

Local Access Forum – Meeting held on Tuesday, 27th September, 2011 at the Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Bath Road, Slough

Present:-

LAF Members

Councillor Nimrit Chohan
Toby Evans (part of the meeting)
Ian Houghton (Vice Chair)
David Munkley (Chair)
Councillor Satpal Parmar (part of the meeting)
Ken Wright

Observers

Martin Gilchrist, Lead Advisor, Natural England

Officers, Slough Borough Council

Alex Deans, Head of Highways
Bruce Hicks, Community Parks Project Officer
Jacqui Wheeler, Public Rights of Way Officer

Apologies for Absence: Gerald Pleace and Steve Roberts

43. Declarations of Interest

Two members declared an interest; Ken Wright in the Myrtle Crescent to Lismore Park gating proposal update, as he lives near to the path and Councillor Parmar in the Mildenhall Road to Lerwick Drive gating proposal as he is resident in Mildenhall Road.

44. Election of Chair

Resolved – Ken Wright nominated David Munkley to be the new Chair of the Slough Local Access Forum and he was duly elected to that position until September 2012.

45. Minutes of the last meeting held on 12th May 2011

The minutes of the last meeting held on 12th May 2011 were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Pg.2 – Minute 35 – Membership Update – it should read welcome to possible new member, Steve Roberts.

46. Matters Arising (other than those on the agenda)

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Stoke Poges Lane – Elliman Avenue Junction – KW queried whether the intelligent management system (MOVA) for this junction was ever installed.

Resolved – JW would ask Transport section to clarify.

Ditton Park Cycle Path update – JW advised that Anthony Hurst Principal Rights of Way Officer RBWM was due to visit site soon and would decide how to progress the issue. CA Real Estate had still not responded to his two previous letters sent in January and May 2011. There had been continual complaints about potholes on the path in the Ditton Park Estate.

JW confirmed that CA Real Estate were under an obligation to maintain the route in a good and safe condition according to the S106 agreement. Members considered how to escalate the situation so that CA Real Estate would take action with Cllr Chohan recommending any further letters have a deadline stipulated for response.

The SBC Transport team are planning to undertake remedial works to the route surface on the Slough section as it runs on the southern edge of the Cricket Ground and links to the Ditton Park Estate section of the path.

Resolved – JW would speak to Anthony Hurst RBWM to see if he can involve RBWM planning enforcement officers.

Gating Order Proposals Updates

Footpath 35a – Demolition of the old Nationwide building adjacent to this path is now complete and the path is open again. The actual development which will require another closure of the path has yet to start though AD advised it has Building Regulations approval.

SIFE – Highways Improvement Scheme M4 Jct 5 -

No further comments were received from members on this scheme after the meeting. The SIFE planning application has now been refused by SBC and an appeal is likely to follow.

47. Membership Update

New members welcomed to the LAF include, David Munkley and Councillor Chohan. DM requested a hard copy of the LAF member handbook published by Natural England. Martin Gilchrist suggested members might also want to look at the advice for LAFs contained on the Defra website. JW will send link around to members.

It was suggested that Martin could advise about improving membership and that Sara Church be approached to become a LAF member. If this is not possible, then the BHS could nominate someone local, but it was recognised that the Slough LAF does need someone to represent horse riding interests.

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Resolved – IH would ask Sara Church to apply for LAF membership and if this is unsuccessful JW would approach BHS.

48. Update on path dedication in memory of Margery Hitchman

JW advised that delivery of the plaque and plinth was imminent and that as soon as received the installation would be arranged. It is planned to hold the dedication ceremony after Margery's mum returns from Jamaica on the 25th October. All agreed it would be good to have the ceremony on or around 4th November which is Margery's birthday.

Resolved – JW would arrange for plaque to be installed and forward date for the dedication as soon as possible to allow members to attend.

49. Gating Order Proposals Updates

Mildenhall Road to Lerwick Drive - Councillor Parmar stated that two cars were smashed recently in the vicinity of this cut through and he still feels that the path should be closed to prevent it being used as an escape route from the police. IH stated there is another path nearby through to Stoke Poges Lane that would also provide an escape route and the route in question was heavily used during the day. JW reminded members of the problems with opening and closing of gates to allow daytime access and that even an automated gate system would be cost prohibitive and not vandal proof.

Borderside to Shaggy Calf Lane – BH has asked Enterprise to trim the bushes alongside this path to create a hedge. While KW thought the litter being thrown into the bushes has now created an additional eyesore.

Mallard Drive Development Link Path – JW explained the situation with this new link path being a planning obligation on the developers to put in. Members felt overall that the path was not necessary but requested a plan of the routes in this area be forwarded to clarify. AD advised that during the design of a new development there has to be consideration of the percolation of pedestrian and cycling access through a site.

Resolved – JW would forward a plan of the area showing this route to all members.

Myrtle Crescent to Lismore Park – the history of this path was discussed with KW voicing concerns that it was even consulted on during the planning process. However, wide consultation is built into the planning process. JW reiterated the report stating that there have been no further reports of anti-social behaviour or crime facilitated by the path since the door knocking exercise to inform residents of the best means of reporting. The path will continue to be monitored.

JW confirmed that all the identified gating order proposals would continue to be monitored and the gating order process previously commented on by the

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LAF is now being followed by community safety and highways officers. As part of the process it is planned to establish an advisory panel on email. So that dependent on the results of an unbiased consultation, the panel would be in a position to decide whether to proceed with the next stage of the consultation process; a gating specific consultation. IH volunteered to be the LAF representative on this panel, which will also have members from the police, community safety, highways and legal sections of the Council.

Resolved – That IH would be the LAF representative on the Gating Order Panel.

50. Chalvey One Way Experimental Scheme Consultation

Members agreed to look at the drawings tabled and that JW would again circulate them by email. The question arose of how to observe the scheme in operation once the works are complete. JW was asked to send a prompt to LAF members once the works are complete and also just before the consultation ends so that those interested can assess the scheme on the ground as well and send comments. The experimental timetable states that any objections must be received by end of Jan 2012, as it is envisioned that the Council will make a decision on the permanency of the scheme in spring 2012.

The plan is to consult proactively with the local community once the measures have been installed on the ground; this will involve engaging with community groups, letter drops, public meetings, door to door surveys and work in schools.

Resolved – That members would study the scheme and send any comments to JW to be forwarded to Nick Healey, Team Leader Network Management.

51. Feedback from Cycle About Slough with SBC Transport Officers

Issues discussed are as follows:

Montem Lane width restriction; AD stated that this width restriction problem may be improved as part of the planning obligation for the new school at the Old Town Hall. It forms part of a walking route to the school from the Chalvey area and might be turned into a crossing point. The school is due to be open by Sept 2012 so it could be fast tracked to this schedule. AD would bring to the LAF when the planning application is received.

Stoke Poges Lane (Belgrave Rd/Bradley Rd) Safety Scheme – The independent safety audit recently undertaken for this scheme recommended that on the northbound approach the road markings were adjusted to direct drivers and other road users away from the build out. This is the issue that was identified by members previously. The Council has complied with this recommendation. However, members did not consider this to be satisfactory and requested that a copy of the safety audit be forwarded to them by email.

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Shackleton Road dead end junction with Queens Road – JW informed the meeting that the parking restrictions are currently incorrectly shown on the ground at the end of Queens Road as they should extend beyond the old bollards towards Shackleton Road. The Parking team have been informed so this can be rectified. The situation has been investigated and bollards will be erected in the first instance to protect the crossover from being blocked by parked cars. A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) would be required to extend the existing double yellow lines in Shackleton Road at a cost of approximately £2000. Members agreed to see how it goes with the bollards before pushing for a TRO. JW would provide feedback at the next meeting.

Park Street/Herschel Street and Hencroft Street North/South crossovers (rear of High Street Slough) – AD informed the meeting that improvements at this location could be implemented.

Herschel Street (only option to cyclists as no cycling allowed in High Street) – Previously this route had been viewed as hazardous for cyclists due to fast drivers and narrow carriageway width. VV had said he would look at the feasibility of removing the centreline as a way of making drivers take more care. JW to chase Transport section for a response on this issue.

East end of High Street Slough – The low level branches on the trees at the east end of the new High Street scheme have been pruned solving the obstruction issue. Members discussed the problems with cyclists being barred from using the High Street. AD stated that this is due to it being a heavily pedestrianised area and the consequent safety implications. AD also informed the meeting of the Windsor Road off-carriageway cycleway scheme where the footway is being widened. Plans of the scheme will be forwarded for comment.

A4 Langley Road junction and Datchet Road crossing near the Myrke – IH stated that the cycling signs are confusing at this location. This will be investigated.

Primary Way, Chalvey – The problems identified by the LAF on this development can be dealt with as part of the safety audit process whereby the developers are obligated to rectify issues raised. DM questioned whether some Council officers are committed to improving cycling.

Path between Spackmans Way and White Hart Road, Chalvey – The issue with the staggered barriers along this route can be dealt with under the same safety audit process as above.

Farnham Road and Buckingham Ave – The update from VV was that this junction improvement could not be incorporated into the SEGRO Leigh Road Central Concession. However, he did forward information about improvements that have been secured and the overall strategy. The narrow central reservation on the Dover Road crossing at Bath Road would be widened. A plan was tabled showing the new layout of the Galvin Road junction which will include blocking the service road to vehicular traffic and

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creating a vehicular one way circular junction. Ultimately the strategy along the Bath Road is to move the cycle ways on to the service road away from the main carriageway.

Sheffield Ave and Oatlands Drive – IH reiterated that the main concern for cyclists on the carriageway is the pinch points created by the splitter islands situated at too regular intervals. The cycle lanes are so narrow cyclists are forced to ride further out and can then create traffic congestion along the entire route with cars having no opportunity to pass. AD stated that there could be a possibility that if this road is resurfaced in the future the situation can be addressed however, there are always problems faced when trying to retro fit modern pedestrian/cycling infrastructure onto existing highway. A balance between all user needs has to be attempted.

Footpath between Shaggy Calf Lane and Borderside, members agreed that the removal of the no cycling roundels benefited the route as it is wide enough to accommodate multiple users.

The general consensus from members was that on carriageway cycling infrastructure was lacking; with too many off carriageway shared use cycleway facilities. It was noted that the Council's Transport section did seem keen to take cyclists off carriageway at most opportunities. IH thought it is safer for cyclists and pedestrians if cyclists are on the carriageway.

Resolved –

- a) To forward minutes and comments to Transport section so they are aware of LAF position regarding off carriageway cycle routes and so that the cycling problems with Oatlands Drive are flagged up.
- b) Actions would be taken as per the above notes and updates provided at the next meeting.
- c) To have another meeting where key council officers involved in transport scheme design could cycle with LAF members to see first hand the types of problems encountered. JW will get back to members with some possible dates.

52. Regional and National Update

Martin Gilchrist, Access and Engagement Lead Advisor with Natural England introduced the changes in structure at Natural England due to budget constraints. He would now be the main conduit of information sharing across the region for LAF members and LAF officers. His main role is to encourage people to enjoy the countryside, volunteering, diversity, green space and access to it and links to the health agenda.

As the main LAF point of contact with Natural England his aim is to improve communication between the LAF's he deals with and with Natural England. The LAF's he deals with are; Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, West Berkshire, Wokingham, Reading, Bracknell, Hampshire, Portsmouth & Southampton and the Isle of Wight The meeting agreed that new membership

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for the Slough LAF was a high priority and Martin would be able to provide advice and support in this.

The new proforma for the LAF annual report was now available and Martin would forward to JW as soon as possible. This would allow easier and more cost effective reporting while still providing benchmarking and good practice data.

All members expressed interest in being trained and registered as MG explained the Huddle online national network site for LAF members. MG also stated that the responses to the Richard Benyon consultation letter would be available by the end of Oct 2011.

There are plans for a LAF conference to be held in Reading sometime in Mar 2012.

Resolved - MG would send annual report proforma, arrange for members to be registered on the Huddle and forward further details on the LAF conference when they become available.

53. Access to Jubilee River in Chalvey Footpath 33 and 32 - Action Plan

JW tabled pictures of the completed mural and the press release, stating that the story had been featured in the Slough Observer and the Slough Citizen. Members praised the mural project and design agreeing that it had achieved the objective of improving the path.

54. Sara Church - British Horse Society Request for additional equestrian access

Due to lack of time, members agreed to look at this issue via email between meetings and feed back at the next meeting.

Resolved – JW to forward details of this item via email and to place on agenda at the next meeting.

55. Eton Dorney Temporary Spectator Bridge and Diversion of Thames Path

This issue came to the LAF's attention via an email from JW for information. Further updates from the Bucks CC Rights of Way Officer confirmed that the ODA is intending to divert the Thames Path for a whole year. Members looked at the maps showing the diversion of the route around the north of the Dorney Rowing Lake. The main concern for members was the length of the diversion, as a year was felt to be excessively long for an event lasting a month or two at most.

Resolved – Members felt it was important to ensure the ODA were made aware of the objections to the length of diversion even though

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they would probably go ahead with it. JW would forward the objection to the relevant contact at the ODA.

56. Any Other Business

None was discussed.

57. Date of the next Meeting

Date of the next meeting is 15th December, 2011 at 5.30pm.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.40 pm and closed at 8.20 pm)