

Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum

Minutes of meeting held on 6th December 2010 at
Priory Visitors Centre commencing at 6.30pm

Members

Bob Wallace - Chairman
David Binns
James Russell
David Mitchell
Barry Ingram
Nigel Jacobs
Graham Watson

Observers

Phill Fox – Bedford Borough Council
Martyn Brawn – Bedford Borough Council
Lizzie Barnicoat – Secretary
Peter Knight – Bedford Borough Council

Apologies

Ian Redgwell
Les Geary
Andy Gerrard

1. Welcome by Chairman

Bob Wallace welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Public Questions

There were no public questions received, as no members of the public present.

3. Apologies

See above, it was also noted that Robert Tate had resigned from the Forum.

4. **Cycling in the Borough, Peter Knight, Cycling Officer at Bedford Borough Council in attendance**

The Chairman welcomed Peter Knight who gave a background of his work history and his current role within the Borough Council being responsible for the highways aspect of cycling and walking. An overview of ongoing capital work schemes in the Borough were detailed, for example, route 51 and introduction of a contra flow for cyclists by the train station, as well as other cycling matters like 'Bike It', bikeability, national cycle week and walk to work week were raised. Further ideas from members were welcomed and discussed regarding how to promote these activities and to encourage as many people as possible to use cycling and walking as a transport method.

BI raised question relating to the often inconsistent approach that is taken in regards to creating cycle ways alongside footpaths and the position of them, sometimes the cycle lane being nearest the road, sometimes being furthest from the road. PK explained that previously one approach was preferred, and then the other approach became preferred so hence why such an inconsistency seen, however, now segregated paths are no longer encouraged. Members also discussed promotion of cycling through the Bedfordshire Walking Festival and ways to raise the profile of 'walking to work' as well as encouraging walking to school. It was felt important to be realistic when encouraging people to walk that expected distances should not be excessive and therefore promotion should be aimed at a reasonable catchment area. Members also received clarification regarding the lack of scheme for walkers and cyclists to use the double roundabout at the end of Shakespeare Road safely and the ideal of an alternative bridge to cross the railway. This scheme is difficult to progress, it was noted due to the trees in the area being protected and the realism that the only solution would be for a new bridge to be built over the railway line. Other items raised and discussed included: Wixams deign and linkage, liaison and working with schools, potential rural schemes and cycleway/footway cats eye.

It was noted by PK a new advisory signage notifying users of the code of conduct will be looked at.

Members also discussed the active travel strategy in relation to the Local Transport Plan, through expansion of the Greenwheel 'spokes' and how best and most efficiently to involve rural aspects within the plan. It was felt very important that references are made to the rural areas not just within the document text but also the visual aspect of the document through photos, and the name of the document to include 'borough'. Also to be included encouragement of people to cycle into the urban area, but greater focus of encouraging people to cycle from the urban out to the rural areas such as Wootton, Bromham, Wilstead.

The Chairman thanked PK for his time and informative presentation.

5. **Minutes of previous meeting held on 4th October 2010 to be agreed**

These had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting, it was unanimously agreed by those present to be signed as true and accurate record by the Chairman.

6. Feedback from previous meeting

6.1 Bedford Borough Local Transport Plan circulation of documents it was noted this had been done by the Secretary.

6.2 Logo progress, PF reported that final agreed design had been done by the Design Team, now to distribute to the Secretary and production of headed paper and compliment slips to be done

Action

Distribution of logo - Phill Fox

6.3 Borough budget consultation document circulation – this had been circulated. At this point of the meeting it was reported that a report to go to the Borough's Executive Committee shortly with the proposals and summary of comments received following consultation. Members were mindful that the proposals in the document would affect the number of seasonal vegetation cuts and the reorganisation of the Rights of Way and Greenspace departments so expressed interest in outcome as this would affect the departments budget. It was also discussed the present Definitive Maps Officer vacancy and the potential impact this vacant post may have on the department, it was agreed that staffing update to be given at next meeting. It was noted whether funding and the budget for the Local Access Forum was secure, PF reported that to date no impact on the Forum's funding expected.

Action

Future agenda item regarding Borough staffing update – Secretary

6.4 Rookery South consultation response to be formulated and submitted – a draft response had been formulated and circulated to all Members in between meeting, the Secretary had registered and submitted the Forum's comments on matters relating to Rights of Way.

6.5 Green Lanes Management Plan progression – MB reported that following the discussion of this item by Members at the previous meeting, BRCC had taken onboard the comments made regarding the draft document and due to meet with MB next week to get progress update. It was agreed that at next Forum meeting progress to be received and discussed.

Action

Future agenda item regarding Green Lanes Management Plan progression update – Martyn Brawn and Secretary

6.6 Update on Higher Level Stewardship Scheme – the Chairman noted that Darren Blaine had updated that DEFRA will no longer be funding new HLS schemes, so when they come to an end they will not be able to be renewed, Members expressed sadness at this. GW informed the Forum that he requested an updated list of current schemes within the Borough which he tabled, and it showed that all schemes had been renewed recently so expected that no immediate impact to the local area following this announcement. Ways of prompting these routes and circulating information was discussed, it was agreed that GW to enquire if an electronic version of the document

could be received so it can be circulated to all Members.

Action

Request of electronic copy of HLS current schemes within the Borough and/or additional paper copies – Graham Watson

PF noted the email circulated to all Members recently regarding uncertainty of the future of the English Access Forum.

Other items to be covered during the meeting.

7. Let's Go! Where Now?'

The Chairman noted the discussion of the website at the recent Forum Steering Group meeting held, minutes of which had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting; other ideas were welcomed from Members.

8. A short break was taken by members.

9. Rights of Way issues

The Chairman gave background information regarding the purpose of the Forum Steering Group and an overview of the recent productive meeting, items that were discussed at this meeting were considered in more detail.

9.1 Website – it was felt that it would be beneficial for the Forum to have an independent website to advertise and promote access opportunities, as it is often felt the Borough Council website is difficult to navigate and is not very informative. There was an awareness by Members that funding such a site could potentially be a problem, the 'project involve' websites available for parish councils in the Borough was raised as a good, easy to use site that is a free resource.

Action

Liaison with Councillor Nick Charsley regarding the request and possible use of project involve – Secretary

9.2 Bridleway survey – this item is work in progress and the suggestion had been by VB of an awards scheme for bridleways that would grade what is available along a route. Members discussed this and the use of a pro forma for volunteers to fill and how the information could be collated and available for all users as a very useful guide.

9.3 Issues/State of Network log – it was felt that it would be useful for users to have information of a conditions survey to help aid route planning, PF detailed an interactive scheme used in Kent where volunteers and the local authority work together logging issues and carrying out maintenance. Members discussed and considered the potential advantages and disadvantages of such a scheme in reality, and the roles and requirements of the Borough as the local authority and the Forum's potential role.

Discussion also centred on the Borough's current system for logging maintenance issues and how they are followed through and feed backing back is done, it was felt and acknowledged that this is an area which needs improving. MB detailed the current processes within the department and how these are being evolved to aid greater consistency and communication regarding reporting of issues. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for a Member to go and visit the department and see the system in operation to aid understanding.

9.4 Volunteer contribution to Rights of Way network improvements – this matter had been discussed previously, MB added that JC currently undertaking a thorough review of environmental volunteering within the Borough.

Action

Invite Joel Carre to next meeting to update on volunteering review, future agenda item – Secretary

9.5 Staffing levels – this item had been discussed previously.

9.6 Promotion of Access and Rights of Way – this item had previously been discussed.

10. Outdoor Access and Rights Of Way Improvement Plan (OAROWIP)

Documentation regarding this item was circulated to members prior to the meeting; Phill Fox reiterated the importance of incorporating Member's thoughts in the new Plan and welcomed comments and feedback on the documentation circulated. Members made suggested amendments to the draft action plan with knowledge of some of the specifically mentioned routes and felt that it was important that the policies and action plans cross reference. There was praise for the document, though some concern over if it was still too extensive and detailed, Members acknowledged the importance of analysing this document further due to its significance and felt it needed specific time allocated to go through it. It was agreed that all Members to be invited to a Working Group to go through the plan in more detail.

Action

Dates to be circulated to Members for the Working Group meeting – Phill Fox and Chairman.

11. Agenda Items and Venue for next meeting

Items to be discussed as raised at this meeting and venue agreed to be Marston Forrest Visitors Centre.

12. Any Other Notified Business

None received.

Meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed:

Date: