

Local Access Forum – Meeting held on Wednesday, 11th February, 2009 at the Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Bath Road, Slough

Present:-

LAF Members

Ian Houghton, (Vice Chair- in the Chair)
Councillor May Dodds
Toby Evans
Malcolm Hellings, Slough and District Civic Society
Les James, Slough and District Civic Society
Councillor Satpal Parmar
Ken Wright

Officers, Slough Borough Council

Alex Deans, Principal Engineer, Highways
Gerald Pleace, Parks Development Officer
Jacqui Wheeler, Rights of Way Officer

Public

Councillor Tony Haines

Apologies for Absence:- Margaret Innis and Laurie Tucker

12. Declarations of Interest

None.

13. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 12th November, 2008 were approved as a correct record subject to an amendment to indicate that Margaret Innis was present at the meeting.

14. Matters Arising

Footpaths 24 and 55

Members were advised that the Cabinet had recently approved a proposal to make an Order to upgrade the footpaths to bridleways. A discussion had also been held with the Rights of Way Officer from South Bucks area regarding signage from Farnham Royal pointing to the cinder track. Confirmation from the South Bucks Highways Department would be needed prior to any signage being erected. Jackie Wheeler (JW) also advised that she was looking into the upgrading of the most northern section of FP24 and the path it linked to in South Bucks.

15. Cross Boundary Routes Surrounding Canal and Site Visit with British Waterways

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JW introduced a report to inform Members about various cross boundary issues relating to the canal and to identify which routes were desirable to pursue improvements. Members noted the four suggested routes and the opportunity to liaise with the Friends of Slough Canal and the Slough Canal Working Group on how these could be achieved. In some cases it was recommended that the future plans of British Waterways be amended to include these routes and also that liaison take place with South Bucks District Council.

Action- JW

Councillor Haines addressed the Forum on behalf of the Friends of Slough Canal and explained that one further route was the ex-footpath that ran between Wexham Road and Stoke Road adjacent to the Sikh school running on the South Bucks side of the boundary. The Local Neighbourhood Action Group had litter picked half of the route last year and it was noted that the route was often used by school children. Ramblers had written to the Parish Council requesting volunteers to walk the route. Apparently this was not identified as an official definitive footpath but this was in regular dispute. JW commented that she was aware of this route but it was not situated near to the canal. Councillor Haines stated that the general concern regarding these routes was the lack of maintenance and the problems caused by the overgrowth of weeds and rubbish. It was felt that it was important to discuss this with South Bucks District Council as soon as possible. Councillor Haines advised that British Waterways owned a metre of the canal north bank, i.e. 1m between the canal and the back gardens of houses. There had been some discussion about gating at the rear of properties to establish moorings between the Basin and the Wexham Road bridge. JW advised that she had received a response from Sam Thomas, Customer Operations Supervisor, British Waterways and it had been suggested that a site meeting take place to discuss the various issues resulting from the accessibility audit. Councillor Haines advised that he would like to attend this meeting and it was agreed that JW would circulate possible dates.

Action- JW

Councillor Haines referred to Nursery Lane where owners had gated a private road. South Bucks District Council had placed a sign here saying that there was a public right of way but there was a concern that fierce dogs in the locality would deter the public from walking in this area. JW confirmed that this lane was shown on an OS map as a public path and agreed that the sign would be looked at to establish whether it should be highlighted further.

Action- JW

Councillor Haines advised that the Friends of Slough Canal had a canal working party organised by Groundwork and they held a copy of the future yearly work programme. It was noted that Thames 21 managed O2 volunteers and had reinstated a piece of the tow path in the Langley area.

Agreed - That the four routes identified by JW as routes desirable to pursue improvements on be approved.

Gating Orders

Ian Houghton was concerned that there was no official policy on how many people should be consulted before a Gating Order was approved. He advised that he had been personally consulted on the Waterbeach Road Gating Order but was concerned that there was no question asking for comment or feedback. JW advised that Community Safety were carrying out this consultation and advised that this particular Order was not a public through route.

Councillor Dodds was concerned that a resident in Cress Road had not been issued with keys to the Bunton Meade flats garages. JW advised that Community Safety were responsible for this area and she would forward on Councillor Dodds' concerns.

Action- JW

16. Membership Update

The Forum noted that there was no change to the current membership of the LAF.

17. Letter to Eton College

JW outlined a draft letter to Eton College from the LAF relating to bridleway No 17, also known as Wood Lane. The letter highlighted the LAF's concerns about the safety of the bridleway running between the Jubilee and Moores Lane, Eton Wick. It was noted that the route was regularly used by cyclists, horse riders, walkers and people with children in buggies. The LAF suggested that the path should be widened to allow those on horseback or cycling or using buggies to pass easily side by side.

Agreed –

- (a) That the LAF approves the content of the letter to Eton College, subject to an addition to indicate that the path be widened to meet the requirements of a bridleway as stipulated by the British Horse Society (BHS).
- (b) That a reply be sought from Eton College within one month and a copy be sent to the local farmer, Eton Town Council, Windsor and Maidenhead LAF and a copy to Howard Albertini in the Planning Section.

Action- JW

18. South East LAF Members Meeting held on 3rd March - Slough LAF Position Statements

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JW outlined a report seeking Members' agreement of draft position statements of the Slough LAF for consideration at the next South East LAF meeting on 3rd March, 2009. It was noted that Marjory Hitchman would attend the meeting to represent the Slough LAF.

In relation to the statement on Gating Orders a Member was concerned that footpaths could be lost through the back door. There was a general discussion on the benefits/disadvantages of Gating Orders and it was agreed that this subject should be the subject of a report at the next LAF meeting.

Action- JW

The position statement was amended to indicate that the Slough LAF would seek to provide advice on all Gating Order consultations in accordance with the legal criteria for making Orders laid out in Section 129A, Highways Act 1980.

Agreed - That subject to the amendment that the Slough LAF position statement on Gating Orders, coastal access and shared use routes be approved.

19. Conference for LAF Members in the South East

Members noted that the LAF had been invited to take part in a conference for LAF Members in the South East region, on 3rd March, 2009 in central London. Members were advised that Marjory Hitchman would attend the Conference and that a further three or four Members would be able to attend. Members were asked to let JW know if they were interested.

20. Annual Report

Members noted the content of the draft annual report and it was agreed that any comments should be forwarded to JW within two weeks.

21. Future Work Programme

It was agreed that someone from the Youth Cabinet should be invited to a future meeting of the Forum.

Action- JW

22. Any Other Business

Members requested that a copy of an ordnance survey map to highlight access routes be made available to Forum Members at future meetings.

A Member was concerned that the availability of cycle parking in the High Street near to Boots had been reduced due to the Heart of Slough project. It was agreed that JW would look into this and report back to the next meeting.

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Action- JW

JW advised that a Modification Order had been published for a new footpath between Beechwood Gardens and Windsor Road.

23. Next Meeting Date

It was agreed that the next LAF meeting be arranged for early May, 2009.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.25 pm)