

Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum

Minutes meeting 1 14th June 2010

Members

Bob Wallace - Chairman
Vicki Barrett - Vice Chair
James Russell
David Binns
David Mitchell
Steve Bumstead
Joel Carre
Les Geary
Ian Redgewell
Robert Tate
Graham Watson
Liz Wright
Karen Aspinall
Cllr Nick Charsley

Observers

Phill Fox – Bedford Borough Council
Martyn Brawn – Bedford Borough Council
Lizzie Barnicoat – Secretary
Lester Harrington – Central Bedfordshire Council

Apologies

Andy Gerrard
Nigel Jacobs

Phill Fox opened the meeting, thanking everyone for attending and welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Forum following the local government re-organisation.

1. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Nominations were requested for a Chair for the coming year, Bob Wallace was proposed as chair, Steve Bumstead seconded the nomination. No other nominations were received; and members unanimously agreed that Bob Wallace be formally elected as chair of the LAF. Nominations were requested for a Vice Chair, Vicki Barrett was proposed as vice chair, Steve Bumstead seconded the nomination. No other nominations were received; and members unanimously agreed that Vicki Barrett be formally elected as vice chair of the LAF.

Bob Wallace gave opportunity for all members to introduce themselves giving a brief background of their areas of interest in relation to the Forum, and welcomed the recently appointed Secretary, Lizzie Barnicoat.

2. Public Questions

There were no public questions received, as no members of the public present. The Chair welcomed member's contributions and Ian Redgwell raised the responsibility of opening and closing byways.

3. Apologies

See above.

4. LAF organisation matters

4.1. Notes of the Start Up meeting held on 15th May had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting and hard copies were available for those present, the Chair welcomed comments, none received.

4.2. Name of the Local Access Forum was discussed the Chair noted that it is important that the name reflects the whole area, David Binns suggested North Bedfordshire, clarification was received that the name does not have to coincide with the name of the Local Authority. The Borough of Bedford was proposed and the Chair called a vote to determine the majority, four votes received in favour of North Bedfordshire, 5 votes in favour of Bedford of Borough and four abstentions, therefore the Forum to be named, Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum.

4.3. The Forum's logo was discussed, Phill Fox updated that awaiting feedback form the design team with the idea of three potential logo's. The details of the brief were raised and it was suggested by Vicki Barrett that some local schools be approached and children could come up with the logo, members felt this was a good idea, though the design needs to be clear regarding access for who, and it was added that this

approach would also promote community awareness

Action

Brief to be circulated and local schools involved. **Phill Fox and Vicki Barrett**

4.4 A template Work Programme for the coming year was circulated to all members present; members were invited to input ideas for future topics.

4.5 Provisional dates were circulated to all members present, and the Chair talked through the dates, for the 2010-11 meetings: August 9th, October 4th, December 6th, January 31st 2011 and April 4th 2011 (elections).

4.6. Terms of reference were circulated prior to the meeting and hard copies were available at the meeting, the Chair highlighted that amendments needed following the appointment of a LAF Secretary as indicated in red on items 3.1, 5.1 and 9.1. Vicki Barrett felt it would be more beneficial to have clearer actions regarding Working Groups. It was noted that the document is a work in progress and if members felt at any point that guidance needed to be added to the document it could be done so as and when, Phill Fox reiterated that based on government guidance but can be amended at any time.

5. Waste Core Strategy consultation

Lester Harrington, Principle Minerals and Waste Planning Officer was in attendance and circulated an informative leaflet giving an overview of the document including that previously before unitary there were four documents covering Mineral and Waste core strategies and site allocations. The three local authorities within Bedfordshire were now amalgamating the four documents into one which is currently out for public consultation until 12th July. A summary of the technologies being used to deal with disposing of waste were given and how landfill as a solution is being moved away from and alternative methods being used. Members raised questions regarding the document and whether it included provisions for Bedfordshire disposing of its own wastes as well as other waste i.e. from London, as at present. Lester Harrington noted that the document did include a provision for managing both Bedfordshire and a small amount of waste from outside of the county and assured members that the document has no connection to the ongoing Covanta proposals to the Rookery South site at Stewartby.

Ian Redgewell raised what access areas are available at present in relation to the sites listed in the consultation document and the Chair added that often significant local benefits and gains in the end from minerals workings. Lester Harrington highlighted that due to the nature of the sites there are often health and safety issues surrounding the sites and therefore enhancing public access, however, at Brogborough work had been done to allow designated linear access routes across certain areas which are clearly mapped out. Members discussed the access network presently and it was felt that it is currently poor to the south of the Borough so it would therefore be important in responding to the consultation that the Forum highlight this and recommend that any site used in the future must have implementation of enhancement of rights of way or

leisure activities.

Action

Additional member comments in relation to this document to be forwarded to the Secretary by 1st July, Secretary then to collate a representative view of the Forum members and circulate to all for further comment opportunity – **All members and Secretary**

6. Green Lanes Management Plan update

Martyn Brawn gave background history of the document and that the JLAF had worked on the draft plan with the aim that the Forum would consider it in June, currently two months behind schedule. Examples of green lanes were given including, Brogborough where there are approximately 50km of green lanes which are historically managed as leisure assets and highways, as well as ones in Poddington, Swinshead and Dean and other clusters around the north of the Borough. The Borough is working with BRCC on this plan and a bio diversity study has been carried out along with historic work then ultimately the document will be circulated for stakeholder consultation. Therefore the document will be ready for discussion at the next meeting; the Chair requested that it would be beneficial if the document could be circulated prior to the meeting so that members could have time to familiarise themselves. Members raised enquiries regarding the responsibility of green lanes and how misuse is monitored, Ian Redegwell gave detailed knowledge of green lanes in the north of the Borough and Martyn Brawn raised that the Borough do split and part close the lane to reduce the number of misuse as well as monitoring the weather conditions to decide if a lane should remain open or not.

Action

On completion of Plan to be circulated to members prior to the next meeting and to be future agenda item – **Martyn Brawn and Secretary**

Cllr. Charsley joined the meeting at this point

7. Allocations and Designations consultation document

Phill Fox noted that the close for comments is 13th July and following meeting with Planning Policy Officers feedback was it would be beneficial for the forum to consider each site and come up with issues and comments particularly on the impact on rights of way as well as suggestions of additional principles that could be added in.

The Chair highlighted the significance of sections 9 and 13 as these referenced green infrastructure and the green wheel, there is very little included in relation to cycling and 'horse' only mentioned twice in document.

Electronic links to the documentation had been provided to members prior to the meeting and some hard copies available at the meeting; Vicki Barrett highlighted that great difficulty in accessing the maps and also not detailed enough to show the current rights of way, therefore difficult to comment and advise on. Members

discussed the importance of rights of ways being maintained in their present status and signing through developments as often in new build sites it is not clear where the right of way is. If the right of way could not be maintained i.e. due to development on the actual way, then comments should reflect the importance of the right of way must at least be as easy to use as before the development. Cllr. Charsley added that valuable on consultation documents to highlight areas/proposals that are liked as well as objections.

Additional member comments in relation to this document to be forwarded to the Secretary by 1st July, Secretary then to collate a representative view of the Forum members and circulate to all for further comment opportunity – **All members and Secretary**

8. A short break was taken by members.

9 **Farming issues - End of Countryside Stewardship and impact on permissive routes. Dogs and livestock problems**

Les Geary gave update regarding dog and livestock issues, in the main landowners had been reasonable when dogs were not being kept under control and only a few cases last year where walkers had been injured. Members felt it was difficult to satisfy all parties and the only way to prevent incidents would be to promote education and encourage dog owners to ensure their dog is kept under control. Steve Bumstead suggested that as often it is walkers becoming lost and straying into areas that are not public access rights of way which lead therefore to walkers and dogs being in fields with livestock that promotion of the countryside code would be beneficial and waymarking.

The Chair then raised the discussion point relating to the stewardship scheme and many permissive routes coming to end shortly, Steve Bumstead highlighted the problems farmers have when trying to renew their routes, due to the detailed documentation required it has made it difficult to re apply. Members discussed in detail the problems faced by farmers and landowners and potential ways in helping and ensuring that routes are renewed swiftly. It was felt very important that it is publicised where the permissive routes are and when they are due to expire to aid walkers when they are planning routes, and to use and liaise with Natural England on the matter. James Russell suggested contacting Natural England under the Freedom of Information Act and requesting a copy of all the permissive routes within the Borough both expired and ones due to expire within a certain number of months. It was felt by all members that this is an important issue that should be pursued and to be looked into and discussed at the next meeting. Some members expressed a wish to look into publishing the routes in existence and the ones due to expire, as well as helping farmers and landowners successfully renew routes efficiently.

Action

Natural England to be contacted for information regarding Countryside Stewardship, interested members to pursue matter and to be future agenda item - **Interested members and Secretary**

10 Outdoor Access and Rights Of Way Improvement Plan (OAROWIP) and Green Infrastructure (GI)

Phill Fox detailed the history of the OAROWIP document, the previous County Outdoor Access team had been involved in producing a plan, and the current plan is being renewed and updated. A time line of the production of the 2011 – 2016 plan was circulated to all members, noting that rough draft expected September time then formal public consultation. It was added that the Forum meeting to be included on timeline so circulation to Forum and feedback would be included. The main areas of the plan is to look at present and future user needs and network issues, members felt value should be included, however, Phill Fox gave assurance that this incorporated into other plan documents. Martyn Brawn added that Greenspaces was reviewed in 2007 and so that will be reviewed shortly as will the Green Infrastructure Plan by the relevant department.

Members wanted to ensure they had a through understanding of the roles of both Outdoor Access and Greenspace Departments within the Borough, so Simon Fisher to be invited to next Forum meeting.

Members raised the amount of resources available to implement the plans aims and objectives, as well as the importance of ensuring the plan is realistic and can be delivered. Several members felt the current plan was not achievable and therefore lost impact so wished to help ensure that the next plan is more focused.

Actions

Simon Fisher to be invited to the next Forum meeting – **Secretary**

Rough draft to be circulated to Forum members throughout the process and to be discussed at future meetings – **Phill Fox, Martyn Brawn and Secretary**

11 Wider Rights of Way issues

Due to time running over the Chair agreed to collate information regarding this item, including background information from the start up meeting where the point was raised, and to circulate so it can be carried forward to next meeting for discussion.

Action

Document to be collated regarding this item – **Bob Wallace**

Date of next meeting

Monday 9th August 2010 – Venue tbc - Full meeting starts at 6.30 p.m.

