



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## *BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM*

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 JULY 2017, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL,  
AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.15 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.50 AM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr R Pushman, in the Chair

Mr J Elfes, Mr N Harris, Mr C Hurworth, Mr A T A Lambourne, Mr G Caspersz, Mr G Thomas,  
Ms A Heath, Mr A Clark, Mr B Worrell and Mr W Chapple OBE

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mr J Clark, Ms J Taylor and Ms C Beevers

### **OTHERS PRESENT**

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from:

- Mr S Thorns

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. MATTERS ARISING/ ACTION NOTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 08 March 2017 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Mr B Worrell gave an update on Item 4- Kent permit system

#### **Kent's Permit System for Byways Open to All traffic (BOATs)**

Administered by the Rights of Way department. There was no charge as they don't want any excuse for not applying. Permit Applications were available online via Kent's website. They generally use combination locks with a physical barrier. What was interesting is that physical barriers still allow track bikes to get through, but as they are perceived to cause no more damage than horses, a blind eye is turned, unless

they go off the track line and cause damage. It is recognised that the track bikes and quad bikes are still illegal and the PCSO (see below) will have a word.

There were some minor issues of locks being ground off and reports of permit holders giving out the combination code to other users. People had to sign a Code of Conduct attempting to prohibit misuse. Permits can be rescinded following infringement of the Code, including not keeping to the track, etc. There had been an improved detection rate of abuse and users are respecting the Permit system. More users are again using the route including walkers, cyclists and horse riders. There is some policing of the specific Rights of Way: in one case there is a PCSO funded through partner contributions (including the police themselves) who carry out other duties and applies the Road Traffic Act to offenders.

The Rights of Way department will perform occasional inspections usually at a time when there is likely to be unauthorised use. Also the Permit Application System is undergoing a revision to allow sharing of information with the police, particularly as they are involved in the policing of the routes. There are three specific routes which have been the subject of abuse. The first one initially started with an ETRO as an experiment. There were 107 landowners along this route and the fields and woods had been sold off in 'leisure plots', several who were no longer alive, and so there was no control or stewardship. The 4x4s were all over land, fly tipping was the norm, burnt out stolen vehicles, and real damage to the surfaces. The Permit system allowed the reporting of misuse and a large majority of the landowners got together and became a community with control and stewardship. Many other users are using the route again and the Council spent some money re-instating the surface to withstand legitimate users/permits.

The second was part of a National Trail and had residents at one end who were fed up with the anti-social behaviour. The permit system stopped fly tipping and users now keep to the route. I think this is the one with the funded PCSO.

The third site had a clay undelay and was remote. The 4x4s caused real damage to the under-surface with large deep ruts full of water, both on and off the route. There were a large number of YouTube clips recording the 'fun' the drivers were having. The permit system brought back control and is now an area patrolled by a PCSO. The Council spent nearly £100,000 in repairs to improve routes, with some improvements to the surface to withstand the permitted use. There is now a wider community use and is seen to be very successful on what was a difficult remote site.

It was agreed the scheme is not 100% successful, but is a major improvement for all concerned with the exception of 4x4 vehicular users who have faded away, including a regular contingent from the continent. Horse carriage drivers largely accept the improvements which include Kent Gaps along with combination locks where required. In addition, disability users are now using the routes, some with RADA keys. Graham Rusling, Team Leader, made the point that they tend not to exclude quad and track bikes on the basis that they cause no more damage than a horse. Also, the community now have control and the permit system gives them that legitimacy.

The Chairman thanked Mr Worrell for the update.

#### **4. CONSULTATION: WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCIL PROPOSED CLOSURE OF FOOTPATH HWU/80 IN HIGH WYCOMBE**

Ms J Taylor gave an overview of the written report. The following points were raised by Members in discussion:

- It was asked if Wycombe District Council (WDC) would have the power to

make this decision with or without the forums input. It was advised they would have the power to proceed regardless of any feedback.

- It was asked if the area was for pedestrians or vehicles, it was advised there was currently access for public pedestrians and private vehicles.
- The Chiltern Society stated they were rejecting recommendation as they felt it would be setting a precedent for the District Councils and the County Council to be able to shut public rights of way as they wish.
- The member representing the Trail Riders' Fellowship pointed out it was a relatively short additional length along the alternative route. .
- It was asked if the statistics of the issues were available as the report states there were issues at all times of day and night and that an alternative timed closure might be acceptable. It was felt that a full closure would be over the top- a "sledge hammer to crack a nut" and by closing the footpath you would simply move the issue from one area to another.
- It was asked that if people/groups object but WDC choose to take the proposal forward, would there be an appeals process for people to follow. MS Taylor was unaware but said she would look into it and feedback to the forum.

**ACTION: Ms J Taylor**

- It is felt by the forum there were too many issues that had not been addressed by the report.
- The forum are objecting the proposal on the grounds of-
  - o May set a precedent for closing footpaths in other areas;
  - o Closing access penalises legitimate users;
  - o The alternative footway is close to noise and fumes from traffic;
  - o The number of complaints seemed relatively low and mainly from one property;
  - o There are inherent weaknesses in a locked gate – it relies on the system working 100% of the time, with too many variables leading to it breaking down.

The Chairman thanked Ms Taylor for the update.

**5. CONSULTATION: THE RIDGEWAY: NEXT STEPS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

Ms S Wright gave a presentation on The Ridgeway - Next Steps for Buckinghamshire. It was agreed to circulate the presentation to members with the minutes. The main consultation was on the proposed new strategic link from the Ridgeway to Princes Risborough town centre to promote visitor spending in local businesses. The second part was looking at how the visitor experience at Ivinghoe Beacon could be improved, together with signage more generally along the route.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Mr B Worrell was trying to lobby for the Ridgeway to be set to the highest status possible to allow for carriage drivers use. It was recognised that there was the need and the demand for cycles and horses, but the Trails Team were looking at parallel routes to allow this where the status along the Ridgeway was only bridleway or footpath.
- Signage could include QR code with links to websites informing the public on accessibility for different levels of disability. It is unfortunate for less able users to find out half way down the path that the route is blocked. Ms Wright felt this would be useful information to provide via a QR code.
- Ms S Wright asked for suggestions for stone that could be used to put plinths in at Ivinghoe Beacon, the forum suggested:
  - o Denner Hill Stone

- Pudding stone
- It was raised there is no representative the AONB on the Forum.

The chairman thanked Ms Wright for the update.

## **6. RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP REPORT**

Definitive Map Team - Mr P Turner updated members on some items from the Definitive Map Team's workload. There were no further questions.

Strategic Access update - Mr J Clark summarised his written report. There were no further questions.

Rights of Way Operations update- Ms J Taylor

- Ms Taylor took members through her written update.
- Ms Taylor said the team was now part of the county council having been brought back in-house from Ringway Jacobs. It was asked who's decision it was to bring external services back? Ms Taylor advised it was the previous Cabinet Member for Planning & Environment. The Forum thought this was an excellent decision.

The Chairman thanked the officers for the updates.

## **7. LAF MEMBERS' REPORT**

The Chairman noted the report, the following points were raised in discussion:

- It was asked when East West Rail would be operational? Mr J Clark said the official start date for trains is 2019, but he thought that seemed ambitious. There were no further questions.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- Mr G Thomas felt there was some confusion around the registering of footpaths with local parishes as part of the Restoring the Record Project. He thought there was a need for clarification to the Parishes around what needs registering. An email needs to be compiled and sent out to parishes to ensure everyone is aware of the process. Mr J Clark said they already had the information, but agreed to write to remind parishes of the process he thought a link to the Restoring the Record website may help clarify the situation.

**ACTION: Mr J Clark**

## **9. DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

10am Wednesday 8 November 2017. Mezzanine Room1, County Hall, Aylesbury.

**Chairman**