There is now a good footpath in Weedon which will eventually deteriorate and only a small maintenance budget.

Cllr Whyte explained that the cycleway was a government grant, so if we didn't bid for it we wouldn't have had anything, so the debate about maintenance or no maintenance is very good, but it makes no difference to getting the path or not. It will be a challenge in the next five or ten years', but he wouldn't have wanted to stop the new path happening. It's a completely different budget from a different organisation. At least residents have an asset to think about maintaining, rather than no asset.

Mr Clark spoke of plans for the Stoke Mandeville bypass (A4010) where HS2 meets Network Rail's line to Princes Risborough. Further information on the footpath crossings will be provided at the next meeting.

ACTION: Mr Clark

Mr Clark outlined the multiple projects affecting Iwer village, though this did provide the opportunity to resolve the dead end Iwer Footpath 15 created by Crossrail. Further information in the agenda pack.

Maintenance

Ms Taylor outlined a joint maintenance project with the Thames Path National Trail Team to resurface 300m of riverside path at Marlow. Mr Thorns gave feedback, as a National trails volunteer, that many local walkers had said the contractor, Smallwoods, had done a good job.

Ms Taylor outlined a meeting that had been held with the county council's Devolvement Lead Officer regarding the 80 parishes involved in devolved services last year. They discussed improvements to managing the mowing list for 2017 and for parishes to provide feedback on their schedules and route clearance. Some routes could be removed where mowing is unnecessary.

Ms Taylor was still seeking a new rights of way officer for the central and south parts of the county; with interviews for the central role due to take place within a matter of days. Corinne Waldron's south officer post is still vacant. She thought she would have to look at organising the officer's areas, probably split in two: north and south.

Ms Taylor explained that the schedule of maintenance outcomes would be updated and circulated to members within the next few weeks.

ACTION: Ms Taylor

6. LAF MEMBERS' REPORT

The Forum noted the information contained within the agenda pack and the following points were raised:

A letter was issued to the landowner regarding the open access land at Frieth, following members' discussions in July 2016. This letter is in the agenda pack and concludes the matter from the Forum's perspective. The Open Spaces Society thanked the Forum for their efforts to try and resolve the problems.

The Restoring the Record project co-ordinator reported 53% coverage of the county, with most volunteers coming forward via parish councils. The Chairman noted the big gaps north of Wycombe and Aylesbury. Mr Clark said the volunteer co-ordinator had been working hard recently and was doing an excellent job.

Cllr Whyte asked if the project will address the gaps that exist between footpaths and the verge on the road. Mr Clark explained this is exactly what the project was about: connecting missing links.

Mr Clark was to write to the Open Spaces Society about hosting and sharing information from the Restoring the Record (RTR) project on their website. However, Mr Thorns had drafted a possible LAF website, circulated to members a few weeks ago, that could host this information for project volunteers to access. Mr Thorns said he can't maintain it, but could show people how quickly one can be created for free. The Chairman suggested perhaps Mr Clark could discuss with Jack Douglass, but Cllr Whyte said there was no budget to get teams involved and this has to be a volunteer effort. The Forum should use either a free website or Bucks Voice. Mrs

Hudson reminded the Forum that the county council needed to remain completely impartial from the RTR Project and the Forum was an independent body. The Chairman asked Mr Harris if Oxfordshire LAF had an independent website. He said the county council host their LAF's website. Wiltshire LAF did have an independent website until the volunteer with the skills left. It was concluded that without a volunteer the Forum will not have its own website.

Mr Clark outlined the correspondence from the British Horse Society (BHS) written to all LAFs in England regarding the Section 36 street list and how it's maintained. Mrs Hudson advised that any route shown on the List of Streets will be exempt from the cut-off date. It was the county's approach not to remove any route on the List of Streets without a legal Order through the Magistrate's Court. This is a public process subject to consultation. Mr Worrell, member of the public, asked about old lists and compared with new lists. Mrs Hudson said Transport for Bucks (TfB) administer the List of Streets, not the Rights of Way team, but a comparison could be made of old lists with new ones to ensure routes have not been lost. The Chairman asked for a briefing on how the list is maintained in Buckinghamshire for the next meeting. Mrs Hudson will respond to the BHS.

ACTION: Mrs Hudson

Mr Clark outlined the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan consultation and asked if members would like to follow a similar process of member consultation and input as done previously for the Wycombe and Aylesbury Vale plans. The Chairman agreed for the Draft Plan to be circulated for comments by members when available.

It was reported that the LAF training day at Maidenhead council was very useful and Mr Clark thanked Mr Osborn, Mr Thorns and Mr Caspersz for attending.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to be discussed.

8. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting will take place on 8th March 2017.

Chairman