

### Activities of the forum

#### **Milestones Statement, and targets for the coming year**

The forum was consulted on the Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Report 2021-22 and recommended that the targets and priorities are retained for the coming year. However, the Forum requested that there is more two-way communication throughout the year on progress towards these targets and the opportunity for members to feed into these with further suggestions.

#### **Working Groups Together**

The RBWM Local Access Forum successfully set up a working group at the end of 2019 to look at improving equestrian access through raising awareness of the issues and via identifying opportunities for new multi-user provision. This group and the existing Accessibility Working group along with new members representing cycling via the Windsor and Maidenhead Cycling Action Group have begun working together to find ways to influence the Council's Transport team's production of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to benefit **all** vulnerable road user groups.

The Multi-User Working Group have produced several reports based on data gathering amongst local livery stables highlighting problems faced by horse riders as vulnerable road users and have been working at identifying deliverable improvements as well as aspirational ones.

Links have been made and new members recruited to the Forum from the local Cycling Group during 2021. The Accessibility Working Group has continued to run access audits on its prioritized Access for All walks with the aim to tackle problems encountered and drive for sustained efforts across the board to improve standards.

#### **Partnership working for Battlemead Common – Public Open Space and Wildlife Conservation**

As a member of the Friends of Battlemead Common Group the forum was well placed to advocate for access and accessibility to help the Friends work towards a balance between the needs of public access and those of wildlife conservation. Over the last year and a half the Forum has received continuous reports on this subject, helping the Friends Group move forward towards a compromise with a final decision now being reached on managing the site for all.

### **Multi-user routes and Horse-Riding improvements**

Set up in November 2019 this subgroup has gathered momentum throughout 2020 -21 building on its first report with multiple investigations into new provision and suggestions for improvements to the network that could be a help to all vulnerable road users. One such project being taken forward is for a permissive bridleway at a council owned countryside park at Cox Green, Maidenhead. It is hoped this will act as good practice to encourage other local landowners to allow equestrian access onto their land.

### **Volunteer Works**

After a period of inactivity during the pandemic and required social distancing, volunteer works have begun again in earnest during the early part of 2021. A report taken to the Forum on 5th July 2021 detailed completed and planned tasks for 2021 including major vegetation clearance, reed pulling, step construction and waymarking to name but a few. These tasks are increasingly valuable to provide help in sustaining and improving our local rights of way network as well as local parks which performed such a vital function during the pandemic helping people's health and wellbeing. The Forum continues to receive reports and support all volunteer activities.

### **Recruitment and Promotion**

Unfortunately, three members resigned during the last year and a half, two as a direct consequence of the pandemic, however two new members have also joined, one representing cycling and the other as a liaison with one parish council. The Forum recognises that there is a need to maintain the balance of interests and is keen to recruit cycling members and those representing land management/ownership. The Forum remains committed to encouraging younger members to be involved and though delayed due to Covid, is in contact with the local college of agriculture to bring this about.

### **Links with other local, regional and national groups**

Though enthusiasm is still present to restart the joint chairs meetings in the region and to expand it to include other areas LAF's such as Surrey, a date to meet has not yet been agreed. The Forum feels this is an important objective for the coming year to foster information sharing, solidarity, bench marking and partnership working on cross boundary and shared issues. The pandemic, reductions in authority resources and officer time under pressure remain challenges.

### **Other issues that the forum has discussed during 2020-2021:**

- Volunteer works
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Emerging Local Plan
- Building relationship with the Cycling Action Group

## Looking forward

Re-starting the joint chairs meeting to develop dialogue between LAF's in the region  
Accessibility Working Group – recommendations to be taken forward

Horse riding and multi –user provision working group in conjunction with Cycling Group

Promotion to and encouragement of younger membership/involvement.

## Meetings of the Forum

The Local Access Forum meetings for 2020 - 2021 were as follows:

Formal meetings:           30th June 2020  
                                      30th November 2020  
                                      5th July 2021 (NB: this meeting falls outside the scope of this report)

## Membership of the Forum

The forum is expected to achieve a reasonable balance of members' interests. The current membership of the Local Access Forum is listed below.

Name	Representing	Other interests
Geoff Priest (Chair)	Open countryside, access for younger users	Hurley Parish Council
Lisa Hughes (vice chair)	Disability access	Disability & Inclusion Forum
Cllr. Maureen Hunt	RBWM Councillor	Chair of Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel
Cllr. Phil Haseler	RBWM Councillor	n/a
Cllr Julian Sharpe	RBWM Councillor	n/a
James Copas	Land and estate management	n/a
Steve Gillions	Walking	East Berks Ramblers
Mark Howard	Walking	Cookham Parish
Alan Keene	Land and estate management	Bisham Parish Council, countryside, rights of way, farming and land management,
Trisha Mentzel	Horse riding	Wildlife
Lynn Penfold	Wildlife Conservation	Access to the Countryside
Susy Shearer	Cycling and walking	Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces
Anne Woodward	Horse riding	Road safety for vulnerable users

## Finances

		Total Cost (£)
<b>Meeting expenses</b>		
Meeting refreshments	200	
		200
<b>Members' Expenses:</b>		
Dependent Care	-	-
Travel / Mileage	-	-
Other Expenses	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>200</b>

**Note: The costs above do not include overheads such as Officer time or printing costs**

## How to get involved

For more information about the Local Access Forum and how you can get involved, visit the Local Access Forum web pages at [Local access forums | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead \(rbwm.gov.uk\)](https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/local-access-forums), or contact Jacqui Wheeler, Parks & Countryside Access Officer on (01628) 796289 or email [jacqui.wheeler@rbwm.gov.uk](mailto:jacqui.wheeler@rbwm.gov.uk) or [prow@rbwm.gov.uk](mailto:prow@rbwm.gov.uk)