

# Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013  
at Borough Hall Mill commencing at 6.30pm

## Members

Bob Wallace - Chairman  
Nigel Jacobs  
Steve Bumstead  
Barry Ingram  
David Mitchell  
James Russell – Vice Chairman

## Observers

Lizzie Barnicoat – Secretary  
Simon Fisher – Bedford Borough Council  
Phill Fox – Bedford Borough Council  
  
Apologies  
Brian Cowling  
Mark Egar  
Andy Gerrard  
David Binns  
Sarah Jayne Hollands

### 1. Welcome by Chairman

Bob Wallace welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking everyone for attending. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary was recorded by BW, detailing that hopefully this can be marked at the joint LAF meeting expected to be in June/July. It was noted that DM, BW, JR and PF having been involved during the whole 10 years with the Forum.

The item of membership was raised at this point of the meeting, and the members asked the local authority to look at boosting membership perhaps through their forthcoming volunteer meeting. Areas of interest for future members which would ensure a good balance would be: nature conservation, cycling and horse riding.

BW reported that over the last three years there has been a lot of detail focus by the Forum rather than a strategic overview, so this needs to be clearly moving forwards and built into the future work programme.

### 2. Profile of Rights of Way, looking at internal and external promotion, linking into the ROWIP action plan (Aim 2 - Increase community use and enjoyment of the rights of way network)

The current ROWIP action plan pages 41-46 were circulated and discussion followed considering the internal departmental awareness of rights of way work within the local

authority. The understanding by the elected Borough Councillors of the value of the LAF and rights of way more generally was discussed, it was felt that unfortunately there is a lower profile for this work area. Also prior to unitary status the Borough Council did not manage access, it is a department it has taken on following the change in unitary. The members agreed that raising the profile of rights of way is needed internally as well as externally.

The colleagues within the authority are also not fully aware of the full functions of the department, with the amount of work and promotion given to the re-launch of the Higgins Museum being exemplified as an asset the Borough are trying to promote, however, the access network as an asset is not promoted in the same way even though it is available to all.

Increasing awareness of the legal aspect of rights of way and the decision makers within the local authority being fully understanding of the departmental workings could be improved. This matter was raised at the recent National LAF conference, it was noted, PF fed back that the importance of the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Board through healthy walks promotion in the countryside is a key item.

It was suggested producing an information pack personal to Borough Ward Councillors area, that be provided by the LAF as perhaps a useful way of raising both Member and other departments awareness. It was also felt that by having an informative guide for Ward Councillors and departments this would further utilise promotion of the local access network. NJ and PF agreed to research and produce a draft document that shows benefits of the network, and other members were happy to support review. SF to look at possibility of having an insert into the Members newsletter about access, as well as further suggestions of inviting the Director of Environmental Services to attend a Forum meeting to receive questions.

**Action: PF/NJ/SF/Future Item**

The promotion externally to local communities was discussed and how best to achieve this, such communication would create more positive feelings within the network and it was felt that the proposed information document could also be used for this purpose. Possibly using a link to the LetsGo! website and PF's department update report would be very useful as they could be used to raise awareness through external websites and Parish Councils. The reports before and after pictures would be a strong way of showing the difference improvements have made, as well as looking at introducing 'we have fixed it emails' to local parishes to again highlight the repairs done in their local area. Also letting maintenance contractors have local authority contact card details would be another possible useful way of building up contacts with the users and general public.

The future department reports to the future LAF can be used as a template for further reporting and forum members supported formalising the promotion of good news updates to local parishes. The promotion through the Borough Assembly was also suggested as an idea for promotion.

Advertising to new users was the next area of discussion for members, the Bedfordshire Walking Festival would be an ideal opportunity to really publicise the fifteen Borough walks. It was felt that inviting the Mayor to a particular walk during the festival as well as promoting more locally in the parishes where the walks are planned would be good for promotion.

It was also felt that it would be worthwhile for the LAF to send a letter to the new Director of the Health and Wellbeing Board, using the recent LAF National conference information as guidance for what an asset the network is. **Action: BW**

### **LARA discussion**

3.

With AG's absence it was agreed that this item to be carried forwards and it was noted number of supporting document circulated.

**Action: Future Item**

4.

**Administrative Matters to include**

**Public Questions** – There were no public questions received, as no members of the public present.

**Apologies** - See above.

**Minutes of previous meetings held in February 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 a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

5.

**Matters arising from previous meeting**

6.1 Feedback from National Conference – PF had circulated feedback documents and information to all members, SB reported that very informative conference and useful workshops run including on the Paths 4 Communities scheme. It was highlighted that Marston Vale had received confirmation of securing £26k towards a local scheme, which the members praised. SB also attended the urban paths workshop which gave a different perspective on such matters as well as the event being a useful networking opportunity. There were 88% of the LAF's represented which was also pleasing to hear. PF outlined the useful national data available as well as the continuous reference to the government's White Paper, with the high value being placed on LAF's also being a clear message made. All papers available were further highlighted for members to review.

It was added that the Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Consortium has now been awarded Local Nature Partnership status and regarding LAF representation it was agreed for BW to be the member put forwards.

6.2 John Bunyan route from Elstow through to Haynes, section 106 clarification – the cycleway trigger point in relation to the occupancy levels relating to the Wixams S106 was the item to be clarified. **Action: SF**

It was noted that the recent Renhold S106 following refusal by the local authority for re-negotiation has gone to appeal.

6.

**Borough Updates:**

**Volunteering** – there are two volunteering update review days to receive feedback and briefing on the May survey work as well as future possible equipment that may be available for volunteers. Volunteer tasks other than surveying will also be put forwards at this point, such as unmapped area support, research and computer support items. There will be a further update available at the next meeting from this feedback, and cross over work will also be looked at being progressed such as 'ripple' that is taking place in Central Bedfordshire area. **Action: Future Item**

**Work Programme for the year ahead** – SF had circulate work programme for the year ahead for information from a departmental aspect, welcoming comments from members. The document was set in the context of the ROWIP and individual work programmes within the team. The Forum can therefore use this tool as a future useful monitoring tool. There was also a department general update by PF on the work having been done recently which members commented was pleasing to see and the website update.

7.

**LAF Workplan 2013**

The annual report for 2012-13 will be ready for the next meeting along with the carry

forward LARA item and it was agreed to pick another main ROWIP topic, to be aim 3 for discussion, as well as promotion feedback. **Action: Future Item**  
The planning aspect and inviting a speaker to a future meeting was discussed, it was agreed that Alison Stringfellow to be invited to a meeting in the near future. **Action: SF**

**8. Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2013 – 14**

It was agreed for JR to continue as Vice Chair and BW to remain as Chair. The members thanked BW and JR for their support and leading the Forum.

**10. Any Other Notified Business**

None received and next meeting agreed as Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July at Borough Hall.

Meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed: .....

Date: .....